

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN BEAUTY AND
FASHION MAGAZINES ON BODY IMAGE

by

MELISSA SHRADER
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Interpersonal Communication
in the Nicholson School of Communication
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2007

© 2007 Melissa Shrader

ABSTRACT

This investigation examines how women perceive that magazines influence the body image of self and others. Seventeen audio-taped in-depth interviews were conducted with college women who read beauty, fashion, and grooming magazines frequently. These interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed and the data developed into topics of importance. The findings indicated that informants perceived other women were influenced more by images of women in the media than they themselves were influenced. However, informants did not advocate behavior changes for others or hold pro-censorship attitudes. Other findings include favorable perceptions of magazines utilizing larger sized fashion models, negative attitudes towards advertising, and a reverse third-person effect when the 'other' is male. These findings are consistent with existing research on the third-person effect.

This manuscript is dedicated to a wonderful professor and personal mentor, Dr. Denise DeLorme and to my loving husband Cory whose endless support and encouragement has allowed me to surpass my personal ambitions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Research on Body Image and Body Dissatisfaction.....	3
Research on Body Image in the Mass Media.....	5
Research on the Third-Person Effect.....	7
Perceptual Component.....	7
Behavioral Component.....	10
Research on the Third-Person Effect in Body Image.....	12
CHAPTER THREE: PURPOSE OF STUDY & RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	15
Research Questions.....	15
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHOD.....	18
Research Method.....	18
Research Approach.....	19
Sample.....	20
Recruitment.....	21
Procedure.....	23
Analysis.....	24
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS.....	26
Description of Interview Informants.....	26
Perceptions of the Images of Women in BFG Magazines.....	29
Perceived Influence of Images in BFG Magazines.....	33

Perceived Influence on Self	34
Perceived Influence on Others	35
Other Perceived Influences on Body Image	40
Future Behavior Regarding BFG Magazines.....	43
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	46
Theoretical Parallels.....	47
Practical Implications.....	48
Future Research	50
Limitations	52
APPENDIX A: SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE	54
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE	56
APPENDIX C: DEMOGRPAHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	64
APPENDIX D: INFORMANT PROFILE.....	66
REFERENCES	68

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How people perceive the world around them, influenced by their experiences and interactions with others, affects who they are and what they will become. To the individual, perception is reality and this perceived reality can determine actions or reactions. For instance, a mother who perceives her neighborhood as dangerous may not allow her child to play in a public park and an employer who perceives employees as lazy may keep careful track of how company time is spent. Regardless of its accuracy – for the perceiver, perception is reality.

For frequent consumers of beauty, fashion and grooming (BFG) type magazines, the world around them includes visual images of women who are below average in body weight and above average in height. Current statistics indicate that while the average woman in the United States is 5'4" and weighs 140 pounds, the average American model is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds (National Eating Disorder Association, 2003). This portrayal of slender female body figures in the media, which is referred to in this investigation as the United States media's representation of female beauty, has become even more evident in recent years.

Examples of this U.S. trend towards the increased popularity of the thinner female body type are seen with magazine models and pageant contestants. According to a content analysis of Playboy magazine and the Miss America pageant (Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1992) women in the media have a smaller body size than women in actual life. Data collected from visual images of women between 1979 and 1988 indicated that 69 percent of centerfold models and 60 percent of Miss America contestants had weights 15 percent or more below the expected weight of their age and height category. Another content analysis conducted by Sypeck, Gray

and Ahrens (2003) examined the portrayal of women in four popular fashion magazines from 1959 to 1999. Through analyzing only the models depicted on the magazine's cover, this study found a significant reduction in model weight and a significant increase in the amount of body exposed over time.

Scholars, however, aren't the only individuals aware of this media trend. The U.S. media's representation of female beauty has also generated interest from the media industry itself. Interviewed by *CNN*, lecturer and author Jean Kilbourne said, "One prevalent form of censorship in the mass media is the almost complete invisibility, the eradication, of real women's faces and bodies" (Kilbourne, 1999). Kilbourne's feelings are mimicked through countless editorial pieces, some printed in the same magazines as the images they protest against. In the May 2001 issue of *Vanity Fair*, actress Jennifer Aniston was quoted as saying, "The media creates this wonderful illusion, but the amount of airbrushing that goes into those beauty magazines, the hours of hair and makeup! It's impossible to live up to, because it's not real" (Rowland, 2001). In another female targeted publication, *MORE* magazine, actress Jamie Lee Curtis voiced her opinion by saying "I think that the airbrushing, perfect image that we keep perpetuating is fraud" (Jones, 2005).

To determine if these opinions are shared by media consumers, this investigation seeks to better understand women's perceptions of the U.S. media's representation of female beauty directly from the voices of BFG magazine readers. More specifically, how do frequent readers of BFG magazines perceive that these visual images affect their personal body image and the body images of others. Additionally, what behaviors, if any, result from these perceptions?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Body Image and Body Dissatisfaction

For more than 50 years, researchers from a variety of disciplines including medicine (e.g. Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006; Howes, Edwards & Benton, 2005; Martinez, Kemper, Diamond & Wagner, 2005), psychology (e.g. Jung & Lennon, 2003; Koff, Rierdan & Syubbs, 1990; Leary & Quinliyan, 2005), sociology (e.g. Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Pelletier, Dion & Levesque, 2004; Spurgas, 2005) and communication (e.g. Bissell, 2004; Holmstrom, 2004; McCabe, Ricciardelli, Melior & Ball, 2005) have studied and attempted to explain the development of individual body image, defined as a mental perception of personal body weight, size and appearance (Hendricks, 2002). With the use of quantitative methods, including surveys (e.g. Ball & Kenardy, 2002; Contento, Basch & Zybert, 2003), experiments (e.g. Monro & Huon, 2005; Wedell, Santoyo & Pettibone, 2005) and content analyses (e.g. Cash, Morrow, Perry & Hrabosky, 2004; Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz & Thompson, 1980; Wiseman et al., 1992), and qualitative methods, including focus groups (e.g. Duncan & Robinson, 2004) and interviews (e.g. Pompper & Koenig, 2004; Ziebland & Robertson, 2002), a large amount of scholarly knowledge regarding body image development has been generated. Overall, the literature resulting from these efforts suggests that perceptions of personal body image are related to what is perceived as the ideal body type. According to Festinger's social comparison theory, people compare themselves to people or images that represent goals they desire to obtain (Festinger, 1954). When a gap exists

between body image and the perception of what is considered physically attractive, attitudes, self esteem and behaviors can be affected either positively or negatively (Powell & Hendricks, 1999).

When individuals negatively view the differences between their body image and their preferred appearance, body dissatisfaction can occur. More than 95 percent of females overestimate their body size, particularly their cheeks, waist, hips and thighs (Thompson, 1986). Alarming numbers such as these have sparked interest among researchers to question the root of such dissatisfaction. One study that reported higher levels of body satisfaction in congenitally and partially blind women (Baker, Sivyer & Towell, 1997) suggests that visual comparisons play a significant role in the development of body dissatisfaction.

Body dissatisfaction can cause some individuals go to extreme lengths to change their appearance. For example, a study conducted by Global Market Institute, Inc. for the National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) found that 40 percent of Americans suffer from or know someone who suffers from an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa or binge eating disorder (National Eating Disorder Association, 2003). Anorexia nervosa, perhaps the most recognizable eating disorder, has a higher mortality rate than any other psychiatric disorder facing young women today (Birmingham, Su & Hlynsky, 2005). It is under estimated that 10 million women and 1 million men currently suffer from either anorexia or bulimia (National Eating Disorder Association, 2003).

Another clinically recognized extreme form of body dissatisfaction is body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), which is the obsession with or exaggeration of a small or imaged body defect (Renshaw, 2003) such as a preoccupation with the size or shape of the nose. While the perceived flaw is a huge concern for the individual afflicted with BDD, others may never notice

imperfection. Patients who are diagnosed with BDD often show signs of depression, low self esteem, social isolation and compulsions (Neziroglu & Yaryura-tobias, 1997) and are 45 times more likely to commit suicide than the average American (Phillips & Menard, 2006). The cause of BDD is currently unknown.

When considering how body image can influence mental and physical well being, the benefit of understanding how perceptions of the ideal body originate seems evident. If researchers can determine which factors have the greatest influence on body image development, then measures can be taken to reduce negative influence. To better understand body image development, researchers have examined how a variety of factors influence body image, including exercise (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006), social relationships (Pelican, Heede, Holmes, Melcher, Wardlaw, Raidl, Wheeler & Moore, 2005) and culture (Soh et. al., 2006). However, one of the most significant areas of interest remains the mass media.

Research on Body Image in the Mass Media

Research examining the mass media's influence on body image has concentrated on the role of television (e.g. Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Harrison, 2000; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Rouner, Slater & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2003), print media (e.g. Pompper & Koenig, 2004; Kalof, 1999; Lokken, Worthy & Trautmann, 2004) and advertising (e.g. MacFadyen, Amos, Hastings & Parkens, 2003; MacKay & Covell, 1997; Peck & Loken, 2004; Ford & LaTour, 1993; Fay & Price, 1994; Richins, 1991). For instance, a questionnaire administered to Asian women found a significant relationship between the consumption of advertising and editorial content and the development of eating disorder symptomology and body dissatisfaction

(Prendergast, Yan & West, 2002). A similar study administered by Harrison and Cantor (1997) found that in addition to the development of eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction, television and magazine consumption was positively associated with the desire to obtain a thin body type.

While these investigations examine how thin models negatively impact readers and viewers, studies have also been conducted on how the media can positively impact body image. Peck & Loken (2004) used experimental research to determine how larger models are viewed in the media. The results from this investigation showed that larger female models, models size 16-18, were considered more attractive when framed in a nontraditional magazine or a magazine containing an equal representation of larger models and thinner models. This study also showed that when the heavier models were seen as attractive, higher levels of self-referencing by female participants occurred. This implies that the media can have a positive effect by simply increasing the presence of larger female models in magazines.

Although the majority of research conducted on the media's effect on body image remains quantitative in nature, qualitative methods have also been used. Pompper and Koenig (2004) used a focus group and telephone interviews to collect information on Hispanic women's perception of the ideal female body. In this investigation, women across generations indicated an agreement that magazines set society's standard for ideal body image, the skinniest image being the most ideal.

Another qualitative study interviewed 12 female adolescents individually and in focus groups to determine their interpretations of health messages in teen magazines (Chow, 2004). The feedback generated from this study suggested that the adolescents believed teen magazines

taught women to place great importance on physical appearance. The young informants also reported their primary appearance goals were to obtain the attention of males by losing weight and looking attractive.

The overall finding across research on body image in the mass media indicates that although the media does have a significant effect on body image, the effect size is small (Holmstrom, 2004). For this reason, other media roles, such as the media's indirect influence on body image through the third-person effect, should also be given consideration.

Research on the Third-Person Effect

In the past two decades, a vast amount of research has been conducted on the perceived effects of the media beginning with Davison's (1983) theory of the third-person effect. The following section will discuss this theory, which provides insight into the media's perceptual and behavioral influence, in greater detail.

Perceptual Component

The perceptual component of the third-person effect indicates that people perceive the negative effect of the media is greater than it actually is and has a larger influence on others than it does on self (Davison, 1983). Studies on this component have been conducted on topics such as pornography (Byoungkwan & Tamborini, 2005; Lo & Paddon, 2001, 2000), explicit music lyrics (Eveland & McLeod, 1999; McLeod & Eveland, 1997), media violence (Hoffner, Plotkin, Buchanan, Anderson, Kamigaki, Hubbs, Kowalczyk, Silberg & Pastorek, 2001; Salwen &

Dupagne, 2001; Hoffner & Buchanan, 1999), advertising content (Price, Tewksbury & Li-Ning, 1998; Borzekowski, Flora, Feighery & Schooler, 1999; Henriksen & Flora, 1999) and politics (Cohen & Davis, 1991; Rucincki & Salmon, 1990). These studies have been primarily quantitative in nature, with surveys and experiments reporting a substantial effect size for the third-person effect (Paul, Salwen & Dupagne, 2000).

Studies on the third-person effect appear to agree that who the comparison group is and the perception of the message involved are core components in its existence. With the third-person effect, the comparison group is often those who participants perceive as being less similar and thus more susceptible to media influence than they believe themselves to be. As the social distance between participants and others increases, so does the third-person effect. This observation is referred to as the social-distance corollary (Lambe & McLeod, 2005) and is supported in the majority of third-person effect literature (Scharrer & Leone, 2005; David & Johnson, 1998)

In an effort to elaborate on the findings revealed in a prior investigation (Huh, DeLorme & Reid, 2004), one qualitative study interviewed 25 middle age adults to learn about their feelings towards direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising (DeLorme, Huh & Reid, 2007). In support of both third-person effect and the social distance corollary, older adults perceived that “others” were more influenced by direct-to-consumer drug advertising than they were themselves and that perceived influence was greater when “others” was in more general terms. For instance, the level of influence was downplayed when informants referred to a specific example where the “other” individual was a person they knew.

However, some scholars disagree that social distance is what determines the third-person effect. In a media effects study conducted at a midwestern university, Eveland, Nathanson, Detenber & McLeod, (1999) reported that perceived likelihood of exposure to negative media messages was a stronger predictor of the third-person effect than was the social distance corollary. Their experimental study revealed that third-person perceptions increased as the comparison group became more general, but not as the groups differed by age or education. According to Eveland et al. (1999), these findings may indicate that what is misinterpreted as the social distance corollary is actually inferences of the likelihood that the ‘others’ will be exposed to negative media messages.

This brings into consideration the second core component of the third-person effect – perception of the media message. A meta-analysis on the third-person effect reported that the type of message was a significant predictor of its size and presence (Paul et al., 2000), negatively viewed messages (e.g. pornography, explicit music lyrics) having a larger effect size and positively viewed messages (e.g. drug use prevention campaigns) having no or a reverse third-person effect. This observation was supported in a study of direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising (Huh et al., 2004). This study found significant evidence for the theory’s perceptual component with a larger third-person effect existing with perceived negative than with perceived positive media messages.

Mixed opinions on the social distance corollary and the level of importance of message perception provide opportunity for more in-depth research into the perceptual component of the third-person effect. Through a qualitative analysis of BFG magazine readers, greater insight may be obtained on the effect allowing it to be linked to existing, relevant theoretical literature.

Behavioral Component

The behavioral component of the third-person effect expands on the theory by suggesting that communication produces reactions in people not because they are directly influenced by a message, but because they perceive that others may be influenced by it (Davison, 1983). For instance, parents who believe violent television programs have a greater negative effect on other children when compared to their own may monitor their child's selection in friends more closely than their child's viewing habits (Tsfati, Ribak & Cohen, 2005). The majority of studies on this component examine behaviors such as media censorship or regulation (e.g. Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002; David & Johnson, 1998; Gunther & Hwa, 1996; Seonmi Youn et al., 2000), but other studies have been conducted on voting behaviors (e.g. Salwen, 1998), mobility (e.g. Tsfati & Cohen, 2003) and crisis preparation (e.g. Tewksbury, Moy & Weis, 2004).

Not only has far less research been conducted on this component, but findings report mixed results. A study on censorship, conducted by McLeod, Lambe & Paek (2005) discovered that while support for censorship was equally present in adult and student samples, the third person effect was not. While students reported being less influenced than others to media content, adult participants reported being more influenced than others. This finding indicates that in this instance the third-person effect was not responsible for the censorship behavior.

In contrast, another censorship study conducted on several different groups at a college campus did find support for the third person effect. Rojas, Shah & Raber (1996) surveyed students in advanced women's studies, advertising and ROTC (reserve officers training corps for the Army, Navy and AirForce) classes to determine their attitudes towards the censorship of the media in general, violence and pornography. In all three media messages, a third-person effect

was found. This study also indicated that pro-censorship attitudes among participants were contingent on the message being perceived as potentially harmful to others.

Voting behavior has also been shown to be influenced by the third-person effect. In an experimental study conducted during the Bush/Kerry 2004 presidential election campaign (Golan, Banning & Lundy, 2005), support was found for both the perceptual and behavioral components of the third-person effect. After being exposed to political advertising campaign messages, participants indicated that others would be more influenced by negative campaign messages and therefore would make poor voting choices. To compensate for this perception of political ignorance, individuals reported a higher likelihood of voting.

Another study supporting the behavioral component of the third-person effect was conducted on Gaza settlers using random digital dialed telephone surveys. This study indicated that the perception of the media's bias had an impact on the behaviors of Israelis. Believing others were affected by the media portrayal of the development towns in which they resided, current Israeli residents reported an increased desire to relocate (Tsfati & Cohen, 2003).

A variety of explanations exist pertaining to the third-person effect's influence on behavior. Psychological theories including attribution theory, biased optimism, ego involvement, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), and social categorization theory (Paul et al., 2000) have been used in an attempt to understand why the third-person effect occurs and why it influences behavior. This investigation, through the use of individual in-depth interviews, aims to provide further insight into existing survey findings and help to explain the dynamics of the third-person effect.

Research on the Third-Person Effect in Body Image

For the purposes of the proposed investigation, the most pertinent third-person effect studies are those that examine the impact of the third-person effect on body image. Although vast amounts of literature can be found on body image and the third-person effect separately, there have been few studies that have examined these topics in combination.

A study conducted by David and Johnson (1998) used experimental methods to determine the perceived effects of the media's representation of female beauty on women's perceptions, psychological emotions and behaviors. Using an all female college sample, a widening third-person gap was seen between each of the undesirable outcomes. The third-person effect increased as the perceived outcome moved from influence on perceptions (i.e., perceived body weight) to psychological factors (i.e., self esteem) to behaviors (i.e., eating disorders).

Another investigation utilized an Internet survey to find support for the behavioral component of the third-person effect. Park (2005) used a modified version of the third-person effect theory to examine the indirect effect of the media on an individual's desire to be thin. This study indicated that readers of beauty/fashion magazines perceive the prevalence of a thin ideal, presume that this ideal negatively influences others, presume the media have a similar influence on themselves and adopt the desire for thinness. Therefore, the researchers concluded that magazine readership indirectly influences the desire to be thin.

Other body image investigations reiterate the importance of who is in the comparison group. A cross-cultural study conducted on women from the U.S. and from China used a questionnaire to examine the perceived influence of female models in advertising on female body image (Wan, Faber & Fung, 2003). This study reported similar levels of body disturbance

in women of Western and Eastern cultures and presence of a third-person effect. However, the third-person effect was only present when the “others” were women, not men. Women in this investigation reported that they would be more influenced by images of thin female models in advertising than a male significant other would be.

Another investigation used race to separate the comparison groups (David, Morrison, Johnson & Ross, 2002). The survey findings showed that a third-person effect did exist, but also indicated a stronger effect with black women than with white women. Black women perceived the effect on self would be greater when exposed to a black model than when exposed to a white model. This finding was not supported for white women who reported an equal effect on self regardless of the model.

These studies are consistent with a pattern found across third-person effect literature; the third-person effect exists in specific, not all, circumstances. When the outcome of influence is deemed to have a negative connotation and is perceived as socially undesirable, a third-person effect is more likely to occur. However, if circumstances change and the negative social consequence ceases to exist, so will the effect. Since the media’s portrayal of ultra-thin figures has been publicly scrutinized, it is assumed that individuals may associate the approval of such images as holding negative social consequences. For this reason, they would be less likely to admit being influenced by these images.

Using both survey data and in-depth interviews, Milkie (1999) studied the influence of the mass media on the female body image of black and white women. The study found that although all women viewed the images as unrealistic, only white women perceived others as holding them to the unrealistic standard portrayed by the media. For this reason, white women

compared themselves to the images and expressed a desire to obtain the goals they set. Black women felt other black women and males held similar feelings regarding the representation of female beauty by the media and therefore believed themselves and other black men and women to be less influenced by the images. This study is important because it elaborates on the thought process of the informants, better explaining why certain behaviors occur in some instances and not in others. If this study had used only quantitative methods, differences would have been seen in the presence of the third-person effect between white and black women, but the reasons for the reported difference would not have been discovered.

Because the third-person effect is contingent on the circumstance, the use of primarily quantitative methods limits the understanding of what causes someone to deem a message negative in nature. It is this limitation that has prompted the desire to use qualitative methods in this investigation. In doing so, the dynamics of the third-person effect in regards to body image can be more closely examined.

CHAPTER THREE: PURPOSE OF STUDY & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This investigation adds to the existing literature on body image and third-person effect and makes practical contributions to the magazine and advertising industries. In the way of theoretical contributions, this study uses qualitative methods to elaborate on the conditions in which the perceptual and behavioral components of the third-person effect exist; in other words, how informants perceive images in BFG magazines influence themselves and other women. This investigation adds depth to the third-person effect and body image literature by providing future researchers with insight into the importance of the perception of social consequence and what role it plays in the effect itself. This study also makes practical contributions by providing guidance for consumers, magazine publishers, and advertisers regarding the U.S. media's portrayal of women.

Research Questions

In this investigation, women have been interviewed in-depth to gather specific details regarding how they perceive images of women in the media affect body image and what behaviors result from their perceptions. These perceptions pertain to both personal body image and the body image of others. For this investigation's purpose, "others" is defined as women who are similar to informants in age and BFG magazine consumption habits. The first two research questions were constructed around the third-person effect's perceptual component:

RQ1: How do female frequent BFG magazine readers perceive that the visual depiction of women in BFG magazines affects their own body image?

RQ2: How do female frequent BFG magazine readers perceive that the visual depiction of women in BFG magazines affects the body image of others?

As already stated, research currently exists that indicates the presence of a third-person effect with the media's promotion of idealized images of women (David & Johnson, 1998; David et al., 2002; Milkie, 1999). These research questions go beyond the effect's existence to understand the thought process behind its construction. Individual interviews help elaborate on why women feel the way they do about BFG magazines and what causes them to act on their perceptions.

Although a variety of media formats contain images of the traditional American model, BFG magazines were chosen for this investigation because empirical research has found that they hold a strong correlation with internalized standards for feminine beauty (Lokken et al., 2004). Specifically, the BFG category was chosen from nearly 80 different national consumer magazine categories classified by the Standard Rate & Data Service (SRDS, 2005), the world's leading provider of media rates and information (www.srds.org, 2006). BFG magazines were the most pertinent because they are primarily publications which are geared towards women and they feature articles and advertisements related to appearance and other women's issues. Some examples of BFG publications include *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *ELLE Magazine*.

To address the third-person effect behavioral component, a third research question was posed:

RQ3: What types of influences, if any, do these perceptions have on female frequent BFG magazine readers' behavior?

This research question addresses whether or not the third-person effect influences behavior by addressing what originally promotes behaviors. In other words, how do the perceptions readers hold influence their actions? By closely examining what does and does not influence individuals to behave in certain manners, greater knowledge can be obtained regarding the dynamics of the third-person effect. As discussed in the above review of the third-person effect, findings are mixed regarding the behavioral component of the third-person effect. Using this research question, this investigation hopes to examine this component more closely.

These questions were answered through the use of qualitative in-depth interviews. This method selection allowed rich details to be collected and provided a new perspective on this topic.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHOD

Research Method

As explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is appropriate when either little is known about a research topic or a new perspective on a current body of work is needed. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research forgoes the restriction of data via standardization for the possibility of a new idea surfacing (Morse & Richards, 2002). It sacrifices generalizability for the chance to gather rich detail from informants (Patton, 1990). By doing so, qualitative research allows new findings and perspectives to be discovered.

Because the third-person effect theory is relatively young and the topic of body image is so complex, several reasons exist for the appropriateness of qualitative methods in this investigation. With qualitative methods, a new light can be shed on both components of the third-person effect. Because the key concept in the third-person effect is perception, it is important to have a detailed account of what is perceived. Though quantitative methods have provided a general understanding of the effect, qualitative methods allowed a closer look at the effects dynamics (Creswell, 1998).

This detailed look at the informants' world also allows a better understanding to be obtained on the construction of female body image. Currently, the majority of research conducted on body image has been collected with quantitative methods. Although quantitative methods are valuable for summarizing data (Baxter & Babbie, 2004), they alone do not

adequately express the many factors and feelings which make up body image. For this reason, the language of the participant and nonverbal cues should also be considered. Qualitative methods allow a more holistic picture to be obtained by preserving informant responses in their own words and observing any nonverbal behaviors which may accompany responses.

Research Approach

The rich detail of qualitative methods can be obtained using a variety of approaches including individual interviews, focus groups and ethnography (Denscombe, 1998). According to Creswell (1998), the approach taken depends on the type of information sought: observations, interviews, documents or audio-visual materials. Since rich detail regarding informants' perceptions is important in this investigation, interviews are deemed as the most appropriate research avenue. Given the nature of the topic, open-ended individual interviews were selected over other qualitative approaches because they provide the privacy necessary to ensure that accurate, in-depth information can be obtained (Denscombe, 1998).

According to Patton (1990) there are three primary techniques to open-ended interviewing: the informal conversation interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. Each technique offers different strengths and weaknesses primarily revolving around the interviewer's role. This investigation utilized the interview guide method which allowed the interviewer (the author) to maintain consistency across interviews while having the flexibility to delve into topics of interest. Using a semi-structured format (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), informants were guided through the interview with a series of predetermined open-ended questions (See APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE).

In qualitative research the researcher acts as the research instrument (Patton, 1990). This makes the construction of the interview guide a crucial part in the quality of responses generated during the interview process. The preparation of the interview guide protects the structure and objectives of the interview (McCracken, 1988) by producing consistency, maintaining appropriate interviewer and interviewee distance, establishing clear procedures and allowing the interviewer's complete attention to be on the informant's testimony. For this investigation, a guide was constructed by the author and submitted to an advisory committee for review. Prior to and immediately following committee recommendations, the interview guide was pre-tested in several trial interviews conducted on informants similar to those who were recruited for the study. This pre-testing process helped determine interview length and question wording prior to the start of the investigation.

The use of a guide rather than a more standardized tool also provided the opportunities for probing and additional unplanned questions stemming from relevant topics of interest which arose during the interviews to be asked. These deviations from the guide did not pose a problem since only one researcher (the author) conducted all informant interviews.

The selection of this data collection method and interview structure fostered in-depth detail regarding informants' relevant recollections, experiences and behaviors.

Sample

A purposive sample, where individuals were selected based on how much relevant information they can provide to the study, was used (Patton, 1990). This sampling method was appropriate because the study's intention was to understand how a specific group of individuals

perceive the media. Although this method did not provide generalizable results to a broader sample in the tradition of quantitative research, it did provide valuable insight into the perceptions and behaviors of the women studied.

To determine which informants were able to provide the most information of interest, the demographics for BFG magazines readers were reviewed. Young females were identified as the primary consumers of these publications. For instance, the median age for readers of *Cosmopolitan*, the BFG magazine with the largest paid circulation (“The hot list ADWEEK”, 2005), is 27 (www.natmags.co.uk, 2005). Likewise, the purposive sample for this investigation targeted traditional college age female magazine readers. Another reason this age group was deemed appropriate for this investigation was because young women are at a higher risk of developing distorted body image leading to eating disorders than other population groups. The onset of most eating disorders typically occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood at a mean age of 17 (Willi, Giacometti & Limacher, 1990).

Recruitment

Initially, plans were made for one primary recruitment method and two secondary recruitment methods to be used to locate individuals who have the potential to offer the most information for the investigation. The primary method was to be a verbal announcement during four undergraduate classes. The secondary methods were to include a verbal announcement made to social sorority members and a snowball sample taken from the primary recruitment pool. The snowball sampling method, which includes using current qualifying informants to locate potential informants, would have been appropriate in circumstances such as this when

members of a specific population may be difficult to locate (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). Although steps including asking interviewees to provide names and contact information of appropriate potential interviewees were taken to allow for secondary sampling methods to be used, these additional recruitment methods were not incorporated due to the adequate response received from the primary recruitment method.

The initial verbal announcement pertaining to the study, directed at females only, was made during a total of four undergraduate introductory classes at a large university in a metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. These classes were chosen based on their size and included two lower level sociology, one lower level psychology and one introductory communication class. These classes, which contained mostly freshmen and sophomores, were targeted because they were more likely to provide a young and diverse group of individuals.

After the verbal announcement explaining the investigation was made, a prescreening questionnaire was distributed. The screening questionnaire measured several components of magazine consumption including magazine type, consumption type (e.g. subscription holders, convenience readers such as those found in salons or physicians offices) and amount of time spent reading or flipping through magazines during an average week (See APPENDIX A: SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE). Information on type of consumption was also requested to eliminate individuals who consume BFG magazines solely due to convenience and not due to interest. A total of 147 prescreening questionnaires were returned. Two of these were immediately removed for not meeting the age requirement, leaving a total of 145 informants in the recruitment pool.

Procedure

Within 10 days of the candidate's completion of the screening questionnaire, the screening questionnaires were analyzed. Magazine purchasing habits ranged between zero and 20 per month with a median of one magazine purchased. The amount of time spent reading or flipping through both magazines in general and specifically BFG magazines ranged between zero and 10 hours per week. The median time spent with magazines in general was one and a half hours per week, whereas the time spent with BFG magazines had a median of one hour per week.

From this analysis it was determined that the most qualified, or heaviest reported readers, were respondents who reported reading more than two different types of BFG magazines for an average of at least two hours per week. A total of 35 qualified candidates were contacted by phone to schedule an interview at their earliest convenience. Students not qualifying for the investigation were not contacted.

Qualified students were asked to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview on campus in a classroom at a large university in a metropolitan area in the southeast. This location was selected because of its convenience and availability of quiet meeting areas. Of the initial 35 respondents, only 21 interviews were scheduled. Reasons interviews were not scheduled include scheduling conflicts, disinterest or failure to return messages. Of these, four individuals were unable to make or reschedule their appointments leaving a total of 17 interview sessions conducted.

The interviewees were guided through the interview process with the assistance of a pre-constructed interview guide. Although many questions were preconceived, new questions did

develop as interviewees answered probing questions which gave further insight into their perceptions. The semi-structured format was chosen with this in mind and topics of interest were explored as they emerged.

As they arrived, interviewees were instructed that the study was investigating the influence of the media on female body image. Informants were asked to read and sign a consent form and complete a short demographic and media usage questionnaire (see APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE). The information from the demographic questionnaire was later used in the analysis process for comparison purposes. Along with demographic details, the questionnaire also addressed media consumption habits to verify the qualifications of informants.

The sessions were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and later transcribed in their entirety by the author. Each interview lasted between 35-50 minutes. As an incentive for participation and as a token of appreciation, all participants were offered a \$10.00 gift certificate to a local bookstore and were promised a summary of the research findings upon its completion. These gift cards were funded by the author and were accompanied by a handwritten thank you note.

Analysis

After all of the interviews were conducted, the transcribed material was read carefully several times. Next, the material was reviewed, line-by-line, and categorized into several words or a short phrase that best explained the essence of that line (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This process, known as coding, helped highlight core concepts and patterns across the

interviews. As this process developed, new terms and phrases became more appropriate (Richards, 2005). For this reason, codes were revisited and reconstructed periodically to ensure the greatest value was achieved.

After the transcribed material was coded, the codes were reviewed to see if any significant topics arose. The material was reviewed in various ways in search of similarities. For instance, because it is beneficial to know not only how a single informant responded to the first and fifth questions, but also how all informants responded to the first question, the transcribed material was analyzed across interviewee responses and across question responses. As these similarities began to reveal themselves, the most notable were constructed into key ideas or themes. Themes were those topics of priority to informants, things in which a large amount of information was gathered or even the lack of existence of a phenomena (Emerson et al., 1995). Several of these key themes included making comparisons between self and images in magazines, positive regard for publications which diversified their model base, a third-person effect when a negative social consequence is perceived and the lack of or a reverse of this effect when the negative social consequence is removed. After these themes emerged, the research findings and conclusions were crafted. To elaborate on these themes, interview quotations on readers' perceptions and behaviors have been incorporated in the following results chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

Individual interviews of 17 frequent BFG magazine readers generated 135 pages of transcribed text and a greater knowledge of how informants perceive that women are influenced by BFG magazine's representation of female beauty. The informants, all female, elaborated on their perspectives, which allowed for a more comprehensive picture to be obtained on the dynamics of the third-person effect. This portion of the manuscript will discuss perceptions of influence and will highlight major themes pertaining to body image and the third-person effect.

Description of Interview Informants

The data retrieved from the demographic survey taken by informants prior to the interview sessions provided a snapshot of who was interviewed for this investigation (See APPENDIX D: INFORMANT PROFILE which lists informants by pseudonym). As a whole, it is apparent that the appropriate classes were selected for sampling as 14 of the selected informants were 18 years of age. The age of the remaining three informants were 19, 20 and 21. The races of the informants were reported as follows: 12 Caucasian, two Hispanic, one African American, one Asian and one Islamic. Because the informants were specifically selected to ensure the most qualified individuals were interviewed, it is important to note that this was a purposive sample and as such was not intended to represent the broader population as a whole. The sample was, however, similar to that of frequent readers of BFG magazines.

The demographic survey also collected valuable consumption information. During a typical week, informants reported spending an average of three and a half hours flipping through or reading BFG magazines. The range of time spent with magazines for informants was two to 12 hours per week with a median of three hours. On average, informants reported purchasing nearly three and a half magazines per month. The range of magazine purchased per month for informants was two to 10 with a median of three magazine purchases. When these numbers are compared to the original recruitment sample of 145, it becomes evident that the informants were among the top consumers. The original sample spent only one and a half hours on average per week reading or flipping through BFG magazines and purchased an average of nearly two BFG magazines per month.

When they are consuming BFG magazines, nine informants reported spending an equal amount of time with the images as they did with the editorial content. Of the remaining eight informants, six reported spending more time viewing the pictures than reading the editorial. This lean towards an image preference comes as no surprise as fashion and beauty were listed among the top reasons for BFG magazine consumption. Articles the informant could relate to were mentioned as important, but not nearly as frequently as was fashion. The items informants reported they were most likely to skip were the advertisements or articles they found difficultly relating to, such as articles written for older women or men.

When reviewing informant responses, current body image was also a consideration. The demographic survey indicated that the majority, or 12 of the informants, reported appearance as personally somewhat important. Of the remaining five informants, three reported their personal appearance as very important, one reported personal appearance as somewhat unimportant and

one reported personal appearance as very unimportant. These results indicate that most participants do value appearance, which would make them more likely to have admiration for someone whose appearance they view positively.

When measuring satisfaction with their body currently, 13 informants reported that they were somewhat satisfied. Of the remaining four informants, two reported being somewhat dissatisfied and two reported being very satisfied with their current body. During the course of interviews with these women, the majority alluded to their own self confidence, however, they also admitted to moments of insecurity as they compared themselves to images of women in magazines. For example, when asked how images of women in magazines made them feel, one informant who felt appearance was somewhat important said, “I don’t necessarily feel bad about myself, but I would just like to have those legs or something like that.” Another informant who also felt appearance was somewhat important said:

I like my body. I’m not, I’m not self conscious about my body. The only thing that I don’t like is my stomach. It seems that all my fat goes there. I have no fat anywhere else and so, when I see these skinny women with tiny, toned stomachs, I’m like...it makes me feel self conscious about myself, but not much. [Becky]

Comments such as these indicate a desire to emulate the images seen in magazines. The phenomenon of women comparing themselves to these images, referred to as social comparison (Festinger, 1954) is further discussed in the upcoming paragraphs as the potential influence of images of women in BFG magazines is investigated. First, however, a better understanding is needed on how frequent readers of BFG magazines view and understand the images of women they encounter.

Perceptions of the Images of Women in BFG Magazines

Throughout the interview sessions, informants used a range of words to describe the portrayal of women by the U.S. media. These terms referred to model's weight, attractiveness and even promiscuity. However, the most popular descriptive terms were those that referred to the model's thinness. Models were classified as "super skinny," the "smallest five percent," "anorexic," and "a tooth pick." When describing how women are portrayed in BFG magazines, one informant said:

I think they are too skinny for me. I think a lot of guys don't like that. I think, from what I've heard, they don't...they don't really like how like women are so skinny. They want one that looks normal and not like they can break them if they gave them a hug. So, I think they are too skinny. They are really pretty though. [Becky
]

Another made the following statement:

Models are so skinny now and I just think like, yeah, it's normal for models to be skinnier than the average girl, but not like a hundred pounds skinnier. It's just, I think that it's not, it's starting to not even be like pretty anymore. [Kelly]

This informant continued by expressing concern that images such as this could have a negative effect on young girls like her younger sister. This concern was shared by other informants, as nearly all believed that the depiction of women in this manner was more harmful than helpful or at least potentially harmful for women.

Regardless of this negative emphasis informants placed on the thinness of the models or the perceived harmfulness of these images, the models were also described often as having "perfect bodies," as being "the "best of the best" and as "beautiful people that you can never become." Terms like "gorgeous" and "unobtainable" were used often by informants in association to model thinness. One informant expressed her reaction to these images by saying:

Just flipping through magazines, it makes you want to strive to look like them, or just, I don't know. For me, it always gives me something to look at and you know I tear out a magazine and hang it up on my wall and go, 'I want to look like that,' or 'I want to do that with my hair,' or I don't know. For me, it has always been like that. It's been a big influence. [Kristen]

Another said:

I see pictures in the magazine and I automatically assume that, you know, in order to...be more likable, I need to look like that or I need to have a skinnier body or, if I want to go out in my bathing suit, then I need to look like that and so, I think what I do, especially when I read magazines, I find myself working out more or eating salads more or something like trying to perfect my body the best I can. [Patricia]

These statements convey what many informants continued to express though the course of the interview sessions – the desire to obtain the goals set by these images of women. This result becomes even more intriguing later in the investigation as informants acknowledge media editing techniques and report perceptions of the media's negative influence. But first, how informants believe women should be portrayed will be discussed.

Along with answering questions pertaining to the kinds of women depicted in BFG magazines, informants were asked questions regarding the images that were not seen. The majority of women believed that only those which symbolized what society considered the ideal or most beautiful portion of the population were depicted and that magazines were missing images of "normal" or "everyday kind of people." This desire for more images of average women was further suggested as one change BFG magazines should consider. One informant, who referred to herself as "slightly overweight" voiced her opinion by saying, "If you are going to make clothes fit a range of sizes, then maybe you should have models that are a range of sizes." Other comments were made suggesting similar changes such as:

I think they should use a diverse amount of people. Like different races and skin colors and body sizes and everything...maybe that person's twice the weight of one of the

models, but put their make up on really pretty, do their hair and like show people that not everyone is that size and like you can still be beautiful. [Kelly]

When they show a magazine they should show a lot of fashion, like a lot of different clothes and such instead of showing the skinny tall models. Instead they should show more normal people. Like regular size people...Now, I think that it's just all models and pretty girls and a lot of like, skimpy outfits and stuff and I don't think that's right. [Melanie]

I just think it would be a lot easier for girls in particular to buy these magazines and not look down on themselves so much if they had like more realistic advertisements, like modeling and that kind of stuff in there. [Abigail]

With these expressions also came an exception - not all magazines depict only one kind of woman. The informants acknowledged that select magazines, advertisers and society are making efforts to add a more diverse depiction of women to BFG magazines. "There are certain magazines that are really good about putting different sizes in, but most of the high fashion magazines like *ELLE* and *Vogue* and all that don't. Would never even consider doing that," stated one informant who believed more than "size zeroes" should be portrayed in magazines. Another informant applauded her subscription by saying:

One thing I really like about *SELF Magazine* is that they do, they show the real women that are overweight and then they lose weight and it shows what weight those women want to be to look good for themselves and I think they should show more images of women at a healthy weight for their body and not just very thin women that you see in the media. [Kayley]

Even advertisers were recognized for recent changes. One advertiser, Dove, whose current advertising campaign depicts women with various appearances, was referred to on numerous occasions. Here is one informant's description of the campaign's efforts:

It had the women in just their bras and it was like the bare skin in their underwear and it wasn't about what they looked like, but it was at the same time and it had all different types of women. I remember they had a pregnant woman and they had a really short woman and they had a really tall one and I think that that was probably how women

should be portrayed. Not for, “well, look at me I’m beautiful” or “look at me cuz I’m smart,” but this is just how we are so accept us. [Karen]

Although these examples are commendable, overall the informants felt that the average woman was only minimally included in BFG magazines. When informants were asked why they believed the image of the everyday woman was left out, the most popular response pertained to a perceived societal norm. One informant who began reading BFG magazines at a young age said, “Society shows us, like on TV, that you know, skinny and...that’s the ideal. You know, they don’t want to show that people look like this (like real people).”

Another informant, who referred to the media’s representation of female beauty as, “tall, slender” with “big boobs,” said, “society doesn’t care what men look like at all...it’s never going to be socially unacceptable for a man to be overweight as it is for women.” It was suggested by others that woman have been depicted in this manner for so long and in so many formats that being thin is commonly associated with being beautiful. One informant expressed her confusion as she reflected on a time when full figured women were depicted in artwork. “There were times in the past when thin women were unhealthy and women who were a little heavier, they were the model of beauty and you can see it in paintings and things like that from history.”

She went on to say, “we have moved towards this model where everybody has to be thin and perfect.” Another informant who believed women should look to themselves for beauty suggested that the media desires for woman to emulate these images by saying, “I think magazines think that there is some sort of standard that they want young girls to look at so that they can be like that too.”

In fact, these images have become so ordinary that many informants expressed no reaction to the images at all. One informant made the following comment:

It's what we are used to. We see them all, we see, we see models and we think of models we think of skinny, skinny girls and it really doesn't affect me anymore. It's just what I am used to. Opening up a magazine and I'm used to seeing skinny models. [Kristen]

Informants also believe that because woman have become so accustomed to this image of perfection, that anything else would be seem unnatural. For this reason, they justified the use of these images by BFG magazines. They believed that not doing so could affect magazine or product sales. One informant who believed no changes should be made by advertisers expressed this by saying, "I agree they should (use BFG images) if they want to sell more...it would probably be bad for business if they changed anything they did." Another informant who consumed BFG magazines for hair and make up tips expressed this by saying, "No one is going to want to pick up a magazine and read the whole thing and look at regular people because it's not going to sell their beauty products."

Information collected through the demographic survey and during the interview process revealed similarities in the kinds of individuals who frequently consumed BFG magazines. The value informants place on appearance and their opinions on the U.S. media's depiction of female beauty should be referenced as their perceptions of influence are explored.

Perceived Influence of Images in BFG Magazines

In what may be considered the core line of questioning, informants were asked questions pertaining to the influence the media had on female body image. Though these direct questions gave some insight into the perceived differences in influence, it was only by analyzing each interview in its entirety that the third-person effect truly emerged. In this section, the perceived influence on self and others will be discussed and comparisons will be made between the two.

Perceived Influence on Self

To answer the first research question, informants were asked to discuss the influence or lack of influence images of women in BFG magazines had on their personal body image. When referencing this potential influence, informants acknowledged a personal influence, but did so hesitantly. They admitted to allowing the images to affect their self esteem, influence purchasing habits and dietary goals and motivate their desire to exercise. Informants made the following comments that pertain to the influence of BFG images on self: “The way somebody dresses, I’ll like that style from one person and another person and another person and try to mix them together to make it look more and less like I did it myself,” and

They’ll have like healthier eating and they’ll have women who’ve lost weight. They’ll show pictures and sometimes that’ll re-motivate me to start (dieting) again and I don’t want to lose like 60 pounds, but maybe four or five won’t kill me...sometimes I’ll adapt those into my routines. [Karen]

The most common behavior that nearly all informants acknowledged in both self and others was the tendency to compare their bodies with the bodies of women depicted in magazines. Informants made comments like, “You know, like, I want to have the perfect body like the magazine shows and I want my hair to look like that and I try and it doesn’t work,” and

I look in there (BFG magazines) and I’ll be like, ‘oh, they look as skinny as me,’ or, ‘they are pretty. I look like that sort of.’ I can like relate to how they look and relay it back to myself. [Lauren]

It’s hard not to compare yourself because that’s just a normal thing to do, to compare one thing to another, and if you see the majority of what you’re looking at are pictures of beautiful girls and then you’re going to compare that to the way you feel about yourself and the way you look. [Miranda]

Informants expressed an idolization for figures in magazines and suggested that women desire to model themselves after the U.S. media’s representation of female beauty. One

informant who was hesitant to admit her own influence said “I don’t necessarily compare, I just think...that’s just what I’d like to look like.”

Informants did not, however, acknowledge making extreme efforts to modify their appearance. An example of this can be seen in one informant’s response to the influence these images have on her behavior:

I think they affect how I dress. I like to follow the current fashion...maybe if I could see a cool recipe in a magazine I will go and make that recipe or try a new beauty treatment because they said that it was effective, but I wouldn’t go off the deep end with their exercise and diet program. [Kayley]

Another said:

Every time I read a magazine I am like, ‘I’m going to go and exercise and stuff,’ and then like after a week that’s gone. So, it kind of energizes me to do something, but then it’s like I lose interest...I might change the way like I eat to eat more healthier, but not really for long periods of time. So, it’s not like a permanent thing. [Sheridan]

Perceived Influence on Others

On the contrary, when the second research question was addressed and informants referred to the influence on others, the degree of influence became more extreme. Practices such as eating disorders, intense exercise or plastic surgery were referenced. One informant who downplayed the influence of these images on herself said, “Obviously the media and things like that has such a great impact on young girls. I mean, obviously with all the problems with bulimia and anorexia and all that’s going on.” Other comments were made like:

Most people, they’ll look at it like a magazine and see somebody that they like and they’ll be like, I want to be that skinny too. Let me stop eating. Let me look like this. Let me spend this much money. I have to have this much money to have this thing to be this way and I am just like, it’s nice to have certain things, but I wouldn’t starve myself or go into debt to be like somebody else. [Lauren]

I definitely think that a lot of girls could be definitely...like their self esteem could be impacted. It could lead to many things, like if someone is very dissatisfied with their body and they might think like, you know, they are too fat...like seeing all the, what the media give you might lead them to eating disorders. I know lots of girls who have them...looking at magazines where women are so beautiful probably affects them.
[Tammy]

A lot of women just want to lose weight and lose weight even if they already look fine and like some, a lot of people will, you know, be anorexic or bulimic or whatever because these women want to look like these women (in magazines) and it's really hard.
[Melanie]

This emphasis on others being more influenced than self and others behaving differently than self supports the third-person effect's perceptual component. Another factor which suggested that the third-person effect may be relevant in this investigation is the unambiguous nature of the informant responses. When referring to the media's influence on others, the terms "definitely," "obviously" and "absolutely" are frequently used. In fact, nearly all informants suggested in some way that others were influenced; whereas, half of informants reported no behavioral influence on self and those who did recognize an influence on self tended to downplay the extremity of influence.

When informants were asked to directly compare the influence on themselves to the influence on others, only one informant reported being influenced more than others. The 16 remaining informants responded that they were either equally or less influenced by images of women in BFG magazines than were others. Some of the responses that were given include the following: "Probably influences people more than me, just because my mom always raised me that I was fine however I looked," and

I think more realistic than other people do so when I see these women, I kind of feel bad, but then I snap out of it. I'm like, I mean, I could never look like that just because my body type and stuff, but other people probably feel really bad sometimes. [Becky]

I think I have a better outlook on it than most people just because I have gone off the deep end and come back up, but I think that a lot of women...I think that I have better body image than most people. [Kayley]

Informants who reported being influenced less than others quickly provided justification for their reasoning. In essence, they expressed having more experience or being more knowledgeable and for that reason, were less impacted than others. For example, over the course of the interviews, one particular group of others continued to reoccur as being at greatest risk to the influence of the media's representation of female beauty - teenage girls. Informants felt teenage girls were influenced because they were, "more impressionable during that age." A couple of informants elaborated by saying:

They're confused about like their bodies changing and like what they are suppose to like, how they are supposed to be like when they grow up and the only thing they have to look at is these women in magazines that look perfect and so they want to look like them. [Melanie]

Older people, like I said, they have found themselves. Like my sister, that age group haven't and they are vulnerable to things and they're, I don't think they make the right decisions and so it's just...it's harmful for younger people. [Tammy]

This reference to the lack of understanding of younger women suggests that informants viewed themselves as wiser and having a better ability to understand that the portrayal of women by the U.S. media is edited and not always obtainable.

In addition to teenage girls, one other group was mentioned as being at more of a risk to the influence of women in BFG magazines - those with low self esteem. Various forms of

warnings were given for these women including not being so, “hung up on the way they look because that certainly is not the most important thing.”

The perception by informants that others are at a greater risk to the influence of the media shows support for the third-person effect theory. However, this support is not seen in every instance. When the comparison group of others became men instead of women, a reverse third-person effect was seen. Although nearly half of informants acknowledged a similar media pressure on men, males were still perceived to be less influenced than other women and less influenced than self. Reasons for this reverse third-person effect included perceived differences in societal pressures, likelihood of exposure, consumption habits and attitudes towards appearance. One informant who believed the media placed more pressure on women said “I would say I am probably influenced more than the average man is influenced, but still less than the average woman.” She went on to add:

I think girls are a lot more influenced than guys. Yeah, they want to be buff like the same guys...but the media doesn't affect them as much. I think they're more in competition with each other or with their friends to looking better than they are with the media.
[Kristen]

Other informants made comments like:

I think it hits women harder like, because to me guys are kind of like care free. They don't really care too much if they have a gut or something, you know...Guys, they can get away like with body flaws more so than girls. [Lisa]

I think women are...influenced more by the magazines than I think guys would be...I feel women are more concerned with their looks, but we are put on that. There are more products for women to look better, more beauty products and stuff. [Heather]

In this section, evidence of a third-person effect in some, but not every instance has been revealed. This result indicates that the third-person effect is in fact conditional and appears in select situations. For instance, the third-person effect was not seen with social comparisons.

This could be because making comparisons with images in BFG magazines has no negative social repercussions. One of the most frequent BFG magazine consumers expressed her feelings on social comparisons by saying, “Everyone does (compare themselves to BFG images). Even if they say they don’t, they do.” Whereas behavior such as eating disorders were viewed negatively as expressed here in one informant’s comment:

They look at them and they are like, “why can’t I look like that,” and then they are so obsessed with that they get, develop eating disorders, become depressed and I just think not all of them do, but I know it’s just really harmful I think to show all of these pretty women. [Becky]

Because social comparisons were viewed as normal, and thus carried no negative social repercussions, no third-person effect was seen. Whereas, the extreme negative stigma associated with eating disorders is perceived as having negative social repercussions and therefore a widening third-person gap between self and others was present. Not a single informant acknowledged currently suffering from an eating disorder resulting from their BFG reading habits, but numerous informants did suggest that others could be influenced in this way.

Similarly, the reverse third-person effect is seen when men were introduced as a potential ‘other.’ As informants perceive different societal appearance expectations for men and women, to be more influenced than men was not viewed negatively. In fact, informants perceived that men cared less about their appearance than did women and should therefore be influenced less than women. One informant who strongly believed women in general care more about their appearance than men commented, “I don’t care what I look like when I go out, but I mean, I do try to not look like I just rolled out of bed, because like men we see sometimes walking down and you think, did you just get out of bed?” Therefore, this investigation shows evidence of a reverse third-person effect with self reporting a greater influence than the male other.

Other Perceived Influences on Body Image

Other factors beyond images in BFG magazines were also recognized by the informants as having an influence on their personal body image and the body image of others. These factors included social relationships, images in other media formats and images in advertising.

Other than the media, women reported that men, society, family and peers influence their personal body image and the body image of others. Of these, the biggest influence seemed to come from the relationships informants had with their family and friends. For example, one informant compared family interactions as being, “critical, just like the media sometimes,” whereas a different informant referred to the influence of friends by saying:

I think a lot of pressure comes from friends and who you are surrounded by. I mean you're, even though they are your best friends, you're in constant competition with them. You want to look better...you're not going to tell them you're in competition with them, but in the back of your mind you just want to look better than them. [Kristen]

Another referenced social relationships by saying:

I think friends and family and spouse. I mean, I know I have an ex-boyfriend who told me I have to be exactly this way. I had to work out everyday and that's so detrimental for a woman to have that kind of pressure to be something from somebody they care about. [Beth]

Regardless of the perceived influence by social relationships, the influence of the media was still perceived to be stronger because of its promotion of perfection and availability. When asked why they felt the media had a greater influence than did social relationships informants explained:

Because typically the people you probably are going to see in the media are going to be the most beautiful girls that a certain magazine can find or the epitome of what that magazine thinks. Whereas, the people in real life, because they are of limited means and don't live the, you know, high life or they don't have all that money to make them look

like that, they are going to attempt to look more real. More realistic. So, I think the media is what affects most how girls see themselves. [Patricia]

When you go on the Internet you see a pop up ad and it's a beautiful model doing some kind of pose for some kind of ad and then you see, or if you go to watch TV you have those images and then the commercials or if you pick up a magazine and look at a billboard it's just any type of visual reference that we have that we suddenly have to compare ourselves to. [Karen]

Another informant who believed the media had more influence than peer groups said, "With friends you might not talk about that (body image) as much. You could talk about school and change the subject, but you really can't do anything when it's a TV commercial."

Of all the media formats discussed, informants felt the strongest influence came from television. Informants perceived that the influence of television came from the combination of audio and visual, body image focused programming, influence of celebrities, and high levels of viewership. One informant, who reported having been influenced by the media, explained, "More people watch TV than read a magazine. Even people flipping through channels are going to see these shows. They don't necessarily have to spend four dollars on a magazine." One of the few informants who reported being somewhat dissatisfied with her body remarked that, "You have all these makeover shows and like Doctor 90210. You see all of these plastic surgeries...It's just reinforcing how much it's a part of your culture that women be this certain way."

Following close behind television, magazines were also reported as having one of the strongest impacts on female body image. Informants believed magazines had a strong influence due to editing and magazine retention. "I think a magazine sticks with you a lot longer. I know I carry a magazine with me around everywhere, so for me it's...that's the kind of stuff you can

pull out and pin on your wall,” explained one informant with a strong interest in fashion.

Another informant said:

On like TV and movies...you know they are famous so you don't think of yourself on the same level as them. So, yeah, as much as you'll like compare yourself to them, it's just...they're famous. They're not you. Then if you look at a magazine, you don't know the name of this girl, or this model, but you know that she's like prettier than you and maybe that's why it's more influential in magazines. [Tammy]

Within these magazines, the images found in editorial pieces and the images found in advertisements were perceived to be different. When asked to compare the influence of these images, informants believed that images in advertisements had a greater influence on others than did images paired with editorial. Informants also believed that this influence was negative in nature. The images in advertising were depicted as focusing on sex appeal, using inappropriate images of women and being “exaggerated;” whereas, the images in the editorial content were positively classified as “inspirational,” “realistic” and beneficial to the reader. For example, informants made the following comments regarding images in magazine editorial content and advertisements: “Probably subconsciously people in advertisements are more influential about like your image, but if it is a good article, it can influence you on the inside to do good things,” and

I think not many people really read articles in beauty magazines, so they don't get influenced that much. Like, I'm sure if they did, because I read the articles, sometimes they are more inspirational...if they read it, (they'd) have a good influence, but mostly people look at the pictures and the advertising itself. They are influenced by that more [Melanie]

A lot of people who look through magazines just look at the pictures and the clothes and the products and they don't actually read the serious articles. So, I think the advertisements (have a greater influence)...it's just mindless. You just glance at it. I think those have a greater effect on people. [Kayley]

Given the positive and negative emphasis of each type of image, it was no surprise that informants also stated that they themselves would prefer that images in editorials be more influential. One informant who reported spending more time with the articles than with ads expressed this by saying, “I would say the ad is probably more influential, but I think the editorial should be more influential because it’s more normal.”

The negative influence of advertising was sometimes seen with others, but not with self; another indicator of the third-person effect. One possible explanation for this reported difference in influence could be because informants perceived that others focus on the wrong things when consuming BFG magazines. Informants reported their own consumption habits as spending more time with articles than with advertising, while reporting in interviews that others read fewer articles and viewed more advertising images. This indicates that informants align their behaviors with the positively viewed articles and associate the behaviors of others with the negatively viewed ads. The fact that informants reported avoiding advertising due to the negative perception of influence may be an indicator of the third-person effect behavioral component.

Future Behavior Regarding BFG Magazines

In this investigation, informants’ comments show indication of primarily the perceptual component of the third-person effect. When it came time to discuss future behavior pertaining to magazine consumption, as required for the third and final research question, informants did not believe that changes should be made. The interview sessions were concluded by asking participants if they would continue to read BFG magazines and if they felt others should continue to read. Most informants reported that other women should continue reading BFG

magazines as often as they currently do and nearly all reported that they would continue to read the same amount as before. Informants did, however, warn that others should be careful when encountering images of women in magazines and not to let the images they viewed impact their behavior. One informant who reported that she “didn’t read the whole thing” said, “You don’t want it to be like your book that you read all the time; that you rely on.”

Another said:

It’s probably not the best thing to be filling your mind with, but I think you can’t take it too seriously. You can’t let it influence you too much because that’s when you get into trouble and that’s when girls start trying more dangerous ways to solve their problems.
[Kristen]

Although this line of questioning did not indicate support for the behavioral component of the third-person effect, other informant reported behaviors did suggest this component may also be relevant in this investigation. For instance, informants reported that their consumption habits favoring editorial to advertiser was in response to their negative perceptions of advertising’s influence. Also, informants reported making short-term behavior changes in response to their perception of societies body image ideal. This finding is similar to a modified version of the third-person effect suggested by Park (2005). As in the Park investigation, informants perceived the prevalence of a thin ideal in the media. They also perceived that others were negatively influenced by this ideal for thinness and acknowledged that this ideal may have a similar influence on their personal body image. Therefore, although informants reported that they were not influenced as strongly by this thin ideal as were others, they did express a desire to look more like the thin models.

In summary, this investigation uncovered support for both components of the third-person effect with less support for the effect’s behavioral component. Informants suggest that

they have a realistic understanding that the U. S. media's depiction of female beauty is edited and is not always obtainable. Informants also believe that others, in particularly younger women, are naïve to this reality and thus are more susceptible to the influence of the media. For this reason, informants wish for changes to be made by the media, but do not intend to stop consuming these images themselves.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This investigation's purpose was to gain further insight into the dynamics of the perceptual and behavioral components of the third-person effect as it pertains to female body image. By using individual interviews to understand women's perceptions of the U.S. media's representation of female beauty, the investigation uncovered varying levels of perceived influence which corresponded with the third-person effect. As previous studies have indicated the third-person effect exists in specific, not all, circumstances. When the influence was viewed by informants as carrying a great negative social consequence, the third-person effect was more evident than in instances where the influence carried little or no perceived social consequence. This result adds support to the David and Johnson (1998) study which found that as the outcome moved from perceptions and psychological factors, such as self esteem, to behavioral factors, such as eating disorders, the third-person gap between influence on self and others widened.

This result is noteworthy for third person effect literature because it stresses the importance of the media message itself. In other words, when accepting a media message was seen as potentially bringing societal criticism, the third-person effect existed and informants reported that others were at a greater risk than themselves. When adopting a behavior or media message was viewed as socially acceptable or appropriate, then the third-person effect was negated or reversed as in the instance of a male other.

Theoretical Parallels

Possible causes for the third-person effect seen in this investigation can be found in a variety of psychological and communication theories such as ego involvement, the elaboration likelihood model, social categorization and social desirability (Paul, 2000). However, the most relevant theoretical framework comes from the theories of social comparison, attribution and biased optimism.

As referenced above, the social comparison theory suggests that people compare themselves to people or images that represent goals they desire to obtain (Festinger, 1954). This is seen in this investigation as women exalted the media's representation of female beauty and on numerous occasions openly acknowledged making comparisons with these images themselves. As mentioned before, this behavior of making comparisons with BFG magazine images was the only instance in which the third-person effect was not seen. One possible explanation for this pertains to another theory common in third-person literature, the attribution theory.

The attribution theory refers to the way individuals explain their own behavior and the behavior of others by attributing action to internal and external factors (Heider, 1944). This theory suggests that individuals assume that others are similar and thus behave similarly based on these various factors. This portion of the attribution theory may explain why informants believe that others behave similarly in low risk circumstances such as making comparisons to images of women in BFG magazines. The attribution theory also recognizes the desire for individuals to maintain a high self esteem (Heider, 1944). To do this, Heider states that in some instances, when the ego is in danger, individuals may attribute their own behaviors to external factors and attribute the behaviors of others to personal dispositions (Paul, 2000). Therefore,

although individuals may report being similar to others, in circumstances of perceived negative social consequence individuals may explain their own behavior based on external circumstances and explain the behavior of others as a personality weakness. For example, I might not be influenced negatively by BFG images because my experiences have taught me that the images are unrealistic, whereas you are influenced because you have low self esteem.

Finally, a third theory, biased optimism or unrealistic optimism, is seen in this investigation in informants' desire to protect their personal self esteem by down playing or denying their own media influence. According to Weinstein (1989), individuals desire to be better than others and therefore attempt to self preserve by reporting less of an influence on themselves than others. By acknowledging the role of biased optimism, a weakness in this investigation must also be recognized. Since the informants selected for this investigation were college students, they may be better educated and thus be more prone to biased optimism (Gunther, 1995). For this reason, a third-person effect may be more likely to be seen than it would have been had less educated informants been interviewed.

Practical Implications

In 2006, overly thin models were banned from a top-level fashion show in Madrid, Spain because of the perceived negative influence they could have on young girls. The regional government believed that images of underweight models would influence teenagers to partake in unhealthy habits to obtain the thin figure they epitomized. Thirty percent of the models who took part in the previous fashion show were turned away (CNN, 2006). This unprecedented event in which a form of censorship was administered based on an assumed influence is just a

single example of the importance in recognizing the biases of perceptions and distinguishing between perceptions of influence and actual influence. This investigation can be used practically by educating the public on perceptions and encouraging proponents of censorship to conduct research on actual influence prior to taking action. Through education, public policy officials and the general public may realize that only a perceived influence actually exists.

Also, by educating the public on the possible inaccuracies of their perceptions, the opinion that only 'others' are at great risk to the influence of media may be reduced. If women are made more alert to their biases towards self preservation, it is possible that they could begin to make more informed decisions regarding their own media consumption habits. By understanding the dynamics of perceptions, consumers may begin to admit a similar influence on themselves and others. This acknowledgement would perhaps compel females to read or purchase less media formats that promote only the thin ideal. Also, by acknowledging the possibility of media influence on themselves, females may make behavior changes that would improve both their physical and mental well being, such as no longer attempting to achieve unrealistic appearance goals.

Finally, this investigation is a testament that advertisers and publishers are not restricted to thin figures to make their marketing efforts effective. In fact, magazines and advertisers who did deviate from the norm were not only acknowledged, but also applauded by informants. Similar to the Peck and Loken (2004) investigation on the perceptions of larger women in magazines, informants viewed images of larger women favorably and expressed the desire for the images to appear more frequently. Results such as these should be used to encourage marketers to incorporate a more diverse model base in their publications. By doing so,

magazines have not only the opportunity to positively impact women's self esteem, being that women reported higher levels of self esteem when shown images of larger women in magazines (Peck & Loken, 2004), but also have the opportunity to gain market share and positive public relations. Being viewed positively by the public is particularly important now, during a time when the media's depiction of women is being heavily scrutinized. As currently demonstrated with women on the runway, if change is not made voluntarily, the public may demand legislation and censorship.

Future Research

The results unveiled in this investigation provide both theoretical and practical application. Information gathered from the individual interview sessions adds support and rich detail to several theories including the third-person effect, attribution, biased optimism and social comparison. By allowing informants to give responses in their own words, a more complete picture of the third-person effect dynamics were uncovered.

For academia, this investigation has also opened avenues for future inquiry into the media's role in female body image. One of the first possibilities for additional inquiry would be to further examine the reverse third-person effect when comparing the media's influence on men and women. As did Wan et al. (2003), this investigation found that informants perceived themselves to be influenced less than female others and yet still believed they were more influence than male others. Research should be conducted to determine if this result comes from media consumption differences, likelihood of exposure, societal expectations, or from other

factors. Also, men should be questioned to determine if circumstances exist where they perceive themselves to be less influenced than male others and more influenced than female others.

Another excellent avenue for inquiry pertains to the behavioral component of the third-person effect. Although informants in this investigation stated that they would like to see media changes, they expressed no desire for censorship and expressed no intention to change their current behavior. To better understand this result, additional research should be conducted isolating the behavioral component. Research should be conducted across age, gender and media type to determine if these factors would mediate the presence of the behavioral component. Specifically, it may be interesting to see if parents would adopt pro-censorship attitudes in response to their perception of the media's influence on their children. By conducting qualitative research in this area, the perspectives of both male and female parents could be examined and compared. Qualitative research could allow for parents to give in-depth responses about the types of media they perceived as influential and how they believed media images influenced their own children and the children of others. Members of pro-censorship groups could be interviewed to determine what causes their attitudes and behavior. This avenue of research could also uncover differences in how parents perceive media images influence young men verses young women.

Another area for qualitative research would be to learn more about how different demographic populations interpret images of women in various forms of media. As female body image concerns are worldwide and this study was isolated to the U.S. media, research should be conducted across cultures. For instance, it would be interesting to learn more about the perceptions of women in Europe or Asia. Specifically, it would be interesting to examine the

third-person effect in a more collectivistic culture where a differentiation between self and others may be less distinct.

Women with varying body weight and body image should also be sought out and interviewed to see if similarities or differences exist in their perceptions of how the media portrays women. It would be interesting to see if women with low self esteem perceived these images as having a greater negative impact than do women with high levels of self esteem. Also, women currently suffering from eating disorders or BDD should be interviewed to learn how they perceive images of women in the media and if they believe these images have impacted their behaviors.

A final avenue for inquiry revolves around the negative perception informants hold for advertising. Although this investigation did not delve deeply into the rationale behind the perceptions of magazine advertising, it was evident that very strong negative feelings towards advertisements did exist. Research should be conducted solely on advertising images to determine the perceptions of advertising influence and to better understand how these negative associations develop.

Limitations

As with any research, this investigation had several limitations. As the investigation was conducted on a small purposive sample, the results are not generalizable to the population as a whole. This investigation can only offer new perspectives and generate additional avenues for future research. Another limitation of qualitative research is the interaction with the researcher.

The desire for interviewees to appear positively to the interviewer may have caused some self censoring of their responses. For this reason, it must be acknowledged that a difference may exist between the actual influence and the reported influence of the media. Finally, although the body mass index of informants in this investigation was not recorded, it was apparent in viewing each informant that obese or overly thin women were not represented. Since nearly all informants appear to be within their ideal body weight, they may hold different attitudes towards images of women in the media than would women with a more diverse range of body types.

Regardless of these limitations, this research has generated new knowledge on the perceptions of BFG magazine readers. These findings open doors of opportunity for the academic community by offering support for the perceptual component of the third-person effect and generating avenues for additional inquiry into body image development. This investigation also provides the general public with insight into the importance in understanding the potential biases in personal perceptions. Finally, this investigation acts as a reminder that the media is perceived as having a powerful influence and as perceptions are reality to the perceiver, should act responsibly.

**APPENDIX A:
SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Screening Questionnaire

I am conducting individual interviews for a study on the influence the media has on female body image. These interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and will be held on campus at the interviewee's convenience. If you are interested in participating, please complete the following questionnaire. Your responses will be kept confidential.

What is your date of birth? ____/____/____

What type(s) of magazines do you read? You may check more than one.

- Beauty, Fashion & Grooming (e.g. Cosmopolitan & ELLE)
- Cooking & Food (e.g. Bon Appetit, Southern Living)
- Entertainment & TV (e.g. People, Star, US Weekly)
- Health & Fitness (e.g. Flex, Fitness, Self)
- Other _____
- I don't read magazines.

On average, how many beauty, fashion and grooming type of magazines do you purchase per month? _____

During a typical week, approximately how much time do you spend flipping through or reading magazines? _____hours

During a typical week, approximately how much time do you spend flipping through or reading beauty, fashion and grooming type of magazines? _____hours

Please list the beauty, fashion & grooming type of magazines you read.

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Contact Information

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Phone Number: (_____)_____ Email Address: _____

Those who qualify will be contacted within 10 days to schedule an interview. As a token of appreciation, participants who complete the entire interview will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble bookstore.

**APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW GUIDE**

Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is Melissa Shrader and I am a Communications graduate student at the University of Central Florida currently working on my Master's thesis. For this project, I have chosen to investigate the factors that influence how women view their bodies.

Today, I'd like to talk with you about your experiences with images of women in beauty, fashion and grooming (BFG) type of magazines such as Cosmopolitan and ELLE Magazine. Your experiences will help me better understand how women experience, perceive and interpret these images and their associated behaviors.

Before we begin the interview process, I have a folder for you that contains a formal consent form and a demographic questionnaire. Please read and sign both copies of the consent form and then begin the questionnaire. After you have completed both items, return one copy of the signed consent form and the questionnaire to the folder and close it. This will show me you are ready to begin. The second copy of the consent form is for your records.

(DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE)

Ready to begin? Good. I will now be asking you questions regarding your own experiences with beauty, fashion and grooming magazines. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to be candid and share your opinion openly with as much detail as possible.

Share as many experiences as you like. The more information you are able to provide, the more I will be able to learn.

I may also ask about your perception of the experiences of other people. By others, I mean other women, similar to yourself, who read beauty, fashion & grooming magazines as often as you do. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in your opinion.

With your permission, I will be audiotaping this session, but the recording will be kept confidential. It will only be used by me for later analysis. Your name and any identifying remarks will be removed during the transcription process.

This interview should last approximately one hour. Do you have any questions? Let's begin.

BFG MAGAZINE EXPERIENCES

Think about your most recent or most memorable experience with a BFG magazine. Please describe the experience for me with as much detail as you can.

- When was it?
- What magazine was it?
- What interested you in it?
- Walk me through how you looked at the magazine, for instance what you read or look at first, what you spent a lot of time with and what you skipped over.
- What do you remember most?

- Was this a typical experience?
 - Why or why not?

What kind of pictures of women did you see in the magazine?

- Please describe their appearance.

What was your reaction to the images of women you saw?

- What did you think?
- How did you feel?
- In what ways did it affect your behavior? Why or why not?

What images, if any, did you think were missing?

- Why do you think these images were left out?

BFG PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ON OTHERS

So far, the descriptive details you are providing are excellent. Now, let's talk a little bit about the possible influence of images of women, like you described, in BFG magazines. We'll first talk about the influence on others. Again, by others I am referring to other women who read BFG magazines as often as you do.

Do you think these images influence others in any way?

- In what ways specifically? Please describe.

Do you think these images influence how other women feel about their body?

- How?
- What happens? How does it work?
- Do you think others compare themselves to these images?

- How? Why?

Do you think these images influence the behavior of other women in any way?

- In what ways specifically? Please explain.

BFG PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ON SELF

Okay! Now let's switch gears for a moment and talk about your own feelings and behaviors.

Do you think these images influence you in any way?

- In what ways? Can you give me an example?

Do you think these images influence how you feel about your body?

- How? What happens? How does it work?
 - Why?
- Do you compare yourself to these images?
 - How? Why?

Do you think these images influence your own behavior in any way?

- In what ways specifically? Please explain.

COMPARISONS

Great! Now I'd like to hear some of your thoughts on comparisons.

How do you think the influences of these images on others compares to the influences on you?

- Do these images influence others more than you, less than you or the same as they influence you?
 - Why?

How do you think the influence of these images on men compares to the influences on women?

- Why?

How do you think the influence of images of women in BFG magazines compares to the influence of images of women in other media forms?

- For instance, how do images of women in BFG magazines compare to images of women on television, in movies, in newspaper or in other magazines?
- Which is more influential?
 - Why?

How do you think the influence of images of women portrayed in editorial content compares to the influence of women in advertising?

- Which is more influential?

What other factors, if any, do you think influence how women feel about their body?

- Do social relationships with family, friends or peers have an influence?
- Do genetics or personality traits have an influence?
- How do these compare to the influence of BFG images?
- What is the biggest influence? Why?

OPINIONS

Overall, what are your feelings about the way women are portrayed in magazines?

- Are the images more harmful or more helpful?
 - Why?
- Why do you think women are portrayed this way?

- How do you feel women should be portrayed?
- What changes, if any, do you suggest?
 - For women?
 - For society?
 - For advertisers?
 - For publishers?

Overall, what are your feelings about the way women are portrayed in BFG magazine advertising?

- Why? Please explain.

Do you think women should read BFG magazines more often, less often or as often as they do now?

- Why?

Will you continue to read BFG magazines more often, less often or as often as you do now?

- Why?

CLOSING

Wonderful. Thank you for your participation!

Are there things about the images of women in BFG magazines that we haven't talked about that you think I should hear?

- Do you have any questions about this interviewing process?
- Do you have any other questions?
- Can you recommend anyone else for this study?

Okay then. I want you to know that I really appreciate you volunteering for this investigation.

The information you provided was very helpful

To show how much I appreciated your time, here is a \$10.00 gift certificate to Barnes & Noble bookstore. If you'd like a copy of this investigation, please leave your name and address on this blank sheet and a summary of the final manuscript will be mailed to you.

**APPENDIX C:
DEMOGRPAHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

Demographic Questionnaire

Please select or list the most appropriate response to the following:

What is your age? _____years

What race do you consider yourself to be?

- African American/Black
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Latin/Hispanic
- Other_____

During a typical week, approximately how much time do you spend flipping through or reading beauty, fashion and grooming (BFG) type of magazines? _____hours

On average, how many beauty, fashion and grooming type of magazines do you purchase per month? _____

When flipping through or reading BFG of magazines, how is your time spent?

- I spend more time on articles than on pictures.
- I spend more time looking at pictures than on articles.
- I spend equal amounts of time on articles and pictures.
- I don't know.

When flipping through or reading BFG of magazines, how much of your time is spent with advertising?

- I spend more time on articles than on advertisements.
- I spend more time on advertisements than on articles.
- I spend equal amounts of time on articles and advertisements.
- I don't know.

Overall, how would you rate your current satisfaction with your body?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Overall, how important is appearance to you?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Very unimportant
- Don't know

Thank you for your participation!

**APPENDIX D:
INFORMANT PROFILE**

Informant Profile

Reported Consumption Habits

Pseudonym	Age	Race	P-HI	D-HI	P-MP	D-MP	Time Articles & Pics	Time Ads & Articles	Body Satisfaction	Appearance Importance
Abigail	18	Black	2	2.5	3	3.5	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Becky	18	White	2	2	1	2	Pics More	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Beth	21	White	2	2.5	2	3	Equal	Articles More	Dissatisfied Somewhat	Somewhat Important
Danielle	18	White	2	3	4	4	Pics More	Equal	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Important
Heather	20	White	5	5	2	3	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Karen	18	Asian	3	12	4	3	Pics More	Equal	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Unimport.
Kayley	18	White	2	2	4	3	Articles More	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Kelly	18	White	2	2	2	2	Pics More	Ads More	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Unimport
Kendall	18	White	4	4	4	4	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Kristen	18	White	3	5	10	10	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Lauren	18	Black	3	3	3	3	Equal	Articles More	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Lisa	18	White	3	4	4	3.5	Pics More	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Melanie	18	Latin	2	3	2	2	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Miranda	19	White	3	3	2	2	Articles More	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Important
Patricia	18	Latin	4	4	3	2	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Important
Sheridan	18	White	3	10	3	2	Equal	Articles More	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important
Tammy	18	Other	3	4	5	4	Pics More	Equal	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Important

KEY	
P-HI	Prescreen Questionnaire, Hours Spent with Images
D-HI	Demographic Survey, Hours Spent with Images
P-MP	Prescreen Questionnaire, Magazines Purchased
D-MP	Demographic Survey, Magazines Purchased

REFERENCES

- Baker, D., Sivyer, R. & Towell, T. (1997). Body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes in visually impaired women. *The International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 24, 319-322.
- Ball, K. & Kenardy, J. (2002) Body weight, body image, and eating behaviours: Relationships with ethnicity and acculturation in a community sample of young Australian women. *Eating Behaviors*, 3, 205-217.
- Baxter, L.A. & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Birmingham, C. L., Su, J. & Hlynsky, J. A. (2005). The mortality rate from anorexia nervosa. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 38, 143-146.
- Bissell, K.L. (2004). What do these messages really mean? Sports media exposure, sports participation, and body image distortion in women between the ages of 18 and 75. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(1), 108-123
- Borzekowski, D. L. G., Flora, J. A., Feighery, E. & Schooler, C. (1999). The perceived influence of cigarette advertisements and smoking susceptibility among seventh graders. *Journal of Health Communication*, 4, 105-118.
- Byoungkwan, L. & Tamborini, R. (2005). Third person effect and internet pornography: The influence of collectivism and internet self-efficacy. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 292-310.
- Cash, T. F., Morrow, J. A., Perry, A. A. & Hrabosky, J. I. (2004). How has body image changed? A cross-sectional investigation of college women and men from 1983 to 2001. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 72, 1081-1089.

- Chow, J. (2004). Adolescents' perceptions of popular teen magazines. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 48*, 132-139.
- CNN. (2006). Skinny models banned from the catwalk. Retrieved September 13, 2006, from <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/09/13/spain.models/index.html>
- Cohen, J. & Davis, R.G. (1991). Third-person effects and the differential impact in negative political advertising. *Journalism Quarterly, 68*, 680-688.
- Contento, I. R., Basch, C. & Zybert, P. (2003). Body image, weight, and food choices of Latina women and their young children. *Journal of Nutrition Education & Behavior, 35*, 236-248.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- David, P. & Johnson, M.A. (1998). The role of self in third-person effects about body image. *Journal of Communication, 48*, 37-58.
- David, P., Morrison, G., Johnson, M. & Ross, F. (2002). Body image, race and fashion models: Social distance and social identification in third-person effects. *Communication Research, 23*, 270-294.
- Davison, W.P. (1983). The third person effect in communication. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 47*, 1-15.
- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.
- DeLorme, D., Huh, J. & Reid, L. (in press). "Others are influenced but not me": Older adults' perceptions of DTC prescription drug advertising effects. *Journal of Aging Studies*.

- Duncan, M.C. & Robinson, T.T. (2004). Obesity and body ideals in the media: Health and fitness practices of young African-American women. *QUEST, 56*, 77-104.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R. & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Engeln-Maddox, R. (2005). Cognitive responses to idealized media images of women: The relationship of social comparison and critical processing to body image disturbance in college women. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 24*, 1114-1138.
- Eveland, W.P. Jr. & McLeod, D. M. (1999). The effect of social desirability on perceived media impact: Implications for third-person perceptions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 11*, 315-333.
- Eveland, W.P. Jr., Nathanson, A.I., Detenber, B.H. & McLeod, D.M. (1999). Rethinking the social distance corollary: Perceived likelihood of exposure and the third-person perception. *Communication Research, 26*, 275-302.
- Fay, M. & Price, C. (1994). Female body-shape in print advertisements and the increase in anorexia nervosa. *European Journal of Marketing, 28*, 5-18.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations, 7*, 117-140.
- Ford, J.B. & LaTour, M.S. (1993). Differing reactions to female role portrayals in advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research, 33*, 43-52.
- Garner, D. M., Garfinkel, P.E., Schwartz, D. & Thompson, M. (1980). Cultural Expectations of Thinness in Women. *Psychological Reports, 47*, 483-491.

- Golan, G., Banning, S. & Lundy, L. (2005). *Likelihood to vote, candidate choice and the third-person effect: Behavioral implications of political advertising*. Conference paper at the International Communication Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY.
- Gunther, A. (1995). Overrating the x-rating: The third person perception and support for censorship of pornography. *Journal of Communication, 45*, 27-38.
- Gunther, A. C. & Hwa, A. P. (1996). Public perceptions of television influence and opinions about censorship in Singapore. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 8*, 248-265.
- Hargreaves, D. & Tiggemann, M. (2003). The effects on “thin ideal” television commercials on body dissatisfaction and schema activation during early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 32*, 367-373.
- Harrison, K. (2000). Television viewing, fat stereotyping, body shape standards, and eating disorder symptomology in grade school children. *Communications Research, 27*(5), 617-640.
- Harrison, K. & Cantor, J. (1997). The relationship between media consumption and eating disorders. *Journal of Communication, 47*, 40-67.
- Hausenblas, H. A. & Fallon, E. A. (2006) Exercise and body image: A meta-analysis. *Psychology & Health, 21*, 33-47.
- Heider, F. (1944). Social perception and phenomenal causality. *Psychological Review, 51*, 358-374.

- Hendriks, A. (2002). Examining the effects of hegemonic depictions of female bodies on television: A call for theory and programmatic research. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 19*(1), 105-123.
- Henriksen, L. & Flora, J. A. (1999). Third-person perception and children. *Communication Research, 26*, 643-665.
- Hoffner, C. & Buchanan, M. (1999). Support for censorship of television violence. *Communication Research, 26*, 726-742.
- Hoffner, C. & Buchanan, M. (2002). Parents' responses to television violence: The third-person perception, parental mediation and support for censorship. *Media Psychology, 4*, 231-252.
- Hoffner, C., Plotkin, R. S., Buchanan, M., Anderson, J. D., Kamigaki, S. K., Hubbs, L. A., Kowalczyk, L., Silberg, K. & Pastorek, A. (2001). The third-person effect in perceptions of the influence of television violence. *Journal of Communication, 51*, 283-299.
- Holmstrom, A. J. (2004). The effects of media on body image: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 48*, 196-217.
- Howes, H. F. R., Edwards, S., & Benton, D. (2005). Female body image following acquired brain injury. *Brain Injury, 19*, 403-415.
- Huh, J., DeLorme, D.E. & Reid, L. N. (2004). The third-person effect and its influence on behavioral outcomes in a product advertising context: The case of the direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising. *Communication Research, 31*, 568-599.

- Jones, J. (2005, November 5). *Impossibly thin? Super-skinny super models project unattainable goals for girls and women*. Retrieved on February 25, 2006 from http://medialit.med.sc.edu/impossibly_thin.htm
- Jung, J. & Lennon, S.J. (2003). Body image, appearance self-schema and media images. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 32, 27-51.
- Kalof, L. (1999). Stereotyped evaluation judgments and female attractiveness. *Gender Issues*, 17, 68-83.
- Kilbourne, J. (1999, November 12). *Deadly persuasion: Why women and girls must fight the addictive power of advertising*. Retrieved on February 26, 2006 from <http://www.cnn.com/books/beginnings/9911/deadly.persuasion/index.html>
- Koff, E., Rierdan, J. & Syubbs, M.L. (1990). Gender, body image, and self-concept in early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 10, 56-69.
- Lambe, J.L. & McLeod, D.M. (2005). Understanding third-person perception processes: Predicting perceived impact on self and others for multiple expressive contexts. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 277-291.
- Leary, M. R. & Quinlivan, E. (2005). Women's perceptions of their bodies: Discrepancies between self-appraisals and reflected appraisals. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 24, 1139-1163.
- Lo, V. & Paddon, A. (2001). Third-person effect, gender differences, pornography exposure and support for restriction of pornography. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 11, 120-142.

- Lo, V. & R. Paddon, A. (2000). Third-person perception and support for pornography restrictions: Some methodological problems. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 12*, 80-89.
- Lokken, K.L., Worthy, S.L. & Trautmann, J. (2004). Examining the links among magazine preference, levels of awareness and internalization of sociocultural appearance standards, and presence of eating-disordered symptoms in college women. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, 32*, 361-381.
- MacFadyen, L., Amos, A., Hastings, G. & Parkes, E. (2003). 'They look like my kind of people' – perceptions of smoking images in youth magazines. *Social Sciences & Medicine, 56*, 491-499.
- MacKay, N.J. & Covell, K. (1997). The impact of women in advertisements on attitudes toward women. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 36*, 573-584.
- Martinez, S. M., Kemper, C. A., Diamond, C. & Wagner, G. (2005). Body image in patients with HIV/AIDS: Assessment of a new psychometric measure and its medical correlates. *AIDS Patient Care & STDs, 19*, 150-156.
- McCabe, M. P., Ricciardelli, L., Melior, D. & Ball, K. (2005). Media influences on body image and disordered eating among indigenous adolescent Australians. *Adolescence, 40*, 115-127.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- McLeod, D. & Eveland Jr., W. (1997). Support for censorship of violent and misogynic rap lyrics. *Communication Research, 24*, 153-171.

- McLeod, D., Lambe, J., Paek, H. (2005). *Antecedents to support for media restrictions: Individual differences, democratic principles and third-person perceptions*. Conference paper presented at the International Communication Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY.
- Milkie, M.A. (1999). Social comparisons, reflected appraisals, and mass medial The impact of pervasive beauty images on black and white girls' self-concepts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 62, 190-210.
- Monro, F. & Huon, G. (2005). Media-portrayed idealized images, body shame, and appearance anxiety. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 38, 85-90.
- Morse, J.M. & Richards, L. (2002). *Read me first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Myers, P.N. & Biocca, F.A. (1992). The elastic body image: The effect of television advertising and programming on body image distortions in young women. *Journal of Communication*, 42, 108-133.
- National Eating Disorder Association. (2003). *Statistics: Eating disorders and their precursors*. Retrieved December 17, 2005, from http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=286&Profile_ID=41138
- Park, S. (2005). The influence of presumed media influence on women's desire to be thin. *Communication Research*, 32, 594-614.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Paul, B., Salwen, M. B. & Dupagne, M. (2000). The third-person effect: A meta-analysis of the perceptual hypothesis. *Mass Communication & Society, 3*, 57-85.
- Peck, P. & Loken, B. (2004). When will larger-sized female models in advertisements be viewed positively? The moderating effects of instructional frame, gender and need for cognition. *Psychology & Marketing, 21*, 425-442.
- Pelican, S., Heede, F.V., Holmes, B., Melcher, L.M. Wardlaw, M.K., Raidl, M., Wheeler, B. & Moore, S.A. (2005). The power of others to shape our identity: Body image, physical abilities, and body weight. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, 34*, 56-79.
- Pelletier, L. G., Dion, S. & Lévesque, C. (2004). Can self-determination help protect women against sociocultural influences about body image and reduce their risk of experiencing bulimic symptoms? *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 23*, 61-88.
- Pompper, D. & Koenig, J. (2004). Cross-cultural-generational perceptions of ideal body image: Hispanic women and magazine standards. *Journal & Mass Communication Quarterly, 81(1)*, 89-107.
- Powell, M.R. & Hendricks, B. (1999). Body schema, gender and other correlates in nonclinical populations. *Genetic, Social, and Psychology Monographs, 125*, 333-412.
- Prendergast, G., Yan, L. K. & West, D.C. (2002). Role portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: An Asian perspective. *International Journal of Advertising, 21(2)*, 237-258.
- Price, V., Tewksbury, D. & Li-Ning, H. (1998). Third person effects on publication of a Holocaust-denial advertising. *Journal of Communication, 48*, 3-26.

- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Richins, M.L. (1991). Social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18, 71-83.
- Rojas, H., Shah, D.V. & Raber, R.J. (1996). For the good of others: Censorship and the third-person effect. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 8, 163-186.
- Rouner, D., Slater, M.D. & Domenech-Rodriguez, M. (2003). Adolescent evaluation of gender role and sexual imagery in television advertisements. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47, 435-454.
- Rowland, H. (No date). *Obsessed with thin: Has the media gone too far?* Retrieved on February 25, 2006 from <http://www.hilary.com/fashion/bikini.html>.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rucincki, D. & Salmon, C. T. (1990). The 'other' as the vulnerable voter: A study of the third-person effect in the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2, 345-368.
- Salwen, M. B. & Dupagne, M. (2001). Third-person perception of television violence: The role of self-perceived knowledge. *Media Psychology*, 3, 211-236.
- Salwen, M. B. (1998). Perceptions of media influence and support for censorship. *Communication Research*, 25, 259-285.

- Scharrer, E. & Leone, R. (2005). *I know you are but what am I? Young people's perceptions about video game influence*. Conference paper presented at the International Communication Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY.
- Seonmi Youn, K.P., Faber, R. J. & Shah, D. V. (2000). Restricting gambling advertising and the third-person effect. *Psychology & Marketing, 17*, 633-649.
- Soh, N. L., Touyz, S. W., Surgenor, L. J. (2006). Eating and body image disturbances across cultures: A review. *European Eating Disorders Review, 14*, 54-65.
- Spurgas, A. K. (2005). Body image and cultural background. *Sociological Inquiry, 75*, 297-316.
- Standard Rate & Data Service. (2006). *SRDS Media Solutions*. Retrieved on March 19, 2006 from <http://www.srds.com/portal/servlet/LoginServlet?action=loginFrame&linkHit=ips>
- Standard Rate & Data Service. (2005). *SRDS Consumer Magazine Advertising Source*. Des Plaines, IL: SRDS.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sypeck, M. F., Gray, J. J. & Ahrens, A. H. (2004). No longer just a pretty face: Fashion magazines' depictions of ideal female beauty from 1959 to 1999. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 36*, 342-347.
- Tewksbury, D., Moy, P. & Weis, D. S. (2004). Preparations for Y2K revisiting the behavioral component of the third-person effect. *Journal of Communication, 54*, 138-155.
- The hot list ADWEEK 25th anniversary. (2005, March 14). *Media Week*, p.SR19.
- The National Magazine Company. (2005). *Cosmopolitan: Advertiser's info*. Retrieved January 24, 2006 from <http://www.natmags.co.uk/magazines/magazine.asp?id=2>.

- Tsfati, Y. & Cohen, J. (2003). On the effect of the “third person effect”: Perceived influence of media coverage and residential mobility intentions. *Journal of Communication, 53*, 711-727.
- Tsfati, Y., Ribak, R. & Cohen, J. (2005). Rebelde way in Israel: Parental perceptions of television influence and monitoring of children’s social and media activities. *Mass Communication & Society, 8*, 3-22.
- Wan, F., Faber, R.J. & Fung, A. (2003). Perceived impact of thin female models in advertising: A cross-cultural examination of third person perception and its impact on behaviors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 15*, 51-73.
- Wedell, D. H.; Santoyo, E. M. & Pettibone, J. C. (2005). The thick and the thin of it: Effect in body perception. *Basic & Applied Social Psychology, 27*, 213-228.
- Weinstein, N.D. (1989). Optimistic biases about personal risks. *Science, 246*, 1232-1234.
- Willi, J., Giacometti, G. & Limacher, B. (1990). Update on the epidemiology of anorexia nervosa in a defined region of Switzerland. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 147*, 1514-1517.
- Wiseman, C. V., Gray, J. J., Mosimann, J. E. & Ahrens, A. H. (1992). Cultural Expectations of Thinness in Women: An Update. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 11*, 85-89.
- Ziebland, S. & Robertson, J. (2002). Body image and weight change in middle age: a qualitative study. *International Journal of Obesity, 26*, 1083-1092.