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Cover to Cover: Contemporary Issues in Popular Women's Magazines

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CHAPTER SIX

COVER TO COVER: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN POPULAR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

DEBBIE DANOWSKI

For more than a century, women's magazines have provided insight, entertainment, and advice to the American public. Despite controversy and criticism about content, these magazines have continued to survive, and even thrive, for more than one hundred years. Beginning in the period from 1890 to 1916, when American women's magazines captured one-third of all magazine advertising dollars (Waller-Zuckerman 1989, 3), and continuing today with an estimated readership of approximately 40 million each month (Starr 1999, 2), *women's magazines have consistently dominated popular media while at the same time providing valuable insight into American culture. As Zuckerman (1998) points out,*

Women's magazines also tell us a great deal about the construction of gender in U.S. society. Within these journals certain aspects of women's lives were emphasized, other dimensions downplayed or ignored. Topics discussed, images displayed, activities presented all affected women's perceptions of themselves, their possibilities, and the world. (xv)

According to Johnson and Prijatel (2000), magazines have several important uses for consumers. First among these is the social function. In this case, consumers use magazines as means of helping them to "fit in" with society, thus creating a shared culture. Next, Johnson and Prijatel point to the cognitive function magazines provide. According to the authors, magazines help consumers to acquire information and provide meaning about issues and events that may affect them. The personal use of magazines is another important aspect discussed by Johnson and Prijatel. They note, "Magazines can help us live our lives as sane individuals, strengthening our credibility, confidence, stability, and status. They

reinforce our values, provide us with psychological reassurance and self-understanding, and give us a chance to explore reality” (6).

Furthermore, Johnson and Prijatel (2000) consider magazines to be “active members of a complex society” by setting public agendas, providing advocacy, building community, and providing symbolic meaning to the world (76–90). They note that a magazine cover performs a variety of tasks:

A magazine cover can be viewed as an event: Put a model on that cover and she starts dating rock stars; put a rock star on the cover and his career takes off. Magazines select our best and worst cities, celebrities, schools, investments, cars, stereos, and people, and these selections become fodder for other media stories. (92–93)

Kirca (1999) takes this a step further by noting that women’s magazines “can be seen as a barometer of the extent to which feminist ideas have been adapted and appropriated for popular feminism. While they reflect the appeal of popular feminism, they also reflect its limitations” (8).

In order to understand exactly what ideas are reflected in popular magazines, a thorough analysis of the issues they present is necessary. Brookfield’s ideas about “deconstruction” point to the importance of thoroughly examining the messages sent out by the media. According to Brookfield (1987), “deconstruction” involves taking apart media content to discover “identifiable elements” that can be analyzed separately to determine the judgments and assumptions present (197).

To expand on Brookfield’s observations, Thoman (1999) points out that there are five areas of awareness educators have historically named as necessary for true media analysis. These are as follows:

Media messages are “constructed” . . . Whatever is “constructed” by just a few people then becomes “the way it is” for the rest of us. But as an audience we don’t get to see or hear the words, pictures, or arrangements that were rejected. We see, hear, or read only what was accepted.

Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules. Each form of communication—whether newspapers, TV game shows, or horror movies—has its own creative language. Scary music heightens fear. Camera close-ups convey intimacy. Big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax, and metaphor system of media language increases our appreciation of media experiences and helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

Different people experience the same media message differently. No two people see the same movie or hear the same song on the radio. Even parents and children do not see the same TV show. This concept turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers as passive couch potatoes. We may not be conscious of it, but we are all constantly trying to make sense of what we see, hear, or read. The more questions we can ask about what we are experiencing around us, the more alert we can be about accepting or rejecting messages.

Media are primarily businesses driven by profit motive. Newspapers lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, we all know that commercials are part and parcel of most TV watching. What many people do not know is that what's really being sold through television is not only the advertised products to the audience—but also the audience to the advertisers. The real purpose of commercial TV, whether news or entertainment, is not just to entertain us but also to create an audience (and put them in a receptive mood) so that the network or local station can sell time to advertisers.

Media have embedded values and points of view. Media, because they are constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important—at least to the person or persons creating the media. Media are also storytellers (even commercials tell a quick and simple story), and stories require characters, settings, and a plot. The choice of a character's age, gender, or race mixed in with the lifestyles, attitudes, and behaviors that are portrayed, the selection of a setting (urban? rural? affluent? poor?), and the actions and reactions in the plot are just some ways that values become embedded in a TV show, a movie, or an ad. We must learn how to “read” all kinds of media messages to discover the points of view embedded in them. Only then can we judge whether to accept or reject these messages as we negotiate our way through our mediated environment. (2–3)

Specific to the magazine industry, Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) note the importance of “deconstructing the potentially harmful messages” contained in magazines (10). In this study, the authors studied food advertisements in women's magazines, concluding that these ads “contribute to social norms that place girls and women at risk for the development of eating disorders” (9). The authors note, “Far from being a benign presence in the lives of girls and women, these advertisements both

shape and reinforce damaging sex-role stereotypes, social expectations, and normative behaviors" (9).

Background

Throughout the years researchers have consistently studied many aspects of the magazine industry. Some of these aspects include the messages about sexuality and romance from 1974 to 1994 in *Seventeen* magazine (Carpenter 1998); the representations of adolescent sexuality in *Seventeen* and *YM* magazines (Carpenter 1998); food advertising in women's, health, and fitness magazines (Lohmann and Kant 2000); the characteristics of heroines in women's magazine fiction (Peirce 1997); political advocacy in women's magazines (Media Research Center 2001); representations of males in the popular press (Vigorito and Curry 1998); the presence of cigars in young women's magazines (Feit 2001); body image messages in fitness magazines (Markula 2001); and the effects of fashion magazines on women's body image satisfaction (Turner et al. 1997).

Despite this extensive body of knowledge, little research has been done to examine the most visible aspect of any magazine: its cover. Malkin, Wornian, and Chrisler (1999) did one study in which the covers of twenty-one popular women's and men's magazines were analyzed for gender-related messages regarding body appearance. The authors determined that "women's magazines were more likely to contain messages about diet, exercise, and cosmetic surgery to change body size than were men's magazines" (3). They noted that a magazine's cover is "primarily a sales tool . . . the images selected and the way we describe the contents must be provocative, hard-hitting, and full of elements that sell—not feature oriented" (2).

In a similar content analysis, Simanski studied twenty-six articles in popular magazines from 1984 to 1993, to determine the quality of information presented to parents regarding communication with their adolescent children about sexuality. Although this study did not specifically address magazine covers, the methodology is worth noting. Using articles located through the *Reader's Guide to Periodicals Index*, a content analysis was employed to determine similarities and differences as related to child development theory. Simanski (1998) concluded,

On the whole, the advice currently offered to parents via the popular press resonates with what has been learned from research. However, the popular press should make a greater effort to broaden its audience by including fathers and nontraditional families, as well as devoting more attention to such value-laden issues as contraception and homosexuality. (9)

Magazines cannot be underestimated as a major cultural influence in the lives of American women. Whether or not women buy magazines, it is impossible to avoid their covers. And what is on these covers is significant. As Johnson and Prijatel (2000) point out,

The cover is the most important editorial and design page in a magazine. The cover, as the magazine's face, creates that all-important first impression. It also provides both continuity through format recognition and change through intriguing cover lines from issues to issue. Editors, art directors, publishers, and circulation directors spend hours trying to select the perfect cover for each issue—one that sells out at newsstands and creates a media buzz. (240)

As further proof of this, Johnson and Prijatel (2000) point to president and CEO of Hachette Filipacchi Magazines David Pecker's discussion of the importance of magazine covers. "The business of editorial demands that we pay as much attention to our covers as we do to our content," he said. "Remember the old adage 'You can't tell a book by its cover'? Well you can't sell a magazine without a good one" (240). According to Pecker, 80 percent of newsstand sales are determined by the magazine's cover (Johnson and Prijatel 2000, 240).

Exposure to popular magazine covers is widespread among even those choosing not to read a particular magazine. With news racks in all grocery and convenience stores, the American public cannot escape at least a quick glance at the material presented on the cover. Because of this, it is vital that we analyze the messages being disseminated each month through these publications.

Method

This study will attempt to analyze and categorize the messages sent out via the covers of the five most popular general interest women's magazines with the highest circulation during the year 2000. These magazines are (in descending order of circulation and rounded off to the nearest tenth of a million) *Family Circle* (5 million); *Good Housekeeping* (4.5 million); *Ladies' Home Journal* (4.2 million); *Woman's Day* (4.2 million); and *Redbook* (2.3 million) (Fine 2000, 3).

Prior to beginning this study, several current women's magazines were viewed to determine commonality of content. Following this, seventeen categories for material content were created. These are food/cooking; relationship (family, friends, etc.); weight loss; fashion; beauty (makeup, hairstyles, etc.); home (decorating, cleaning tips, etc.);

celebrity/entertainment; fitness/mental health; finances/career; fiction; editorials/personal experience; medical; travel; parenting/grandparenting; holiday/seasonal; body fixes; and miscellaneous.

Drawing on these categories, a cover categorization chart was created. Included in this chart was the name of the magazine, the month it was published, the total number of articles discussed on the cover, the most prominent article, the most prominent photo, and an area for additional comments. Each time a line describing a certain category appeared on the cover, a check mark was placed beside the appropriate category. Upon completion, a quantitative count of each category was determined. The results in the top four categories as well as each individual magazine were qualitatively analyzed by category to determine the significance of the stories being promoted on the covers of the most popular women's magazines.

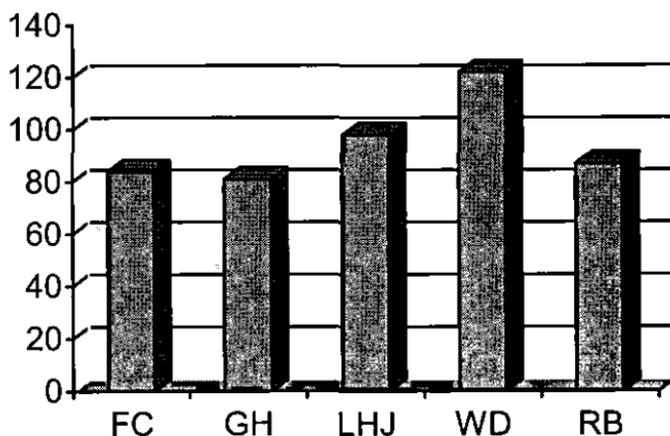
Before moving on, it is important to clarify two points. First, two of the magazines (*Family Circle* and *Woman's Day*) are published more than twelve times a year. Due to concern about overrepresenting one publication, only twelve issues of each magazine were included in this study. In cases where two issues appeared in the same month, the first issue of the month was analyzed and the second excluded. Second, the August issue of *Family Circle* was unavailable. To maintain an equal representation of each magazine, the September 12 issue was substituted. Considering that the previous issue, June 20, was published two months prior to the missing issue, the September issue seemed to be the best possible substitute.

Results

In the discussion that follows, all of the magazines referred to are from the year 2000. In total, 472 cover entries were reviewed from sixty magazines (see table 6.1). Of these, the covers of *Woman's Day* (WD) magazine contained the greatest number of entries, with 122, or 26 percent of the total cover story promotions in the five magazines. Following this, *Ladies' Home Journal* (LHJ) contained 98 entries, or 21 percent; *Family Circle* (FC) 84, or 18 percent; *Good Housekeeping* (GH) 81, or 17 percent; and *Redbook* (RB) 87, or 18 percent. On each chart, the content is abbreviated as follows: food/cooking (FD); friend and family relationships (REL); weight loss (WT); home cleaning/decorating (HM); celebrity/entertainment (CEL); fitness/mental health (FIT); finances/career (F/C); medical (MED); parenting/grandparenting (P/G); and holiday/seasonal (HOL). Abbreviations

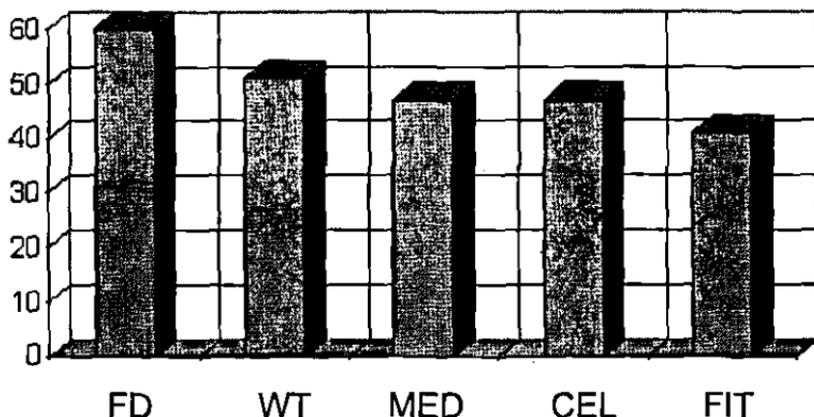
are not supplied for content areas that had few entries, and thus these content areas do not appear on the charts.

Table 6.1: Number of article promotions on each magazine during 2000



When broken down by category (see table 6.2), the highest number of entries appeared in the food/cooking area, with sixty cover story promotions, or 13 percent dedicated to the topic. Fifty-one entries, or 11 percent, of the total number of cover entries in the five magazines was devoted to weight loss. In third place, there was a tie with forty-seven, or 10 percent, of the entries fitting into the medical category and the celebrity/entertainment category. Next, the fitness/mental health category contained forty-one entries, or 9 percent. In total, these four categories represented 52 percent of all cover story entries for the year of 2000.

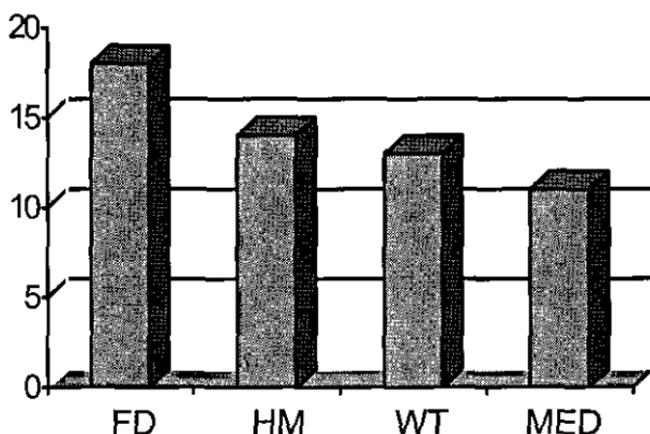
Table 6.2: Most represented categories during 2000 in top five women's magazines with highest circulation



Conversely, although each category had at least one entry, several were dramatically underrepresented. Both the fiction and travel categories contained only one cover story promotion in all five magazines for the year. The fashion category contained five entries, and six entries appeared in the "body fixes" topic. Combined, these categories represent only 3 percent of the total; separately, they delineate 1 percent or less.

Categories by magazine were also determined. What follows is a presentation of both the most and least used cover promotion topics by magazine. To avoid confusion later, this material will be presented in descending order of circulation as is consistent with the rest of the paper. Although it is tempting to use descending order by percentages of the results in this study, it may cause confusion and therefore will be avoided. Following this section, however, material will be presented in a logical order according to the discussion rather than circulation numbers.

The top category of *Family Circle's* eighty-four entries was food/cooking, with eighteen stories, or 21 percent, devoted to the topic. Following this, the home category was next with fourteen cover story entries, or 17 percent; and then weight loss, with thirteen, or 15 percent; and medical with eleven, or 13 percent. Together, these four categories represent 67 percent of all cover stories on *Family Circle* magazine (see table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Top four categories in *Family Circle* for 2000

The top four categories on the cover of *Good Housekeeping* magazine include celebrity/entertainment with 15 entries or 19 percent of the 81 total cover stories represented, weight loss with 11 or 14 percent, financial/career with 9 entries or 11 percent, and food/cooking with 8 or 10 percent. In total, these four categories represented 53 percent of all *Good Housekeeping* cover story entries for the year (see table 6.4).

In *Ladies' Home Journal* magazine, celebrity/entertainment was the top category with twenty entries, or 20 percent, of the ninety-eight total cover story articles. Next, the relationship category represented fourteen entries, or 14 percent, followed by medical with twelve, or 12 percent, and fitness/mental health with eight, or 8 percent. These four categories represented 54 percent of all cover entries on *Ladies' Home Journal* (see table 6.5).

The food/cooking category, representing twenty-five entries, or 20 percent, of the total 122 cover story articles, was most visible on the covers of *Woman's Day* magazine. The home category was next with twenty-two entries, or 18 percent, followed by the holiday/seasonal category with sixteen entries, or 13 percent. In fourth place, there was a tie between the weight loss and financial/career categories representing twelve entries, or 10 percent, each. When including both categories in fourth place, these four categories represent 71 percent of all *Woman's Day* cover story entries (see table 6.6).

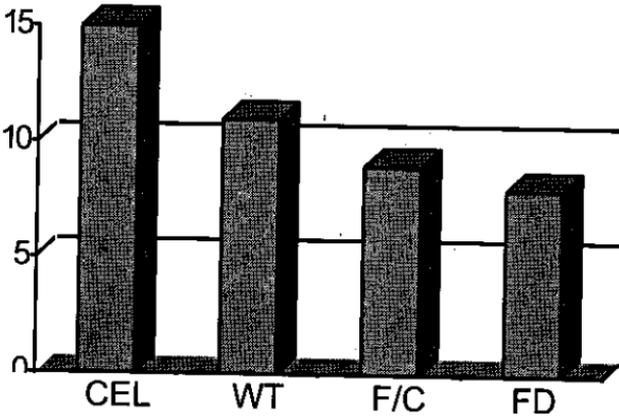
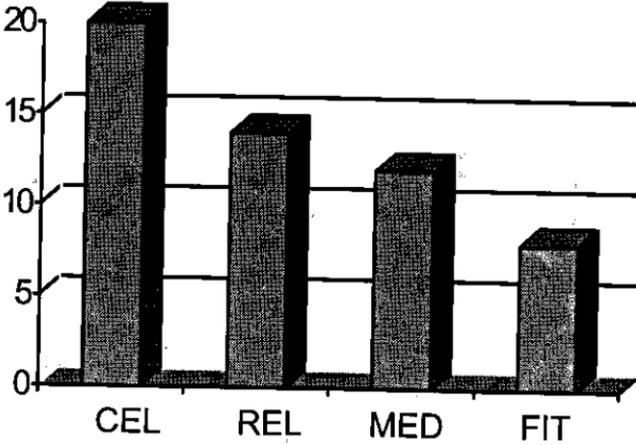
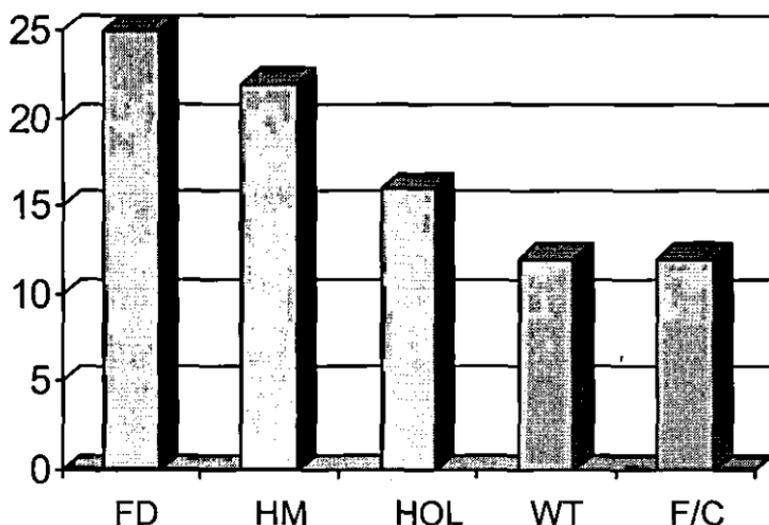
Table 6.4: Top four categories in *Good Housekeeping* for 2000**Table 6.5: Top four categories in *Ladies' Home Journal* for 2000**

Table 6.6: Top categories in *Woman's Day* for 2000

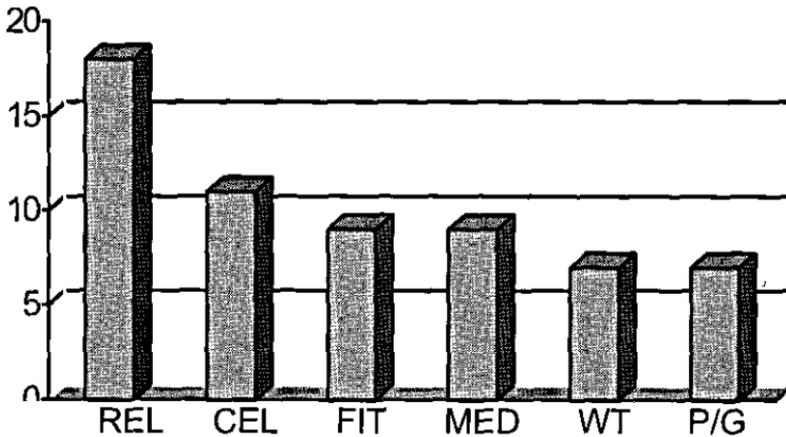
In *Redbook* magazine, the top category was relationships with twenty entries, or 23 percent, of the eighty-seven cover story entries. Following this, the celebrity/entertainment category represented twelve entries, or 14 percent. In third place, the fitness/mental health category contained ten entries, or 11 percent, while in fourth place the medical category represented nine entries, or 10 percent. These four categories represented 57 percent of all *Redbook* cover story entries (see table 6.7).

Discussion

When considering the results from all five magazines, it is important to note that nearly as many article entries were devoted to the weight loss category as were to the food/cooking category. In many cases, both graphic design and editorial techniques were employed to join the two topics. This is especially apparent in *Woman's Day* magazine, where it was commonplace for dessert items to appear adjacent to weight loss stories. For example, a white-chocolate brownie pie fills the lower right and middle portions of the cover on the April 1 issue. Slightly above the whipped cream topping on the left-upper section of the cover, nearly spilling over into the dessert, is an entry for a new diet plan ("14 lbs. Gone! Our Amazing Plan"). In addition to the dessert, three other food/cooking cover entries, including another about a dessert item ("Great

New Chicken Recipes,” “2 Months of Easy Dinner Menus,” “8 Cookies From One Dough”) appear.

Table 6.7: Top categories in *Redbook* for 2000



Similarly, in the January issue, New Year’s desserts are pictured in the middle of the cover while a special section about a “can’t fail” diet is advertised directly below, overlapping the dessert picture. In the February 1 issue of *Woman’s Day*, however, there is a slightly different twist. Rather than a dessert item, *Woman’s Day* trumpets a four-week diet plan directly next to a photo of a skillet lasagna and directly above an entry on “easy chocolate treats.” Furthermore, in the May 9 issue, a picture of a “luscious raspberry cheesecake” is positioned to the left of two weight loss entries (“Take 2” Off Your Waist” and “35 Ways to Look Thinner”).

Additionally, the latter entry is positioned directly below a “Spring’s Prettiest Cakes” entry. Incidences such as these also occur in the June 1 (“Walk Off 10 lbs.” and “No-Bake Cakes”), August 1 (“Stop Dieting and Lose Weight” and “Fresh Fruit Parfaits”), September 1 (“Lose Weight For Good” and “Pasta Primavera”), and November 1 (“Walk Off Weight Plus Free Diet Booklet With 2-Week Plan” and “Ghost Cake Recipe”) issues. In total, this practice of pairing weight loss articles with food/cooking stories occurs in ten out of the twelve issues studied. Only the July 11 and December 12 issues do not follow this practice. Consequently, of the *Woman’s Day* issues studied, 83 percent paired weight loss with food/cooking articles.

The concept of pairing desserts or high-fat foods with diet promotions is also apparent in *Good Housekeeping*, though, unlike *Woman’s Day*,

pictures of the food are not included on the covers. In the February issue of *Good Housekeeping*, for example, a “Wicked Chocolate Desserts” entry appears to the lower left of a “New Blockbuster Diet” entry. Similarly, the November issue discusses “How 10 Moms Took It Off” just below and to the left of “The Cutest Ever Cupcakes,” though no picture appears. The August issue contains a “Diet, Italian Style: Lose 6 Pounds Fast” entry above a “No-Bake Fruit Pies” entry. Between the two there is also an “Inspired Salads” entry.

Unlike *Woman's Day*, however, *Good Housekeeping* sometimes pairs apparently healthier food/cooking entries with weight loss articles. This pairing occurs in these issues: April (“19 Fast, Fabulous Pasta Recipes” and “Blast Off the Last 10 lbs.: Denise Austin’s 28-Day Plan”), June (“No-Fuss Grilling” and “His & Her Diet: Get Slim With Him”), July (“Chicken on the Grill: 27 Great Recipes” and “The Suzanne Somers Diet: Lose Weight Like The Stars Do”), and October (“22 Great Recipes: Fresh Vegetable Cookbook” and “No Willpower? No Problem! Smart Ways to Resist Temptation”). In total, seven of the twelve issues, or 58 percent of those studied, paired weight loss with food/cooking articles.

This phenomenon does not occur in *Redbook* magazine. Considering that only two of the twelve issues even contain food/cooking entries, this is not surprising. The only occurrence that is even closely related appears on the August cover, where a story about “dangerous foods” is positioned on the same cover as the “#1 summer fat trap.” Since the entry about “dangerous” foods does not contain a recipe promotion, this does not match the intent of the previously mentioned pairings in the other magazines.

Family Circle magazine appears to take the concept of pairing weight loss articles with food/cooking stories a step further by concentrating almost solely on dessert items and joining the two through color. For instance, in ten of the eleven issues where this phenomenon takes place, dessert entries or pictures are paired with weight loss articles. Out of these, there are eight pictures of dessert items on covers where weight loss stories appear. In the January 4 issue, for example, a diet article (“Walk It Off! Drop Pounds Fast”) appears in bold white print directly to the left of half a dozen cookies featured in “Heavenly Cookies to Make.” Furthermore, the entire border of the magazine is surrounded by cookies in various shapes and sizes (moons, suns, planets, stars, etc.), many of which are white, thus matching the bold white font in the weight loss article. Similarly, the February 1 issue uses the same color effect: the purple in the “Blooming Cupcakes” title matches the purple of the “Peel Off Pounds: 12

Ways to Trick Your Metabolism” entry. Once again, the name of the diet article is placed to the left of the dessert item.

In the March 7 issue of *Family Circle* magazine, however, coordinating colors are used. The “Rosebud Cake” with pink flowers and green vines coordinates with the large purple font of the “Drop 10 Pounds by Spring The Busy Woman’s Diet” entry. As in the previous issues, the weight loss story appears to the left of the large cake, although in this case the final word of the entry (“Diet”) is actually positioned over a small portion of the dessert item. Following this cover, the April 1 and May 9 issues contain pictures of craft projects yet still pair weight loss stories (“35 Weight-Loss Secrets From Top Spas,” “Drop a Size by Summer”) with food/cooking entries (“Cake-Mix Magic,” “Great Meals in Minutes”).

Similarly, the next three issues (June 2, July 11, September 1) continue the concept of matching or coordinating font colors of weight loss entries with those of food/cooking stories. In the June 2 issue, the dark-pink font of the two diet stories (“Test Your Fat IQ and Lose Weight, Too,” “New Walking Workout: Banish Inches, Beat Stress”) coordinates with the reddish pink of in the “Spectacular Strawberry Dessert” pie on the cover. The July 11 issue pairs an image of cookies assembled on a sand background with “Drop 20 Pounds: New Fat-Fighting Plan” and “16-Page Calorie Counter: Healthy Guide to Fast Food,” while the September 1 issue uses the yellow of the “Flower-Power Cookies” entry to connect with the title of the “Drop 5 Pounds Fast! Fresh-Start Diet” story.

But the September 12 issue does not include a picture. Instead, “Easy Diet Secrets: Eat What You Like and Lose” appears in bold print above “All-Time Favorite Apple Desserts,” separated only by a warning about herbs and drugs that don’t mix. The October 2 issue once again uses color to join a weight loss story (“Get Thin in 30 Days! Free Diet Booklet”) with dessert items (“Sweet Treats Halloween Cookies”). The white of the Halloween ghost cookie in the upper-right corner matches the thick, white font of the diet story. The last issue to contain both a diet story and cooking entry is that of November 14; on the cover, the green of “Drop a Dress Size Easy Diet Plan” matches the green buttons on the “Snowman Cakes” picture. In total, eleven out of the twelve issues, or 92 percent of those issues studied contain weight loss stories that are paired with food/cooking entries.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be reached from the previous data. The most striking illustrates the seemingly contrasting spirit of the top two

categories. With nearly as many entries in the food/cooking section as in the weight loss area, there appears to be an interesting dichotomy. Because most of the food/cooking entries involve dessert items, the conflicting nature of these high-calorie items with weight loss stories presents readers with conflicting messages. Considering that over half of the adult population in America, or more than 58 million people, are overweight (Danowski and Lazaro 2000, 43), it seems as if these women's magazines are trying to attract those who enjoy eating sweets but also want to lose weight. While this may appear to be a valid marketing technique, the implications of the contrasting messages cannot be overlooked.

One of the most difficult aspects of any weight loss program is the misrepresentation of food consumed. Many people who begin weight loss programs are often unaware of the amount of food they eat. Furthermore, denial is the single most difficult barrier for those with eating disorders. Denial impairs judgment and "results in self-delusion that perpetuates a self-destructive pattern" (Danowski and Lazaro 2000, 78). It would seem as if the magazines that pair weight loss entries with food/cooking stories are encouraging further development of this denial. While there is no suggestion of censorship as a solution, awareness of these mixed messages among the general public is vital. It is imperative that individuals, particularly those most susceptible, such as teenagers, become more sophisticated readers of the popular media. Messages appearing in printed material can be particularly worrisome, considering the extended life of newspapers and magazines.

Another important finding of this study is the image of women that is presented in the popular media. From the top categories (food/cooking, weight loss, medical, celebrity/entertainment, and fitness/mental health), a portrait of American women through the eyes of popular magazines can be constructed. While in the late 1800s popular women's magazines heavily advertised the presence of famous fiction writers, the periodicals of today do not regularly promote fiction on their covers. This is evidenced by the fact that only one article promoting fiction appears on any of the magazines during the year of 2000. Interestingly, the fiction entry appears in the November issue of *Redbook* in the upper-right corner, in a smaller font size than that of other promotions on the cover. Furthermore, the name of the novel (*Lacewings*) does not appear on the cover. From this information, the American woman can be seen to be practical, having less time for leisure than her earlier counterparts.

This image is further delineated by the lack of travel story promotions on the covers of these magazines. The only travel entry on any of the five magazines appears on the July 11 issue of *Family Circle* magazine. As in

the previously mentioned case, the story is in the upper section of the magazine, with the entry placed directly above the magazine's heading and printed in a smaller font than that of the other entries. Additionally, this travel entry involves a chance to win a Caribbean family vacation rather than offering readers information about planning vacations. Although articles of this type regularly appear in the pages of these magazines, the focus of this study is to determine those features most vigorously promoted to readers, as evidenced by entries' cover placement.

Conversely, the food/cooking and weight loss categories were the most heavily promoted in these magazines. Considering that these five magazines have garnered the largest share of the women's market, it is fair to assume that today's American woman still considers food/ cooking and weight loss to be important parts of her life. While the dichotomy of these two categories has been discussed in the beginning of this section, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the entries in the food/cooking category involve tips and/or recipes for food preparation. Although it can logically be assumed that eating is a regular part of life, it is pertinent that articles of this type would account for the highest represented category when combining all five magazines. Historically, women were relegated to kitchen and household duties by traditions and laws, yet today meal preparation and home duties are still seen as important to the American woman.

Again, this idea is illustrated by the fact that the home category, which encompasses articles promoting decorating and cleaning, tied for fifth place with the relationship category. Once more, both food and home are historically considered to be primarily female concerns. It appears as if these magazines and the women who regularly purchase them are perpetuating historical stereotypes of American women. Yet it is also important to note that the parenting/grandparenting category, with twenty-three entries, fell noticeably below the financial/career category, which contained thirty-four story promotions. Although this is not to say that parenting or grandparenting should be considered less important than financial or career matters, the order of the two is significant when discussing women's stereotypes. The financial/career category also contains more entries than the beauty (twenty-five entries) and fashion (five entries) categories as well. From this information, it can be concluded that although the covers of popular magazines have made some progress in breaking stereotypes about American women, there is still a considerable amount of work to be done.

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