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# Feminine Beauty Norms And The Media: A Content Analysis Of A Popular Tween Magazine

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**FEMININE BEAUTY NORMS AND THE MEDIA:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF A POPULAR TWEEN MAGAZINE**

by

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**THESIS**

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of Wayne State University,

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Advisor

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Date

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Somewhere between the innocence of childhood and the angst of the teenage years lies a group of children making their own mark on the world. Commonly referred to as “tweens,” children of this age make up an ever-increasing demographic in U.S. society, an age-group that is increasing in prominence and power. Not quite old enough to be considered teenagers, but perhaps a little too old to be called children, tweens are caught between two very different life stages. Whereas the teenage years might once have been considered a time of being “stuck in the middle” between childhood and adulthood, tweens now have claimed the “in between” title, thereby illustrating the shifting meanings and experiences of age.

Tweens are the targets of entire marketing campaigns in the U.S., and have recently changed the way retailers and major corporations think of the young consumer (Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1999). In a technologically advanced society such as the U.S., information is gained through various media outlets simultaneously. Marketing to tweens continues to increase via media sources such as magazines, television, and the Internet. Information on the various products being marketed to tweens is of importance to understanding this influential age-group. Not only do tweens consume various types of media, they represent a particular niche within it. Tween-centered television shows (e.g. Hannah Montana and iCarly) and books (e.g. the Harry Potter and Allie Finkle series) are not uncommon, nor are magazines and websites geared toward today’s tween. It is through these various media outlets that tweens are exposed to content and images that may shape their sense of self. Seemingly uncharted territory until recent years, tweens

now represent an ever-expanding consumer population, and the targeting of this market does not seem to be slowing down.

Certainly the notion of a pre-adolescent, or pre-teen, is not a new concept, so when and how did the term “tween” come to fruition? It is rather impossible to know exactly when and by whom the term came to be used, but it has gained popularity within the past decade. Kantrowitz and Wingert’s *Newsweek* article (1999) provided an introduction into the lifestyle and marketability of America’s “newest” age-group, “the tweens.” It was this article that perhaps acted as a springboard for other research on “tween culture,” fueling interest in the tween demographic, increasing the number of published reports on the topic, and popularizing the term itself. Regardless of when the term was first adopted, it is certainly one that is being used frequently in U.S. mainstream culture in contemporary times.

So who represents a tween? Since every child at some point will reach the age at which others might consider him/her to be a tween, the basic idea of a tween is not new; rather, just the terminology is new. Depending on the source, a tween could be an individual between the ages of 7 and 16 years of age (Siegel, Livingston, and Coffey, 2004). Much of the research on tweens suggests that the most common classification is between the ages of 8 and 14 years of age (Guthrie, 2005; Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1999). Individual researchers such as Siegel, Livingston, and Coffey (2004) have their own preferences for the age classification of tweens. Siegel et al. (2004) preferred the age range of 8 to 12 and provided justification for this particular range based on Psychologist Jean Piaget’s stages of cognitive development. Piaget’s four stages of cognitive development purports that children’s learning and development can be

categorized into four age-groups beginning at infancy and ending at the age of 15 (Siegel et al., 2004). Siegel et al. (2004) based their definition of a tween on one of these four age-groups. They also proposed that the tween classification itself consists of three age-groups; that is, there are those who are just entering the tween phase, children roughly 8 years of age, and there are those transitioning out of tweenhood, those around 12. Children at 11 years old are believed to be at the dividing age between the younger tweens and the older tweens (Siegel et al., 2004). What becomes clear in existing research on tweens, however, is that there is no definitive age range that classifies one as being “in” his/her tween years. Previous research agrees that tweenhood begins around age 8, but the ending age is less clear, as researchers have differing opinions. Attempts to identify an exact range of ages for this life stage are therefore inconclusive and somewhat futile, as the categorization of “tween” is usually described more generally than specifically.

The seeming overuse of the word tween within the last decade is perhaps attributable to the marketing industry alone (Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1999). Tweens represent a buying base separate from children and teenagers. As highlighted above, marketers have taken notice of this unique buying base and have created an industry geared solely toward today’s tween consumer (Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Siegel et al., 2004). Kantrowitz and Wingert (1999) refer to tweens as “a retailer’s dream:” they know what they want and they are willing to spend their own, or their parent’s, money to get it. While they may still be considered children in the public’s eye, tween interests are not to be confused with child interests. No longer do toys suffice on the tweens’ lists of wants and needs. Clothes, accessories, make-up, and music are just a few of the kinds of

products marketed to the tween consumer (Guthrie, 2005; Driscoll, 2002). Clothes are of particular importance to the tween consumer and are perhaps one of the most popular items for them to buy. Tweens are characterized as being very much aware of and concerned with the brand of clothing they purchase, so not just any clothing will satisfy them (Siegel et al., 2004; Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1999). The tween consumer has instigated the recent development of tween-gear magazines, television shows, and movies as well (Olson, 2007; Guthrie, 2005; Cook and Kaiser, 2004). A demographic that was virtually left untouched in previous years (because they were perhaps defined as “children” until recently), the tween market has boomed recently, making possible the production of these various products and the successful marketing and selling of them to the tween consumer.

In terms of how this term is constructed, today’s tween consumer is overwhelmingly female as opposed to male. This is not to suggest that there are more girls of this age than boys, but rather that the targeted consumer of tween-based products is an 8- to 14- year-old girl (Guthrie, 2005; Cook and Kaiser, 2004). Specialized tween stores are becoming more popular, with some gearing their products specifically to the tween-aged girl (e.g. the clothing store Justice and accessories store Claire’s). Even magazines have jumped on the tween bandwagon and, more often than not, are targeted towards a female audience. Perhaps the stereotypical image of a tween is female because that is what the media tends to portray. When the media discusses the latest tween-obsessed music act or movie they are often referring to what tween-aged girls like, not necessarily what the boys are interested in (Olson, 2007). Focus is perhaps on the tween girl because society has different expectations for females than it does for males. Girls



are expected to look and act a certain way, both of which they can learn from the media. Consequently, while tweens have emerged as a unique category there are numerous sex and gender differences between the tween boy and the tween girl, just as there are differences between the teenage boy and girl and the adult male and female. Research and media may tend to focus on the tween girl, then, but that is not to imply that the tween boy niche is nonexistent; tween boys are simply not the foci of tween-themed research. I believe researching the tween girl is important in understanding how and when young girls are socialized into being perceived as adult females. The discussion of tweens in this thesis will remain solely on the female tween since she is the one most often associated with the tween label. Future research should include a greater exploration of tween boys, however, and I will address this point in my conclusions.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the messages that tween girls are exposed to in the media. Using a content analysis of magazine advertisements from a tween-targeted magazine, I analyze three aspects of tween media exposure. First, I analyze the advertisements' message on tween appearance. I pay particular attention to the beauty messages relayed to tweens via their facial appearance and style of dress. Second, I evaluate the advertisements' messages in terms of tween biological development. Third, I categorize the messages relayed to tweens based on actions/behaviors.

The next section is a literature review of existing research on tweens and media exposure. In chapter three, I detail the theoretical framework for this thesis. Chapter four describes the methods, including the data source as well as the procedure used to collect, code, and analyze the data. In chapter five, I describe the results of this study, focusing

on the most important findings by discussing emerging themes in the data. In the conclusion, I offer limitations of this thesis and opportunities for future research.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to research the tween experience, I find it crucial to understand the biological and sociological happenings of this age-group. The tween years represent a time when many changes are occurring both internally and externally. The following pages discuss both the biological changes experienced by a tween as well as the social changes. The biological and social aspects of tweenhood are important to understand because tweens are at an age when they are starting to become less dependent on their parents and instead are seeking independence. How a tween comes to understand herself is influenced by various sources of socialization, such as parents, peers, and the media, all of which will be discussed in the following pages.

### **Tween Biology**

As previously discussed, the term tween appears to have emerged because of the marketing industry. Whatever the reason for choosing this particular age-group to assign such a label, it does not go without notice that the years in question, that being between roughly 8 and 14, are a formidable time in one's life. This time period is often associated with entry into puberty. Pubertal changes occur both inside and outside the body for these tweens. Visible changes occurring to pubertal girls include the development of breasts, growth of body hair, and an increase in height and weight (Mannheim, 2008). Internally, a tween girl's body is preparing for menarche, or her first menstrual period (Mannheim, 2008; Lee, 1994). Menarche occurs late in the puberty process but is often the most common signifier of it (Posner, 2006). Although the age at which puberty begins depends on numerous factors, typically girls reach menarche between the ages of

10 and 14 (Mannheim, 2008; Posner, 2006). Because menarche is a major developmental event for most female tweens, I center my discussion on this particular aspect of biology.

With the changing of their bodies brought on by puberty and subsequently menarche, young girls undoubtedly experience a range of emotions and feelings about themselves and their bodies. Those who have yet to experience menarche may perceive it as a negative event (Marvan, Vacio, Garcia-Yanez, and Espinosa-Hernandez, 2007). Even girls who have reached menarche may display negative feelings about it, feelings that are confounded by the implications of the life-event they just experienced.

Embarrassment and discomfort were two attitudes regarding menarche that Moore (1995) found in her study regarding girls' understanding and social construction of menarche, for instance. Those reaching puberty early in their lives may be more susceptible to depression and negative body image, however existing research does not completely agree on what represents "early" menarche (Posner, 2006). Upon menarche some girls may even report distress or ambivalence about growing up. The ambivalence toward growing up is associated with a girl's desire to be an adult while at the same time feeling embarrassed about experiencing a grown-up occurrence such as menstruation (Moore, 1995). On the other hand, some girls may be excited about getting older and therefore remain positive about experiencing their first period (Ruble and Brooks-Gunn, 1982). This positive attitude toward menarche may be due to the amount of knowledge a girl has about puberty and menarche before it occurs. For instance, some research has shown that girls who felt prepared viewed menarche more positively than girls who did not have much previous information (Rierdan, Koff, and Stubbs, 1989; Golub and Catalano, 1983).

While pubertal girls may be dealing with internal conflicts regarding their changing bodies, they may also be made aware of what menarche symbolizes to U.S. society. Puberty has often been associated with adolescent sexuality (Posner, 2006). Since menarche is a component of female puberty, it too has come to represent adolescent sexuality. The significance of menarche may often be “entwined with cultural beliefs regarding adolescent female sexuality” (Posner, 2006, p. 316). As Lee (1994) posits, menarche represents the beginning of womanhood. By entering into menarche, a young female is often unconsciously entering a world within which her body overwhelmingly is a focal point for attention. She, in turn, may become more aware of her body and how others perceive it. Lee (1994) wrote extensively about this idea and other issues associated with menarche, something she refers to as the “heterosexualization of menarche.” She argues that there comes a point in a female’s life when society no longer views her as a little girl and instead begins to see her in a more sexualized way, at least in part, the onset of menarche signals the start of this tendency. In particular, it is with menarche that a female’s body begins to represent both sexual and reproductive availability (Lee, 1994). During this time a girl may become more self-conscious of her body and how it is viewed, particularly in a society where a woman’s body is often objectified, because she begins to notice others’ gazes upon her changing body. For many, this happens in the tween years.

While brought on in part by menarche, the self consciousness individual girls/women might feel toward their bodies can also be attributed to the media. Many girls may get information about menarche from their mothers, but many also get information via the media, in particular, magazines (Driscoll, 2002; Moore, 1995). At

times the information presented in mainstream magazines may idealize the pubertal girl's body, giving her an image to which she compares herself (Driscoll, 2002). Comparing one's body to bodies found in magazines is a common activity, then. Research on body image and the media often focuses on the images females are exposed to and how those images affect the attitudes they have about their own body. Not enough research has paid attention to the messages about and images of the female body in tween magazines.

### **Socialization of the Importance of Appearance**

Biologically the tween's body may be changing in a myriad of ways, but socially she may be experiencing changes as well. Tween female socialization centers largely on appearance. Social pressures from peers, parents, and the media to act and look a particular way influence tween life. Appearance is very important to tweens and research has found that a focus on appearance in tween years tends to have a profound negative effect on body image. Adolescence is a time when body image becomes an increasingly important issue (Driscoll, 2002). Research has found that pre-adolescent/pre-teen girls (tweens) are increasingly dissatisfied with their bodies (Peterson and Jung, 2007; Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006; Sinton and Birch, 2006). This dissatisfaction may stem from the various socializing influences previously mentioned.

Body dissatisfaction in tween girls is undoubtedly linked to the focus on women's appearances and the prominence of beauty ideals within mainstream culture in the U.S. Female beauty is valued and even idealized in the U.S. Physical appearance is considered to be one of the most important characteristics of an individual; or so the media and other socializing agents have led us to believe (Jones, Vigfusdottir, and Lee,

2004; Mazur, 1986). It is through media representations, however, that a so-called culture of appearance is created and reinforced (Jones et al., 2004). Tween girls watch programs on television or flip through magazines that emphasize the importance of appearance. In a way, these media outlets train girls how to look a certain part and how to fit into this appearance culture. Girls are not trained to be who they want to be, but rather who society wants them to be (Pipher, 1994).

U.S. society places a great deal of emphasis on feminine beauty. The feminine standard of beauty in the U.S. is a woman who is thin, young, white, and upper-class. This woman should also be free of any noticeable physical imperfections and disabilities (Zones, 1997). How a woman physically represents herself is therefore influenced by societal beauty norms and ideals. There are various physical attributes that make a person appear attractive to others. To be anything other than thin, for instance, is to not be ideal. Thus, a major ingredient in beauty ideals is the prescription for thinness. Much research has been devoted to this ideal female body type and for the most part, it all agrees that the thin body type is the one by which women strive to achieve. In addition, breast size is one physical attribute that is often valued or devalued. Millsted and Frith (2003) argue that female breasts are objectified and sexualized by males who view large breasts as most appealing. The ideal breast size for a female is large, as determined by societal beauty standards (Millsted and Frith, 2003; Mazur, 1986). Not only is it important for a female to have large breasts, though, it is also important for her to be thin. Since breasts are comprised primarily of fat, and those who are thin have little fat, the ideal feminine body of large breasts and a thin frame is rather unattainable (Millsted and Frith, 2003).

Other attractive feminine features include full lips, clear skin, and shiny hair (Sarwer, Grossbart, and Didie, 2003). Various regimens can be used to help a woman attempt to achieve these idealized attributes; regimens such as cosmetic surgery, medication, and make-up. Cosmetics companies pledge to help women achieve the ideal look and their products may help give the illusion of full lips or clear, smooth skin (Gallagher and Pecot-Hebert, 2007). Another feminine beauty ideal that many women ascribe to is hair removal. Beauty ideals suggest that it is acceptable for a female to remove her body hair so that she may be perceived as more feminine. Since body hair is attributed with masculinity, females engage in hair removal practices so that they are left with little to no body hair (Toerien, Wilkinson, and Choi, 2005).

Many of the societal standards surrounding women's appearances are related to the parts of women's bodies that are deemed most "feminine" (breasts, faces, hair, legs, hands, etc.) and most visible to others. Objectification theory posits that females are treated as a body or a collection of body parts (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). The objectification of women's bodies is visible in print images of females wherein the image cuts off the woman's head, leaving only her body visible. Under objectification theory, women are viewed not as people, but as objects which are subject to the gaze of others. Being treated as a body may lead women to believe that they are objects, which may in turn lead to body dissatisfaction (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997).

As I discuss, tween girls are generally dissatisfied with their bodies. The dissatisfaction is due to numerous factors, some of which include peer, parental, and media influence. Dissatisfaction arises because the girls wish to look a certain way; a way that they see portrayed in the media. Perhaps one of the most influential factors



determining girls' body images, then, is media socialization. Through television programs and advertisements, females acquire an unrealistic view of what the female form should look like. Media images of what constitutes the ideal female body bombard individual women (particularly younger girls and women who access media venues more often). Still, peers and parents have a socializing influence.

Peer groups play an integral part in the lives of tweens that influence, in turn, how girls perceive body image. Peers are no longer merely playmates for the tween; they are the source of information and identity development (Newman, Lohman, and Newman, 2007). While the peer group may provide a tween with a sense of belonging, it can also be the source of negativity and pressure. Research has found that peer groups can influence how a tween girl views her body. Jones and Crawford (2006) found that girls talked more about appearance within their peer groups than did boys. Discussions within the peer group about appearance and the desire to conform to a particular idea of what constitutes the ideal body are undoubtedly related to this dissatisfaction. Girls in Dohnt and Tiggemann's (2006) study who thought their friends desired to be thin also reported wishing to be thin themselves; that is, those who thought their friends were dissatisfied with their bodies were more likely to be dissatisfied with their own bodies. Girls identified as overweight in Jones and Crawford's (2006) study indicated that they believed more people would be friends with them if they were thinner. Peer groups influence not only how the tween girl perceives her body, but also the behaviors she engages in as a result of the appearance discussions. Girls in their tween years, then, may feel pressure to diet, particularly if she is overweight (Jones and Crawford, 2006). In addition to dieting, other weight loss behaviors that have been associated with peer

influence include excessive exercising and various eating disorders (Mackey and La Greca, 2008).

Although the peer group becomes a more integral part of a tween's life than it was as a younger child, parents are not completely devoid of influence. In one study on pre-adolescent weight concerns, girls who reported that it was important to one of their parents that they be thin were more likely to be concerned with their weight than their peers (Field, Camargo, Taylor, Berkey, Roberts, and Colditz, 2001). Dieting behavior, in particular, has emerged in research as an area in which parents have influence. Field et al.'s (2001) findings suggest, for instance, that girls who indicated that it was important to their fathers that they were thin were more likely to diet than their peers. Additionally, girls were also likely to become constant dieters when they believed their mothers were trying to lose weight (Field et al., 2001; Hill and Pallin, 1997). In a study conducted by Sinton and Birch (2006), girls were asked survey questions pertaining to parental weight loss behavior, the importance parents placed on being thin, encouragement to lose weight, and if they were ever teased about their weight at home. Those respondents scoring high on the aforementioned questions, indicating higher parental influence on weight behavior, were likely to score high on measures of body dissatisfaction as well (Sinton and Birch, 2006).

### **Media Socialization**

In addition to peers and parents, body dissatisfaction in tweens has been related to media influences. The media is very influential when it comes to body image representations. Television and print media are two common forms of media that

comprise the life of today's tween. The findings of many media and body image studies are similar to that of the previously highlighted studies about the influence of peer groups and parents. Research has found that, in general, tweens who are exposed to various types of media are dissatisfied with their bodies (Jung and Peterson, 2007; Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006). A study on media consumption, for instance, found that watching certain television programs and reading particular magazines led to body dissatisfaction and diet awareness (Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006). Similarly, research has shown that reading beauty and fashion magazines both directly and indirectly increases a woman's desire to be thin (Park, 2005). Another study on body satisfaction and media use found that, when asked to identify their ideal body type, girls were more likely than boys to choose an image that represented a thin and rather unhealthy body (Jung and Peterson, 2007). Studies have shown that women will go to great lengths to achieve what they perceive to be beautiful. Modifying one's body is not uncommon in order to attain this beauty (Reischer and Koo, 2004). Modification can include weight loss or the more drastic measure taken by many, cosmetic surgery. Neither is an uncommon practice among women attempting to reach or even maintain the thin ideal (Reischer and Koo, 2004). The connections between girls' and women's body images and media socialization to beauty ideals is one that has been researched extensively. Much of the research points to the negative portrayal of the female image and the effects it has on women. However, research is still lacking on the exact types of media socialization to which tween girls are exposed.

The connection between media socialization and negative body image is an issue for tween girls because they are exposed to infinite amounts of information from the

media on a daily basis. While television programs and magazines may claim to be of a tween nature (i.e., suitable, in that they are “age-appropriate”), messages more suitable for an older audience are relayed to the tween audience, whether intentionally or unintentionally, at the same time. The style of dress employed by television characters or images in magazines may be sexually suggestive and therefore age-inappropriate for tweens. While the messages and dialogue may be of a tween nature, the behavior and dress of the people portrayed may not be, thereby sending tweens mixed signals about what is and isn’t age-appropriate (Fabrianesi, Jones, and Reid, 2008). Furthermore, the media is very sexualized, and tweens may be receiving sexual messages from television programs, their favorite songs, and/or magazines that are inappropriate for their age-group (Escobar-Chaves, Tortolero, Markham, Low, Eitel, and Thickstun, 2005).

Tweens are exposed to a lot of images in the media because there is a tween media market out there for them to be exposed to. Unlike generations past, today’s tween has grown up in a time where technology has reigned supreme (Roberts and Foehr, 2008). They don’t know of a time when there weren’t televisions, computers, and more importantly, the Internet. There are various mediums through which tweens are exposed to the media: television, print, video games, and digital media such as cell phones and music players are just a few examples. Not only are tweens and teens using various forms of media, they are using multiple forms of media at the same time, something Roberts and Foehr (2008) refer to as “media multi-tasking.” The use of multiple media at the same time increases the amount of content a tween is exposed to while also implying a certain comfort level they may have with media.

One area of particular significance to the media is that of corporate America. Although the media comes in various forms and there are multiple viewpoints, the media is a part of corporate America. Corporations have a stake in media affairs and therefore have the potential to profit from successful forms of media. One corporation of particular interest to the tween consumer is Disney. Perhaps no discussion of tween media consumption would be complete without the mention of Disney. Leading the way in tween-centered programming is that of The Disney Channel. Writing for *Fortune* magazine, Julie Boorstin (2003) called The Disney Channel of years past the “ugly stepchild” of the Disney empire, referring to its dated programming and inability to appeal to a wide audience. No longer the “ugly stepchild,” The Disney Channel has cemented its place in cable television domination. With programming geared toward children ages 6 to 14, Disney Channel is immensely popular in filling the tween-age television demand and has numerous markets in countries around the world (Disney Channels Worldwide, 2008). The success of Disney programming has blossomed in the last decade, with much of the popularity coming from its powerhouse movie *High School Musical* (Disney Channels Worldwide, 2008).

Disney’s domination, however, is not limited to television programming. The success of numerous tween-geared shows and movies has spawned an entire franchise of Disney related products. Toys, games, and clothing based on popular Disney Channel programs are just a few of the tween-friendly items available for purchase (Disney Channels Worldwide, 2008; Boorstin, 2003). Another television station offering programming for tweens is Nickelodeon (Banet-Weiser, 2004). It too has created an empire of shows, movies, and merchandise for the tween consumer. Of the two stations,

however, Disney appears to have won the tween consumer race by amassing huge ratings numbers for their original programming and movies. In terms of worldwide appeal, Disney certainly dominates, claiming the number 1 television telecast among 6 to 14 year olds (Disney Channels Worldwide, 2008).

One media source that has benefited from Disney's success with tween entertainment is that of magazines. Readership of tween-g geared magazines saw an increase after Disney's *High School Musical* premiered, and brought life to an industry that had been on the decline (Olson, 2007). Magazines for the tween girl include such names as *Bop*, *TigerBeat*, and *Girls' Life* and contain content such as beauty and fashion advice, and information on celebrities considered popular among tweens (Olson, 2007). Most often the celebrities featured in tween magazines are from popular tween shows, movies, or bands. The magazines are filled with pictures of these celebrities and various tidbits of information about the star. By featuring other media venues, tween magazines further enforce the images, values, and ideals tweens are encouraged to adhere to. Within the past few years, a number of magazines have ceased operations, some of which included those specifically for teens and younger teens (read: tweens). Many of these magazines were published on a monthly basis, therefore making the readers wait weeks before a new issue came out. Their readership declined with the introduction of weekly published magazines as their readers no longer had to wait a month to get their entertainment news (Olson, 2007). Although some tween magazines may have seen an increase in readership within the past few years, many have also seen a decline and have therefore ceased operations. A market cannot exist without readers and magazines have had to seek new ways of reaching their customer base.

One way in which magazines have reached out to consumers is via the Internet. Record numbers of people use the Internet and research has shown that adolescent girls often visit the websites of popular magazines (Labre and Walsh-Childers, 2003). It is worth noting that all of the tween magazines previously mentioned have a corresponding website. The content of the websites are similar to that contained within the pages of the magazines. However, unlike their print counterparts, the websites for these magazines are also able to offer interactive features such as games, quizzes, and message boards (Labre and Walsh-Childers, 2003). In an analysis of four popular teen magazine websites, researchers found that the content amongst all was fairly similar; that being a focus on beauty, fashion, and celebrities (Labre and Walsh-Childers, 2003). The focus on beauty that emerges as a common theme on these websites once again reinforces the idea of an appearance centered culture. Not only are today's tweens receiving messages from television and magazines about the ideal feminine body, they are also exposed to the images via the Internet.

Although the Internet is a popular tool for tweens to use, print magazines are still being produced and sold to consumers, which suggests that there is still a demand for them in the market. Even though many magazines have a corresponding website, the number of advertisements on the website is much less than those contained in the print version. Some research suggests that print advertisements are more effective than those on the Internet and on television (McPheters & Company, 2009). Print advertisements were more effective in that they made a stronger impression on participants of the study than either digital or television ads (McPheters & Company, 2009). Since previous research on teen magazine advertisements has focused on the print issues, it is of

importance to this research that the print issues are analyzed. Furthermore, since research has also suggested exposure to print magazine ads to be more effective than either Internet or television ads, and since tween girls are at an impressionable age, the messages and images being advertised in tween magazines is also of importance.

### **Existing Literature on Adolescents' Print Magazines**

The content of adolescent magazines has been the focus of a lot of research on media and adolescent body image. A content analysis of three adolescent magazines identified three common themes related to the articles and images found inside (Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner, 1991). The first theme involved self improvement primarily via fashion, beauty, and weight control. Secondly, all three had a focus on identity development. The third common theme identified was a racial bias in the advertisements and other photos, such that white females were represented more often than other racial or ethnic groups (Evans et al., 1991).

Other research identified a similar theme of self improvement related to weight control which the researchers identified as helping to perpetuate the thin ideal (Ballentine and Ogle, 2005). Research on the content of *Seventeen* magazine conducted by Ballentine and Ogle (2005) identified two common themes: the making of body problems and the unmaking of body problems. They found that the content of the magazine presented the body as a problem while at the same time encouraging girls to “unmake” this problem. Content presented a set of beauty standards by which a girl should conform while also encouraging her to not conform to beauty ideals and rather embrace her own uniqueness (Ballentine and Ogle, 2005). The contradiction of messages found in some



magazines could be confusing to readers since it is sending mixed messages about how they should look and feel about themselves. While all three commonly identified themes found by Evans et al. (1991) and Ballentine and Ogle (2005) are of equal importance and warrant further research, one identifies quite clearly with that of prior research on media and adolescents; that being the idea of self improvement as it relates to beauty (appearance), fashion, and weight control.

Messages about beauty, fashion, and weight are relayed to readers in multiple ways. Featured stories, advice columns, and photospreads commonly comprise magazines and are representative of different contexts in which influential messages can be conveyed. However, messages can also be relayed in another important way, one that teens and tweens may not realize they are being influenced by: advertisements. There has been extensive research on the effects of television and magazine advertisements on the body image and self-esteem of women (e.g., Harper and Tiggemann, 2008; Hamilton, Mintz, and Kashubeck-West, 2007; Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Lavine, Sweeney, and Wagner, 1999). Females in Harper and Tiggemann's (2008) study who viewed advertisements found in a popular beauty and fashion magazine were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their own body, have a negative mood, and experience appearance-related anxiety compared to females viewing ads containing only products and no human image. A similar result was found by Hamilton et al. (2007) wherein female participants viewing advertisements containing females who exemplified cultural ideals of thinness and attractiveness were more likely than a control group viewing only product advertisements to be dissatisfied with their bodies. Females exposed to television ads depicting women as sex objects were likely to perceive their own body as

larger than it actually was and they expressed a desire to be thinner compared to those viewing non-sexist ads (Lavine et al., 1999).

Advertisements in magazines for females have often showcased the female body. Viewing these seemingly ideal women makes the readers feel bad about their own body. They compare themselves to what they (and society) perceive as the perfect female, and as a result of being exposed to the images, become saddened by their own appearance (Engeln-Maddox, 2005; Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar, 2005; Jones et al., 2004). Avoidance of these images in women's magazines is rather difficult as advertisements are an essential part of magazines. In the case of adolescent magazines, advertisements comprise a significant portion of the content. Advertisements for clothes, hair, and skin and beauty products were all identified in four 2006 issues of a popular adolescent magazine analyzed by Brookes (n.d.). Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner's (1991) content analysis of adolescent magazines similarly identified beauty care products as the most frequent type of advertisement, followed by clothing. Content of this type further fuels the importance of beauty and appearance in our culture and helps to perpetuate the body image issues many adolescent females have.

### CHAPTER 3: THEORY

Research on gender often distinguishes between sex and gender. The terms may often be used interchangeably, but they are not synonymous. Sex biologically classifies a person as either male or female according to the reproductive organs and/or chromosomes they possess (West and Zimmerman, 1987). In contrast, gender is socially constructed through psychological, cultural, and social influences (West and Zimmerman, 1987). While a person may biologically be a male or female, how they are defined and define themselves within society, as well as how they think and act, constitutes their gender. Sex is something a person is born with, whereas gender is acquired.

The process of gendering a person into either male or female begins at a very young age, perhaps as early as infancy (Lorber, 2001). From early on in a person's life they are treated according to how they are supposed to appear to, think, and act within society. West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that gender is not simply what a person is, but rather what that person recurrently does through interaction with others. It is through gendered interactions and performances—our “doing” of gender—that the concept of little girls and little boys emerges and the differences between the genders are established. Our interactions with media items, such as advertisements in magazines, also create and confirm gender and gender differences as well, as we learn to see ourselves through the images we view.

Gender is a social construction that is shaped by the various interactions people have with society. Social construction feminism examines the structure of social order as it relates to gender (Lorber, 2001). Thus, social constructionist feminists view gender as a social institution that not only differentiates between men and women, but also

produces gender inequalities. Inequalities emerge out of the building of dominance and subordination into gendered interactions and relationships (Lorber, 2001). People treat men and women differently, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities. Social construction feminism argues that “women and men are socially differentiated in order to justify treating them unequally” (Lorber, 2001, p. 186). Since men and women are treated differently by society, they are also expected to look and act differently and, ultimately looking and acting differently serves to re-cement differential treatment of men versus women. Generally people look and act in ways that are gender-appropriate because they have been socialized to do so, and are constantly faced with interactions that reinforce what they have learned. Lorber (2001) therefore attributes gender appropriate behavior to the gendered social order which justifies and therefore expects men and women to act differently. Gender expectations and norms are constructed and maintained through numerous institutions. Parents (family), schools (education), and the media all influence gender norms and provide girls and boys with certain expectations about what is gender appropriate (Lorber, 2001). It is through these various institutions that ideas of masculinities and femininities are presented, learned, and reinforced.

Lorber (2001) contends that gender differences are natural; that is, individuals are gendered from the time they are born. It would seem unnatural and wholly inappropriate to respond to and interact with an infant girl the same way one would respond to and interact with an infant boy. Some studies have found that adults treat infant boys differently than they do infant girls (Lorber, 2001). Little boys are big and handsome; little girls are delicate and pretty. Gendering may seem like a natural process because it comes instinctually to people. They know how to treat males and females based on how

they themselves have been treated and by what they have learned via various social institutions. (They do not know nearly as much about how to interrupt gendering processes because of how “normal” and “natural” gendering is.) As Lorber (2001) asserted, the mass media is a very influential institution for constructing and maintaining gender differences. It is through the media that people are presented with images and descriptions of what is gender appropriate.

Young children who do not have the life experiences of adults would invariably seek verification for gender practices from socializing agents, such as peers, parents, or, more importantly for my purposes, the media. By reading magazines, for instance, tween girls are presented with images and text that convey to them what are ideal and acceptable female characteristics. Tween girls then sustain and confirm their gender status by engaging in gender appropriate thoughts and behavior which they may learn from magazines and other media items. In this sense, the media can play an integral part in the maintenance, and perhaps (re)construction of gender in tween girls.

Social construction feminism pertains to the construction of gender. Just as gender is socially constructed, other ascriptions of individuals are also constructed. Medicalization theory pertains to the construction of seemingly normal occurrences into medical issues. Medicalization is the process wherein nonmedical problems become viewed as medical problems and are therefore treated as such (Conrad, 2007). The hallmark of medicalization is that a nonmedical problem becomes defined medically using medical language and is treated using medical intervention. The medicalized problem is viewed as an illness or a disease, something that needs to be treated medically when in fact it may not require any treatment at all (Conrad, 2007). Traditionally, female

problems have been medicalized more than male problems. Issues occurring naturally to women such as pregnancy, menopause, and premenstrual syndrome have all been medicalized (Conrad, 2007). Medical treatments have been established to help women treat these so-called diseases. A seemingly nonmedical problem that has also been medicalized is menstruation, a common occurrence experienced by most females. The medicalization of menstruation is important to this research because tween girls are at an age when menstruating is a new experience. Their reaction to and experiences with menstruation may be related, in part, to the medicalization of menstruation and how it is portrayed in the media.

#### Purpose of this thesis

Feminist social science research on the portrayals of female bodies in girls' and women's print magazines is now a longstanding tradition. Magazines such as *Seventeen* and *Teen Vogue* are popular with tweens and teenagers and have been the focus of considerable research on gendered media influences. Although these magazines are popular with tweens, their target audience is the older teenager. So far, little research has focused on print magazines whose target audience is the younger teen and tween; that is, girls who are roughly 10 to 15 years of age. This thesis contributes to existing literature by focusing specifically on a product geared to the tween consumer. I identify three reasons that it is important to add to our knowledge of the messages that tween magazines convey to young girls about the culture of beauty. First, adolescents and pre-adolescents have extensive exposure to mainstream media in contemporary times. Second, research has found many young girls to be dissatisfied with their bodies, specifically because of media influences on their body images. And third, consumerism

forms the basis for the current definition of a “tween,” thereby suggesting that products and images are marketed to them via magazine advertisements. This project is a qualitative content analysis of advertisements in one tween magazine. I answer the following research questions in this study:

- Do the advertisements in tween magazines focus on appearance? If so, on which aspects of appearance do these advertisements focus? Do the advertisements in tween magazines conform to or resist beauty ideals?
- Do these advertisements focus on issues of puberty/menarche or other age-appropriate health topics?
- What actions do ads encourage? Are these gendered actions?

To answer these questions, I engaged in a qualitative content analysis of *Girls’ Life* magazine. In the next section, I describe my methods, including the data source and coding categories. I conclude my methods section by describing the process used in gathering and analyzing the data, as well as detailing how I recorded the data.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODS

This research consisted of a qualitative content analysis of the advertisements found in *Girls' Life* magazine. *Girls' Life* has a target audience of 10 to 15 year old girls and claims to be the number one magazine for girls in this age range (Girls' Life, n.d.). It was established in 1994, and is published on a bi-monthly basis, making a total of six issues per year. *Girls' Life* is the official magazine of choice for the Girl Scouts of America. In 2008, there were a total of 374,530 subscribers and single copy sales of the magazine (Magazine Publishers of America, n.d.). *Girls' Life* has been the recipient of numerous awards, many of which were from parent groups. It is operated by Girls' Life Acquisition Company and its editorial and publishing staff is comprised solely of females (Girls' Life, n.d.). Females also head the advertising department, a division of the magazine that is central to this research. In the following pages, I describe my data source, analysis, limitations of the research, and the management and recording of data.

### *Data Source and Analysis*

I conducted an analysis on all advertisements found in the magazine for the years 2007 and 2008, making for a total of thirteen individual issues. I analyzed a total of 286 advertisements from these thirteen issues. I chose these two years because of availability of these issues of the magazine. Additionally, at the time when this research began, 2008 represents the most recent year to date that a magazine could have achieved a full publication year. Although the Internet is a popular resource for tweens to use, and *Girls' Life* magazine has a corresponding website, print issues of the magazine were chosen for analysis to maintain consistency with previous research conducted on teen magazines (e.g., Ballentine and Ogle, 2005; Evans et al., 1991).



The content of the ads was the primary focus of this research. On the coding sheet I created for this project (see Appendix A), I indicate the three main aspects of the ads that I analyzed; the text, the person(s) in the ad, and the product or service being sold. I analyzed the text for tone, the words used (appearance-, health-, and body-related), whether it was assumed that women are in control of their bodies, and whether an educational message was conveyed.

In order to address issues related to tween girls' body image and the existence of an appearance culture, I also analyzed the image of the person in the ad. The visibility of their body and body parts was one focus in this case, and I coded specifically for what portion of their body was showing in the ad. The portion of the body shown was further broken down into three categories: ads containing a full body shot, ads containing just a head shot, and those in which only part of the body is visible. Previous research has found that viewing images of the ideal female can lead to dissatisfaction of one's own body (Clay et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2004). I coded the visibility of the person's body to better understand the amount of visible body a tween magazine reader is exposed to. The position the person was in was also coded for, as well as the activity he/she was engaging in and the setting in which he/she was portrayed.

Coding of the image portrayed also included an analysis of the person's appearance, such as the clothing he/she was wearing, and his/her facial expression. As explained by Escobar-Chaves et al. (2005), the media is very sexualized. I analyzed the position of the person in the ad as well as his/her overall appearance to address issues of sexualization that may be present in the ad. Additionally, the relative age of the individual(s) in the ad was analyzed to see whether he/she appeared to be between the

ages of 8 and 15. This point of analysis will help to better understand the suitability or relevance of the images that tween girls are exposed to and possibly expected to emulate, causing them to do gender in either age-appropriate or age-inappropriate ways. The number of people in the ad was accounted for, as well as their gender and race. Since previous research has found the peer group to be an integral part of tween socialization, the number of people in the ad was accounted for to better understand peer group portrayals (Newman, Lohman, and Newman, 2007).

Lastly, deriving from categories established by Evans et al. (1991), all advertisements were categorized according to the product or service being sold. The products or services were analyzed according to the following six categories: Beauty & Cosmetics, Clothes & Accessories, Feminine Hygiene, Health, Entertainment, and a Miscellaneous category to account for those ads that did not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. Finally, I assessed whether the products or services were helping to enforce beauty ideals by drawing attention to certain parts of the body.

#### *Data Management and Recording*

I was able to locate and check-out all thirteen issues of the magazine at public libraries in the metro Detroit area. Once I had checked them out, I went through each issue, taking a digital photograph of every advertisement. Each photo was then loaded onto my computer and filed under the issue months and years. I had thirteen file folders of photos, corresponding with thirteen magazine issues. Within each file folder, I labeled the photos by numbers, so as to have a quick reference for how many ads were in a given issue.

Given the total number of ads, the coding process was somewhat long and tedious. After completing coding for the first issue, I checked in with my thesis committee to see if I was properly coding the information and also to see if there were any corrections or additions to make to the coding sheet. The coding sheet was made as a table in Microsoft Word. I alternated colors of the text between the issues to separate more clearly the coding of each issue. For example, the December/January 2007 issue was coded in black text, the February/March 2007 issue coded in blue text, the April/May 2007 issue coded in black text, etc. While I was coding, I also created a separate table in Word that contained advertisements that had been duplicated. If I had previously coded the ad, I did not re-code it, rather I noted in the duplicate table how many times that ad occurred throughout the thirteen issues. Once every advertisement had been coded, I printed my completed coding sheets and put them in a three-ring binder separated by issue. Since duplicate ads were only coded for once, I noted at the top of the coding sheet how many times the ad was duplicated.

Data analysis was an equally long and tedious process. All of the counting and recording of data I did was by hand. Using blank paper, I made tally marks to count how often a specific coding category occurred. I then created a Microsoft Excel document to put all of this information in. I separated the issues according to the product or service being sold, which allowed me to count how many ads belonged to each of the six categories: Beauty & Cosmetics, Feminine Hygiene, Clothes & Accessories, Health, Entertainment, and Miscellaneous. Although I had initially put the completed coding sheets in issue order, I found it easier to separate them by the type of product or service being advertised. Once I had separated them by product category, it was easier to work

through one category at a time. The information contained in the Excel document derived from the part of the coding sheet in which the person(s) and products or services were coded. I took the individual aspects of the person(s) category and counted and recorded how often that particular aspect occurred. For instance, I counted how many ads had females, how many had males, the position the people were in, etc. For the products and services category of the coding sheet, I recorded what the products were and how often they appeared. I used both memory and the Excel document to help develop themes found in the data.

#### *Methodological Issues and Limitations*

The total number of individual ads found in the thirteen issues was 283. However, there were three instances in which an advertisement belonged to two separate categories. In each instance, these advertisements were coded twice, once for each category. One ad contained products or services for both Feminine Hygiene and Entertainment, another ad for Clothes & Accessories and Entertainment, and a third ad fell into both the Beauty & Cosmetics and Feminine Hygiene categories. These three instances are not reflected in the total of 283 since this total reflects the number of individual ads and not the frequency of category occurrences. Since the remainder of this discussion will focus on the categories, the total will be adjusted to 286 to reflect the three instances in which an advertisement belonged to two categories.

Data collection was not difficult and I experienced few problems. I was able to find all thirteen issues at two local libraries near where I live. One minor issue I encountered was that the issues I required were a few years old and thus were located in library storage. This was a problem in that in some cases the issues were located in

separate parts of the library, requiring me to seek the assistance of library staff to help locate the issues. In some instances, this took some time to locate the issues, which posed more of an inconvenience than a problem. I was able to check-out issues of the magazine for a week at a time.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

This chapter contains information pertaining to the findings of the research conducted. I identified three main themes in the results: appearance, feminine hygiene, and actions and behaviors. A discussion of each theme is provided, as well as examples of ads that fall into each theme. Before discussing the themes in detail, I provide a general discussion of each coding category (Beauty & Cosmetics, Clothes & Accessories, Feminine Hygiene, Health, Entertainment, and Miscellaneous) and the types of ads that were placed into each category. In this general discussion I highlight the products and services commonly featured in each coding category.

I analyzed thirteen individual issues of *Girls' Life*, beginning with the December/January 2007 issue and ending with the December/January 2009 issue. In total, I coded 286 advertisements, with an average of 21.77 per issue. Of these 286 ads, those falling under the category of Entertainment occurred most frequently, with 118/286 (41.26%) comprising the total number. Advertisements in the Feminine Hygiene category had the second highest occurrence, comprising 44/286 (15.38%) of the total. The category of Miscellaneous had the third highest occurrence of advertisements with a total of 41/286 (14.34%). Health related ads were fourth highest occurring, with 29/286 (10.14%). Beauty & Cosmetics and Clothes & Accessories each occurred 27/286 (9.44%), thereby making both categories the least occurring. Advertisements containing only females comprised 154 out of the 286, making for just over half, or 53.85% of the total number of ads. While ads containing only females occurred most often, those containing no people represented the second highest frequency, with 77/286, or 26.92%. In these ads, the product was of particular interest and was therefore the focus.

Table 1: Total advertisements per category

Category	Total	Percent of Total
Beauty & Cosmetics	27	9.44%
Clothes & Accessories	27	9.44%
Feminine Hygiene	44	15.38%
Health	29	10.14%
Entertainment	118	41.26%
Miscellaneous	41	14.34%
Total	286	100%

### *Products and Services*

Of the 27 Beauty & Cosmetics ads, 25 advertised lip products. Clothes & Accessories also had 27 total ads, of which 18 were advertising shoes. Thus, these results automatically suggest an emphasis on particular body parts (lips and feet). Advertisements for jewelry and those with a combination of products such as shoes, clothes, and jewelry each occurred 4 times. Health ads consisted of those in which health-related messages or products were being sold. Products that were considered for use by both males and females were included in this category, thereby distinguishing it from the Feminine Hygiene category. Of the 29 total Health ads, 23 were for acne medication, and the remaining 6 were those that promoted the health benefits of milk. Although acne medication was portrayed as being for both males and females, the prevalence of acne ads focusing on the face (and appearance) is gender-specific to females. The classification of ads into the Feminine Hygiene category consisted of those products or services whose intended consumer was female. Unlike the Health category, these products were specifically for females and female related issues. Of the 44 total ads, 32 were for menstruation related products. More specifically, 18 advertised pads, 12 advertised tampons, and 2 advertised both pads and tampons. The higher number of

advertisements for pads suggests an age-appropriate approach to menstruation products in that the tween consumer, a girl who is new to menstruating, may not be ready for tampons. Other products included in this category were those for deodorant, bath products, and hair removal products such as those for shaving and waxing. The Miscellaneous category consisted of products or services that I could not account for prior to coding and therefore did not fall into any of the other more specific categories. Forty one ads comprised this category, of which there was a variety of products and services. Advertisements for snack foods such as cookies, fruit snacks, and bubble gum as well as those promoting the Girl Scouts each occurred 12 times, making both the highest occurring products. Other products and services in the Miscellaneous category included anti-drug and air freshener ads.

By far the category containing the highest number of ads was that of Entertainment. Within this category there were various products being advertised, but all had the intended purpose of providing entertainment for both girls and boys, although products for females were of primary focus. There were a total of 118 Entertainment ads, of which the most advertised product was books (30/118). Ads for games had the second highest occurrence with 24 out of the 118 instances. The games classification included advertisements for video, computer, and board games as well as gaming systems. Other Entertainment ads included those for cell phone applications (18/118), tv and movies (18/118), and those promoting websites (10/118), to name a few.

Of particular interest to this research are the categories of Beauty & Cosmetics, Clothes & Accessories, Feminine Hygiene, and Health. However, the categories of Entertainment and Miscellaneous had the first and third highest occurrences, respectively,



and should not be ignored. I have identified three themes in the data that I believe of are particular importance to understanding what is being advertised and the messages that are conveyed to tweens. These three themes can be found across the various coding categories and are as follows: appearance, feminine hygiene, and actions and behaviors.

Table 2: Total advertisements per theme

Theme	Total # of ads per theme
Appearance	80
Feminine Hygiene	32
Actions and Behaviors	144

## Appearance

Because appearance-related issues have been found to be prevalent in existing literature on adolescents, and because of the research questions posed in this project, coding strategies were developed to search for information about women's external bodies and physical beauty in these ads. I coded a total of 127/286 ads as appearance-related, and these ads fell across the general coding categories, Beauty & Cosmetics, Clothes & Accessories, Feminine Hygiene, and Health. Thus, almost half (44%) of the ads found in *Girls' Life* within 2007 and 2008, dealt somehow with appearance-related issues. Further analysis indicated three appearance-related subthemes within these ads, specifically related to an emphasis on the face, body parts, and revealing clothing worn by the person(s) in the ad.

### *Emphasis on the Face*

Ads promoting products specifically for the face were common in both the Beauty & Cosmetics and Health categories. Lip products comprised the bulk of the Beauty & Cosmetics category, totaling 25 of the 27 total ads. More specifically, these lip ads

advertised lip glosses, products that specifically aim to give the lips a wet and shiny appearance. Among Health ads, 23 of the 29 ads advertised acne products. While acne can occur other places besides the face, these products focused specifically on the face by using head shots of individuals to highlight an area where acne can occur.

Lip product ads were primarily for the brand Lip Smackers, although a few CoverGirl lip products were advertised as well. Lip Smackers ads tended to be the first and/or last ads in the issue. They often featured two or more smiling and/or laughing females per ad. Ten ads featured girls between the ages of 8 and 15 and 9 contained both 8 to 15 year olds and people older than 16. One ad, for example, contained five tween females, one of whom was spraying the others with a water hose (April/May 2007 & February/March 2008). All appeared to be laughing. While girls being sprayed with water may appear somewhat erotic, the ad did not appear to be created for that meaning. The ad's text has a positive tone, as many of the sentences convey excitement by ending with an exclamation point; "All together for more fun! More ways to love what you love! One is good. Three is better!" The apparent motto of Lip Smackers, "All the flavor of being a girl," is included in every ad, and also reinforces the notion of expressing femininity via sweetness, tasteable flavor, and the application of make-up. Lip Smackers products taste sweet, and girls are expected to have a sweet attitude. The Lip Smackers motto captures the essence of tween behavior: "the flavor of being a girl" is to be sweet. Girls are expected to be sweet and docile, thus the products are a representation of feminine ideals.

CoverGirl ads, unlike Lip Smackers ads, used the same model in both ads, pop singer Rihanna, a celebrity in her 20s. CoverGirl ads showed the female from her

shoulders up, and made her lips more visible than those in Lip Smackers ads. In one ad for CoverGirl Wetslicks Fruit Spritzers, the model is holding a strawberry near her open mouth, as if ready to bite into it (August/September 2007 & October/November 2007). Although the image is primarily of her head, her shoulders are exposed, revealing a string-like halter top around her neck. This image comes across more sensual than the Lip Smackers ads. Using their famous tagline, the CoverGirl ads always include the slogan, “Easy breezy beautiful CoverGirl.” Wetslicks lip gloss is the product being advertised in both ads, lip gloss that as one ad proclaims will give “you endless options in shine.” Large images of the product are also included as part of the ad, images that show beads of water on the product, making it seem as though it is wet. Wet images and objects are sexual in nature, thereby furthering the message of sensuality portrayed in the ad. Whereas the Lip Smackers ads portray multiple tweens in an advertisement, the CoverGirl ads all had a singular model who was older than a tween. The single CoverGirl model implies that when one desires to be sexy, she does not need her friends around to convey this message; sexual appeal can be achieved alone, without the aid of friends. Lip Smackers ads appeal to tweens who want to have fun with their friends; CoverGirl ads appeal to tweens who want to be flirty, playful, and sensual, who want to act older than they are. Both Lip Smackers and CoverGirl advertise lip gloss, but the messages they send to tween girls are different.

Advertisements for acne comprised 23 of the 29 Health ads. These ads were generally not gender-specific as both males and females appeared in the photos. Ads consisting only of head shots comprised 9 out of 21 ads featuring people, a point which furthers the emphasis on the face that is portrayed in these appearance-related ads.

Clearing facial acne was the target of many of these ads, with one encouraging to “do your face a favor” and try the Stri-Dex acne pad that won’t burn and provides “full-face coverage and deep, but gentle cleaning.” One ad for Proactiv Solution claimed it is “Keeping America beautiful. One acne-free face at a time” (April/May 2007). This same ad encourages the reader to try the product “today and set your true beauty free at last.” This suggests that one is only beautiful on the outside, and with acne-free skin. When the person with the acne is female, the pressure to fix it is even more paramount because females are expected to live up to beauty norms which emphasize clear skin and physical attractiveness.

An ad for Stri-Dex acne pads shows two cartoon faces, one smiling, one angry (see Appendix B, image 1; December/January 2007, April/May 2007, June/July 2007, December/January 2008, & April/May 2008). The angry face is labeled as “the other brand” whereas the smiling face is labeled as the Stri-dex brand. Per the text, “Only medicated Stri-Dex pads are alcohol-free, so you can clean your skin, treat existing breakouts, and prevent new occurrences...comfortably.” The best way to take control of one’s skin is to use these face pads. Additionally, happiness is an emotion best felt when one’s face is clear of acne. Another Stri-Dex acne pad advertisement shows a large picture of the product box with big red boxing gloves on either side of it. The text reads “The power to win the fight against acne without a prescription” (February/March 2007, August/September 2007, & February/March 2008). These acne ads encourage the use of acne products to fix skin imperfections because having a clear face is beautiful, and only with these products can a person begin to appear beautiful to others. With 23 of the 29 ads in the Health category advertising acne medication, it is apparent that acne has been

sufficiently medicalized in U.S. society so that medications and concerns for acne are numerous.

Advertisements emphasizing the face were found throughout the Beauty & Cosmetics and Health categories in *Girls' Life*. The only make-up product advertised was for lip gloss, suggesting perhaps that the magazine is aware that tweens may be too young to wear other forms of make-up. Furthermore, there were no ads for lipstick, implying that lip gloss is to be the tween girl's first foray into make-up products. Lipstick is sophisticated and associated with females older than tweens, whereas lip gloss is fun and flirty and is attributable to young girls. A focus on acne medication products teaches tweens that a clear, acne-free face is the prettiest face. If they do not have that clean face, they need to use acne medication to achieve it so that they can adhere to U.S. beauty norms.

### *Revealing Clothing*

Clothing emerged as a point of interest related to appearance in that I became increasingly aware during coding that females pictured in the ad tended to be in clothing that revealed at least part of their skin, regardless of the magazine issue and the season it was published in. More specifically, it was common for females in the ads to be in tank tops, shorts, and skirts. I was particularly surprised at how often I seemed to encounter ads in which a female was in a tank top, which exposes shoulders and arms. Of the 77 ads in the appearance theme, 47 contained images wherein at least one person was seen wearing a tank top, short skirt or dress, or other forms of clothing that expose a significant portion of the skin. Of the 22 Beauty & Cosmetics ads, for example, 17 contained people wearing t-shirts and/or tank tops. Of these 17, 7 contained a

combination of people in both tank tops and t-shirts, and another 7 contained people solely in tank tops. Similarly, of the 21 Health ads featuring people, 14 showed people in at least short sleeves, with 7 ads portraying people in tank tops only. These numbers may seem rather inconsequential, but tank tops, particularly those with thin straps or halter styles, are revealing in terms of the amount of skin that is exposed.

Revealing clothing can be found in advertisements across all coding categories. An ad for Red by Marc Ecko shoes depicts an older tween wearing a miniskirt and short sleeve sweater (August/September 2007 & October/November 2007). The product advertised is shoes, but the female's clothing is revealing and attention is drawn to her clothing and body (particularly her legs) rather than the shoes that she is modeling. A similar advertisement for the same shoe brand features a female in short shorts and knee high socks (October/November 2008). In both of these shoe ads, the females are exposing substantial amounts of skin. Perhaps the intent of these ads is to draw attention to the model's legs, thereby drawing attention to her shoes, but this strategy of advertising only further draws attention to the female's body and away from the product. An ad for the company Punkrose features a female wearing black pants and a purple hooded sweatshirt that is open and revealing a bra/bikini top (October/November 2008). The model is seen holding onto the open part of her sweatshirt, as if holding it open to reveal her clothing (or lack thereof) underneath. Other advertisements show females in strapless dresses, low-cut tops, and tank tops.

These ads imply that tweens should wear clothing that reveals at least part of their skin, regardless of whether the exposure is of the arms, legs, or even breasts. Tweens are therefore being sexualized at a young age and are sent messages via magazine

advertisements that they need to dress in clothing that will attract the attention of others, particularly males. This sexualization could lead to unwanted attention as well as body image issues. Advertisements featuring females in revealing clothing placed an emphasis on the female's body and body parts and further sexualized and objectified her image.

### *Emphasis on Body Parts*

To further address the issue of objectification of female bodies, ads were also coded for the amount of body being shown. Throughout the four appearance-related categories (Beauty & Cosmetics, Feminine Hygiene, Clothes & Accessories, and Health), 47 ads portrayed at least part of the human body (out of 86 ads containing people). Partial body shots were identified as those in which the full body was not visible, but more of the body was shown than simply a headshot. For instance, partial body shots ads consisted of those in which the body was blocked by an object (e.g., a gift box) or part of the body (e.g., legs) was cut off from the frame of the photo. Advertisements containing at least a partial body shot and those containing a full body shot occurred more often than those containing just a head shot. Head shots were considered those in which there was a close-up of the head, primarily from the base of the neck up. The visibility of clothing within the ad was also used to define the difference between a partial body shot and a head shot; for example, only a shirt or blouse collar might be shown in a head shot ad. Partial body shot ads were most common in the Beauty & Cosmetics category. Feminine Hygiene ads had an equal number of partial body shots (10) and full body shots (10), out of the 22 ads containing people. The Health category contained 9 head shots and 8 partial body shots out of 21 ads containing people. Considering many of the ads were for acne products focusing on the face, 9 out of 21 ads featuring head shots is not particularly

surprising. As for full body shots, Clothes & Accessories was the only category to contain more full body shots than head shots and partial body shots, or a combination of both. Since 18 of the 27 ads were for shoes, and 21 of those 27 ads contained people, the existence of 14 full body shots is not surprising.

Table 3: Visibility of body in appearance-related coding categories

Category	Number of Ads with People	Partial Body Shots Only	Full Body Shots Only	Head Shots Only
Beauty & Cosmetics	22	14	-	-
Clothes & Accessories	21	6	14	-
Feminine Hygiene	22	10	10	-
Health	21	8	-	9

As previously discussed, an emphasis on particular body parts is apparent in both the lip gloss and acne product ads. In both instances, the face is emphasized, with lip gloss ads further emphasizing the lips. An important feature for female tweens to emphasize is lips, because full lips are viewed as attractive (Sarwer, Grossbart, and Didie, 2003). Lips are also a sensual feature, and the emphasis on them further objectifies and sexualizes the female body. Other instances in which body parts are emphasized in *Girls' Life* are in advertisements for body hair removal products. Products such as Nair Hair Remover and Skintimate shave gel were included in the Feminine Hygiene category because of the intended audience; females. An ad for Nair Hair Remover shows a female cartoon figure sitting in a yoga-type position with text proclaiming the following:

*...I am pretty. I am beautiful in my strength. I am poised. I am ready for the day. I am not going to settle for anything but soft skin. I am who I am. I am pretty...*



The advertisement further states that “smooth, pretty skin” can be achieved by using the Nair Hair Remover and implies that one can feel pretty by having soft, hair-free skin (June/July 2008 & August/September 2008). The Skintimate shave gel ad contains a picture of bare female legs and a mango dripping water (See Appendix B, image 2). Similar to the CoverGirl lip gloss ad, this ad furthers the idea that wet objects are sensual. Furthermore, the only visible part of the female is her legs. This ad is a classic example of the objectification of women in that it emphasizes a particular body part (her legs). The ad reads “Get Skintimate with your legs. Juicy new Flirty Mango” (June/July 2008). Both ads for hair removal products objectify women by placing emphasis on their outward appearance and reducing their identity to a physical attribute (smooth, clean-shaven legs). Another physical feature highlighted in 7 ads is female breasts. Revealing clothing such as low-cut tops and bras/bikinis emphasized breasts in the ads. An ad for Secret Scent Expressions deodorant, for example, showed a female wearing a long dress made of leaves with coconuts over her breasts (June/July 2008 & December/January 2009). The scenery of the ad is a jungle, so the female’s breasts stand out in the ad because she is surrounded by green leaves and trees and the coconuts covering her breasts are brown. The coconuts also emphasize the shape and size of her breasts. U.S. beauty ideals associate breasts with sexiness, particularly large breasts. The emphasis placed on breasts in these ads implies that in order to be viewed as attractive by U.S. beauty standards, tweens must emphasize their breasts. These ads are yet another example of the objectification of women by placing emphasis on a particular body part, thereby reducing a female’s identity to the size of her breasts.

Advertisements found in *Girls' Life* that emphasize appearance adhere to cultural feminine beauty norms. Tween girls are taught that it is important to uphold feminine beauty ideals and to appear physically attractive. Tweens are encouraged to have full lips and clear skin and to wear revealing clothing. Furthermore, tween girls are exposed to sexualized images of women revealing their breasts and it is suggested that they emulate these images. Through revealing clothing and the objectification of body parts, females in advertisements found in *Girls' Life* are sexualized. Tween girls are presented with messages that their physical appearance is important to society and that the objectification of women is standard practice.

### **Feminine Hygiene**

Since menstruation is a natural process experienced by most females, the presence of menstrual product advertisements in a tween magazine is not unexpected. Menstrual product ads comprised 32 of the 44 Health ads. Menstruating is a concept that has been medicalized and is presented as unwelcome and inconvenient. Women are taught to think of menstruating as a negative experience, something that will interfere with everyday activities. The advertisements for menstruation related products found in *Girls' Life* portray it as an embarrassing experience that should remain hidden. One Tampax ad shows a picture of a goldfish in a bowl full of water, and proposes, "A leak can ruin everything" (June/July 2008). By using Always brand pads, however, one can be worry free of the potential for leaks and can "Have a happy period." These ads assume that the potential for leaking (i.e., getting menstrual blood on one's clothing) is a traumatic and unhappy experience and that the only way to gain control (and, therefore, happiness) is to

use a pad with enhanced coverage. They also imply that menstruating is something to be ashamed of and one should make attempts to hide the fact that she is menstruating from others. An ad for Always pads shows a bedroom ceiling at nighttime, littered with glowing stars, one of which is a pad (December/January 2008). The ad reads, “Star light. Star bright. This pad stays put at night.” These ads eliminate the worry about leaks and offer solutions for controlling them.

Whereas the aforementioned menstrual product ads highlighted the embarrassment associated with menstruating and how to hide it, other menstrual product ads focus primarily on portraying menstruating as unwelcome. An ad for Tampax Pearl Tampons, for example, proclaims, “When you get mother nature’s monthly gift (a.k.a., your period), don’t back down” (see Appendix B, image 3; October/November 2008). It further encourages one to “Outsmart Mother Nature.” This particular ad depicts a female soccer player, roughly in her mid to late teens, kicking a gift box with a tag reading “mother nature’s monthly gift.” The package is made to represent a soccer ball, and she appears to be flying through the air ready to kick it away. Receiving a gift is usually a welcomed gesture, but when the gift is from “mother nature” and is one’s monthly period, it is unwelcome. The female is seen kicking the box (i.e. her menstrual cycle) because she does not want her cycle to come. Per the ad’s suggestion, she is attempting to take control of her menstrual cycle, to “outsmart mother nature,” so that she can engage in other activities (such as soccer). It is also meant to be patronizing, referring to one’s period as a “gift,” but one that is not (and should not) to be enjoyed. A similar Tampax ad featuring a large image of a gift box blatantly proclaims that “Sometimes your period is anything but a ‘gift,’ especially if you need a liner too” (August/September

2008). Not only does this ad depict menstruating as unwelcome, it also depicts it as embarrassing by implying that a pantliner may sometimes be needed as extra protection from unwanted menstrual leakage. Another ad tells the reader to not blame Santa, it was mother nature, after all, who delivered “the one gift you didn’t ask for” (December/January 2009). By portraying menstruation in a negative light by referring to it as a “gift,” the advertisements suggest that the only way to take control of one’s body is to use Tampax tampons. They imply that women must make a concerted effort to take power over their bodies, since natural bodily processes (such as menstruation) can prevent one’s ability to succeed at other activities if women do not take charge.

Advertisements in *Girls’ Life* depict menstruating as embarrassing and inconvenient. Tween girls are at an age when they have yet to, or have just reached, menarche. The messages sent to tween girls about their bodies in menstrual product ads is that it is an embarrassing monthly occurrence that can interrupt daily activities and should be hidden from others. It further implies that females are not in control of their bodies, but rather “mother nature” is in control, a point that will be further discussed below.

### **Actions and Behaviors**

Advertisements depicting and/or implying certain actions and behaviors were present throughout the coding categories. Since there are numerous ads that comprise this theme, I found it necessary to categorize the actions into subthemes. The first action and/or behavior I will discuss is that of control. The second action discussed is sharing, followed by a discussion of ads in which individuality is encouraged. I will then address

ads that encourage gendered behavior. Lastly, I conclude with a subtheme on ads that promote doing good deeds.

### *Controlling One's Body*

The issue of being in control of one's body was echoed in various forms throughout the advertisements. Nowhere is the issue of taking and having control more prevalent than in ads for menstruation and acne medication products. Both issues pertain to one's body and insinuate that we (women) are not in control of our bodies. However, it is also implied that by using the product advertised, we *can* gain control of our bodies, especially in terms of what others can see about our bodies. Ads for menstruation products implied that someone or something else is in control of female bodies (in this case, "Mother Nature"). Only "outsmarting" her by using particular pads and tampons can one exercise some control of her body. The ads imply that menstrual leaks (i.e. getting menstrual blood on one's clothing) is embarrassing and can only be prevented by using specially designed pads and tampons. Menstruating is depicted as a negative and unhappy experience. Ads for Always pads imply that happiness while menstruating can be achieved if the product is used. The suggestion is that products that eliminate leaks lead to happiness, peace of mind, and sleep. Uncontrollable bodies otherwise lead to unhappiness, worry, and lack of sleep. Menstrual product ads depict that initially, someone or something else is in control of one's body, but control can be achieved by using the advertised product.

Ads for acne medication similarly imply that only through purchasing of acne medication one can gain control of her body's natural tendency to misbehave. These ads insinuate that we alone do not have control over the presence or absence of acne, but that

clear skin is important to have, particularly if one is to be perceived as beautiful on the outside. Acne medications are advertised as a solution for controlling one's skin and, therefore, one's physical appearance. Of the 23 acne medication ads, 15 contained people and 8 contained only one person in the ad. In ads where multiple people were featured, only three depicted people coming in contact with one another. Few representations of human contact in the ads imply that acne is to be controlled in private so that one does not appear out of control of one's body when in public. The presence of acne requires direct action by the individual by placing a burden on him/her to make sure it disappears. If acne is to be prevented, that implies that it is meant to be controlled which, in turn, implies that those who have acne do not have control.

While it may be true that people do not have complete control over their menstrual cycle or the appearance of acne, these advertisements denigrate both normal health experiences. Menstruating and acne are two common occurrences that can be controlled. To suggest that females, and males in the case of acne, are prisoners to their body's natural tendencies is to imply that they lack control over their bodies, and furthermore, lack self-control more generally over their lives until they "take charge." The notion of taking control of one's life, however, places a great burden on the individual to conform to U.S. norms of standard behavior. The person who does not take control and does not use particular products to rid his/her face of acne and does not use the "proper" menstrual products, is at fault for not adhering to U.S. beauty norms. In this sense, the acne and menstrual product ads that imply control can be damaging to the individual while at the same time motivating him/her to take control, thereby sending conflicting messages.

Control issues implied in *Girls' Life* send the message to female tweens that they do not have control of their bodies. However, they also imply that if girls take action and use the products advertised, they can take control back. Menstruation and acne are two medicalized health issues that tweens do not have control over if they are not proactive. By taking control of their bodies they can cement their adherence to U.S. beauty norms.

### *Females Sharing*

As previously stated, ads containing females comprised 154 of the 286 total ads. Within the 286 ads, there were over 400 females. Seeing as how there were more females than ads, it is apparent that many ads contained multiple females. This is particularly relevant in lip product ads found in the Beauty & Cosmetics category. These ads not only promote a product, but feature multiple girls engaging in activities and conveying a sense of friendship and togetherness. In all of the Lip Smackers ads, for instance, which constitute 22 of the 25 lip product ads overall, the girls represented are smiling and/or laughing; they appear to be genuinely happy and having a good time. An ad for a new “rolly” lip gloss from Lip Smackers contains four females dressed in pajamas (See Appendix B, image 4; June/July 2008). They are all sitting indoors, as if at a slumber party. Although this is an advertisement for lip gloss, it focuses on more than just the product. Activities of being a girl, doing typical “girl” things like having a slumber party, are pictured. This ad is a prescription for female togetherness in that Lip Smackers puts the focus on multiple females, all smiling and having a good time, presumably enjoying the company of one another. The laughing and smiling depicted by all the girls is also representative of the beautifying process as an enjoyable experience. For Lip Smackers, to be a girl is to wear lip gloss, to spend time with friends playing

outside and going to slumber parties. The ads show that it's fun to be with friends, just as their products are fun to apply and wear. Furthermore, they also represent girls adhering to a standard feminine beauty norm practice: the application of make-up.

Other Lip Smackers ads use text to encourage togetherness. An ad featured in a holiday issue shows four females holding onto gift boxes and dressed in sweaters (December/January 2008). They appear to be at a holiday party. The ad proclaims, "Time to share with one and all!" All the girls are smiling, excited perhaps for the holidays and being able to spend time with one another and receive gifts. The text encourages the girls to share, presumably share their favorite Lip Smackers products, with their friends. This sentiment is echoed in another Lip Smackers ad in which two tween girls are peering into a gift box, with text proclaiming "Wishing and hoping and sharing!" and "...just in time to share with your best friends" (December/January 2008). Sharing, sharing time, sharing things with friends, are common phrases within these ads. The act of sharing is a good "feminine" behavior as it implies empathy and concern for others. These ads provide readers with the opportunity to not only visually see a representation of female friendship, but to also read text that alludes to the importance of such relationships with other girls and not just one friend, but many.

Representations of female friendship are also visible in advertisements for the Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts ads not only depicted female friendship, they depicted images of females being "apart" from others. Advertisements for the Girl Scouts appeared 12 times throughout the 13 issues—that is, roughly one ad per issue. Some of the ads were duplicated across issues, making for a total of 6 different Girl Scouts ads. Each had a different message, and all used very little text to convey this message, but text that



existed made a powerful statement. Three of the ads even used the girls' clothing to convey the desired message. There were two types of Girls Scouts ads: one type featuring older girls in their 20s, and the other featuring tweens. The message conveyed by the ads varied depending on the ages of the girls represented. The ads portraying girls in their 20s focused on promoting Girl Scouts as an organization, whereas the ads picturing tweens focused on issues critical to girls of that age, often encouraging them to “defy” something. All ads also featured girls of different races, some white, some black, and some Asian.

The ads promoting the organization featured the same two female models. Both were African American and in their 20s. One ad featured two girls looking at a computer screen with the ad tagline saying, “Make Girl Scouts your business” (February/March 2008, June/July 2008, & October/November 2008). The other ad featured the same two girls holding maps in front of a background that contained various occupations (April/May 2008, August/September 2008, & December/January 2009). The occupations listed included cardiologist, producer, architect, and financial analyst; occupations that, in general, are not often associated with females. The tagline for this ad was, “In a world where you can be someone...how will you introduce yourself?” Both ads encouraged girls to “Discover a world of possibilities at the Girl Scouts.”

The other four ads for the Girl Scouts—those that actually portrayed girls who appeared to represent the tween age-group—sent an even more powerful message. One ad featured a girl outside, crouching on orange-colored pavement (December/January 2008). The tagline encourages one to “Defy Conformity.” A second ad shows a group of four girls standing outside (August/September 2007). Three of the girls are dressed the

same, all wearing t-shirts that say “be cool.” The fourth girl is dressed differently from the other three, wearing a t-shirt that says “be yourself.” The tagline for this ad encourages one to “Defy Peer Pressure.” A third ad shows one girl standing with a skateboard, wearing a tank top that says “surf like a girl” (April/May 2007 & June/July 2007). The message of this ad, as suggested by the text, is to “Defy the Stereotype.” Lastly, one of the Girl Scouts ads shows a tween standing in front of a marble-looking building such as a capitol or federal building, leaning against a sign that claims “I am your future president” (See Appendix B, image 5; February/March 2007 & October/November 2007). The text for this ad also encourages one to “Defy Self-Doubt.” Many of these ads for the Girl Scouts also include the phrase, “It’s a Girl’s Life. Lead it.” The ads encourage female togetherness by promoting the Girl Scouts organization and half of the ads (3/6) contain more than one female per ad. However, half the ads for the Girl Scouts also contain a single image.

### *Female Independence*

Ads for the Girl Scouts containing a single female imply that tween girls can act and be alone and do not always need to be in the company of their friends. Girls are encouraged to interact with others but at the same time, they are also encouraged to be an individual and not be dependent on their friends. These ads encourage girls to be strong and independent, characteristics traditionally ascribed to males. Ads for the Girl Scouts differ from appearance-related ads in that they encourage girls to adopt masculine characteristics whereas appearance ads focus primarily on (re)enforcing feminine characteristics. The Girl Scouts ads depict a balance that tween girls should have in their lives: balancing “alone” time with time spent with friends. Other depictions of females

engaging in activities alone include those for CoverGirl lip gloss and acne medication products. CoverGirl lip gloss ads featured a sole model and were more sensual in nature than ads for other lip glosses from Lip Smackers brand. These ads imply that when one is ready to appear sensual and sexy, she can do so without the help of her friends. Acne medication ads also depict females being apart from others. Since having acne does not conform to U.S. beauty norms, it is something that needs to be prevented and treated so that a clean complexion can be achieved. Of the 15 acne medication ads containing people, 8 contained one person in the ad. Not only does this imply that acne needs to be controlled alone, but it also implies that acne is to be hidden from others. Having acne is unacceptable by U.S. beauty standards and females should treat it privately, not in the company of their friends.

Representations of female friendship and togetherness are found throughout advertisements in *Girls' Life*. Female togetherness can be found in advertisements for Lip Smackers lip gloss and the Girl Scouts. The Girl Scouts ads also encourage individuality by showing females engaging in activities alone. Females are also seen alone in ads for CoverGirl lip gloss and acne medication. Advertisements in *Girls' Life* encourage tween female togetherness while also depicting instances in which it is permissible for females to act alone.

#### *Encouraging Gendered Behavior*

Within the Entertainment category, advertisements for books comprised the highest number of ads. Candy Apple Books, for an example, had an ad featuring four of their published books: *The Accidental Cheerleader*, *The Boy Next Door*, *Miss Popularity*, and *How To Be A Girly Girl In Just Ten Days* (June/July 2007 & December/January

2007). The ad features four separate book covers with cartoon images depicting the book's title. Short synopses of each book provide readers with an introduction to the plots. *The Boy Next Door*, for example, is a book focusing on heterosexual teen romance that features Taryn and Jeff, who "...never really thought of themselves as anything other than just friends. But when they hit sixth grade, everything changes...." Popularity is an issue tackled in *Miss Popularity*, a book featuring Cassie "...the fashion queen of her Texas school until her dad's job moves the family to Maine and she suddenly goes from hot to not." Issues of heterosexual romance and popularity are important to the tween girl. Tween girls are at an age where they may begin to take an interest in members of the opposite sex. Likewise, they are also at an age where "fitting in" and being popular is crucial. These books reinforce the significance of having heterosexual relationships and being popular by suggesting that tweens should spend time thinking and reading about these issues.

Another issue advertised as being of importance to female tweens is scrapbooking. An ad for the website [www.ourhubbub.com](http://www.ourhubbub.com) offers the opportunity to create an online scrapbook, a task often performed by women (October/November 2007, December/January 2008, & February/March 2008). Traditionally, women are the keepers of memories, the family member who documents important family events and special occasions (Demos, 2006). Two tween girls, both smiling and hugging comprise the ad in which various school related silhouette figures are in the background. Part of the text for the ad reads:

*Friends. Memories. Sharing. Create your group MemoryBook today. You and your friends are going to love using OurHubbub's fun approach to authentic storytelling to share your unforgettable experiences.*

This particular advertisement is a representation of females engaging in gendered behavior. Scrapbooking is a predominately female task, one that emphasizes the importance of memory keeping. It encourages girls to engage in gendered behavior by documenting their memories in a memory album. Scrapbooking provides the opportunity for females to socially interact with one another and provides “me” time, time spent away from every day responsibilities (Demos, 2006). The advertisement for [www.ourhubbub.com](http://www.ourhubbub.com) encourages tween girls to begin documenting memories, thereby encouraging gendered behavior practices.

Another ad depicting gendered behavior is for the video game, Baby Pals, a game which allows the user to raise a virtual baby. This ad enforces the idea of mothering (December/January 2008). Although the ad does not specifically state it is a game for females, it is to be assumed. As part of the text in the Baby Pals ad reads:

*...With Baby Pals, the game that lets you do all of the fun things real parents do, you can bring home an adorable baby to feed, bathe, play with and love. You'll have hours of fun choosing your baby's name, gender, eye color, skin tone and much more. And if you're a really good parent, your little one will even love you back!...*

Baby Pals encourages girls of a young age to develop mothering skills and is therefore representative of gendered behavior and traditional female roles. Caring and nurturing are feminine traits associated with mothering and the text implies these traits. The text also describes typical female roles of feeding and bathing babies. Baby Pals encourages tween girls to “practice” mothering skills, thereby encouraging gendered actions.

#### *Doing Good Deeds and Actions*

While some ads depicted and/or encouraged gendered behaviors such as being popular, documenting memories, and caring for babies, others encouraged tweens to

practice good deeds and actions. One example of such an ad is for those advertising milk. Of the 29 Health ads, 6 were milk ads querying “Got Milk?” Ads in milk’s famous “Got Milk?” campaign traditionally feature a known celebrity sporting a white “milk” mustache. A paragraph of text touts the benefits of drinking milk. An ad featuring female celebrity, Amanda Bynes, makes the following statement:

*What’s changed since “The Amanda Show?” Me. Thanks to milk. Some studies suggest teens who choose milk over sugary drinks tend to be leaner, plus protein helps build muscle. Grow beautiful, inside and out (February/March 2008).*

All six ads for milk carried the same message: that a leaner body could be achieved by drinking milk and that milk contains protein, which helps build muscle. The ads encourage drinking milk to improve one’s health, a message that could be conceived as primarily positive. With the prevalence of childhood obesity, the milk campaigns encourage tweens to make good and healthy decisions.

Other ads encouraging good and healthy actions were those for the website [www.abovetheinfluence.com](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com). This website has an anti-drug message and was advertised 6 times across the 13 issues of *Girls’ Life*. One of the ads was duplicated in another issue, thereby making a total of 5 different anti-drug ads within this sample. One ad was very simple and contained a marijuana leaf with a maze inside (December/January 2007). There was little text except for the labels of “Start” and “Or Start Here” near the maze. The website [www.abovetheinfluence.com](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com) was also included in the text. This ad, unlike the other anti-drug ads, did not have a straightforward message; rather the intent was to be vague, to pique interest in the website being advertised. Another ad features a female who appears to be in her tweens, sitting in a chair amongst trash. It is an ad for the same website and comes with the message via text that “Friends aren’t disposable. If your

friend is doing drugs or drinking bring them back” (August/September 2007). Another ad features a side view of a male, who appears to be over 16 years of age. His mouth is open as if shouting and various magazine cut-out phrases are coming out his mouth such as “You don’t need that stuff” and “You’re way more fun sober” (June/July 2007). The ad encourages one to “Talk to your friend. Something will stick.” The remaining two anti-drug ads feature stick drawn people of unknown age. All characters appear to be male, and are depicted in a drab background of brown and tan. The following conversation is depicted between two individuals in one ad: “I smoke pot to impress the ladies.” “Try football” (February/March 2007 & April/May 2007). Another ad features an individual and a dog. The cartoon character is laying on a bed, smoking something, presumably pot. The individual’s thoughts read, “Can’t you just walk yourself?” The dog appears to be thinking/saying “You disappoint me” (February/March 2007). The ads convey that drugs will not help one be popular and will only further disappoint those who are close to the person using. They also discourage tweens from using drugs, an action which could be conceived as having good intentions.

An ad addressing the issue of internet awareness is also representative of the promotion of good deeds and behaviors. The ad is for the website [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) and is sponsored by the Ad Council, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the U.S. Department of Justice (October/November 2007). The ad implies that people, particularly tween and teen girls, need to be careful about what they post online. The ad features a girl who appears to be 16 years or older, sitting on a stool holding a computer screen in front of her chest. She is fully clothed in jeans and a long sleeve shirt, except for the part that is covered by the computer screen in which she appears to be in a

bikini or bra top. The expression on her face is one of sadness, perhaps regret. The text of the ad warns one that “Anything you post online, anyone can see. Think before you post.” Various text in the background lists people such as “your teacher,” “your little sister,” and “a sex offender” who all may view what one posts online. By showing a young girl in a bikini or bra top, the ad suggests that females are likely to take sexually suggestive photos of themselves and put them online where unintended viewers may see them. It further infers that females are naïve and may need to be reminded of what is and is not appropriate (and age-appropriate) to post online. The ad discourages posting personal information online and encourages tweens to make good decisions about the information they choose to share with others.

A final ad brings awareness to menstruation issues that arise in other parts of the world and suggests tween girls engage in good deeds. Sponsored by Always brand pads and Tampax tampons, this particular ad features a young, African girl sitting at a school desk in what appears to be a barren area, one that might conjure images of Africa (February/March 2008 & April/May 2008). Part of the text reads:

*There are lots of reasons kids miss school. Being a girl shouldn't be one of them. In some regions of the world, many girls have to stay home when they get their period just because they don't have protection. Which means they may fall so far behind, they drop out...*

The ad goes on to state that by purchasing Always and Tampax products, one is helping to donate money to the United Nations Association's Hero campaign, an organization which provides feminine protection and education to girls in Southern Africa. Unlike other ads for menstruation products, this ad addresses an important issue, that of global awareness in regards to menstruation hygiene and education. Although it is a rather positive message, the ad also implies that U.S. menstruation norms should be adopted in



other countries and suggests that the U.S. and its menstruation companies “know best” when dealing with menstruation. The ad promotes awareness of menstruation issues and encourages tween girls to practice good deeds and actions by purchasing certain menstrual products to help benefit tween girls in other countries.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The goal of this research was to understand how magazines, through their advertisements, construct and represent femininity for tween girls. Media influences on the representation of the female body have long been researched throughout various disciplines in academia. With the term “tween” becoming more popular in the past decade, this research attempted to understand how the media represents femininity when the intended reader is a young girl who has yet to reach adolescence. Through a content analysis of 13 issues of *Girls’ Life* (2007-2008), a popular magazine for tweens, I analyzed the advertisement messages (n=286) relayed to tween girls in terms of appearance, health, and actions/behaviors. I coded the advertisements according to six categories; Beauty & Cosmetics, Clothes & Accessories, Feminine Hygiene, Health, Entertainment, and Miscellaneous. I found that advertisements adhere to feminine beauty norms by constructing the ideal tween to be pretty and ashamed of menstruating, while simultaneously encouraging tween girls to engage in both gender appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This tension creates mixed messages for tweens that they should engage in feminine activities such as applying make-up and sharing time with friends while at the same time adopting the masculine characteristics of independence and self-control.

Although little research has focused on the tween girl and products intended specifically for her, much research has been conducted on teens and beauty norms. This research is consistent with previous research on adolescents and the media (Ballentine and Ogle, 2005; Evans et al., 1991). Many of the advertisements focused on appearance and were consistent with feminine beauty norms and to a lesser extent, issues of puberty

and menarche. For this particular magazine, stereotypical representations of femininity were present in many of the advertisements, furthering the culture of appearance. The advertisements also relayed messages of feminine and masculine behaviors tweens should engage in. Appearance, feminine hygiene, and actions and behaviors were all emergent themes found throughout advertisements in the coding categories. The results suggest that females are exposed to beauty norms and a culture of appearance via media representations early in life, perhaps as early as age 8, the unofficial start of the tween years, and are encouraged to engage in both stereotypical feminine and masculine actions and behaviors.

## **Findings**

Previous research on the content of advertisements in teen magazines identified beauty care products as the most advertised, followed by clothing, then miscellaneous music, entertainment, and personal services (Evans et al., 1999). Health and hygiene advertisements were ranked fourth in terms of overall ads. Research on the editorial content of a teen magazine similarly found that emphases on appearance were popular (Ballentine and Ogle, 2005). Researching a popular teen magazine, Brookes (n.d.) identified clothes and an “other” category as comprising many of the overall ads. Although the coding categories for this current research on tween magazine advertisement content was modeled after those of Evans et al. (1999), results varied. For ads in *Girls' Life*, those in the Entertainment category were most popular (41.26%), followed by Feminine Hygiene ads (15.38%), and those in the Miscellaneous category

(14.34%). Beauty care products (9.44%) and fashion clothing (9.44%) were the least advertised products.

I developed the coding categories of Beauty & Cosmetics and Clothes & Accessories to address my first research objective/question focusing on female appearance. I found that the advertisements emphasized the importance of physical appearance. Highlighting lips and having clear skin were found throughout many of the ads, as was a tendency to depict models in revealing clothing. Advertisements for lip gloss were common in the Beauty & Cosmetics category. These products may give lips a full appearance, an attribute of importance by feminine beauty norm standards. Acne medication ads encouraged girls to have a clean face, one that is free of acne. Ads featuring models in revealing clothing were also found throughout the magazine, ads that highlighted body parts such as legs and breasts. Many females were shown wearing tank tops, a type of clothing which leaves the arms, shoulders, and collarbone exposed. Consistent representations of females in skin exposing clothing sexualizes the body, making it an object, and taking the focus away from the product or service being advertised. By emphasizing a female's physical appearance, advertisements in *Girls' Life* conform to feminine beauty ideals.

My second research objective/question focused on representations of puberty/menarche and other age-appropriate health topics that may be depicted in the advertisements. I found that issues related to menstruation were represented in advertisements falling under the Feminine Hygiene category, with a majority of those ads being for menstruation products. Menarche specifically was not represented and references to it were unfound. Menstruation was negatively portrayed, with many of the

ads implying that girls think of it as a nuisance. As a magazine for tween girls, an age range who has yet to reach menarche or has just reached it, *Girls' Life* does little advertising to inform girls about the experience. The advertisements imply menstruating is an illness that needs to be controlled. The advertisements in *Girls' Life* medicalize menstruation and further perpetuate its lack of acceptance into mainstream U.S. society. Another health condition medicalized in U.S. society is that of acne. The treatment and prevention of acne comprised most of the ads in the Health category (23/29). These ads focused on eliminating acne, because having acne resists beauty ideals and is therefore one medical condition that needs to be treated in order to appear attractive. Since acne is often associated with adolescents, the presence of ads for acne medication is representative of age-appropriate health issues. Although the presence of acne medication ads can be related to beauty ideals, they are also representative of a common problem (acne) experienced by pubescent and pre-pubescent tweens.

My third objective/question centered on the messages relayed to tweens with respect to actions and behaviors appropriate for this age-group. As discussed above, one aspect of expected behavior of tweens is to conform to beauty ideals by emphasizing physical appearance and objectifying the female body. The ads not only encouraged girls to engage in these feminine behaviors, they also encouraged girls to be strong and independent, traits often associated with males. The messages of the ads constructed expectations for tween behavior through specific activities. For instance, they encouraged girls to have close ties with other females and represented girls engaging in gendered behavior. Attending sleepovers, creating scrapbooks, and applying make-up were implied as fun female actions to engage in. To a lesser extent, girls were also made

aware of the importance of having heterosexual relationships and being popular. However, a clear distinction was made in terms of what behavior is appropriate to engage in with friends and what actions are best done alone. Actions best done alone included acne prevention and displays of sensuality. Having acne does not conform to beauty ideals and is therefore best hidden from others and treated in private. Displays of sensuality were present in some lip gloss ads and implied that one does not need to be in the company of her friends to appear sexy. Ads for the Girl Scouts encouraged individuality and strength in the female reader. Menstrual product and acne medication ads suggested females take control of their bodies. The actions and behaviors implied in the advertisements in *Girls' Life* only further the confusion tweens experience as a result of the societal expectations placed upon them. They are presented with a paradox wherein they are expected to look feminine at all times but act and behave in ways that is typical of both genders.

### **Other Important Findings**

Another finding of importance not included as one of the three themes pertains to the overall ages depicted in the ads. In both the Feminine Hygiene and Health coding categories, people 16 years and older were shown more often than tweens (14/22 for Feminine Hygiene, 15/21 for Health). As for the Beauty & Cosmetics and Clothes & Accessories categories, both portrayed girls/women at different ages, with slightly higher occurrences of females 16 and older. Within the Beauty & Cosmetics category, 10 out of 22 ads featured girls that appeared to be approximately 8 to 15 year olds and, thus, in their tween years. However, 9 out of 22 ads featured a mix of 8 to 15 year olds and

girls/women 16 years or older. Within the Clothes & Accessories category, 11 out of 21 ads featured people 16 years or older. The Entertainment category was the only category where ads featuring 8 to 15 year olds was higher than any of the other age classifications (49/97 ads with people). Thus, while Entertainment ads tended towards the portrayal of tweens only, the four appearance-related coding categories all included a large proportion of ads that featured individuals older than 15/16 years of age. I believe this is of importance because the message is being sent that it is ok for the intended reader to act her age and engage in age-appropriate forms of entertainment, but when it comes to her appearance, she should look older than her age. The tween girl's maneuvering of gender norms should therefore include the practice of age-appropriate gendered behavior and age-inappropriate appearance practices.

### **Application of Theoretical Approaches**

Social construction feminism and medicalization theories provided the theoretical framework for this research. Both theories are helpful in understanding the results obtained. Social construction feminism argues that people are not born with a gender, rather gender is constructed psychologically, culturally, and socially. Gender is constructed in such a way that inequalities emerge between the different sexes and people treat each other differently based on their acquired gender. As is evident in this research, females are expected to look and act a certain way, something they learn through various sources of socialization, such as magazines. Tween girls are taught through the magazine advertisements in *Girls' Life* that their appearance is important. Furthermore, they are taught that being perceived as feminine through the application of make-up and their

style of dress is an important marker of their gender status. Social construction feminism therefore helps to address my first and third research questions; the first pertaining to appearance and the third pertaining to actions and behaviors.

Medicalization theory helps to understand my second research question about the portrayal of menstruation and other age-appropriate health topics in *Girls' Life*. Medicalization focuses on defining common health occurrences as illnesses. As suggested by the results, menstruation is a medical problem that has been medicalized in advertisements for feminine menstruation products. Of the ads that focused on menstruation, there was a tendency to negatively portray menstruating. A common female occurrence was therefore depicted as a disease that needed some sort of medical intervention to “fix” it; thereby representing the basic tenets of medicalization theory. Acne is a common adolescent condition, but it is one that has been sufficiently medicalized. Ads in *Girls' Life* also medicalize acne by depicting it as a disease that needs to be treated and prevented with medicine. Social construction feminism and medicalization are both helpful in gaining an understanding of the types of advertisements found in *Girls' Life* magazine and the messages these ads are sending to tween girls.

### **Limitations**

The findings for this research pertain only to the ads found in *Girls' Life* magazine during the course of two years. The results obtained apply solely to this research and cannot and should not be used to make generalizations about tween feminine beauty norms and the overall nature of media influence. Furthermore, this



research focused on the advertisements found in the magazine and not the actual content of the magazine, such as feature stories and advice columns. Although the content of the advertisements is not necessarily a reflection of the editorial content of the magazine, it is a reflection of the magazine and who it is willing to have sponsor its ads.

Another limitation of this research is that researchers have yet to agree upon an age range to define tweens. Varying reports exist in regards to the age range associated with a tween. Consistent with Siegel et al.'s (2004) research, I believe the age range of tween should be further broken down into the categories of "young" tween and "old" tween. An 8 year old who is just coming into tweenhood may have a different set of interests than a 12 year old who is transitioning out of tweenhood. Advertisements geared to a younger tween set may be viewed as childish by the older set. *Girls' Life* magazine has an intended audience of 10 to 15 year old girls. Since research tends to support the age range of a tween being that between 8 and 14 (Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Guthrie, 2005; Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1999), *Girls' Life* does not entirely meet the desired tween demographic. Although they purport to be a tween magazine, the target audience of *Girls' Life* is slightly older than the researched definition of a tween, which may in turn impact the content and advertisements presented in the magazine. This is a problem in that they claim to be a magazine for tweens, yet their content is perhaps more mature than an 8 year old, who, by research definition, is a tween.

A further limitation of this study relates to the magazine chosen. Prior to this research I was unfamiliar with *Girls' Life*. This magazine is considered a children's magazine and I was able to locate it in the children's section of libraries as well as with other children's magazines in stores. This is a limitation in that it is questionable whether

the intended reader would locate the magazine in the children's area or whether she would choose the more popular and easily accessible teen magazines.

Finally, perhaps no discussion of research limitations would be complete without the mention of reliability and validity. As a qualitative research project, the issue of reliability invariably arises. The analysis of the text and images of the advertisements was at my sole discretion and it would be problematic to assume that others following the same procedure would obtain the same results. Undoubtedly my own personal biases influenced my analysis of the advertisements which in turn influenced the results. While I did my best to maintain validity, that too could be considered a limitation. I constructed coding categories that I felt would adequately address the research questions posed. Although I believe the categories to clearly represent the questions posed, others may disagree and therefore question the validity of this project.

### **Future Research**

With the increasing popularity of the term tween and the influx of tween related products, future research would benefit from continuing research on this rather new segment of the population. Since the term "tween" and products for them have increased in the past decade, it would be interesting to examine the products and services advertised to tweens before their rise to popularity. Tweens are increasingly comfortable with multiple forms of media, and future research should examine the influences of these other forms, such as the Internet and television. Focusing on other forms of media influence and tween products would further researchers' knowledge of tween culture. *Girls' Life* magazine has an accompanying website with content that can be updated more frequently

than in a bi-monthly magazine publication. Internet content may provide further information regarding tween beauty norms and how they are presented to the young consumer.

This research examined only the advertisements in *Girls' Life* and did not analyze the featured content of the magazine. Future research should analyze the published content of the magazine such as featured articles, photospreads, and other content not related to advertisements. Furthermore, future research should also include a comparative analysis of advertisements found in tween magazines and those found in teen magazines. Previous research has focused on the influence of teen magazines on readers, but I found little to suggest a comparison between teen magazines and tween magazines. It would be beneficial for future research to examine this possible link to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences in the content of magazines for each age-group.

Since today's tween is predominately female, future research should also address the tween boy, a segment of the population who is perhaps forgotten by mainstream tween culture. Experiences of males and females during puberty differ and they presumably share differing interests as well. Research on advertising and body image has often focused on females and the negative impact it can have on their self-esteem. U.S. society places a great emphasis on female physical appearance and women feel pressure to conform to beauty norms. The present research suggests that even at a young age, girls are exposed to images that represent and encourage beauty norms. Future research would therefore benefit from an analysis of the products and services sold to the male tween and the impact of media advertising on his body image and self-esteem. An analysis of male

beauty norms and their impact on the male tween would also be beneficial to the aforementioned research.

Products and services for the tween consumer continue to gain popularity and any future research regarding this age-group would be beneficial to better understanding the experiences of today's youth. This research found that tween girls may be receiving conflicting messages from the media regarding what is expected of them. Media suggests that tween girls should act their age while at the same time looking as though they are older. Physical appearance is emphasized and girls are provided with messages that they need to conform to U.S. feminine beauty ideals. Tween girls are exposed to images that negatively depict menstruation and imply acne to be an embarrassing medical condition that resists beauty norms. Tween media also celebrates girlhood and encourages girls to have close relationships with other girls while at the same time depicting instances in which being and acting alone is permissible. Tween girls are also exposed to sexualized and objectified images of the female body and are encouraged to engage in gendered actions while at the same time expressing their individuality and independence. The conflicting messages of both positive and negative nature tween girls receive regarding their body and position in society as females may further confuse an age-group that is already caught "in between."

## APPENDIX A

Issue:

Year:

Ad#:

<u>Text</u>			
Tone			
Words Used	Appearance Related	Health Related	Body Related
Assuming Control			
Educational			

<u>Person(s)</u>			
Number of People			
Gender			
Relative Age (b/w 8-15?)			
Position			
Visibility of Body	Full Body	Head	Partial
Race			
Activity (what they're doing)			
Appearance	Clothing	Make-up	
Setting			
Facial Expression	Happy/Smiling	Sad/Frowning	Other

<u>Product/Service</u>	
Beauty & Cosmetics	
Feminine Hygiene	
Clothes & Accessories	
Health	
Entertainment	
Miscellaneous	
Enforcing beauty ideals?	
Attention drawn to part of the body	

APPENDIX B: IMAGE 1

**ORDINARY ACNE PADS**

**STRIDEX PADS**

# Burned By Your Acne Pad?

## Do Your Face A Favor.

Ordinary acne pads can create more problems than they solve. Stridex acne pads offer proven effectiveness without the burning, stinging or drying effects other pads make you tolerate. The soft-textured pad provides full-face coverage and deep, but gentle cleaning. Among leading brands of acne medication, only Stridex offers alcohol-free medicated pads, so you can clean your skin, treat existing breakouts, and prevent new occurrences...comfortably.

**SAVE \$1**

MANUFACTURER'S COUPON / EXPIRATION DATE 7/31/08

with purchase of any **STRIDEX** product

clear complexion with comfort™

230215

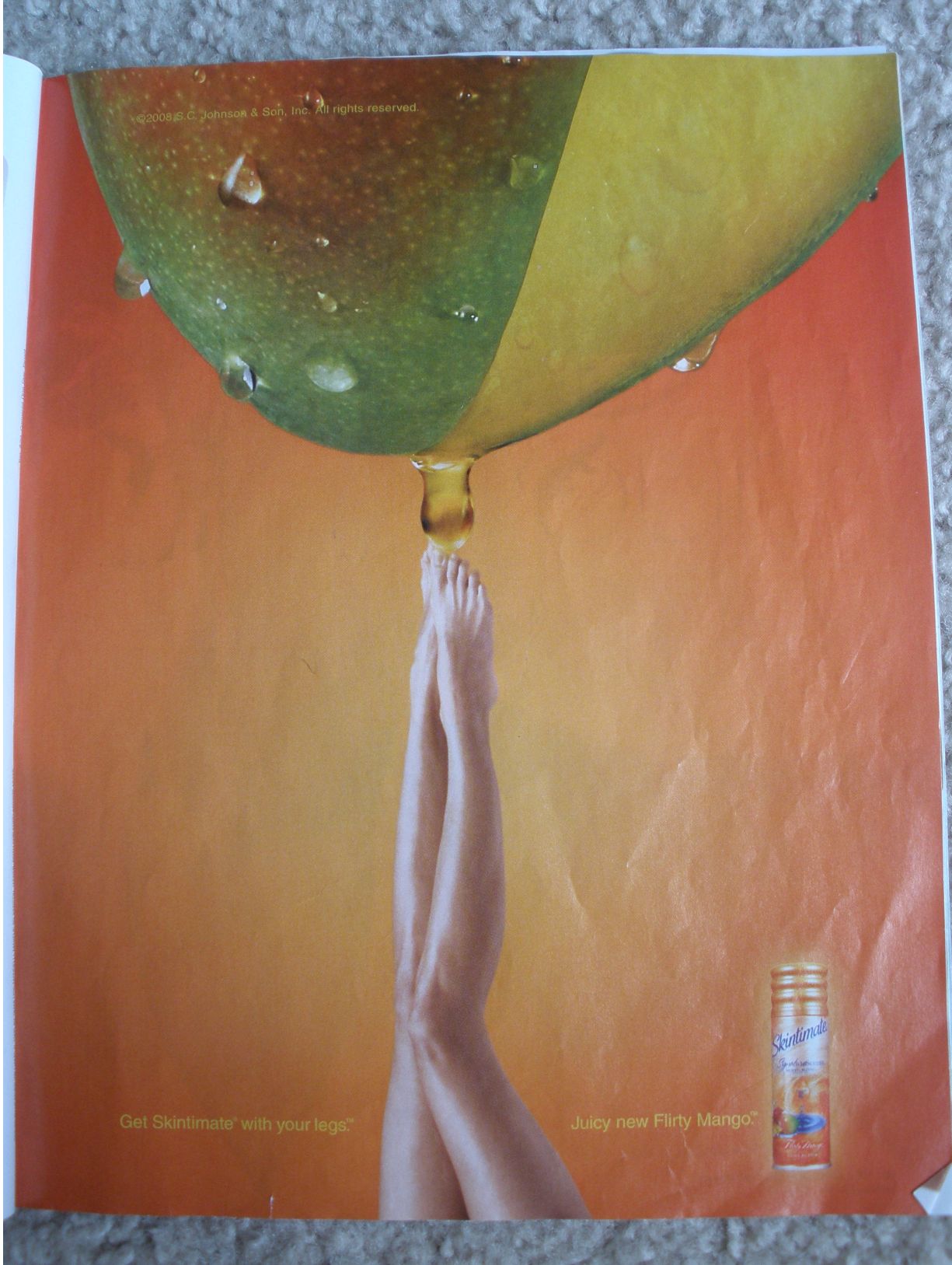
5 41388 25076 7 (8100) 0 23021

**STRIDEX**

clear complexion with comfort™

©2007 Blistex Inc. Use Only As Directed.

APPENDIX B: IMAGE 2



Get Skintimate® with your legs.™

Juicy new Flirty Mango.™



APPENDIX B: IMAGE 3

**BRING IT ON**

WHEN YOU GET MOTHER NATURE'S MONTHLY GIFT (A.K.A. YOUR PERIOD), DON'T BACK DOWN. ONLY TAMPAX PEARL<sup>®</sup> HAS **LeakGuard<sup>®</sup>** BUILT IN SO YOU COULD DITCH YOUR BACKUP. SCORE.

LeakGuard<sup>®</sup> Braid + LeakGuard<sup>®</sup> Core = Bye Bye Backup

*Outsmart Mother Nature*

**TAMPAX**

TAMPAX COMPAK PEARL<sup>®</sup> TAMPAX PEARL<sup>®</sup>

MEET MOTHER NATURE AT BEINGGIRL.COM

ILLUSTRATION BY MARIE BOVO

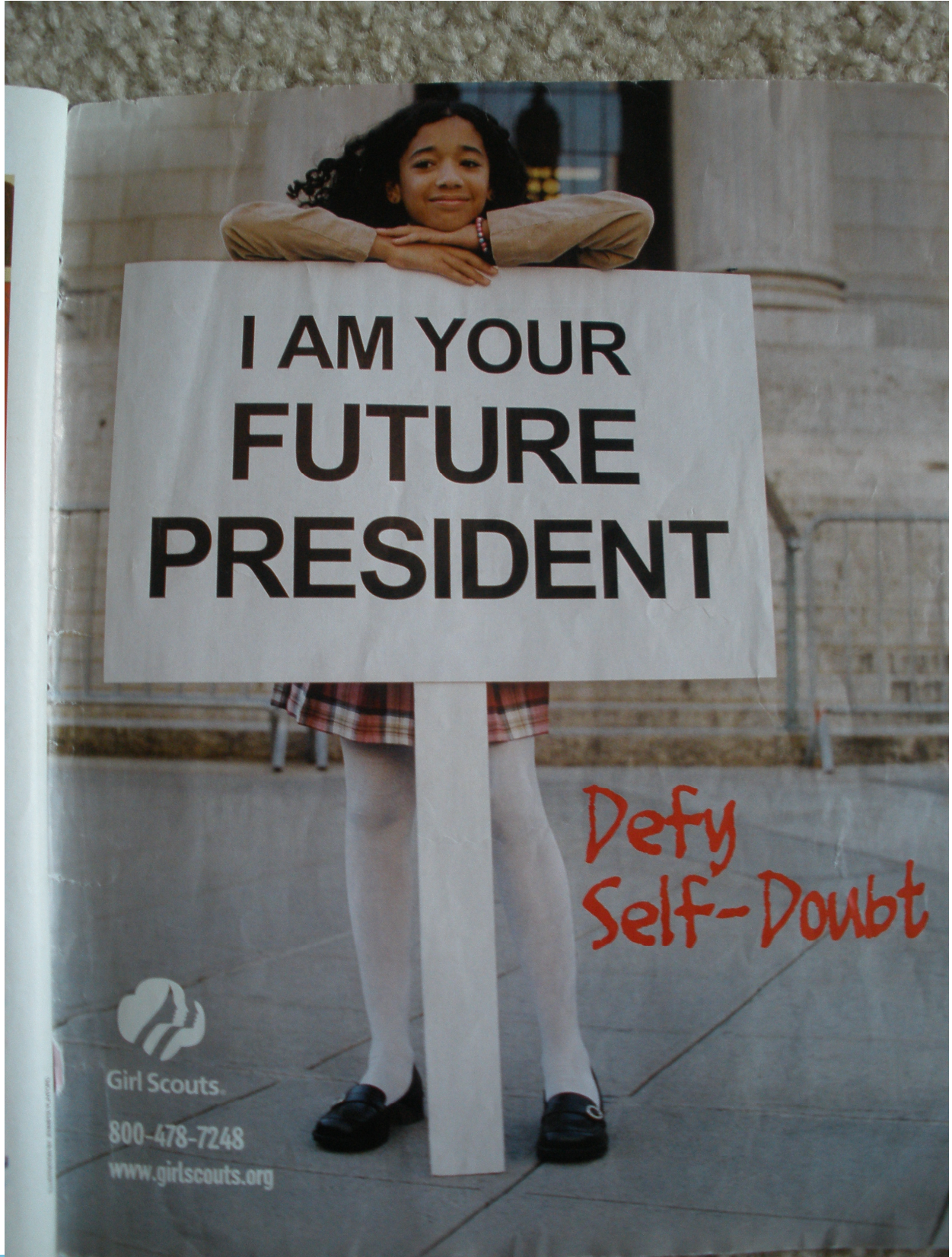
©2008 P&G



APPENDIX B: IMAGE 4



APPENDIX B: IMAGE 5



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**ABSTRACT****FEMININE BEAUTY NORMS AND THE MEDIA:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF A POPULAR TWEEN MAGAZINE**

by

**VICTORIA VELDING****AUGUST 2010****Advisor:** Dr. Heather Dillaway**Major:** Sociology**Degree:** Master of Arts

The term “tween” is rather new and has become widely used in mainstream culture. In terms of how this term is constructed, today’s tween is overwhelmingly female rather than male. Girls are expected to look and act a certain way because of societal beauty norms, which they can learn about via mainstream media, parents, teachers, peers, and other sources of socialization. So far, little research has focused on magazines whose target audience is the younger teen and tween; that is, girls who are roughly 8 to 14 years of age. This research consisted of a content analysis of advertisements found in *Girls’ Life*, a popular magazine for tween girls. Results indicate that tween girls are exposed to feminine beauty norms and the culture of appearance via the media. Common themes identified in advertisements included an emphasis on appearance, feminine hygiene, and actions and behaviors.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

I attended Grand Valley State University for my undergraduate degree, where I earned a B.S. in both Psychology and Sociology. My interest in sociology led me to pursue graduate courses. Upon completion of the M.A. degree, I will continue pursuing a Ph.D. in Sociology. I hope to use my Ph.D. to become a faculty member at a university. My primary interests lie within the broader topic of social inequality, particularly as it relates to issues of gender. Specifically I am interested in constructions of gender and femininity, as well as issues of social class and the influence of the media. My primary interest group is the female adolescent and her understanding and construction of gender and femininity. I am also especially interested in issues of menarche and menstruation.