

I'M EVERY WOMAN:  
COLLEGE WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF "REAL WOMEN"  
IN PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the American capitalist society, the media is often an agent used to perpetuate ideals and to inform consumers of products that they can purchase by using multiple advertising techniques. In an attempt to counter the thin body ideal for women, some companies have begun advertising their products by using plus size models, such as the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*.

The purpose of this research is to examine college women's perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, an advertising campaign whose goal is to reverse the stereotypical body ideal for women and broaden the definition of beauty. Some sociologists have criticized Dove for sending conflicting messages. This study is the first that focuses on women's perceptions about this potential conflict.

Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study examined if, how, and when women changed their initial perceptions toward the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* based on two separate scenarios brought to their attention. This is important because the findings suggest how consumers can change their perceptions regarding a company, in this case one that is a part of a multi-million dollar parent company, based on how a company advertises its products.

## DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this to my Nana for always believing in me and motivating me to achieve whatever dreams and goals I set for myself. It is with her caring heart that I am able to finish what I begin. I love you up to the sky, and the sky never ends.

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## **Introduction**

The media often becomes the conduit of the ideals that members of society hold as true. Many people in society will strive to become what they see in the media, no matter what harmful steps it takes to get there (Harrison 2000; Wilcox and Laird 2000). Since the ideal that the media sets forth for women's beauty in the present day is being thin (Groesz et al. 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004), some females resort to habits that are destructive towards their bodies to become the standard. In an attempt to counter this phenomenon, some companies have begun advertising their products by using plus size models, such as the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*.

Advertisements serve as a way to inform consumers about a product that a company is selling to entice them to pick and to purchase what they have created. Some researchers suggest that the traditional capitalist economic theory, which serves as the foundation of the United States' economy, has shaped our economy into a highly competitive and innovative market. Companies must think of new ways to advertise their products, and set themselves apart from their competitors (Becker et al. 2009). The term "hypercompetition" has been coined by Richard D'Aveni as, "an environment characterized by intense and rapid competitive moves, in which competitors must move quickly to build advantage and erode the advantages of their rivals . . . the process of continuously generating new competitive advantage" ("Hypercompetition: Managing the Dynamics of Strategic Maneuvering" 1994, cited in Becker et al. 2009).

Additionally, being that the United States government is that of a democratic and free society, companies are able to promote their products under the protection of the First Amendment lending them the right to free speech, with just a few exceptions. These restrictions

include commercials or advertisements that could be determined as being “misleading” or “false” according to the Supreme Court. Therefore, states may require businesses to have additional information about their products in advertisements, such as “warnings and disclaimers” (Kuhne 2004).

This study uses quantitative and qualitative data to examine college women’s reactions to media images, particularly print advertisements that include women of different body shapes. In particular, the study will explore college women’s perceptions of *Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty* to see if it creates a positive impression on the participants that view the advertisements. While there have been studies examining different aspects of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* and women’s perceptions regarding those aspects, this study will explore the gap in prior research by examining women’s perceptions of the campaign after its contradictory message is brought to their attention.

## Background

What seemed like an insignificant photo shoot became a pivotal moment in magazine and advertisement history. In 1966 the important face and figure of a model called “Twiggy” for her skeletal body shape, graced the covers of many American magazines, including *Vogue*, *Glamour*, and *Newsweek* (Lawson 2008). When Twiggy emerged as the first supermodel, the body ideal for women who were within the target audiences for those publications, specifically in the United States, changed. This new body image enforced the idea that women must morph themselves into the spindly image that was showcased in popular magazines. Just as Superman conjures the idea of beyond human strength and ability, and super powers that only exist in comic books, Twiggy sets forth an out of reach body ideal for most women to attain.

Since then, other models and advertisements have sought to mimic the image that Twiggy started. According to the findings of Sypeck et al. (2004), the depiction of the female body in magazines has changed over the years. In the late 1950s, the beauty that a woman had was based on her facial beauty. However, in the late 1960s the trend shows a woman’s full body in advertisements emerged, creating the ideal of being excessively thin. An article in a 1957 issue of *Vogue*, titled, “How to Look Like a Beauty” actually reprimanded women by suggesting they do not care about their looks (Hesse- Biber 2007). The article states:

Some women find beauty unnecessary, and will take the trouble to hide inherited good looks behind frowzy hair, fat, badly- chosen spectacles, and dreary clothes, feeling elemental and honest when they spurn artifice... But the woman who finds it necessary to be beautiful comes to look like a beauty because there is a need in her. She will make up for a lack of inherited good looks with work, knowledge, time, fashion and any artificial aid that’s appropriate... Beauty is, very often, like any other ambition or drive—capable of realization of a degree in proportion to the need of satisfaction... If her hair is a natural disaster, she goes to the very best hairdresser and gets the very best advice as well as the very best work that she can (“How to Look Like a Beauty” 1957, cited in Hesse-Biber 2007: 64).

In analyses of over-time trends of female bodies portrayed in popular magazines, researchers have found that women have become significantly thinner, and the advertisements themselves have focused more on the model's full body rather than parts of her body (Sypeck et al. 2004; Owen and Laurel-Steller 2000). In fact, women featured in advertisements are significantly thinner than the average woman in the United States. According to Rader Programs, a treatment facility for those who suffer from eating disorders, "The average woman in America is 5'4" and weighs 140 while the average model in the U.S. is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds" ("Media Influence" 2006).

This emphasis on the body as a defining feature of a woman's beauty is not culturally universal. Using content analysis techniques, Frith et al. (2005) sought to examine how the beauty ideal is constructed in different cultures and societies. For coding purposes, the advertisements featured in popular magazines had to include the model's face and part of her clothing. After analyzing the print advertisements, the results showed that beauty in the United States is constructed more in terms of "the body" and not just "a pretty face" as is the case in other countries they examined, such as Singapore and Taiwan. This was concluded because while the advertisements taken from magazines in the United States showed the model's full body, the magazines in the other countries mentioned focused on the model's body from the shoulders and above.

In contrast to mainstream advertisement foci, various companies have started campaigns that deliberately challenge the societal norms of beauty by using "average size models" to promote their products. One company that uses women that are relatable to "the everyday

woman” is Dove and their *Campaign for Real Beauty*. The campaign was launched in September of 2004 to meet their goal to debunk the typical beauty myths and stereotypes in U.S. society that depicts beauty as being thin (“Campaign” 2008). A study conducted by those at Dove in 2004 showed that only 2% of women worldwide described themselves as beautiful and 81% agreed that ads and the media portray an unrealistic view of beauty that is unachievable (Patton and Vasquez 2008). One of the campaign slogans is “Real women have real curves,” which tells women that they do not need to be slender to be beautiful. Over the years, Dove has tried to renew its mission through several phases of the campaign, with their most recent being in 2011.

The newest vision of the campaign is the Dove Movement for Self-Esteem. This allows women everywhere to get involved by becoming a mentor for young girls of the next generation to “celebrate real beauty” (“Social” 2011). Launched in 2010, Dove has partnered with the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A, Girls Inc., and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Since its inception, Dove has said it has reached over 7 million girls, and has set a global goal of reaching 15 million girls by 2015 (“Social” 2011).

### **The Media’s Impact on Women’s Body Image**

Research has been conducted on examining the media’s impact on women’s body image. Bissel and Rask (2010) believe that prior research on body image demonstrates that media is one force that has caused an increase in the occurrence of eating disorders among adolescents. The reason for this “blame game” is because it is the media that typically sends women the message pertaining to the “thin ideal” (Bissel and Rask 2010). Hesse-Biber states, “A mirror, reflecting the virtual image if an object placed before it, is an analogy for how society fosters women’s obsession with weight and body image” (2007:62). When most women look at media images

they tend to compare themselves to the models shown (Engeln-Maddox 2005; Groesz et al. 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Hawkins et al. 2004; Marcum 2010; Peck and Loken 2004; Tiggemann and McGill 2004; Wilcox and Laird 2000). 82% of the 202 college women from ages 17-32 who participated in Engeln-Maddox's (2005) study had reported that they compared themselves to the models shown, wondering why they were not as thin. The reason behind this comparison is what is highlighted in the media is known to be "the ideal." Women are shown images of what they *should* be, rather than what they are. The ideal in society at this point of time is "thin is beautiful." Being presented with this ideal, some researchers suggest that many women try to be something that is unattainable and unrealistic (Hesse-Biber 2007; Thompson and Heinberg 1999).

Thompson and Heinberg (1999) propose that media images have reached a point where the line between what is real and what is airbrushed is blurry. They argue that many women cannot distinguish between what a model really looks like compared to the edited image they see in magazines. This is a situation that is closely related to what Baudrillard (1994, 1998) coined as "hyperreality," meaning that images that are supposed to represent what is "real" alters a person's reality. Even if not true, the image has the ability to surpass the real, making a person believe that what they see is actually real. To create an intervention for women believing that the images presented to them in magazines are accurate, Thompson and Heinberg (1999) showed women the techniques used to create the beauty ideal. By doing this, the women reported feeling less anxiety when focusing on their weight. This finding suggests that if women are educated or brought attention to how unrealistic some media images actually are, they can distinguish

between what is “real” and what is not, leading them to be more critical when looking at print advertisements.

Harrison (2000) suggests that exposure to media with models who are thin, especially in print advertisements, predicts body dissatisfaction among women. Hitchon et al. (2004) agrees with Harrison (2000) by suggesting that the technology used to alter the media image, terming it “manipulated beauty,” leads women to unhealthy habits so they can mimic what they see in magazine advertisements. According to Bessenoff and Snow (2006), women who compare themselves to unattainable media images set forth by society, and find an inconsistency between the two, resort to behavior that has damaging effects on their bodies. These sources of literature show that the thin body ideal comes with negative and harmful effects for some women exposed to it.

The harmful effects triggered from the viewing of unrealistic media images stem from body dissatisfaction. The findings from Mornro and Huon’s (2005) study suggest that when women look at models that represent the ideal body shape, they not only compare themselves to the models, but their sense of body dissatisfaction increases. The researchers also found that it did not matter if the product being advertised was body related or not; women still had increasing rates of body dissatisfaction when shown images featuring very thin women. These findings support the notion that the participants focused more on the model than the product being advertised.

Lew et al. (2001, 2007) analyzed the impact of an intervention aimed to mitigate the relationship between media images and body dissatisfaction. Their studies suggest that women who are dissatisfied with their body shape could potentially keep themselves from experiencing



the harmful effects from models in print advertisements by focusing on the model as a person rather than a “perfect picture” of the beauty ideal. In their studies, they had women talk and write in a journal about what they perceived the models’ life experiences to be, their intelligence, and other non-body specific aspects of the models’ lives. By focusing on “who they thought the model was as a person,” women were more likely to save themselves from comparing their bodies to the models shown in the images, which made them feel more positive about themselves. Lew and colleagues’ (2001, 2007) findings imply that concentrating on aspects other than body shape when looking at print advertisements may protect some women from body dissatisfaction.

Studies conducted by Hausenblas et al. (2002, 2004) examined women’s responses when viewing slides emphasizing models’ physiques. Hausenblas et al.’s (2002) findings suggest that women are more likely to have lower self-esteem when they compare themselves to models using an “upward comparison” or a type of comparison that makes them feel inferior. For example, they found that women who reported having a higher amount of body fat had negative views of themselves when looking at the slides of women with the ideal, slender bodies compared to women who had lower body fat. The findings suggest that if women were to “downward compare,” they would have higher self-esteem.

In a later study, Hausenblas et al. (2004) found that women who have a higher drive to be the thin ideal reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction than those who had a lower drive. Both of these studies suggest that women who feel they are far from the body ideal and must become the models featured in print advertisements who are the ideal, exhibit a low self-esteem and are dissatisfied with their bodies.

## **Women's Perceptions of Body Shapes in Print Ads**

Over the years social scientists have explored the impact of media depictions of models, specifically their body shapes, on women who look at print advertisements. Recent studies suggest that women tend to have lower self-esteem when looking at advertisements featuring skinny models (Engeln-Maddox 2005; Groesz, Levine, and Murnen 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Hawkins et al. 2004; Marcum 2010; Peck and Loken 2004; Wilcox and Laird 2000) and the more “traditional,” meaning thin, body shapes that are seen as “beautiful” in today’s society. Peck and Loken (2004) asked women aged 18 to 30 who participated in the second part of their study how they felt when viewing the advertisements of size 16 and 18 models and thin models. Their findings suggest that women had significantly more positive thoughts about themselves when looking at heavier models than when looking at thin models (Peck and Loken 2004).

Some studies have focused specifically on the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, examining whether or not the company met all of its stated goals in their advertisements (Patton and Vasquez 2008) and women’s perceptions of the advertisements used in the campaign, which features the “everyday woman” (Gustafson, Hanley, and Popovich 2008; Scott and Cloud 2008). According to Patton and Vasquez (2008), the campaign’s goal to “serve as a starting point for societal change and act as a catalyst for widening the definition and discussion of beauty” as well as to “make more women feel beautiful everyday by widening stereotypical views of beauty” (“Campaign” 2008), and approach seem good in theory, however there is still an ideal that is put forth, thus creating a contradictory message. Even though Dove seeks to give women what they want to see, they still suggest through advertising that women are not beautiful unless they use their products. For example, what can be viewed as a “shameful” characteristic of a women’s

body [e.g., cellulite], is a flaw and must be fixed by using Dove's firming cream. By telling women that they must "correct" this flaw, Dove insinuates that women must alter their natural beauty. In addition to contradicting themselves, the "real women" models Dove uses are not a truly random sample of the population, but rather what Patton and Vasquez term as "a diverse portrait of the same idealized beauty standards the campaign aims to remove from the industry with the models having smooth skin, feminine features, straight white teeth, and hourglass shapes lacking cellulite" (Patton and Vasquez 2008: 859).

Studies examining women's perceptions of these advertisements have found that women appreciate the campaign, but wish to see a more diverse group of women to include differences in race, ethnicities, body shapes (as in larger and thinner women), height (meaning shorter women), hair color, and women with freckles and birthmarks (Scott and Cloud 2008). According to Gustafson et al. (2008), 38% of the participants in their study liked the advertisements by Dove, with over 40% saying that they did not like how the women were dressed and posed. These mixed feeling reactions from women have led others to explore different aspects of the advertisements.

The findings from Bissell and Rask's (2010) study suggest that one campaign featuring "the everyday woman" is not going to change the body ideal for women to be that of a more natural, 'real' woman. The researchers conducted a study consisting of 138 women aged 19 to 51, located in different areas of the United States. These women were shown media images that were digitally manipulated on Photoshop, but the participants were not aware of that component. The image began as a model from the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, and then her face was merged onto 3 other images of models that had a different body shape, presenting the

participants with a total of 4 images. The body shapes the image was morphed into were “the ultra-thin, muscular/athletic and plus-size” (Bissell and Rask 2010). The color of the lingerie or swimsuit of all of the models was white to maintain consistency. The participants rated the image featuring the plus-size model the lowest in terms of attractiveness, followed by the original Dove model. This implies that the participants believed that body shape and attractiveness is directly related, considering all of the bodies featured in the images had the same face (Bissell and Rask 2010).

In an analysis of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, Dye (2009) argues that the message of the campaign is conflicting and exploits women’s longing and suggests that Dove upholds the beauty fabrications and expectations it claims to intend to reverse. Dye states:

By encouraging images of ‘real women’, Dove implies that women who do not fit the ideal are not real women, and that ‘real women’ are not the ideal in today’s society ... One of Dove’s slogans, ‘Real women have real curves,’ can lead some girls who are naturally thin to suffer from a negative body image and low self-esteem because they are assumed to have an eating disorder. (2009: 120)

Also, Dove promotes being “real” and “genuine,” but they advertise beauty and hair products, firming creams, lotions, and wrinkle- reducing ointments. Thus, Dove’s “Real Beauty” Campaign perpetuates the dominant belief of female beauty by promoting “real beauty” and selling beauty products. It also excludes some women in advertisements who do not meet their standards of “real beauty” (Dye 2009). Prior research has found that some women believe that Dove’s statement was geared to telling women that, “You still need to use our products to be beautiful” (Howard 2005). This proposes that the campaign itself, even though trying to break the beauty norm, may not have been as successful as they have anticipated.

## The Current Study

This study aims to discover how female college students feel about “real women” in advertisements, specifically the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. It is part of Dove’s mission to help girls feel better about themselves by having higher self-esteem, and this study will see if the campaign and its advertisements produce positive perceptions among college women. Since there have been some mixed feelings regarding Dove’s message, with some critics believing that the company’s message is contradictory to its business and the products it sells, the study will examine women’s responses regarding Dove’s possible contradictory message.

This study differs from past research in that it seeks to examine college women’s feelings about the contradictory message that Dye (2009), and Patton and Vasquez (2008) have said exists in the advertisements in addition to the campaign’s message and inclusiveness. While other studies have asked women how they felt about the advertisements versus the beauty standards in today’s society (Millard 2008) and how women construct their body images (Marcum 2010), the former looked more at beauty as a performance and the latter did not look at the *Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty* specifically. The Dove campaign was present in other studies to examine its ability to change the definition of beauty (Infanger 2009; Millard 2008), while other studies sought to explain the effects that thin models in advertisements have on women (Engeln-Maddox 2005; Groesz, Levine, and Murnen 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Hawkins et al. 2004; Loken and Peck 2006; Peck and Loken 2004; Wilcox and Laird 2000). However, no one has examined how women view the message and how they perceive the “real women” that the campaign encompasses after being brought attention to the potential contradictory message.

This study is the second of two phases examining college women's perceptions of "real women" in the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* and the message associated with the campaign. While the first phase was quantitative, the second uses qualitative methods through the use of focus groups to explore college women's perceptions of the use of "real women" to sell a company's product, specifically Dove and its Campaign for Real Beauty. This study [Phase 2] also seeks to look at this topic using the theories of social constructionism and ethnomethodology. According to Blumer (1969), individuals operate based off of the meanings they associate or give to certain objects or things. Moreover, those meanings surface from interactions the individual has with others, and those meanings are held and are subject to morph or change through an individual's life experience. Social constructionism (Holstein and Gubrium 2000) posits that individuals produce, negotiate and reproduce reality through ongoing social interactions. This project used social constructionism by analyzing the ways in which participants produced and reproduced their perceptions of the campaign when different aspects or contradictory messages of the campaign were surfaced.

## Research Questions

### Phase 1

- 1) Women will overall have a positive response to the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty.
- 2) When presented with three photos (a thin model, Dove Campaign for Real Beauty advertisement, and an advertisement featuring a larger model) to choose from, women will choose the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty advertisement most often.
- 3) Most women will change their initial attitudes towards the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty when brought attention to its contradictory message.

### Phase 2

- 1) What are women's perceptions regarding the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, its message, and the use of larger models in print advertisements in comparison to the use of thin models?
- 2) Do women's perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* change when contradictory components of the campaign are pointed out to them?
- 3) How are women's perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* constructed and negotiated through social interactions?

## Methodology

Before discussing the methodology of this study, it is important to note that this study has two phases. In brief, Phase 1 was conducted quantitatively through the use of online surveys that were completed around the nation. Phase 2 data were collected qualitatively through the use of focus groups, with the participants being University of Central Florida students. In both phases, participants were asked first what their initial perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. After this, the two possible contradictory arguments were brought to the participants' attention to see if exposure to these two scenarios would change their initial perceptions.

### Phase 1

Phase 1 data derived from 202 online anonymous surveys distributed across the nation that examine college women's responses regarding companies that use "real women" in print advertisements to promote their products. Out of the participants in this phase of the study, 56.10% White, 11.60% Black, 19.20% Hispanic, 4.50% Asian, 8.60% Multi/ Other. The mean age of the women was 22.13. The survey consisted of demographic questions and six print advertisements featuring models with different body shapes (two with thin women, two from the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, and two with plus size women). The survey also included questions regarding the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, specifically drawing upon the inconsistency between the campaign's message and its business of selling beauty products.

Phase 1 of the study predicted that women would have an overall positive response to the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. Also, when presented with three photos (a thin model, *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* advertisement, and an advertisement featuring a larger model) to choose from, it was predicted that women would choose the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*



advertisement most often as the body shape they would like to see most in print advertisements. Finally the study predicted that most women would change their initial attitudes towards the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* when brought attention to its contradictory message.

The link to the online survey was handed out to students around campus with each participant knowing that it was voluntary from a speech given prior to handing the link to the survey out. The link was also posted on several professors' Webcourses. Snowball sampling also occurred by sending the survey link to personal contacts, thus gaining data from college students around the nation.

After all of the surveys were administered, the data were entered and statistically analyzed in SPSS, looking at college women's responses to models in print advertisements, and to see if the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* was well liked by the college women who participated in the study. Moreover, the study examined the perceptions women held regarding the potentially contradictory message conveyed by the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty.

The independent variables examined were Race/ Ethnicity [White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Multi/ Other] and the participants' self-reported body type, which was recoded to Athletic, Curvy/Average, Slightly Overweight/ Obese, and Thin. These two independent variables were separately analyzed in Chi-Square Crosstabulations with the dependent variables labeled "Pick\_White" and "Pick\_Black", meaning the participants' response to the body shape they would like to see most in print advertisements by selecting one of three pictures from one of two sets of images featuring two with thin women, two from the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, and two with plus size women. The difference between the two sets was the Race/

Ethnicity of the models shown. The first set featured White models, while the other featured Black models.

To test each hypothesis, the variables were statistically analyzed by using frequencies. Likert scale questions were used to test H1 by examining women's overall reactions to the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. Having women pick the image that they would like to see most in print advertisements tested H2. The images were broken down into two sets, both featuring a thin model, a model from the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, and a plus size model. The first set of images featured white models, while the second featured black models. H3 was examined by providing participants of the study with the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* mission to "make more women feel beautiful every day by widening stereotypical views of beauty" ("Campaign" 2008), along with two print advertisements from the campaign. After being asked if the participants believed that Dove has remained true to their statement, women were then brought attention to the fact that the advertisements were for firming cream. The participants were then asked if that fact changed their initial attitudes towards the campaign, to which the respondents replied "yes" or "no."

The results of Phase 1 suggest that participants overall have a positive response to the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. The *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* advertisement was selected most often when women were given three images to choose from (a thin model, *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* advertisement, and an advertisement featuring a larger model) in both cases of advertisements featuring white women and black women. When brought attention to the arguable contradictory message of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, 56.1 % of women did not change their initial thoughts about the campaign. However, 43.9% of women did change their initial

thoughts. This had set the foundation for Phase 2 of the study because while most participants chose the Dove advertisements when given three images featuring different body shapes, 43.9% of women changed their initial thoughts about the campaign when brought to the attention of its debatable contradictory message.

## **Phase 2**

Phase 2 of the research collected data qualitatively through focus groups. Focus groups are designed to allow for a deeper understanding of why people hold the beliefs that they do, not to produce statistically generalizable data (Donley, 2012). A total of 7 focus groups were held with a total of 20 women participating in the study; 4 groups contained 2 participants, 1 group contained 3 participants, 1 group contained 4 participants, and another group contained 5 participants.

The women in this study were asked questions (Appendix B) related to their perceptions of the body shape of thin models in print advertisements versus that of a Dove model. With these questions, women were shown advertisements of thin models and models from the Dove campaign. Additionally, women were asked about what they perceive the Dove campaign's mission to be, and if they thought that the campaign met its goals that were read to them. Because the same company that owns Dove (Unilever) owns the company Axe that makes body scents for men, print advertisements for Axe were shown to highlight the potential contradictory message. This is because the women in those ads portray the thin body ideal, which the Dove Campaign tries to overturn. The sessions were audio recorded and transcribed to allow for the data to be coded for themes.

When coding, participants were placed into groups depending on their statements regarding their initial perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* and when they revealed to the group that they had changed their opinions, if at all, of the campaign. At first, the participants were split up by their initial thoughts of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* into three groups: Dove Meets its Campaign Goals, I Don't Know if Dove Meets its Campaign Goals, and No Comment if Campaign Meets its Goals. Because no participant suggested that Dove completely did not meet its campaign goals, there was no group established for it. These groups were then separated further based on responses made about each participant's changed or not changed perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* when it was mentioned that Axe was owned by the same company as Dove: Changed Perception with Axe, No Changed Perception with Axe, and I Don't Know if Changed Perception with Axe. It is important to note that these perceptions came to fruition after being showed print advertisements from the Axe marketing campaign, but the participants did not know how both companies were related until after viewing the advertisements. Similarly, groups were formed based on the participants' reactions about the scholarly argument made: Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument, No Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument, and I Don't Know if Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument. After groups were made, a table was constructed to show how and when each participant's perceptions changed throughout the focus group (See Appendix D).

Phase 2 of the study was examined through the lens of social constructionism, in particular ethn methodology. According to Gubrium and Holstein (1997), ethn methodology seeks to examine the ways in which "actors" produce and reproduce their realities. This is achieved by listening to individuals in social settings. This method is seen throughout Phase 2,

specifically in the coding process when participants were split up into groups based on their initial perceptions of the *Dove Campaign of Real Beauty*, and even further based on when or if they changed their perceptions of the campaign with any of the two scenarios given to them. After this, participants were separated by the themes in which they defended their realities (i.e. marketing ploy, different audiences, and hypocritical [to name a few]).

## Findings

### Phase 1 Results

From the data collected through 202 online surveys, most of the participants in this phase chose the Dove advertisements when given three images featuring different body shapes, 43.9% of women changed their initial thoughts about the campaign when brought to the attention of its arguable contradictory message.

### *Univariate Analysis*

**Table 1—College Women’s Perceptions of Print Advertisements**

General Print Advertisements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Print advertisements in magazines cause people to have low self-esteem.	5.50%	48.80%	24.90%	19.40%	1.50%
Print advertisements in magazines often lead me to compare myself to the models shown.	18.00%	50.50%	12.50%	14.00%	5.00%
I want to look like the models I see in print advertisements.	13.90%	37.30%	21.40%	20.90%	6.50%
Print advertisements portray distorted images of reality	37.50%	46.50%	8.50%	6.00%	1.50%
I have to change my body shape when I see thin/slender women in the media outlet I use the most.	5.10%	21.90%	20.90%	32.10%	19.90%
Seeing thin/slender women in the media outlet I use the most has no effect on me.	10.10%	18.60%	19.10%	42.20%	11.10%

Out of the college women surveyed, respondents overall agreed that print advertisements cause people to have low self-esteem, they compare themselves to the models shown, and they also want to look like the models in print advertisements (see Table 1). However, the college women disagreed that they felt the need to change their body shape when they see thin/slender women in the media outlet they use the most, and neutral to seeing these models has an effect on them.

**Table 2—College Women’s Perceptions of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty**

<b>Dove Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I think the ads are aimed to all women of all sizes.	11.90%	44.00%	14.50%	24.90%	4.70%
I think that the ads leave out people who do not meet Dove’s definition of “real beauty.”	7.70%	25.80%	27.80%	33.00%	5.70%
I think women have negative body images when looking at Dove’s “Real Beauty” Campaign.	1.60%	7.90%	24.60%	48.70%	17.30%
I think Dove’s “Real Beauty” Campaign is contradictory because they sell beauty products for “beautiful” women.	3.60%	13.00%	26.00%	46.90%	10.40%

Overall, the college women surveyed had a positive response to the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. Most respondents not only agreed that the advertisements for the campaign were aimed for women of all sizes, but mostly disagreed that Dove only included women who met their definition of “real beauty” in their advertisement. When asked about the possibility of Dove being contradictory, women disagreed with the notion that the campaign was contradictory for selling beauty products to women they already had stated were “naturally beautiful” in their campaign (see Table 2).

**Table 3—Photos of Models Favored by Race/ Ethnicity**

<b>Model</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
Slender	31.60%	45.20%
Curvy	21.20%	3.40%
Dove	47.90%	51.40%

In Table 3, race refers to the models in the images shown to participants, not the respondents.

The data suggest that the college women surveyed overall would like to see the body shape of the women featured in the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty print advertisements in magazines the most. This occurred when given the option from picking between a thin model, a model from the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, and a plus size model (see Table 3).

**Table 4—Changing Attitudes of the Participants on the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	56.10%
Yes	43.90%



Overall, 56.1% of women did not change their initial perceptions of the campaign. However, 43.9% respondents did change their initial thoughts about “the realness” of the intentions behind the campaign, meaning that these respondents did believe that the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty has a contradictory message (see Table 4).

*Bivariate Analyses*

**Table 5—Advertisements Featuring Black Models Favored Based on Respondents’ Race/ Ethnicity**

<b>Advertisements Featuring Black Models Favored by Respondents’ Race/ Ethnicity Crosstabulation</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Multi/Other</b>
Slender Model	46 45.10%	6 28.60%	14 48.30%	5 62.50%	7 50.00%
Curvy/ Average Model	4 3.90%	1 4.80%	1 3.40%	0 .00%	0 .00%
Dove Model	52 51.00%	14 66.70%	14 48.30%	3 37.50%	7 50.00%

Participants who responded White, Black, or Hispanic as their race/ ethnicity chose the Black Dove model as the body shape they would like to see most in magazines. When it came to those who are Asian, the Black slender model was the popular choice, while the Multi/Other respondents were split between the Black slender model and the Black Dove model. The Chi-Square did not show any significant differences among participants based on race/ ethnicity.

**Table 6—Advertisements Featuring White Models Favored Based on Respondents’ Race/ Ethnicity**

<b>Advertisements Featuring White Models Favored by Respondents’ Race/ Ethnicity Crosstabulation</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Multi/Other</b>
Slender Model	33 30.80%	3 15.00%	15 42.90%	3 37.50%	5 29.40%
Curvy/ Average Model	21 19.60%	6 30.00%	6 17.10%	1 12.50%	6 35.30%
Dove Model	53 49.50%	11 55.00%	14 40.00%	4 50.00%	6 35.30%

The data in Table 6 suggests that those who responded their race/ ethnicity as White, Black, and Asian chose the White Dove model as the body shape they would like to see most in magazines. Those who responded as being Hispanic chose the White slender model as the body shape they would like to see in magazines, while those who are Multi/Other were split between the White Dove model and the White Curvy/Average model. The Chi-Square did not show any significant differences among participants based on race/ ethnicity.

**Table 7—Advertisements Featuring Black Models Favored Based on Respondents’ Body Type**

<b>Advertisements Featuring Black Models Favored by Respondents’ Body Type Crosstabulation</b>	<b>Athletic</b>	<b>Curvy/ Average</b>	<b>Slightly Overweight/ Obese</b>	<b>Thin</b>
Slender Model	17 53.10%	32 41.00%	7 36.80%	24 51.10%
Curvy/ Average Model	0 .00%	6 7.70%	0 .00%	0 .00%
Dove Model	15 46.90%	40 51.30%	12 63.20%	23 48.90%

Participants whose body type was either athletic or thin overall picked the Black slender model as the body shape they would like to see most in magazines. Those who were curvy/average or slightly overweight/obese favored the Black Dove model over the other options. The Chi-Square did not show any significant differences among participants based on body type.

**Table 8—Advertisements Featuring White Models Favored Based on Respondents’ Body Type**

<b>Advertisements Featuring White Models Favored by Respondents’ Body Type Crosstabulation</b>	<b>Athletic</b>	<b>Curvy/ Average</b>	<b>Slightly Overweight/ Obese</b>	<b>Thin</b>
Slender Model	14 40.00%	24 28.90%	4 22.20%	17 32.10%
Curvy/ Average Model	3 8.60%	14 16.90%	9 50.00%	14 26.40%
Dove Model	18 51.40%	45 54.20%	5 27.80%	22 41.50%

Respondents who reported their body shape as being athletic, curvy/ average, or thin favored the White Dove model when selecting the image of the body shape they would like to see most in magazines. Those who were slightly overweight/ obese preferred the curvy/ average model as the body shape they would like to see the most in magazines. The Chi-Square for this data set showed no significant differences among participants based on body type.

In summation, hypothesis 1 was supported (see Table 2). Women overall have a positive response to the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. As shown in Table 3, hypothesis 2 was supported. The *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* advertisement was selected most often when women were given three images to choose from (a thin model, *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* advertisement, and an advertisement featuring a larger model) in both cases of advertisements featuring white women and black women. As shown in Table 4, hypothesis 3 was not supported. However, 43.9% of women did change their initial thoughts about the campaign.

## **Phase 2 Results**

From the data collected from participants during the focus groups, analyses reveal that most participants had initial positive perceptions toward the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*.

However, 65% of participants had changed their initial perceptions about the campaign when the scholarly argument surfaced in comparison to 25% changing their perceptions when the relation of Axe was brought to attention.

### *Does Dove Meet its Campaign Goals?*

Out of those who stated their initial perceptions about the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* [2 participants had no comment], 65% of participants believed that the *Dove Campaign For Real Beauty* has met its stated goals of “serving as a starting point for societal change and act as a catalyst for widening the definition and discussion of beauty, as well as to make more women feel beautiful everyday by widening stereotypical views of beauty” (Campaign 2008). A common theme among the responses referred to the natural, relatable and identifiable qualities that the campaign possesses. For example, some participants mention these components of the campaign in their responses regarding its goals.

Bianca: I think that people could identify with this more and I think that is what their whole campaign is about. Everyone feeling confident and beautiful regardless of if you are a model you see in a fashion magazine or a Dove ad.

Aster: It's definitely more relatable than what you typically see.

Ingrid: I feel like I could be with them, you know? I could also be in that picture.

Anne: They look like my friends and you know, people that I know or would know. I look at it and feel happy. I look at it and don't feel insecure about myself. Like I feel the same way.

Out of the participants who responded, 27% of women responded that they did not know if the campaign met its goals. Statements from Emma, Christine, and Sydney suggest that because women still see the thin/ slender models in magazines, it does not make a difference if this campaign exists because it will not foster its impact toward societal change. Therefore, these

individuals stated how the societal change aspect of the campaign's mission may never be reached.

Emma: I think that girls and everyone are used to seeing the skinny models so they see these girls and think that they are overweight. They're not, but I feel that if I was 12 years old I would ask 'why is that fat girl there?'

Christine: That's one company when all of the rest of them advertise skinny/ stick thin models when there should be more normal girls out there to send the message out.

Sydney: I don't know. I think it's a step in it, but I don't know if it's a change. It's a good step, but I feel like people still see the advertisements and the other models and that is still what they want to be, and um, like I feel like it's still. It's a good step, but it makes us realize that not everyone is that model out there that's a size negative two but people like to compare themselves to the other ones more.

While some participants focused on the campaign's impact and how it might measure up to what is already being shown to women, others questioned if Dove has met its goals because of the models used in the advertisements.

Abbie stated that Dove was still separating what woman based of "type" by suggesting that Dove is isolating the average woman from "the supermodel."

Abbie: to an extent I can see it. But they are putting the average women in their own little bubble. They all have unique things about them, like they are all in white. That part stood out to me. It's definitely more relatable.

Blake stated that Dove might still have a "type" and insinuated that perhaps Dove is not pushing the envelope as much as their mission states. Specifically, Blake states that these women are different from the thin ideal, but they are not overweight enough to really make a change.

Blake: you know, these women, none of them are probably obese. I mean, some of them might be categorized as overweight. So maybe it's a healthier vision, so... I mean, it's good putting a variety of people visualized in the media. If they are reaching their goal, I don't know if that's necessarily true.

At this point of the focus groups, participants had not been aware of the relation of the Axe campaign or the scholarly argument. From here, the group of those who had initial positive opinions regarding the campaign separated based on when their opinions changed or if they changed.

#### *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty and Axe*

The first scenario to see if women would change their initial perceptions about the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* was referring to the fact that the same company that owns Axe, Unilever, is also in charge of Dove. This was brought to light because advertisements for Axe feature women of the thin ideal in which the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* seeks to overturn. Participants were split up based on their initial perceptions of the Dove Campaign during the coding process.

*Campaign Meets Goals/ No Changed Perception with Axe.* Out of the participants who believed that the campaign meets its goals, 62% responded that their perceptions about the campaign did not change because Unilever owns both Axe and Dove. Within this group, participants had different reasons for why their perceptions did not change, creating more groups. For example, a few women in different focus group sessions understood that Dove and Axe both have different audiences that they each need to cater to. Thus, each company does “what it needs to” in order to market their products to its consumers in order to profit.

Reagan: I think it comes down to marketing and profits and I think they have to, you know, market to their audience. And women are buying Dove products. And men are buying these products. Men want to see this. They don't want to see, you know, real women. I mean maybe they do.

Bianca: And their target audiences are completely different. You know, men don't really care about the Dove campaign. They care about Axe.

Aster: I believe that they just know who their audience is. I personally don't take offense to that. I understand. It is what it is.

Lori not only states that both Dove and Axe has different audiences as seen in the responses from other participants, but she also states how it is a smart economic plan that Unilever has to advertise their products for these two companies.

Lori: I think it has to do with the different audience they are marketing to. Clearly these ads are for men to be drawn into buy that product. Just like how a few minutes ago we were saying about the Dove Campaign 'Oh, that's wonderful. That's great' and if we think they have such strong ideals that are positive we would be more willing to buy their product. So it's a smart economic plan.

Another example of a group that formed was one that focused more on the structure of the companies. Since Unilever owns both Axe and Dove, some participants compared the three companies as family members [Unilever as a parent, while Axe and Dove are siblings] or as a potential hierarchy of power [Unilever on top of the hierarchy, while Dove and Axe are separate from each other at equal plateaus, but connected to Unilever]. Unlike the other participants, the audiences to which both of the companies cater to were not mentioned.

Bianca: Unilever, when it gets to this point, they don't care. This is just their [Unilever] two big profit companies and they are going to do whatever they need to. But that isn't to say that the Dove campaign isn't a good thing.

Valerie: It doesn't exactly change my opinion because I think down the line with big corporations you don't realize how this one company owns this huge company because this company is big on its own. I'm sure the parent company has some sort of say of where they want each company to go. But I think at this point the two companies are so big that they have their own motivations and drive. It's like if they continue to make money, why does the parent company even care. Now if Dove was in charge of Axe then that would be a different story I think, but because they are both sibling companies it just kind of real life. Like siblings don't do the same thing.

One participant stated that advertisements have nothing to do with whether she would purchase a product. With this, Lacey defends her viewpoint by stating:

I think Dove does such a great job and has such a great reputation because I buy Dove because I like Dove. I like how it makes my skin feel, I like how it makes my skin smells, I don't care how much it costs, I like Dove. And the advertisement has nothing to do with if I'm going to buy Dove or not. And I think Dove is that kind of name that has that standing.

All in all, most participants kept their positive attitudes towards the Dove campaign when knowing that the company Axe was owned by the same company as Dove. While most of the women attributed their unchanged perceptions to the fact that both companies have a different audience to market their products to, others looked to the structure of the companies and their personal experiences using Dove products.

*Campaign Meets Goals/ Changed Perception with Axe.* After being brought attention to the fact that Unilever owns both Dove and Axe, 30% of the participants who had initial positive perceptions of the Dove campaign changed their minds. For these participants, Dove's motive and reputation was questioned. While some women thought Dove was hypocritical, others saw Dove as disingenuous.

Jillian: it's almost hypocritical because it's saying 'here's natural beauty, but also look like that twig' [in reference to the women featured in the Axe print advertisements].

Julia: I think it's weird because Dove is all about toward females and to feel good about themselves and then they will turn around and see this for guys and turn around and go back to the gym because they are going to think 'oh, guys want this' [in reference to the women featured in the Axe print advertisements].

Others suggested that the Dove Campaign was being disingenuous:

Anne: You don't view it as genuine. Because you have these women in the Dove ads that are comfortable and they love their bodies and they are happy, and then you have this



representation of women and it's sending completely different messages and it's just like 'Wow'. It's like do you really mean that or are you trying to get us to buy your product.

Ingrid: I guess it kind of takes away the level of trust for the campaign. It's like they are selling confidence.

Those who changed their perceptions of the Dove Campaign did so due to a perceived lack of true honesty from the campaign. None of these participants mentioned Dove and Axe as separate companies with different audiences that were purchasing their products.

Although not specifically stated, participants did critique the use of different-sized models to advertise the products for both companies and they subsequently questioned the motives of the Dove Campaign.

*Campaign Meets Goals/ I Don't Know if My Perception Changed with Axe.* Alison originally stated that the Dove campaign met its goals, but according to her response she did not know if its relation to Axe really altered her perception or not. The reason for this is because the different audiences did not know that there was a relation, just as she did not know that fact before the focus group. Because she felt that it was not a well-known fact among the public, she felt that it was not as big of a deal that others in the focus group had made it out to be.

Alison: But that's not what the public is seeing. The public is seeing Dove and the product and the people that we can connect with. And the guys are like, oh hot chicks. Something to get my rocks off, you know? And guys are easy, so this sells. No big deal. The audience is still seeing this [Referring to the Dove campaign]. What they don't see is that these two companies are connected and what they are selling. The audience doesn't see that. They think, 'I can connect with these average women.'

*I Don't Know if Campaign Meets its Goals/ No Changed Perception with Axe.* Out of the 27% of participants who were not sure if Dove met their campaign goals, 60% of those women did not change their perceptions based on the relation between both Axe and Dove. Like the common theme mentioned before, participants believed that Axe and Dove had a different consumer audience to please. For example, Emma stated:

I think they are trying to sell their products. Like Dove to women who aren't a size zero. Just trying to appeal to their audience. This is going to appeal to guys, and girls who aren't 95 pounds.

All in all, even after women were made aware of the relation between the two companies, some participants still saw them as being separate entities with different buyers to market to. However, Abbie believed that Axe did not change her initial perception about the campaign because they still held true to their message. Abbie said:

I still don't think that is such a negative thing. I still think they are saying that you are beautiful the way you are, just maintain that beauty through our products. Rather than be super skinny and send this sexual message with our products.

Abbie's rationale differs from reasons presented by other women because she focused on the messages conveyed by the two companies rather than their different audiences.

*I Don't Know if Campaign Meets its Goals/ Changed Perception with Axe.* To Blake, the relation between Axe and Dove did change her initial perception of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty. Even though she was not sure if Dove necessarily met its goals, Blake was the only one in her focus group to change her perception about the Dove campaign. Because of this, Blake had taken

a stance that resulted in a back-and-forth exchange with the other women. During this time it seemed as if Blake kept defending the reasons behind her changing her initial perceptions. Blake and the other women of the group stated:

Blake: Nice!!! Breathe the revelation!

Lara: No, but you're gearing towards a different audience.

Blake: But it's for a campaign for marketing, not for a real mission. You know, that mission statement should have added, "to sell more products."

Here, Blake defends her rationale for changing her initial perception of the campaign when the Axe scenario is brought to attention by stating the Dove Campaign is merely just a way to market Dove's products, not to accomplish their mission statement of the campaign.

From there, Blake continues to defend her rationale by explaining that Dove does not actually seek to make women feel good, but rather to sell their products.

Lara: But that's why the Lucky Jeans commercials or the Guess Jeans commercials and stuff like that, that's what it is. You don't go into Guess and see some nasty guy, you see somebody like Enrique Iglesias or something.

Blake: No I totally agree with you. What I was saying is if their campaign mission is to make women feel good, how can this be your company and mission for this campaign and this mission over here. I'm just saying it's marketing, it's not actually to make women feel good. It's like "We love you, take care of yourself"

When it was clarified more in detail that it is Unilever owns both Axe and Dove, Lara states, "See, that's it." But even then so, Blake still stands for her reasoning. She did not state it specifically, but at this time Blake's voice did get louder and she got more animated with her body with her next couple of statement. As an onlooker, it seemed as if she was getting upset with why other participants did not understand her logic.

Blake: But what I'm saying is how can you make that your mission for this company that you own or this product that you own and then have, like, it doesn't seem to me like it's coming from a place of really that, "we really want to make you feel good about yourself." It's coming from a place of "we want you to buy our product."

Blake: This is like we're trying to sell sex like come get this product. It's so obviously that it's okay. To me it's very deceitful of Dove to be putting this statement out there and then, you know, having because it's a woman's product their gearing it towards women. Would women like this feeling of comfort and knowing being like other people and comfortable in their own body, and then over here, selling sex. It is just really selling stuff, but it's very deceitful. That's what I don't like about it.

This is when Alison tried to calmly explain that the audience is seeing only what is shown in the advertisements, and they do not know about the relationship between the two companies. Blake then suggested that for her, masking the relationship from the public was what made her suggest that Dove was deceitful.

Alison: Guys are easy, so this sells [The Axe]. No big deal. The audience is still seeing this. What they don't see is that these two companies are connected and what they are selling. The audience doesn't see that. They think, I can connect with these average women. You know what I mean?

Blake: That's why it kills me. It's that women are buying these products under that guise that is about feeling good about themselves. When really it's like, you know.

From there, Lara suggests that money is important when it comes to business, and Blake responds with how her perception changed from being positive to then seeing that everything she had thought was related to profit and money.

Lara: Money talks. Everybody has a price.

Blake: But I liked it at first. You know, when you first see it you're like "oh, that's such a good idea" like we were saying "Oh they are putting different races out there" "Oh they're putting different body types out there" and it's like, they are just doing it. It is from the same place as money.

*I Don't Know if Campaign Meets its Goals/ I Don't Know if My Perception Changed with Axe.*

Sydney was a participant who was torn between whether the relation Axe and Dove has with each other changed her initial perception. For example, Sydney states:

It kind of tears me both ways. I do see how they are completely different mixed messages. But I do see the hierarchy of just because you're under one person, you can still be separate companies, but owned by the same people. And I agree with the point that they have the product to back it up. It's almost like supporters of Dove would say, "oh that's a great campaign because they have moved towards whatever" But I don't know if I feel like betrayed by Dove. I do see both sides.

In context, Sydney was one of the last individuals to respond to the question, and was part of a focus group that had women stating their opinions towards both separate sides. Sydney was the only one, however, to not pick a "side."

*No Comment if Campaign Meets its Goals/ No Changed Perception with Axe.* Both participants who did not comment when asked if the campaign met its goals also believed like other participants that Axe and Dove had different audiences. These two women were in different focus groups.

Lara: you're gearing towards a different audience.

Aria: They're trying to sell to a different audience. So Dove is geared towards more of the women and the family and their beauty versus this is for a guy product, axe. And you know, they are trying to use the stereotype of "Oh guys always want more chicks" so we're going to give them chicks. That's what I think. So it's almost selling for the product and not for the person.

Aria mentions not only the different audience related to the two companies, but also the fact that both Axe and Dove are not necessarily selling for the audience that is theirs, but rather for the sake of selling products.

### *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty and Scholarly Argument*

The second scenario to see if women would change their initial perceptions about the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* was referring to a scholarly argument brought up by some researchers. These researchers have stated that the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty is contradictory because it tells women that they are naturally beautiful, but they want women to buy their beauty products. Participants were split up based on their initial perceptions of the Dove Campaign during the coding process.

*Campaign Meets its Goals/ Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument.* Out of the participants who originally stated that they believed the campaign meets its goals, 62% responded that their perceptions about the campaign changed when the scholarly argument regarding the potential conflicting message of the campaign was surfaced. A common theme that emerged in the responses from some participants was that of interpreting the Dove campaign as a marketing ploy. For example, some respondents stated:

Reagan: I think it all comes down to money. I hate to say it.

Leslie: What gets me is the top two ads are for firming cream moisturizers, and that's interesting considering that here we are, here are all of these women with curves, we're supposed to be proud of them, but don't forget you need to use this firming moisturizer. So it's this difference. We still want you to be real, but here's a little bit of help for you. Firm it up a little. I just think there is a line. They want us to be natural, but not too natural. You need some help. I think it is just another way to get at, you know, to get at people. It's just another marketing technique.

Bianca: I just think they are trying to mix an ideal with a product. Like okay, yeah, we decided to take this leap and do something new and put plus size models in our ads. But look at what they are advertising, firming lotion. Which is still implying that these ladies need to firm up. So I mean, that's a bit contradictory. You're saying women can be ok and be large, but you are selling products that are aiming to take away some of those

qualities and reduce them. Even if they put dove moisturizer saying “Real women use real products” that’s one thing. But tested on real curves? I mean, for me this loses more than the Axe campaign. Because here it is just a marketing campaign, but before I was like oh ok.

Other participants thought the message was not only contradictory, but insinuated that the message itself did not make sense. For example, women answered:

Anne: I think if you’re telling someone you’re beautiful just the way you are. If you have curves, that’s great if you’re older, embrace it. But buy our product to make you to look even better or to fix this it just doesn’t make sense. I can just imagine being that woman being like ‘oh crap. I’m still not beautiful they want me to buy this.’

Ingrid: There’s not too much I can say about it. The older woman [referring to model in the Dove ad for wrinkle reducing cream] is going to have wrinkles either way, that’s just about getting old. That’s what happens when you age so I feel like I wish they would be saying embrace it and stay healthy. But you can’t get rid of all of those wrinkles. You are going to have to deal with them at some point.

Although different, the responses made regarding what these participants perceived to be contradictory followed similar themes as those made when the Axe campaign’s relation to Dove was brought up; some believed it was marketing, while others thought it was a contradiction to Dove’s goals.

*Campaign Meets its Goals/ No Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument.* Of those who had initial positive perceptions of the Dove campaign, 30% did not modify their original thoughts of the campaign from the scholarly argument. Most of the participants in this group believed that the campaign was being realistic and truthful. For example, some responses were:

Aster: I don’t take offense to it. As a society we want to or we have a fear of aging so I feel there is not a problem recognizing that. It’s saying you are comfortable with who you are and you should be, but there are products for you to make you feel confident. I feel that is the route they are trying to take. I don’t take offense to it.

Lara: It is just the way ads are. We are always going to want to make ourselves look better and it's just too vague to forget things for.

Julia: We have babies, and you get a little stretchy and as long as it's not going to anything crazy like plastic surgery or anything then I don't see anything wrong with a little tighten here and there.

Another participant, Jillian, did not believe the Dove campaign was contradictory from the scholarly argument because she felt as though Dove used suitable models to relay their message for their advertisements.

Jillian: I think it would be contradictory if they put a skinny 18 year old for the dewrinkle cream picture. But they show older ladies.

*Campaign Meets its Goals/ I Don't Know if Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument.*

Lacey was not sure if the scholarly argument changed her initial positive perception of the Dove campaign. The reason behind this is because she did not feel a connection between the models and the products the company was advertising. Lacey responded:

I don't know if firming lotion, or I don't know if I even care about the idea of firming lotion. I don't know if I even believe if that will make a difference or if seeing these women half-naked connects with firming lotion for me. I don't see or feel a connection between the two and I don't care about firming lotion so it kind of just turns me off and doesn't do anything for me.

Lacey is the only participant who expressed feelings of not feeling any relation to the Dove campaign advertisements or felt that there was a relationship among the models and the products being advertised.

*I Don't Know if Campaign Meets its Goals/ Change Perception with Scholarly Argument.*

Findings suggest that 80% of women who were not sure if the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty



met its goals stated in its mission statement believed that Dove's message was contradictory as stated in the scholarly argument. Women in different focus groups stated:

Emma: That is contradictory. You can look like this IF you use our lotion or cream. Then you can walk around naked.

Christine: It's not telling you you're beautiful no matter what. Everyone has to do what they gotta do.

Blake: Firming lotion is like, I mean deodorant is something that people see as necessary. You know what I'm saying? So it's like it's deodorant I can give you a break, but because it's firming lotion it's like wow. Even if you're a healthy size, cellulite is not ok is what it's saying. I mean because they have a whole range of women there, so they are technically telling every woman that they need firming cream. Don't work out and eat a lot, so then you have cellulite and then have to buy the firming cream. We don't want you to be perfect because then we can't sell you our products.

These women changed their initial perceptions because they suggested that the Dove Campaign did not really mean what they said (i.e. all women are naturally beautiful) because Dove still wanted women to use their beauty products to aid them in firming their skin, and changing other "flaws" that are natural characteristics that these women have.

*I Don't Know if Campaign Meets its Goals/ No Changed Perception with Scholarly Argument.*

One participant who was not sure if the Dove Campaign met its goals did not change her initial perception when the scholarly argument was brought to attention. Instead, her response suggests that her initial perception was indeed positive towards the campaign. Abbie had stated:

I still don't think that is such a negative thing. I still think they are saying that you are beautiful the way you are, just maintain that beauty through our products. Rather than be super skinny and send this sexual message with our products.

Abbie's rationale suggests that even though Dove sells beauty products, they still mean what their mission statement explains. She also proposes that the campaign would be contradictory if they used sexual images of the thin body ideal to convey their message.

*No Comment on if Campaign Meets its Goals/ Perception Changed with Scholarly Argument.*

Out of the two participants who had no comment on whether the Dove campaign had met its goals, one woman saw the campaign to be more of a marketing ploy rather than telling women they are naturally beautiful. Aria stated:

Any way they are going to try to make money, they are going to try.

Aria's rationale suggests that the company of Dove is just trying to make money like because it is a business and wants to make a profit. Her statement also proposes that Dove does not seek to make their consumers believe that all women are naturally beautiful.

*Perception Not Changed with Scholarly Argument.* The other participant who felt as though her perception did not change because of the scholarly argument stated:

Lara: Maybe they're just showing, like, if you have this kind of body you do need this. Like Black women need olive oil for their skin. Like if you have eczema, you're going to see a commercial that is geared towards people with eczema.

This statement suggests that the Dove campaign is more realistic and is catering their products to a group of women that need it.

## Conclusions

### Phase 1

Based on the results from this phase, it seemed important to continue studying this topic because the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* is often celebrated as breaking the beauty norm by suggesting women are beautiful just the way they are. While most of the participants in this study chose the Dove advertisements when given three images featuring different body shapes, 43.9% of women changed their initial thoughts about the campaign when brought to the attention of its arguable contradictory message. This phase set the foundation for Phase 2 because although some respondents changed their perceptions regarding the Dove Campaign while others did not, it was not determined why women chose to respond the way that they did.

### Phase 2

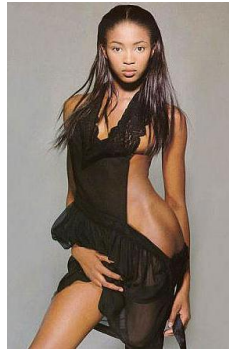
Results found that participants expressed initial positive attitudes towards the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*. When print advertisements from Axe were shown, 25% of the participants shifted their perceptions about *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* more negatively, suggesting that the campaign was disingenuous and played on consumer's emotions as a marketing ploy. When the scholarly argument that suggests that Dove's message is contradictory because they want women to be natural but sells beauty products, 65% of participants had changed their initial positive perceptions about the campaign. This is important because the findings suggest how consumers can change their perceptions regarding a company, in this case

one that is a part of a multi-million dollar parent company, based on how a company advertises its products. When the participants were brought attention to the two scenarios that exposed the reality of the companies and business motives, their own reality changed. This then showed how the participants produced and reproduced their thoughts and realities throughout the time of the focus groups.

As of February 2012, Axe has launched its products and scents for women. Since this occurred after the focus groups had been conducted, future research on this topic is currently being planned. The future study will be tailored to include the newest advertising for women Axe merchandise, where the thin body ideal is being used to promote their products. Because many participants of the current study believed that the relation between both Axe and Dove seemed insignificant due to the different audiences, the future study will see if participants will change their initial perceptions of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* because the audience is now the same.

# APPENDIX A

## Print Advertisements Shown in Phase 1





## **APPENDIX B**

### **Questions Asked in Phase 2 (Focus Group Setting)**

- 1) What is the first thing you notice when looking at this advertisement?
- 2) Is there anything about the model's body that you focus on first? What is it?
- 3) What do you think about this models' body?
- 4) If you were to change anything about this model's body, what would it be? Why?

Show Dove model and ask those same questions  
Continue...

- 5) Yes or no, are you familiar with the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty?

Put up a Dove model and ask...

- 6) What makes this model different from the ones you see in magazines or the model shown before?
- 7) What do you think the campaign's mission is?

Read/ state the mission...

- 8) Do you think the campaign meets its goal? Why or why not?
- 9) What do you think about Dove incorporating women of different race and ethnicities in their campaign?
- 10) Do you think that there is a different body ideal for women to live up to based on their race/ ethnicity? Why or why not?

- 11) How do you think race/ ethnicity plays into different body images in the media?

Show Axe campaign-- several ads

State: "The same company in charge of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty also sells Axe"

12) Does that change your initial thoughts about the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty? Why or why not?

Show more Dove ads with specific products they are selling, and ask...

13) What is Dove trying to sell to its consumers?

14) Some researchers have stated that the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty is contradictory because it tells women that they are naturally beautiful, but they want you to buy their beauty products. What do you think?





## APPENDIX C

### Images Shown for Phase 2

#### Thin Models



## Axe Campaign





# AXE



AXE is a unique all-over bodyspray that combines a seductive fragrance with effective deodorant protection to keep you smelling great all day or all night. Spray it all over including your chest, neck, underarms - all the hot spots.

## Dove Campaign

All this talk about fashion models  
and extreme dieting.  
How did our idea of beauty  
become so distorted?



[campaignforrealbeauty.com](#) | Dove

New Dove Firming.  
As tested on real curves.



campaignforrealbeauty.com | Dove



New Dove Firming.  
As tested on real curves.



campaignforrealbeauty.com | Dove



New Dove Firming. As tested on real curves.



too old to be in an anti-aging ad.



campaignforrealbeauty.com

But the next time you see this pro-age, a new line of skin and hair care from dove, beauty has to age first.



© 2010 Unilever



## APPENDIX D

**Phase 2 Table of Participants & Their Responses**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>DMG</b>	<b>IDK DMG</b>	<b>DNMG</b>	<b>PC AXE</b>	<b>IDK PC AXE</b>	<b>PNC AXE</b>	<b>PC SA</b>	<b>IDK P SA</b>	<b>PNC SA</b>
Reagan (1)	X					X	X		
Leslie (1)	X					X	X		
Lara (2)	NC	NC	NC			X		X	
Sydney (2)		X			X		X		
Blake (2)		X		X			X		
Alison (2)	X				X		X		
Lacey (2)	X					X		X	
Anne (3)	X			X			X		
Aria (3)	NC	NC	NC			X	X		
Isabella (3)	X			X			X		
Corrie (3)	X					X	X		
Valerie (4)	X					X	X		
Bianca (4)	X					X	X		
Aster (5)	X					X			X
Abbie (5)		X				X			X
Emma (6)		X				X	X		
Christine (6)		X				X	X		
Lori (7)	X					X			X
Jillian (7)	X			X					X
Julia (7)	X			X					X

**Key:**

DMG= Dove Meets Goals

IDK DMG= I Don't Know if Dove Meets Goals

DNMG= Dove Does Not Meet Goals

PC AXE= Perception Changes with AXE

IDK PC AXE= I Don't Know if Perception Change with AXE

PNC AXE= Perception Does Not Change with AXE

PC SA= Perception Changes with Scholarly Argument

IDK P SA= I Don't Know if Perception Changes with Scholarly Argument

PNC SA= Perception Does Not Change with Scholarly Argument



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