

5-1-2015

Depictions of Beauty on Cosmopolitan Magazine: Content Analysis of Covers (1959-2014)

Azalee Maslow

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, maslowa@unlv.nevada.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Broadcast and Video Studies Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Maslow, Azalee, "Depictions of Beauty on Cosmopolitan Magazine: Content Analysis of Covers (1959-2014)" (2015). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 2381. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/2381>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

DEPICTIONS OF BEAUTY ON *COSMOPOLITAN* MAGAZINE:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF COVERS (1959-2014)

By

Azalee Maslow

Bachelors of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2012

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts -- Journalism & Media Studies

Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2015



We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Azalee Robin Maslow

entitled

Depictions of Beauty on Cosmopolitan Magazine: Content Analysis of Covers (1959-2014)

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies

Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies

Gregory Borchard, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Lawrence Mullen, Ph.D., Committee Member
Olesya Venger, Ph.D., Committee Member
Maile Chapman, Ph.D., Graduate College Representative
Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D., Interim Dean of the Graduate College

May 2015

Depictions of Beauty on *Cosmopolitan* Magazine:
A Content Analysis of Covers (1959-2014)

ABSTRACT

The media, especially advertisers, have long used beautiful women as an ideal image for attracting viewers and selling products. American women have been portrayed as, ideally, thin Caucasians with blonde hair and blue eyes. Research has found that women compare themselves to the beautiful women in advertising and in turn have negative feelings towards their own appearance. This thesis' goal is to find whether the ideal American woman has changed through a content analysis of the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine over the past 55 years, 1959 through 2014. This content analysis will focus on how the covers changed depending on who was the editor-in-chief at the time. The content analysis will begin with the cover from 1959 because that is when celebrities began to appear on covers. Knowing whether the ideal look of the American woman has changed will gauge how further research should be done on how women are comparing themselves to these women and then feeling afterwards.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Gregory Borchard, my thesis committee chair, for guiding me through this entire process as well as his time, effort, and precise editing skills. I would also like to thank Dr. Lawrence Mullen and Dr. Oleya Venger for their help specifically in the methods and coding sections of this thesis. This thesis was made stronger with the help of committee member Dr. Maile Chapman and coder Tamaula Coffin. Additionally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother and father. Who not only encouraged me throughout this entire process but also taught me what being beautiful truly means — it's an inner trait.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF IMAGES	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Background	2
<i>Cosmopolitan Magazine</i>	4
Thematic Statement	17
Significance of Study	18
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS	21
Literature Review	21
Methodology	34
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS	52
Tables and Images	54
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION	85
Discussion	85
Limitations	98
Future Study	98
APPENDIX: CODING DOCUMENT	101

REFERENCES	109
CURRICULUM VITAE	114

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Races Represented	54
Table 2: Facial Expression	56
Table 3: Perceived Age	57
Table 4: Hair Color	58
Table 5: Eye Color	58
Table 6, Body Type	59
Table 7: Hair Length	63
Table 8: Makeup	64
Table 9: Hair Style	65
Table 10: Wind-Blown Look	65
Table 11: Imperfections	66
Table 12: Type of Shot	68
Table 13: Clothing	71
Table 14: Clothing Color	75
Table 15: Clothing, Secondary Color	76
Table 16: Makeup, Eyes	76
Table 17: Makeup, Lips	77
Table 18: Makeup, Nails	77
Table 19: Clothing, Jewelry	78

Table 20: Tattoos	79
Table 21: Cover Background Colors	82
Table 22: Magazine Title Color	83
Table 23: Text Color	83
Table 24: Cover Topics	84

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: An Early <i>Cosmopolitan</i> Cover, March 1886	6
Image 2: A Sample 1880s <i>Cosmopolitan</i> Cover, August 1887	7
Image 3: An 1880s <i>Cosmopolitan</i> Cover (Non-Fiction), September 1888	9
Image 4: A 1900s <i>Cosmopolitan</i> Cover (Politics), May 1906	12
Image 5: Facial Expression	55
Image 6: Body Type, Example 1	60
Image 7: Body Type, Example 2	62
Image 8: Imperfections	67
Image 9: Type of Shot, Example 1	69
Image 10: Type of Shot, Example 2	70
Image 11: Clothing, Example 1	72
Image 12: Clothing, Example 2	74
Image 13: Tattoos, Example 1	80
Image 14: Tattoos, Example 2	81

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Among the most widely circulated women's magazines of its kind, *Cosmopolitan* for over 50 years has portrayed beautiful women as a social ideal. These women have tended to be thin Caucasians with blonde hair and blue eyes. This "norm" may in part be due to America's history of pageants with primarily blonde contestants, as well as Hollywood's ideal depictions of actresses such as Marilyn Monroe. When the cosmetics industry became an institution in America, this ideal look of the thin Caucasian woman with blonde hair and blue eyes became a mainstay, at least until recently. The Miss America pageant in 2014 crowned the first Miss America of Indian descent, Nina Davuluri, demonstrating what may be a move toward a more diverse ideal of beauty. This thesis seeks to determine how this change corresponds to depictions of women on *Cosmopolitan* magazine covers over the past 50 years.

Cosmopolitan magazine is in the top five highest selling women's magazines for Amazon in the United States, and it is well known for stirring controversy over its airbrushing of the women on the covers and its articles that are featured on the covers that give women tips on becoming thinner or hotter in some way (Landers, 2010). This thesis will look at the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine over the last ten years to see if this norm has changed using content analysis. Seeing whether the women on the covers fit the

mold of America's ideal of beauty, being a thin Caucasian woman with blonde hair and blue eyes will indicate whether this norm is still the norm of beauty that is represented in the media today, looking specially at *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Looking at how the looks of these women has changed will indicate how the way the media represents what is the norm of beauty has changed or if it has changed at all. The ethnicity of the models will be analyzed, along with their body type, eye color, hair color, among various other variables.

This thesis examines the way *Cosmopolitan* has represented ideal women through their covers over the last 55 years. This information will aid new research that looks into how the ideals in beauty affect women's self-esteem. This will be the first content analysis done on the women on covers of *Cosmopolitan*. One example of a study done on *Cosmopolitan*'s covers is Oana Crusmac's article titled, *Post-feminism and Specialized Media: A Content Analysis of Cosmopolitan Headlines*, which focused on the headlines on the covers, not the women. Susie Skarl, Associate Professor and Urban Affairs Librarian at UNLV, assisted in the search for another study done on the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* and was unable to find such a study. This makes this study unique, because academic studies have not looked at how *Cosmopolitan* represents the ideal women through the women they place on their magazine covers.

Background

The American portrayal of a beautiful woman through media has long been a thin Caucasian woman with blonde hair and blue eyes. This ideal came about with the boom

of the cosmetic industry and Hollywood and the creation of Barbie and the Miss America pageant (Jones, 2008). According to Geoffrey Jones' *Blonde and blue-eyed? Globalizing beauty, c. 1945-c. 1980* (2008), all Miss America contestants had to be Caucasian for the first three decades of the contest and at least one-third of the contestants have always been blonde (p. 132). The Miss America pageant was created in 1921. Barbie dolls, which have been predominantly blonde with blue eyes until 1980, were created in the late 1950s. This "Barbie" look was also represented in Hollywood in the 1950s with actresses like Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield in the 1950s.

According to Jones (2008), "there is a general agreement that a modern beauty industry emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century (p. 126). In the 1920s, three major women's magazines emerged which included, *Vogue*, the *Queen*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. With the boom in the cosmetics industry and the creation of these women's magazines, came a boom in women thinking more about how they looked; hence, the beautiful women in the cosmetic advertisements and the beginning of women comparing themselves to the women in the advertisements. The women may have believed that the cosmetic in the advertisement caused the woman in the advertisement to be beautiful. Women then believed the model in the advertisements was the ideal look that they would want to achieve by using this product (Jones, 2008). In addition, with the majority of women portrayed as beautiful at the time in America in the media, many of the women fit the look of being a thin Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes, so this may be how this look became the American ideal of beauty.

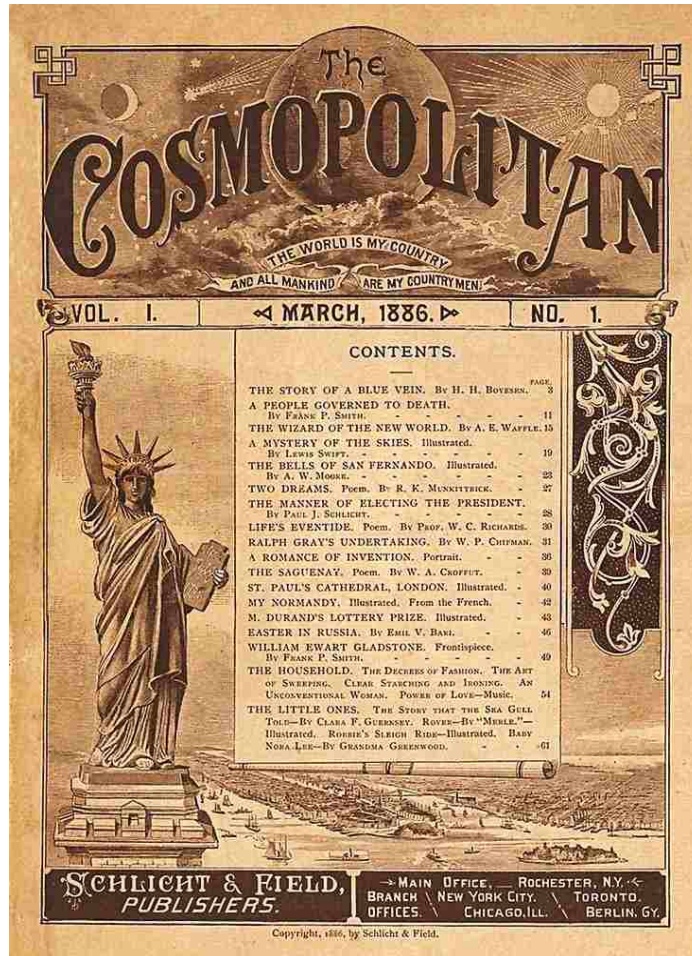
Research has been done on whether using beautiful women in advertising has been successful and the results are mixed. In *Highly Attractive Models in Advertising and the Women Who Loathe Them: The Implications of Negative Affect for Spokesperson Effectiveness* (2001), Amanda B. Bower, a marketing professor, found that the majority of women in the study felt negatively towards the model because the model made the women feel negatively towards themselves. The negative feelings that the women had toward a model may have caused them to feel negatively towards the product. According to David Ogilvy, which *Time* magazine deemed “the most sought-after wizard in the advertising business,” on the question of whether or not sex will sell a product in advertising, “the test is relevance” (1985, p. 25). Ogilvy bases his opinion on his experience in advertising, while Bower’s findings are based on research.

Cosmopolitan Magazine

Cosmopolitan did not start as the sexually oriented women’s magazine it is known for today. Its debut issue came out in March 1886 as a literary magazine for families created by Paul Schlicht. Paul Schlicht was the chief executive of a small distributor of office equipment prior to taking over Schlicht & Field. Several Rochester businessmen whom bought stocks in the company in 1885 financed Schlicht & Field. Schlicht started *Cosmopolitan* within weeks of taking over Schlicht & Field. The magazine consisted of how-to guides on household chores, stories for children, mainstream fiction and poetry, and non-fiction.

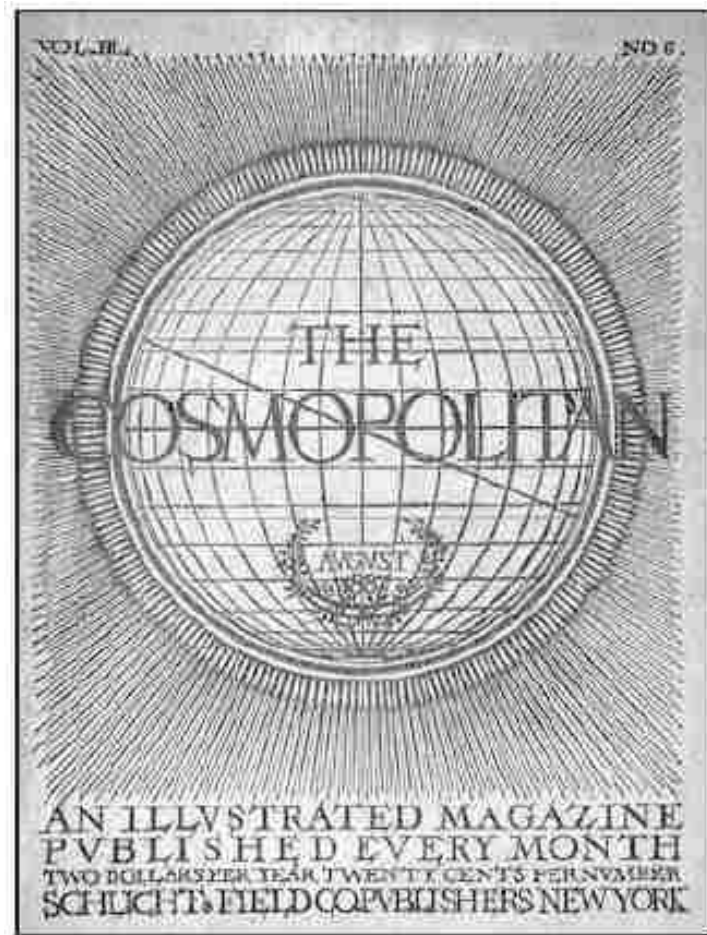
The most memorable feature of the first *Cosmopolitan* was its cover design, exceptionally ornate” one (Landers, 2007, p. 17). The inside of the front cover read, “The *Cosmopolitan* will be a first-class magazine” (p. 17). The debut cover is pictured below. Previous magazines did not have cover illustrations like *Cosmopolitan* nor did they include so many images on the inside of the magazine, it was very expensive to include images in magazines at the time. The magazine paid well-known writers to contribute to *Cosmopolitan*, which was also very expensive.

Image 1: An Early *Cosmopolitan* Cover, March 1886



In August of 1887, a new cover was created for *Cosmopolitan* by Stanford White, which is pictured below.

Image 2: A Sample 1880s *Cosmopolitan* Cover, August 1887



In January of 1888, Schlicht & Field transferred ownership of the magazine to investors from New York City but Schlicht continued as editor of *Cosmopolitan* and continued to spend big on the magazine. The magazine now had a focus on women and was full of racist stereotypes, “editors and writers saw America through a white veil” (p. 30).

In the summer of 1888, *Cosmopolitan* was sold again, now with a new cover and an editorial focus on non-fiction articles. The new cover made its debut in September of 1888 and is pictured below.

Image 3: An 1880s *Cosmopolitan* (Non-Fiction), September 1888



By May of 1888, the magazine was going under and Schlicht had many lawsuits filed against him. Joseph Hallock purchased the magazine that year with its 8,000 subscribers. John Walker bought the magazine in December of 1888 and became the editor of *Cosmopolitan*. Walker had worked in newspapers before and came from a

wealthy, socially prominent family. Elizabeth Bisland was the associate editor of *Cosmopolitan*.

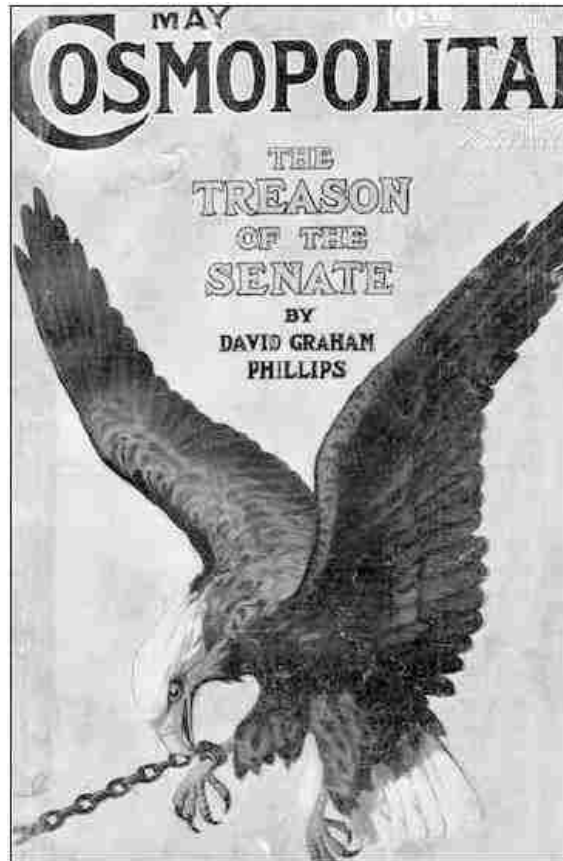
On November 14, 1889, Nellie Bly of *The New York World* was leaving for a trip around the world. That same day Walker asked Bisland to take a trip around the world going the opposite way of Bly, he did it for the publicity. Bly finished the trip first in 72-days and Bisland finished the trip four days later. Bisland went on to write articles for *Cosmopolitan* about the different places she visited around the world. Walker made the magazine modern and emphasized timely articles and commentary. Walker's agenda for *Cosmopolitan* included three main topics: (1) humane treatment for working class men and women; (2) amelioration of racial relationships; (3) and women's status in contemporary America (p. 40).

In January 1893, *Cosmopolitan* distributed 150,000 copies, which put them in the top three tiers of quality magazines alongside *Century*, which sold 190,000 copies and *Harpers*, which sold 175,000 copies. In March 1891 William Dean Howells, author and editor, became *Cosmopolitan's* literary editor and brought a new focus to the magazine regarding current events and social problems. *Cosmopolitan* was now a general magazine, not a literary magazine. Howells quit in May 1891 due to how heavily Walker supervised him. By the fourth anniversary of Walker's ownership "*Cosmopolitan* was a complete package" (p. 66). According to historians, a revolution in magazine production began in 1893, solidifying the form of print media's dominance of advertisement revenue

(p. 67). *McClure's* was created in 1893, and by 1895 competed with *Cosmopolitan*, which in 1903 had a circulation of 350,000 copies, 20,000 less than *McClure's*.

Throughout the 1890s, *Cosmopolitan's* topics included machinery, science, technology, futurism, and a support for the Democratic Party in elections. Expose journalism was also becoming popular at this time and *Cosmopolitan* jumped on board with it. In 1905, when William Randolph Hearst purchased *Cosmopolitan*, his plan was to use the magazine as an orator to shout his populist ideas without anyone knowing it was he. He waited 12 years before he actually put his name on the magazine. Hearst wanted to be President of the United States. In 1906, *Cosmopolitan* circulated 400,000 copies and was full of photographs and lively prose. Hearst hired David Graham Phillips, a former newspaper reporter and novelist and Muckraker, to write a series for *Cosmopolitan* exposing corruption in the Senate. Along with Phillips' articles came a new cover (pictured below).

Image 4: A 1900s *Cosmopolitan* Cover (Politics), May 1906



With Phillips onboard, the magazine hit a circulation of 450,000 copies. In 1909, the magazine began adding more fiction articles, and by 1911, the magazine was primarily fiction and continued to use big name writers for its articles.

Ray Long, *Red Book*'s editor, with a circulation of 600,000 magazines, was hired in 1918 as *Cosmopolitan*'s editor to make the magazine more popular. Long liked what middle-class Americans liked, any reading that entertained, instructed, or thrilled, so that

is what he planned to fill the magazine with (p. 177). Long mixed fiction designed for both men and women in *Cosmopolitan*. Fannie Hurst wrote novels for *Cosmopolitan* at this time. Other writers wrote for several magazines and it became a bidding war between *Cosmopolitan* and the other top magazines including *Ladies' Home Journal*, *American*, *McClure's*, and *Red Book* for the best articles. "If it is the best, *Cosmopolitan* publishes it," Long wrote, which was why "nearly everybody worthwhile reads *Cosmopolitan*" (p. 181). Harrison Fisher created almost every *Cosmopolitan* cover for 20 years until the mid-1930s.

Hearst went on to publish nine more magazines and in 1925, he merged *Hearst's International* with *Cosmopolitan* due to *Hearst's International* about to go under, creating *HI-Cosmopolitan*. This merge caused both magazines to lose their identity and sales. The only way Long agreed to stay on with this merge was if he took over Hearst's position as the president of "International Magazine Company," Hearst gave him the position. Hearst began to think Long was spending too much money on the magazine, so he hired Richard Berlin as a General Manager to investigate the sales and spending for the magazine. In March of 1931, *Fortune* magazine published a feature on Long, giving him the majority of the credit for the success of *HI-Cosmopolitan*. Hearst did not like this and four months later, Long resigned both of his positions.

Harry Payne Burton replaced Long as editor and had to follow Berlin's new budget cuts, which ended up being 40% of the budget Long had. Berlin also requested Fisher, the cover illustrator, to draw the women more modern and contemporary. Burton

had to use *Cosmopolitan*'s inventory of articles to fill the pages due to Berlin's budget cuts, which in turn reduced the quality of the magazine. The male influence on the ideal image for women can be seen here in that *Cosmopolitan* continuously had male editors and it was a male deciding what type of woman the cover illustration should represent.

In August of 1951, Hearst passed away and *HI-Cosmopolitan* became *Cosmopolitan* again. In the 1950s, television threatened magazines and in the 1960s caused financial problems for *Cosmopolitan*. In the 1950s, John O'Connell became Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, and began including articles specifically pertaining towards women. In 1959 Robert Atherton replaced O'Connell and put celebrities, including actors and actresses, authors, and singers, on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*. Atherton also added an entertainment section to the magazine, which featured two celebrities each month and used beginner writers to save money. The associated editors would also write stories, using fictional bi-lines in order to make the magazine appear to have more money by having the ability to hire many writers. By 1964, the magazine was losing money and Berlin was ready to let it go.

In 1965 Helen Gurley Brown, author of bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl*, became the new editor of *Cosmopolitan*, and the first female editor *Cosmopolitan* has had. She originally wanted to start her own magazine called *Femme*. Her husband, David Brown, former managing editor of *Cosmopolitan*, met with Richard Deems, President of *Hearst* magazines, to discuss the possibility of *Hearst* financing *Femme*. Deems presented the idea of Gurley becoming *Cosmopolitan*'s editor instead and using her ideas

for *Femme* for *Cosmopolitan*. Gurley agreed and *Cosmopolitan* became a magazine for women who are bold, who like themselves and like men (p. 223). Deems plan was to capitalize on Gurley's fame to make the magazine popular again. Gurley "had no doubt she would succeed" (p. 224). She stated, "I knew what I liked to read ... that's what I wanted *Cosmopolitan* to be" (p. 224).

In 1972, Gurley convinced Burt Reynolds to become *Cosmopolitan*'s first male nude centerfold, "before the centerfold issue, the magazine was known; after, it was notorious" (p. 228). In seven years, Gurley created an identity for the magazine and she believed the magazine "inspired women to live" (p. 229). After the Reynolds centerfold, the magazine continued to become bolder. The magazine received many derogatory comments for being too sexual; however, an examination of 86 *Cosmopolitans* from Gurley's first issue in July 1965 through the summer of 1972 revealed that the magazines did not contain mainly sexual content. Of the 1,503 non-fiction articles that were examined, only 5.2% were about sex, 10.7% were about personal relationships, 16.2% about celebrities, 7.6% about decor and fashion, 7.3% about careers and finances, 5.8% about movies, music, and television, 5.2% about health excluding sexual health issues, 3.6% about politics and social life, and 3.5% about travel (p. 233). Scholars also looked at the sexual explicitness of the photographs inside the magazine between the years 1965 and 1985. Of the images, 2% showed fully exposed breasts, 3% showed a women's buttocks partially exposed, 4% showed a man's buttocks partially exposed, and no photos showed either gender's genitals nor pubic hair.

Some of the topics *Cosmopolitan* did discuss at this time included; divorce, infidelity, mistresses, one-night stands, sexual satisfaction, masturbation, and abortion once in 1967. The magazine rarely referred to children. Gurley admitted to somewhat modeling the magazine after *Playboy* in being a much focused magazine. Some feminists criticized the magazine for its materialism and ideas on “man hunting.” In 1970, Gurley claimed, “*Cosmo* feels it was in the forefront of the Women’s Liberation Movement and supports the movement totally” (p. 259).

In 1973, Berlin retired, removing the one person who would tell Gurley “no” on some of her article ideas, and she now had total control over the magazine and regarded it as her own. “While offering its risqué material, *Cosmopolitan* continued to publish the basics: careers, décor, and general subjects” (p. 267). Scholars between the years 1972 and 1986 found the magazine did talk about sex and personal relationships more through examining the articles of *Cosmopolitan* again. Of the 2,706 articles that were analyzed, 17% were about sex, 13.1% about personal relationships, 11.1% about celebrities, 10.1% about health, 7.8% about movies, music, and television, 7.4% about career and finances, 6.4% about décor and fashion, 5.1% about politics and social life, and 4.4% about travel (p. 267). Gurley retired as editor of the magazine and became the editor of *Cosmopolitan* International editions in 1997. In a 2007 interview with Gurley, the editor picked up an issue of *Cosmopolitan* and asked, “Are the girls on the cover beautiful? Do they show some of their boob? ... Do they feature women in their country who can serve as role models, be inspirational? ... These magazines make money” (p. 271). This statement by

Gurley demonstrates the type of women she expects to see on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, she also stated, “I see no reason ever to have anything but a pretty girl or at least a sexy girl on each cover” (p. 283). After the summer of 1967, *Cosmopolitan* featured models on the covers instead of celebrities. Bonnie Fuller replaced Gurley for less than a year and then Kate White, former editor-in-chief of *Redbook*, replaced Fuller as editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* in 1998. Joanna Coles, editor of *Marie Claire*, replaced White in 2012. Gurley passed away in 2012.

Thematic Statement

The American ideal of beauty has at least since the mass production of cosmetics and magazines featuring supermodels portrayed beautiful women as thin, Caucasians with blonde hair and blue eyes. This American ideal of beauty has come about through the 1920s with the creation of three women’s magazines: *Vogue*, *The Queen*, and *Harpers’ Bazaar*, and the boom in the cosmetic industry. This American ideal of beauty then continued in the 1950s with the majority of Miss America pageants contestants fitting the mold of this norm, Hollywood, and in the creation of Barbie dolls. Research supports the conclusion that women compare themselves to the beautiful women in advertising and in turn feel negatively about themselves.

The purpose of this thesis is to find whether the ideal American beauty has changed. *Cosmopolitan* magazine is currently one of the highest selling and most popular women’s magazines in America. The covers studied begin in 1959, when Robert

Atherton, then editor of *Cosmopolitan*, put celebrities, including actors and actresses, authors, and singers, on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* (Landers, 2010). Helen Gurley Brown, editor of *Cosmopolitan* from 1967 to 1997, replaced the celebrities on the covers with models and had a requirement of them all to be “pretty” women (Landers, 2010). The study will use a content analysis of the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine over the past 55 years, from 1959 to 2014. The content analysis of the magazine covers will look at whether or not the women on the covers of the magazine fit the mold of the American ideal of beauty, analyzing women’s race, body-type, hair color, and eye color. Seeing how the looks of these women have changed (or have not changed) will provide a glimpse into the changing notions of American beauty.

Significance of Study

If the majority of the women on the covers of these magazines still fit the traditional American ideal of beauty as being a thin Caucasian woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, it will show that the publishers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine have taken fewer steps towards becoming more diverse in an effort to help women’s self-esteem. Although there have been previous academic studies on *Cosmopolitan*, no study has previously been done on the women of the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Helen Gurley Brown wanted the magazine to showcase women that women would look up to (Landers, 2010). Therefore the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, represent what the

publishers of *Cosmopolitan* consider the ideal woman and is the type of woman that they are representing to the public as the ideal.

The American ideal of beauty can be traced back to the creation of the Miss America pageant in 1920 and the boom of blonde Hollywood starlets in the 1950s as well as the creation of Barbie in the 1950s. These women were primarily thin Caucasian women with blonde hair and blue eyes. The American ideal of beauty can also be tied to the boom of the cosmetic industry in the 1920s as well as the creation of three magazines in the 1920s, which included *Vogue*, *the Queen*, and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Being one of the top selling women's magazines, and having a woman on the cover each month, *Cosmopolitan* magazine is a representation of what the ideal woman should look like. However, the magazine did not start out as the bold women's publication it is known for today. It made its debut in 1886 as a literary magazine. In 1889, the magazine did consist of some articles geared towards women, but in 1890s the magazine went back to more serious content. In 1893, the creation of *McClure's* magazine posed competition for *Cosmopolitan*.

Over the next half century, *Cosmopolitan* occasionally featured random images of women on its cover, but these covers were a small fraction of those otherwise designed to reach a general audience. In 1959, the first woman (an illustration) in what would become subsequently a series of exclusively women (photographed) appeared on the cover of the magazine. The 1950s is also when the magazines began gearing itself more towards women, and in 1959 celebrities were put onto the covers. In 1965, Helen Gurley Brown

became the editor of *Cosmopolitan* and not only allowed pretty models on the covers, but also made the magazine the bold women's magazine it is known for being today. Because Helen Gurley Brown admitted that she believes only pretty women should be on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, it is reasonable to conclude that the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine are representation of what the editors of the magazine believe to be the ideal woman.

Research has shown that women tend to compare themselves to the women in the media. Considering *Cosmopolitan* is one of the top selling women's magazines in the United States many women in the United States see the woman that is on the cover of the magazine each month. If the majority of these women fit a particular mold, the women that read this magazine may feel that they should conform. This study will use content analysis on covers of *Cosmopolitan* over the past 55 years to determine if *Cosmopolitan's* representation of the ideal woman has changed over the past 55 years and what type of woman they portray as the ideal.

The following chapter reviews research that has studied the effect that beautiful women in the media have on women, as well as how this effect then causes women to act toward both the women in the media and themselves. The history of the American ideal of beauty will also be reviewed, along with literature describing the uses of different colors and what types of feelings the magazine is trying to evoke from its readers with them. The following chapter will also discuss each component of the coding sheet that will be used for the content analysis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

The media display beautiful women through advertising in hopes of gaining more revenue. Actresses and singers are expected to be beautiful along with their talent. Magazine covers feature beautiful celebrities month after month. These women are beautiful, but they also have a team of makeup artists, hairstylists, personal trainers, and airbrushing to make them appear flawless. With the help of Susie Skarl, UNLV's Urban Studies Librarian, it was revealed through a search of the archives of secondary literature that few people have actually made *Cosmopolitan* the focus of academic study. Among the few studies to focus on *Cosmopolitan*, not one has focused on the women on the covers of the magazine.

Literature Review

Research has shown that many women compare themselves to the women in the media and in turn feel down about themselves. These feelings can lead to depression from not feeling good enough or to eating disorders in an attempt to achieve the unrealistic expectations that the women in the media exemplify.

The research done thus far on the effect that the beautiful women in the media have on women has mainly focused on the models or celebrities being “thin” and a few studies focus on the models or celebrities being “highly attractive” or “flawless.” Renee Engeln-Maddox’s 2005 study *Cognitive Responses to Idealized Media Images of Women: The Relationship of Social Comparison and Critical Processing to Body Image Disturbance in College Women* took 202 undergraduate females whom were asked to view three advertisements that were taken from recent women’s magazines and were then asked to write their thoughts on the advertisements. The participants were then asked to answer questions on their own body image. This study supported that the more women compared themselves to the models, the less satisfied they were with their appearance.

Another aspect of the research has been done on the publishers of advertising (the magazine types), and how specific titles change the way women accordingly perceive themselves. Some of the research also focuses deeper into why the women may feel a certain way about themselves — if they believe that the women in the magazines is what men want or if the women in the magazine is what is ideal.

Steven R. Thomsen’s *Health and Beauty Magazine Reading and Body Shape Concerns among a Group of College Women* (2002) looks into some of these aspects. Three-hundred and forty women between the ages of 18 and 25 filled out a survey asking questions about women’s ideal body images, their thoughts on what men find physically attractive, their concerns about their bodies, how often they read women’s magazines, their ideal body weight and height. The survey found that health and fitness magazines

were directly linked to body concerns while beauty and fashion magazines were only indirectly linked to body concerns in association with the belief of what men expect in a woman. This study shows that while women's magazine do influence the way that women feel about their own body, their thoughts on what men want in a woman also affect their thoughts on their own body.

These thoughts of what men want and what women tend to see in magazines may cause women to internalize these images as what they believe to be beautiful. In *Body Image and Body Shape Ideals in Magazines: Exposure, Awareness, and Internalization* (1997), Dale L. Cusumano and J. Kevin Thompson conduct a survey to find out how sociocultural influences affect women's self-esteem, eating behavior, and body image disturbance. The sociocultural influences studied included media exposure, awareness of societal ideals, and internalization of sociocultural messages. One hundred and seventy-five females between the ages of 18 and 40 participated in this study (Cusumano, 1997, p. 705). This study found that there was not a clear correlation between viewing the beautiful women in the media and a women's body dissatisfaction, eating disturbance, or self-esteem. The study did find a correlation between awareness and internalization of social norms. So, according to this study, although just looking at an advertisement with a beautiful woman may not affect the way the viewer views themselves, the idea that they should look this way is already internalized into their believes and may cause them to have negative feelings towards them-self. Where this internalization may have come from is not mentioned (Cusumano, 1997).

Much of the research done does show a correlation between women having a lowered self-esteem and viewing the beautiful women in the media. Because of this, some research has been done on whether or not women's negative feelings towards the woman in the advertisement, affects the way they view the product that the advertisement is presenting. Amanda Bower's *Highly Attractive Models in Advertising and the Women Who Loathe Them* (2001), examined whether or not this effect exists through two studies. In the first study, 130 undergraduate women were given an advertisement that had a highly attractive model and a treadmill in it and then asked questions on their thoughts of the model and their feelings. In the second study, 111 women were given an advertisement that had a highly attractive model and a hair-highlighting kit in it and then were asked the same questions as the previous study. Some women may look at the treadmill as how the model became so attractive, so Bower wanted an advertisement that did not have to do with the body, which is why the hair-highlighting kit was used in the second study. The results from both studies indicated that women who compared themselves to the model felt down about themselves and in turn felt negatively towards the product. These findings may convince advertising companies that using highly attractive models may be causing them to lose sales.

Some research indicates that the "American ideal" of a beautiful woman is a woman whom is a thin Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes. According to Geoffrey Jones' *Blonde and Blue-eyed? Globalizing Beauty, c. 1945-c. 1980* (2008), the ideal look of a woman, which follows the above criteria, came about through American history

involving pageants, the celebration of the Barbie doll, and Hollywood idealizations. Jones, a Harvard business historian, found that only Caucasian women were allowed to compete in Miss America beauty contests for their first three decades of the contest, the contest was created in 1921 and of the contestants, at least one-third of them have always been blonde (p. 132). Barbie dolls were created in the late 1950s, and until 1980 were predominantly blonde with blue eyes (p. 132). This ideal look was also represented in Hollywood in the 1950s with actresses like Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield. These models in beauty have shaped Americans' view of what is considered beautiful.

An article by Lisa Duke, *Black in a Blonde World: Race and Girls' Interpretations of the Feminine Ideal in Teen Magazines* (2000), confirmed these research findings. According to Duke, "The magazines provided a one-way mirror through which African-American girls could see White girls and all the trappings of White beauty culture, but the White producers and consumers of the beauty culture seemed unable to look through to see Black girls" (p. 382). For this study, 10 Caucasian girls and 16 African American girls participated. They were between the ages of 12 and 18. The girls were all given money to buy the magazine of their choice, and the majority of them chose *Seventeen Magazine*. The African-American girls were not interested in the way the magazine portrayed beauty, but were more interested in the articles about celebrities. The Caucasian girls were the opposite and admired the models.

There needs to be further research done on whether or not this still holds true and to what extent it holds true considering there are now present-day examples on the

publicized ideal of beauty. For example, in 2013 Miss America crowned its first winner of Indian descent, Nina Davuluri. Other successful women are breaking the “Barbie mold,” such as African-American actress Gabourey Sidibe who is well known for exuding confidence.

Helen Gurley Brown wanted the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* to be beautiful, she wanted them to be women that other women would look up to and admire (Landers, 2010). This thesis, in finding what type of women *Cosmopolitan* magazine represents now, and over the past 10 years, will indicate what type of woman *Cosmopolitan* magazine is representing as the “ideal image” for a woman in America.

There has also been a turn in the media to promoting a healthy view of oneself when combined with beauty. Books like *Beauty* by Lauren Conrad (2012) and *Pretty Powerful* by Bobbi Brown (2012) teach women tips on doing their hair and makeup but they also encourage women to love themselves the way they are and to embrace the qualities in themselves that make them unique. There are also books geared towards younger girls that also promote the same message of loving yourself and recognizing your own unique beauty, *Operation Beautiful* by Caitlyn Boyle (2012) is an example of this. The *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* that began in 2004 aims to debunk the stereotypical idea of beauty and help women to realize their own beauty and raise their self-esteem. These books and campaigns have made strides towards stopping women from bashing their bodies and looks to embracing their own unique beauty. Little

research has been conducted on the impact these books have on women, but their existence indicates a reaction against the “Barbie” ideal of beauty.

Are books and campaigns like this the best way to better this situation? Are the women in the media becoming less perfect? Some research has looked into the idea of adding “warning labels” to images that have been altered or airbrushed. In *Reality Check: An Experimental Investigation of the Addition of Warning Labels to Fashion Magazine Images on Women’s Mood and Body Dissatisfaction*, Amy Slater, Marika Tiggermann, Bonny Firth, and Kimberly Hawkins (2012) conduct a study on how adding these “warning labels” would affect the way women react to the images. For this study, 102 undergraduate women viewed fashion magazine spreads that either had: 1) no warning labels; 2) general warning labels that the images had been altered; and 3) warning labels that specified what had been altered in the images. The women who saw the images with either warning labels were less likely to feel dissatisfied with their own body. This study is the first evidence supporting that warning labels may help with women’s body dissatisfaction due to the images of beautiful women in the media.

According to the research, women tend to compare themselves to the beautiful models used in the media and in turn have lowered self-esteem. This lowered self-esteem can lead to depression and eating disorders. The research mainly focuses on the thinness of the models but some research also focuses on the models being highly attractive. There has also been research done on if the type of magazine the advertisement is located in affects how women feel towards themselves after viewing the model in the

advertisement. This research found that female models in health and fitness magazines tend to cause women to compare themselves to the women more than beauty magazines do. Research has also found that women that compare themselves to the highly attractive models and feel negatively about themselves and the models, in turn feel negatively towards the company.

Research conducted both by scholars in psychology and media studies has also found that particular kinds of women are not affected by what they think of the models but instead believe that the models are the type of women who men find attractive and in turn compare themselves to the models. Research has also supported that this ideal of beauty is internalized in women as to what they should look like. The ideal look for women in America's past had been a thin Caucasian woman with blonde hair and blue-eyes due to America's history in pageants, Hollywood, and Barbie. More research on whether or not this is still the ideal look for women in America would gauge where America is at today. Strides have been made towards helping women appreciate and love their own unique beauty through books, campaigns, and diverse pageants winners. There has also been research done that shows that warning labels on advertisements that have been altered would help to prevent women from comparing themselves to these women.

Color can be an important component of visual content. Different colors can evoke different emotions from the reader that in turn could affect how they view the woman on the cover. *Color: Messages and Meanings, A PANTONE Color Resource* (2006) by Leatrice Eiseman, a color expert and both the executive director of the Pantone

Color Institute and founder of the Eiseman Center for Color Information and Training, is based on research of how different colors evoke different emotions. Below is a list of each color along with the emotions Eiseman states the color can evoke.

Reds (p. 11)

Brick Red: Earthy, warm, strong, sturdy, established, country.

Bright Pink: Exciting, theatrical, playful, hot, attention-getting, high-energy, sensual, wild, tropical, festive, vibrant, stimulating, flirtatious, gaudy.

Bright Red: Exciting, energizing, sexy, passionate, hot, dynamic, stimulating, provocative, powerful, courageous, magnetic, assertive, impulsive, adventurous, demanding, stirring, spontaneous, motivating, overly aggressive, violent, warlike, temperamental, antagonistic, danger.

Deep Reds: Rich, elegant, refined, tasty, expensive, mature, sumptuous, cultivated, luxurious, robust.

Dusty Pink: Soft, subtle, cozy, dusky, gentle, composed, nostalgic.

Light Pink: Romantic, affectionate, compassionate, soft, sweet, tender, delicate, innocent, fragile, youthful, too sweet.

Oranges (p. 17)

Coral: Life force, energizing, flexibility, desire.

Ginger: Spicy, flavorful, tangy, pungent, exotic.

Peach: Nurturing, soft, fuzzy, tactile, delicious, fruity, sweet, inviting, warm, physical comfort, intimate, modest embracing.

Tangerine: Vital, juicy, fruitful, energizing, tangy.

Terra Cotta: Earthy, warm, country, wholesome, welcoming, abundance.

Vibrant Orange: Fun, whimsical, childlike, happy, glowing, sunset, hot, energizing, active, gregarious, friendly, good-natured, expansive, communicative, jovial, sociable, self-assured, persuasive, animated, loud, raucous, frivolous.

Yellow (p. 23)

Amber: Jewelry, multi-cultural, mellow, abundant, original, autumn.

Bright Yellow: Illuminating, joyful, hot, lively, friendly, luminous, enlightening, energetic, sunshine, stimulating, innovative, radiating, awareness, surprise, caution, cowardice, betrayal, hazard.

Gold (metallic): Rich, glowing, divine, intuitive, luxurious, opulent, expensive, radiant, valuable, prestigious.

Golden Yellow: Nourishing, buttery, tasty, sun-baked, wheat, hospitable, comfort, comfort food.

Light Yellow: Cheering, happy, soft, sunny, warming, sweet, easy, pleasant, babies.

Browns (p. 29)

Chocolate/Coffee Brown: Delicious, rich, robust, appetizing.

Earth Brown: Earthy, grounded, steady, solid, rooted, wholesome, sheltering, warm, durable, secure, reliable, natural, traditional, supportive.

Tans: Rugged, outdoor, rustic, woody.

Blues (p. 35)

Bright Blue: Electric, energy, brisk, vibrant, flags, stirring, impressive, aquatic, high spirits, exhilarating.

Deep Blue: Credible, authoritative, basic, conservative, classic, strong, reliable, traditional, uniforms, service, nautical, loyal, confident, professional, thought-provoking, introspective, aids concentration, clarify thoughts, aloof, distant, melancholy.

Light Blue: Calm, quiet, patient, peaceful, cool, water, clean.

Periwinkle: Genial, lively, sprightly, convivial, cordial.

Sky Blue: Calming, cool, heavenly, constant, faithful, true, dependable, restful, contentment, tranquil, reassuring, trusting, serene, expensive, open, infinity, transcendent, distance.

Greens (p. 41)

Aqua: Water, refreshing, cleansing, young, babies, cool, dreamy, soft, lightweight.

Bright Green: Fresh, grass, Irish, lively, spring, renewal, lush.

Chartreuse: Artsy, bold, trendy, startling, sharp, pungent, gaudy, tacky, slimy, sickening, mold.

Dark Green: Nature, trustworthy, refreshing, cool, restful, stately, forest, hushed, woodsy, traditional, reliable, money, prosperity.

Emerald: Luxurious, jewel-like, up-scale.

Foliage Green: Natural, fertile, healthy, balance, life, growth, soothing, harmony, restful, restoration, reassurance, environmental awareness, new beginnings.

Light Green: Calm, quiet, soothing, neutral, lightweight.

Lime: Fresh, citrusy, youthful, acidic, tart, refreshing.

Olive Green: Military, camouflage, safari, classic, drab.

Teal: Serene, cool, tasteful, sophisticated, confident.

Turquoise: Infinity, compassionate, protective, faithful, water, coolness, sky, gemstone, tropical, oceans.

Purples (p. 47)

Amethyst: Curative, protective, peace of mind.

Blue Purples: Contemplative, meditative, spiritual, soul-searching, intuitive, mysterious, enchanting.

Deep Purples: Visionary, rich, royal, prestigious, subduing, distant, introspective, aloof.

Lavender: Romantic, nostalgic, fanciful, lightweight, lightly scented.

Mauve: Wistful, sentimental, thoughtful.

Red Purples: Sensual, thrilling, intensely calming, dramatic, creative, witty, expressive.

Neutrals (p. 53)

Charcoal Gray: Steadfast, responsible, staunch, accountable, conscientious, resolute, restrained, conservative, professional, classic, sophisticated, solid, enduring, mature, business-like, dull, conformist, detached.

Neutral Gray: Classic, sober, corporate, practical, timeless, quality, quiet, neutrality, logical, unobtrusive, deliberate, reserved, fundamental, basic, modest, efficient, dutiful, methodical.

Off-white, Ivory, Bone Cream, Ecru Beige: Classic, neutral, soft, warm, comforting, good taste, smooth, subtle, natural, boring.

Silver (metallic): Sleek, classy, stylish, modern, cool.

Taupe: Classic, neutral, practical, timeless, quality, basic, authentic, organic, versatile, inconspicuous, understated, discreet, compromising, modest, bland.

White (p. 59)

White: Pure, clean, pristine, spotless, innocent, silent, lightweight, airy, bright, ethereal, clarity, simplicity, sterile, cold, clinical.

Black (p. 65)

Black: Powerful, empowering, elegant, sophisticated, mysterious, heavy, bold, basic, classic, strong, expensive, invulnerable, magical, nighttime, sober, prestigious, stylish, modern, depression, death, mourning, underworld, evil oppression, suppression, menacing.

As represented above, past literature has looked into the effects that beautiful women in media have on women. Past literature has also looked into ways that the media can help women avoid negative effects from media.

The historical background of where the ideal look for an American women came from has also been addressed. What current academic research is lacking is whether this ideal has changed based on how it is represented through the media. Using *Cosmopolitan* as a specific study to look into how the ideal has changed over the past 10 years has yet to be done, and it is what this study will examine.

Methodology

This thesis uses a content analysis of the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine over the past 55 years, from 1959 to 2014. The covers used will be based on decade periods broken into the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Changes in editor-in-chief were factored, tracing the influences of Robert Atherton (1959-64), Helen Gurley Brown (1965-97), Bonnie Fuller (1997), Kate White (1998-2011), and Joanna Coles (2012-14). The covers used began with the year 1959 because it is the year that women first began appearing regularly and exclusively on the covers. It also examines whether

there was a change in the covers after the retirement of the magazine's general manager in 1973, Richard Berlin, who had a say in the covers over Gurley. It also looked into whether or not the death of Gurley in 2012 affected the covers considering she still worked for the magazine up until her death.

The goal of this content analysis was to find out whether the ideal American beauty has changed and if so, how it has changed over the past 55 years. *Cosmopolitan* magazine was chosen for this content analysis because it is one of America's top-selling women's magazines and always features a woman on the cover.

The categories for this content analysis replicated the categories used in Krystle Anttonelli's thesis *Where in the World are the Women of Time? Women and the "Person of the Year" Covers for Time Magazine* (2012). Antonelli's study is one of the few content analyses done on the people on the cover of a magazine that looks specifically at the person's features. Her methods section was modeled after David E. Sumner's *Sixty-Four Years of Life: What Did Its 2,128 Covers Cover?* (2002). Sumner's study looked at the gender, race, citizenship, and the setting the person was represented in (business, political, sports, leisure, etc.) of the people on the covers of *Time*.

Most of the people on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* have been women over the past 10 years. Covers that included men were not included, so the gender section did not need to be included. The citizenship of the women was also not irrelevant to this study, as was the setting, as the majority of women were American citizens and not representing a specific setting. Facial expression was included in Anttonelli's study and because it could

give more information on the women on the cover, or how this media is representing the ideal women, it was also included in this study. Income was used in Anttonelli's study, but was not used here because you cannot tell the woman's income simply by seeing the cover of the magazine.

The author coded all 100 covers that were included in this study. A second coder was used to test inter-coder reliability. Ten covers were used to test inter-coder reliability, results were poor so the first coder and second coder discussed their reasoning behind their choices and then made the code book more precise based on this discussion. A second round of 10 covers were randomly selected and then coded by both coders. The categories that had an 80% similarity were: perceived age, body type, make-up (light or heavy), how the woman was dressed, the secondary color of the woman's outfit, eye make-up color, lip make-up color, background color, and the color of the word "*Cosmopolitan*." The categories that had a 90% similarity included hair color, shot, primary color of outfit, nail color, text color, and text. The categories that had a 100% similarity included race, facial expression, imperfections, jewelry, and tattoos. Since each category had at least 80% similarity between coders, another inter-coder reliability test was not conducted and coder one, the author, continued on to code the rest of the covers.

Race

African American: Black ethnic groups including persons with origin from Africa.

American Indian/Alaskan Native: Individuals having origin with the original people of North America.

Asian/Pacific Islander: Individuals with descendants from the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian subcontinent, and the Pacific Islands. Such areas include China, India, Japan, Korea, Samoa, and the Philippine Islands.

Hispanic: Individuals with origins from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central or South America. Regardless of race, a person can be of Hispanic origin when they originate from a place of Spanish culture.

White: White ethnic groups, including persons from the Middle East or Arab descent. (The ideal race previously represented in American media).

Another new category will include: *Facial Expression*: Smiling; Not smiling.

Antonelli's study also included the categories "Portrait Presentation" (whether the image is a photograph, painting, or other artistic form), "Centrality of Image," "Type of Theme," and "Type of Image" (whether there were one or more people in the image). These categories will not be included in this study due to inapplicability. "Portrait Presentation" is not included because all of the images are photographs. "Centrality of Image" is not included because all of the women are in the center of the magazine. "Type of Theme" is not included because the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine are not themed in the way that Time magazine are. "Type of Image" is not included because each cover

only features one woman. Several categories not included in Anttonelli's study that will be included in this study analyze the different features of the women.

The first additional category is perceived age in order to determine what *Cosmopolitan* represents as the ideal age.

Perceived Age

- Very young (Less than 20)
- Young (20s)
- Middle aged (30s)
- Older (+40s)

Several questions about the model's hair are included to determine what this aspect of the woman looks like. Hair color, length, and style are included; also, whether or not the model's hair is blowing in the wind is included to represent an aspect of the model being glamorized.

Hair Color (select all that apply)

- Blonde (the norm)
- Brunette
- Red
- Black
- Unnatural hair color (i.e. blue)
- Unable to determine

Hair Length

- Short (above the shoulder)
- Medium (below the shoulder but above the bra line)
- Long (below the bra line)

Hair Style

- Straight
- Curled
- Wavy
- Pulled Up (evening style/up-do)
- Pulled Up (casual/ponytails)
- Braids

Does the model's hair look like it's blowing in the wind? (by a fan)

- Yes
- No
- Unable to Determine

The next category is the model's eye color, in order to determine if there is any consistency of the eye color of the women on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*.

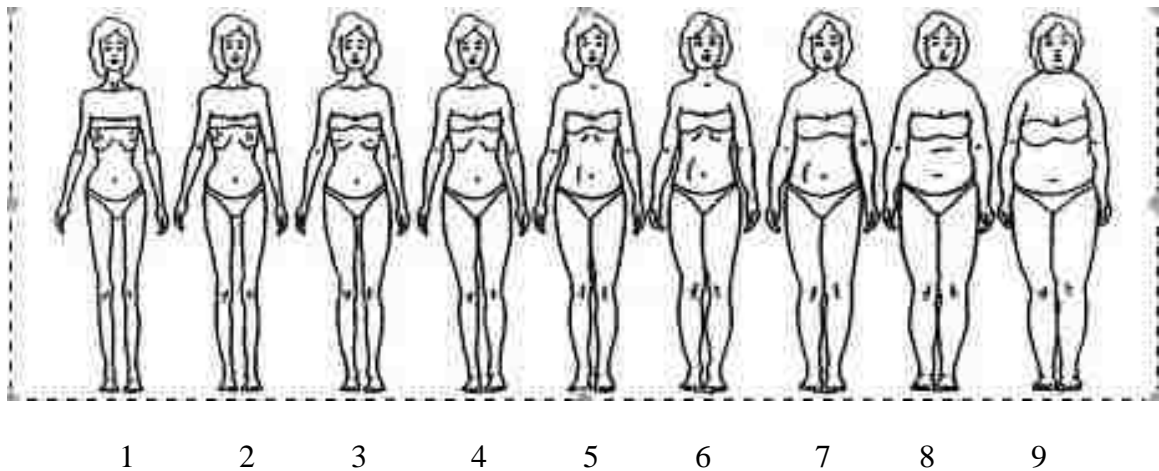
Eye Color

- Blue (the norm)
- Green
- Brown
- Hazel

___ Unable to Determine

The model's body type is included in order to determine if there is any consistency in the body type of the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*.

Body Type (circle one figure)



Whether or not the woman has heavy or light makeup is included to determine how the magazine represents a woman's makeup should be done. The color of the woman's eye and lip makeup is also included to determine this as well and to determine what emotion the cover trying to provoke through using these colors.

Makeup

___ Heavy (dark makeup around the eyes and/or lips)

___ Natural (light makeup - light pinks and tans)

___ Other

Unable to determine

What color are the model's eye makeup? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)

Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)

Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)

Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)

Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)

Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)

Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)

Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru, beige, silver, metallic)

White

Black

Unable to determine

What color is the models lip makeup? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)

- Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)
- Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)
- Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)
- Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)
- Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)
- Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)
- Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)
- White
- Black
- Unable to Determine

A category is included to determine if the woman has any imperfections such as blemishes and cellulite. If most of the women do not have any imperfections this adds to the ideal of being “perfect” and giving women unrealistic expectations.

Does the model have any visible imperfection? Blemishes, moles, freckles,

cellulite

Yes

No

The type of shot the model is in is included to determine what parts of the model's body can be seen and what parts of the body are of importance (since they are shown).

What type of shot is the model in?

- Close-up (face only)
- Semi close-up (shoulders up)
- Three-quarter shot (breasts up)
- Further three-quarter shot (waste up)
- Between three-quarter shot and full body shot (mid-thigh up)
- Full body shot (the model's entire body is shown in the shot)
- Other

The model's clothing is also analyzed. How casually or fancy the women is dressed and how much of her body are shown will determine that aspect of the women the magazine is trying to portray. The colors the model is wearing will show what emotions the magazine is trying to provoke, which could make a reader feel those emotions towards the woman.

How is the model dressed?

- Demurely dressed ("every-day" dress, including walking shorts and tennis outfits, but excluding evening gowns which exposed cleavage and mini-skirts).

___ Suggestively dressed (mini-skirts, “short”-shorts, “muscle”-shorts, full-length lingerie, unless “see-through” that exposed cleavage or chests, and “hiked” skirts that expose thighs).

___ Partially clad (bathing suits, wearing under apparel and three-quarter length or shorter lingerie, and “close-ups” where the shoulders of the models were bare).

___ Nude (unclothed models, including silhouettes, translucent under apparel and lingerie; models clothed in nothing except a towel; and “medium shots,” where the models are depicted with no clothing, except perhaps a towel draped over their shoulders).

___ Unable to determine (headshot)

What color family is the model’s outfit mainly in? (check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s))

___ Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)

___ Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)

___ Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)

___ Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)

___ Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)

___ Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)

Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)

Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)

White

Black

Unable to determine

What other colors is the model wearing? (check all that apply; check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s))

Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)

Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)

Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)

Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)

Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)

Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)

Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)

Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)

White

Black

Unable to determine

What color are the model's nails? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)

Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)

Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)

Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)

Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)

Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)

Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)

Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)

White

Black

Unable to Determine

How many of each piece of jewelry does the model have on?

- Rings
- Earrings
- Necklaces
- Nose Ring
- Lip Ring
- Belly Button Ring
- Bracelets
- Body Chains

Tattoos are another feature that some women have. Knowing how many (if any) of the models show visible tattoos will determine if the magazine finds women with tattoos to be the ideal.

Does the model have any visible tattoos?

- Yes
- No

Several questions are also included on the surroundings of the model. Included are questions on color and on text. Color is included to determine what emotions the magazine is trying to provoke from the reader and text is included to determine how the model is paired with the stories that are featured. Text is also included to determine if a story is featured about the woman that is on the cover.

What color family is the background color in? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- ___ Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)
- ___ Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)
- ___ Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)
- ___ Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)
- ___ Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)
- ___ Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)
- ___ Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)
- ___ Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)
- ___ White
- ___ Black
- ___ Unable to Determine

What color family is the word “Cosmopolitan” in? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- ___ Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)
- ___ Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)
- ___ Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)

- Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)
- Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)
- Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)
- Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)
- Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)
- White
- Black
- Unable to determine

What color(s) is the rest of the text in? Check the color family, and then circle the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink, dusty pink, bright pink, bright red, brick red, deep red)
- Oranges (peach, coral, tangerine, vibrant orange, ginger, terra cotta)
- Yellows (light yellow, bright yellow, golden yellow, amber, gold, metallic)
- Browns (tans, chocolate/coffee brown, earth brown)
- Blues (light blue, sky blue, bright blue, periwinkle, deep blue)
- Greens (light green, bright green, emerald, foliage green, dark green, chartreuse, lime, olive green, aqua, turquoise, teal)

___ Purples (lavender, mauve, amethyst, blue purples, red purples, deep purples)

___ Neutrals (neutral gray, charcoal gray, taupe, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige, silver, metallic)

___ White

___ Black

___ Unable to Determine

How many times is each of the following topics mentioned on the cover? These are the topics *Cosmopolitan* lists on their website. Except “sex” which they include in “love” but it was separated here to be more specific in coding. “Health/fitness/weight loss” was added as well.

___ Love/relationships

___ Sex

___ Celebrity

___ How many times is it the celebrity on the cover?

___ Beauty

___ Style

___ Career

___ Health/fitness/weight loss

Two coders, both female, were designated for the content analysis. One coder — the author — coded all of the documents. A second coder coded 10% of the 100 to determine inter-coder reliability.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

This thesis delved into how *Cosmopolitan* magazine has represented women through their covers. Content analysis was used to analyze the covers of *Cosmopolitan* over the past 50 years. The key variables used in this study were *Body Type; Clothing; Colors (cover background, magazine title, text); Cover Topics; Eye Color; Facial Expression; Hair Color, Length, and Style; Imperfections; Makeup; Perceived Age; Race; Tattoos; Text; Type of Shot; and Wind-Blown Look*. An Excel file was used to code 100 covers. Two covers were chosen from each year from 1959 through 2014. Some covers were only available in a small image, so the covers that were used were the ones that had a larger imager available. If possible one cover from December or January and one cover from June or July was used from each year. Only covers that did not have a man on the cover were included. There have been very few covers with men on them and since this thesis is studying *Cosmopolitan's* portrayal of women, including the men would have been irrelevant. Each cover was given a number between one and 100.

After this process there were 98 covers selected. In order to have the additional two covers to add up to 100 covers, a random number generator was used to select two numbers between one and 100. The two numbers were then looked at in comparison to which cover they corresponded with. The year that each of those numbers corresponded with were included. These included the year 1981 and 2008. Then the random number

generator was used again between the number one and 12 to choose the month for each of these years. The two additional covers were April 2008 and December 1981. Also, after realizing that many of the models had clear or French tip nails, this category was included within the “white” category.

First coder one and coder two coded 10% of the covers in order to find any flaws in the coding sheet. There were several discrepancies, which is when several aspects of this study were changed. First, only larger images were used if possible so that the images were clearer for the coders. Second, some of the directions were made clearer. For example, when coding the colors of the rest of the text on the cover, not including the word “*Cosmopolitan*” there can be multiple colors chosen if multiple colors are present. The only other main issue is colors, but the coders would choose a color that was about one shade off from each other. Having the larger covers should help with this. Also, when analyzing the data, only color families will be looked at so these small differences will not make a difference.

Next, both coders coded another 10% of the covers that were randomly selected by the random number generator. This time there were no large discrepancies between the two coders. In looking at how the women over the past 50 years have changed on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, each decade was broken up. These categories included 1950s that included 2 covers, 1960s which included 5 covers, 1970s which included 21 covers, 1980s which included 21 covers, 1990s which included 20 covers, 2000s which included 21 covers, and 2010s which included 10 covers.

Tables and Images

There were less covers available in the 1950s and 60s, leaving fewer covers in those years for this study. There were also less covers used in the 2010s since it only covers 2010 through 2014; also, the 1950s only includes two covers since only the year 1959 is included in that category. The majority of the women were White in every cover. Table 1, below, demonstrates the percentage of each race that appeared in each decade.

Table 1: Races Represented (percentages)

Years	Major Race	Second Most Common Race	Third Most Common Race
1950s	White/African American (50 each)	N/A	N/A
1960s	White (100)	N/A	N/A
1970s	White (85.7)	African American (9.5)	Asian/Pacific Islander (4.8)
1980s	White (81)	African American (19)	N/A
1990s	White (90)	African American (10)	N/A
2000s	White (80.9)	African American (14.3)	Hispanic (4.8)
2010s	White (80)	African American (10)/ Hispanic (10)	N/A

The majority of women in all of the covers were not smiling. The only years in which this was not the case was the 1950s, but there were only two covers, and the 2000s. Image 5, following, demonstrates the face the majority of the models are making.

Image 5: Facial Expression



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, December 1999.

This December 1999 *Cosmopolitan* cover featured Denise Richards looking into the camera with little to no facial expression. This is the facial expression that the majority of the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* have. She has no expression in her

eyes or her mouth. Some of the models that were not smiling had more of an angry facial expression. Her facial expression is more neutral.

Table 2, below, demonstrates the percentage of models smiling or not smiling based on each decade.

Table 2: Facial Expression (percentages)

Years	Smiling	Not Smiling
1950s	50	50
1960s	0	100
1970s	9.5	90.5
1980s	4.8	95.2
1990s	5	95
2000s	57.1	42.9
2010s	40	60

The age of the women did not differ much, not one model looked to be over her 30s. The majority of the women were in their 20s or 30s until the 1980s when the majority of the women were in their 20s. In the 2000s the models were again in their 20s and 30s and this trend has continued into the 2010s. Table 3, below, demonstrates the percentage of models of each age divided by decade. No age was included over 30s since no models fit into those categories.

Table 3: Perceived Age (percentages)

Years	Less than 20s	20s	30s
50s	0	50	50
60s	0	20	80
70s	4.8	47.6	47.6
80s	0	100	0
90s	5	80	15
00s	4.8	52.3	42.9
10s	0	60	40

Through the 1970s, the models had a full array of hair colors. In the 1970s, some models had brunette hair with blonde highlights, so this category was added. In the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of the models had brunette hair. In the 2000s, the majority of the models had blonde hair. In the 2010s, half of the models had blonde hair and 40% had brunette hair with blonde highlights. Table 4, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with each hair color for each decade.

Table 4: Hair Color (percentages)

Years	Blonde	Brunette	Red	Black	Brunette w Blonde Highlights	Unnatural Color	Unable to Determine
50s	50	0	50	0	0	0	0
60s	20	40	20	20	0	0	0
70s	10	55	25	10	0	0	0
80s	4.8	71.4	0	9.5	14.3	0	0
90s	20	50	0	0	30	0	0
00s	57.1	4.8	0	4.8	33.3	0	0
10s	50	10	0	0	40	0	0

In the 1950s, every model had blue eyes. In the 1960s, 40% of the models had brown eyes. In the 1970s through 1990s, the models' eyes were varied. In the 2000s, most of the models had brown eyes. In the 2010s, most of the models had blue eyes. Table 5, below demonstrates the percentage of each eye color of the models divided by decades.

Table 5: Eye Color (percentages)

Years	Blue	Brown	Unable to Determine	Green
50s	100	0	0	0
60s	20	40	40	0
70s	14.3	23.8	57.1	4.8
80s	38.1	33.3	14.3	14.3

Years	Blue	Brown	Unable to Determine	Green
90s	35	30	30	5
00s	14.3	66.7	19	0
10s	60	40	0	0

Based on the body type chart that was used in this study, not one model was over a five on the scale. The majority of models were between a two and a four. Table 6, below, demonstrates the percentage of models in each body type category corresponding with the decade the cover was in.

Table 6: Body Type (percentages)

Years	1	2	3	4	5	Unable to Determine
50s	0	0	0	0	0	100
60s	20	0	0	20	0	60
70s	0	19	9.5	9.5	0	61.9
80s	0	28.6	23.8	4.8	4.8	38
90s	5	40	35	15	0	5
00s	4.7	52.3	19	19	0	4.8
10s	0	30	50	10	10	0

Image 6, following, demonstrates one of the thinnest models, she was a “1” on the scale. Image 7 follows and demonstrates one of the heaviest models, she was a “5” on the scale.

Image 6: Body Type, Example 1



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, June 2003.

Brittany Murphy is featured on this June 2003 *Cosmopolitan* cover. She is an example of the thinnest body type and that can be seen with her thin limbs, flat stomach, and collar bones protruding. Very few of the other models were this thin looking. The majority of models did have flat stomachs but their arms were not this thin and their collar bones did not protrude like Brittany Murphy's do here. It can also be noted that her clothes seem to be slightly too large for her, which may be making her look even thinner.

Image 7: Body Type, Example 2



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, December 2011.

Adele Laurie Blue Adkins is featured on this December 2011 *Cosmopolitan* cover. She is one of the heaviest models featured on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and it can be seen that she has a fuller figure. It is important to note that although she is heavier than many of the other models, she still appears to have a fairly flat stomach. In comparison to Britney Murphy, above, it can be seen that her collar bone

does not protrude and her arms are much fuller. It is also noteworthy that even though Adele Laurie Blue Adkins is a heavier woman, her cheekbones and jawbone still protrude. Most heavier women would have more rounded face so it may be concluded that this look was done through make-up and airbrushing.

The majority of models in the 1950s and 1960s had short hair. In the 1970s over half of the models had short hair. In the 1980s through 2010s the majority of models had medium hair. Table 7, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with each hair length broken up into decades.

Table 7: Hair Length (percentages)

Years	Short	Medium	Long	Unable to Determine
50s	100	0	0	0
60s	80	0	20	0
70s	52.4	33.3	4.8	9.5
80s	10	85	5	0
90s	15	80	5	0
00s	14.5	85.5	0	0
10s	30	60	10	0

In the 1950s and 1960s about half of the models had heavy makeup and about half had natural makeup. In the 1980s the majority of models had heavy makeup and in the

1980s and 1990s the majority of models had natural makeup. In the 2000s the models were split again between having heavy or natural makeup and in the 2010s the majority of models had heavy makeup. Table 8, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with heavy or natural makeup broken up into decades.

Table 8: Makeup (percentages)

Years	Heavy Makeup	Natural Makeup	Unable to Determine or Other
50s	50	50	0
60s	40	40	20
70s	81	14.3	4.7
80s	70	25	5
90s	35	65	0
00s	52.4	47.6	0
10s	70	30	0

The majority of models in the 1950s, 1970s, and 2000s had curled or wavy hair. In the 1960s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2010s the models hair were split between being straight or curled or wavy. Table 9, below, demonstrates what percent of each hair style the models from each decade had.

Table 9: Hair Style (percentages)

Years	Straight	Curled/Wavy	Pulled Up (Evening)	Pulled Up (Casual)	Braids
50s	0	100	0	0	0
60s	40	40	0	20	0
70s	14.3	85.7	0	0	0
80s	47.6	52.4	0	0	0
90s	60	40	0	0	0
00s	0	100	0	0	0
10s	50	50	0	0	0

The majority of models through the 2000s did not have hair blowing in the wind. In the 2010s, the majority of model did have their hair blowing in the wind. The percentages of hair blowing in the wind is in Table 10, below, divided by decade.

Table 10: Wind-Blown Look (percentages)

Years	Hair is Blowing	Hair is not Blowing	Unable to Determine
50s	0	100	0
60s	0	100	0
70s	23.8	71.4	4.8
80s	5	95	0
90s	30	70	0

Years	Hair is Blowing	Hair is not Blowing	Unable to Determine
00s	28.6	71.4	0
10s	60	40	0

The majority of models in the 1950s did have some type of imperfection, while the majority of models in every other decade did not have any. Into the 2000s and 2010s not one model had a visible imperfection. Table 11, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with and without imperfections, divided by decade.

Table 11: Imperfections (percentages)

Years	Model has Imperfections	Model not Imperfections
50s	100	0
60s	20	80
70s	0	100
80s	4.8	95.2
90s	5	95
00s	0	100
10s	0	100

Most of the models with a visible imperfection had a mole, as shown in the following Image 8.

Image 8: Imperfections



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, October 1996.

Cindy Crawford is seen here on the October 1996 *Cosmopolitan* cover. She is one of the few women with a visible imperfection. If you look at the left side of her face, near her mouth you will notice she has a visible mole. However, she is well known for this mole so the editors at *Cosmopolitan* may have felt that they could not cover it up. Very few of the other models have visible imperfections, and if they do they are very small like Cindy Crawford's mole. Many people may not even notice the imperfection because it is

so small. It is also noteworthy that Cindy Crawford was not put into a headshot, which would have made the mole more noticeable. Instead, more of her body was shown, which makes her mole almost impossible to see.

Through the 1970s the shots varied a lot, and into the 1970s and 1980s the shots became further away. In the 1990s most of the shots were between three-quarter and full body shots. In the 2000s and 2010s the majority of shots were further three quarter shots. Table 12, below, demonstrates the percentage of models in each shot, divided by decade.

Table 12: Type of Shot (percentages)

Years	Close-up	Semi Close-up	Three-Quarter Shot	Further Three-Quarter Shot	Between Three-Quarter and Full Body	Full Body Shot
50s	50	0	50	0	0	0
60s	20	20	20	20	0	20
70s	4.8	9.5	14.3	38.1	33.3	0
80s	0	0	9.5	33.3	57.2	0
90s	5	0	0	10	75	10
00s	0	0	0	100	0	0
10s	0	0	10	90	0	0

Following is an example of a three-quarter shot, Image 9, and a shot that is between a three-quarter and full body shot, Image 10.

Image 9: Type of Shot, Example 1



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, January 1972.

Astrid Heeren was featured on the January 1972 *Cosmopolitan* cover. This cover demonstrates a three-quarter shot. Earlier covers tended to be in this shot or an even closer shot, which both focuses more on the women's facial features instead of her body. Many of the women in the earlier covers that were in this type of shot were fairly covered

up as well. It can be seen that Astrif Heeren has some visible cleavage but it is not the extreme cleavage that can be seen in later *Cosmopolitan* covers.

Image 10: Type of Shot, Example 2



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, July 1981.

Kelly LeBrock is seen on the July 1981 cover of *Cosmopolitan*. She demonstrates a shot that is between a three-quarter shot and a full body shot. Shots like this and a three-quarter shot are what the magazine moved towards from the 1980s through the 2010s. This type of shot focuses less on the face and more focus on the body. It can also be noted how little clothing she is wearing which further emphasizes that this type of shot is meant to show off her body. Her hand placement also lends to the idea that she is showing off. Earlier models did not stand in poses like this and tended to be not only more conservatively dressed, but less of their body was shown in the shots as well.

Between 40 and 52 percent of the models from the 1950s to the 80s were suggestively dressed. In the 1990s, the percentage rose to 80, and between the 2000s and 2010s at least 50% of the models were suggestively dressed. Table 13, below, demonstrates the percentage of models in each type of clothing by decade.

Table 13: Clothing (percentages)

Years	Demurely Dressed	Suggestively Dressed	Partially Clad	Nude	Unable to Determine
50s	0	50	0	0	50
60s	20	40	0	0	40
70s	9.5	42.9	33.3	0	14.3
80s	23.6	52.8	23.6	0	0
90s	5	80	10	5	0
00s	9.5	52.4	38.1	0	0
10s	20	50	30	0	0

Following is an example of a model suggestively dressed in Image 11 and a model partially clad in Image 12.

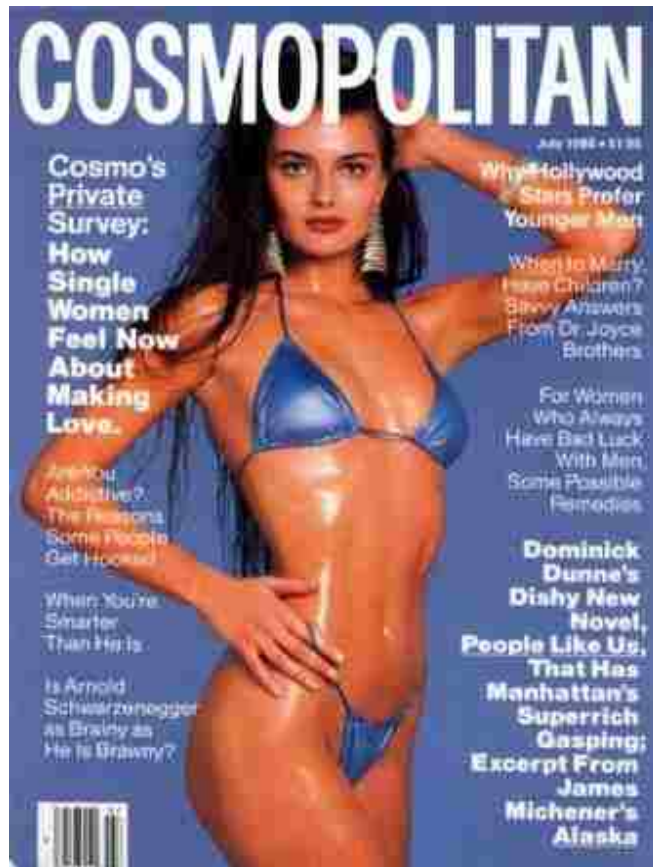
Image 11: Clothing, Example 1



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, July 1977.

Patti Hansen is featured on the July 1977 *Cosmopolitan* cover and represents for the purposes of this study a suggestively dressed model. Although she is wearing “everyday clothing,” she is showing cleavage that is why she is in the suggestively dressed category. It can also be noticed that she is more sexualized due to the strap of her dress falling off her shoulder and the cutout in the front of her dress. Most of the models throughout every decade are dressed like this. It can be noted that although she is in a stance that makes her appear confident, it does not make it look like she is showing off.

Image 12: Clothing, Example 2



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, July 1988.

Paulina Porizkova, featured here on the July 1988 *Cosmopolitan* cover, is dressed in the category partially clad. This is the second most popular way the women are dressed on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, especially moving into later years. All swimsuits are included in the category partially clad that is why this was included in that category. It can also be noted how unlike the above model, Paulina Porizkova poses in a way that

makes her appear to show off. This cover is even more sexualized due to the fact that she has her fingers underneath part of her swimming bottoms. Many of the models in the late covers tend to do things like this with their hands, creating a more sexualized image.

The major color of the models' outfits varied throughout every decade. Table 14, below, demonstrates the percentage of models wearing each color as the main color in their outfit, divided by decade.

Table 14: Clothing Color (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	50
60s	0	0	0	0	20	20	0	0	20	20	20
70s	28.5	4.8	14.3	4.8	9.5	9.5	9.5	0	14.3	4.8	0
80s	23.8	4.8	9.5	9.5	14.4	9.5	0	9.5	9.5	9.5	0
90s	10	5	20	0	10	20	15	5	0	15	0
00s	19.1	9.5	4.8	0	14.3	0	9.5	14.3	28.5	0	0
10s	20	0	0	20	10	0	10	10	20	10	0

Other colors in the models outfit also varied greatly throughout each decade. The other colors in the models' outfits varied throughout every decade. Table 15, below, demonstrates the percentage of models wearing each additional color, divided by decade.

Table 15: Clothing, Secondary Color (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	50
60s	20	0	40	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	20
70s	14.3	4.8	14.3	0	4.8	0	0	0	9.5	9.5	52.4
80s	19.1	4.8	9.5	9.5	14.3	9.5	0	9.5	14.3	14.3	0
90s	10	0	15	0	5	10	10	5	20	5	45
00s	19.1	4.8	28.6	0	19.1	9.5	9.5	14.3	14.3	28.5	14.3
10s	10	0	60	10	10	10	20	50	30	40	10

Many of the eye makeup colors were difficult to determine since every model's eyes were open and few had eye shadow extending past their eyelids. Table 16, below, demonstrates the percentage of models by color eye-makeup, divided by decade.

Table 16: Makeup, Eyes (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
60s	0	0	0	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	60
70s	0	4.8	0	14.3	0	0	0	4.8	0	4.8	71.3
80s	4.8	0	0	19.1	4.8	0	0	9.5	0	14.3	47.5
90s	5	0	0	30	5	0	0	25	0	5	30
00s	0	0	0	38.1	0	0	0	4.8	0	4.8	52.3
10s	20	0	10	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	20

The majority of models from every decade had some shade of red lip makeup.

Table 17, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with a certain color lip-makeup, divided by decade.

Table 17: Makeup, Lips (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60s	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
70s	90.4	4.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.8
80s	80.5	19.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
90s	70	20	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
00s	90.5	9.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10s	90	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 18, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with a certain color nail polish, divided by decade.

Table 18: Makeup, Nails (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
60s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
70s	0	0	4.8	0	0	0	0	0	4.8	0	90.4
80s	4.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47.6	0	47.6
90s	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	75	0	15
00s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	95.2	0	4.8
10s	10	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	60	10	0

Table 19, below, demonstrates the percentage of models wearing each type of jewelry, divided by decade. The only jewelry worn included rings, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. The majority of models in the 1980s and 2010s wore earrings. The majority of models in the 2010s also wore rings.

Table 19: Clothing, Jewelry (percentages)

Years	Rings	Earrings	Necklaces	Nose Rings	Lip Rings	Navel Ring	Bracelets	Body Chains	Eye Glasses	Sunglasses	Watch	Other
50s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
60s	20	40	20	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	20
70s	9.5	28.6	28.6	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	47.6
80s	14.3	71.4	28.6	0	0	0	42.9	0	0	0	0	9.5
90s	10	35	5	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	40
00s	28.6	33.3	23.8	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	33.3
10s	70	70	50	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0

Until the 2010s not one model had any visible tattoos. In the 2010s 40% of the models had visible tattoos. Table 20, below, demonstrates the percentage of models with and without visible tattoos, divided by decade.

Table 20: Tattoos (percentages)

Years	The Model Has Visible Tattoos	The Model does not have Visible Tattoos
50s	0	100
60s	0	100
70s	0	100
80s	0	100
90s	0	100
00s	0	100
10s	40	60

Some of the models with tattoos had very small tattoos, while some of the women had much larger tattoos. Following, Image 13, is an example of a model with small tattoo, and Image 14 is an example of a model with a larger tattoo.

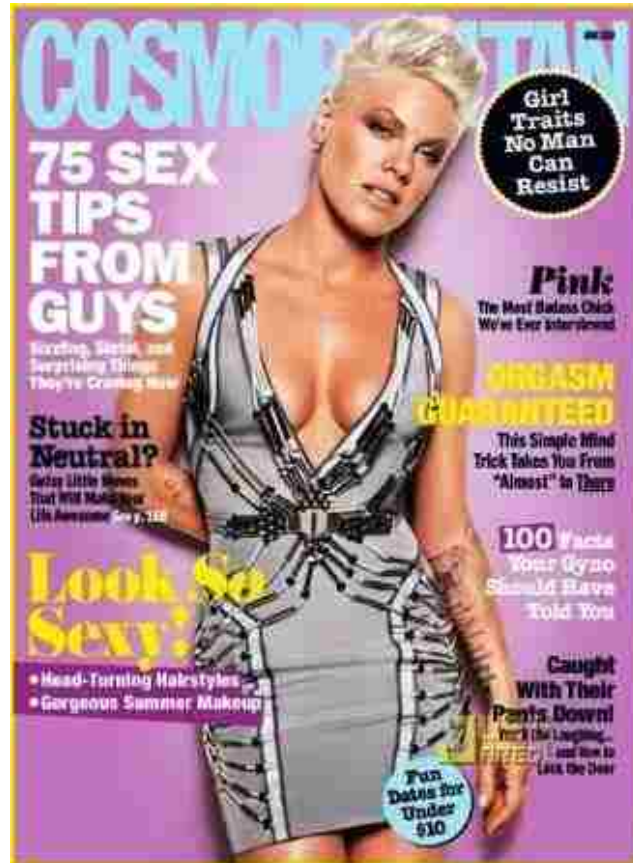
Image 13: Tattoos, Example 1



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, December 2014.

Rita Ora is featured on the December 2014 *Cosmopolitan* and is an example of a woman with a smaller tattoo. You can see she has writing of some type on her upper right thigh. It is clear that this tattoo was purposely shown due to the fact that many other outfits would not of shown this tattoo. So there seems to be a conscious effort to show tattoos, if the models have them.

Image 14: Tattoos, Example 2



Cosmopolitan Magazine Cover, June 2010.

Alecia Beth Moore, also known as Pink, is featured on this June 2010 *Cosmopolitan* cover. She is an example of a model with larger tattoos. Her left forearm has writing on it, and apparently the image of a dog above a quote. It can also be seen that she has tattoos on the outside of both of her elbows, although it is unclear what they

depict. Just like the cover above, these tattoos could have been hidden if the model was wearing a different outfit, so there seems to be a conscious effort to show off these tattoos. Also the models pose and using a body shot both show a conscious effort to show off their tattoos.

Table 21, below, demonstrates the percentage of covers with a certain color background, divided by decade. Every decade the colors varies greatly.

Table 21: Cover Background Colors (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	50	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0
60s	20	0	40	20	0	0	0	0	0	20	0
70s	25	0	5	25	15	0	5	15	0	10	0
80s	23.8	4.8	14.3	9.5	19.1	9.5	0	9.5	9.5	0	0
90s	15	0	20	0	10	15	10	5	25	0	0
00s	20	10	5	5	30	5	10	5	10	0	0
10s	10	0	20	0	10	10	40	0	10	0	0

Table 22, below, demonstrates the percentage of the word “*Cosmopolitan*” in a certain color, divided by decade. In most decades the colors varies greatly. In the 1960s and 2010s the majority were in the color red. In the 1970s through the 1990s the majority were in the color white.

Table 22: Magazine Title Color (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	50	0
60s	60	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0
70s	4.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.2	76.2	4.8	0
80s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.5	90.5	0	0
90s	10	5	0	5	5	10	5	10	45	5	0
00s	19	14.3	33.3	4.8	4.8	9.4	4.8	4.8	4.8	0	0
10s	60	0	10	0	20	0	0	0	10	0	0

Table 23, below, demonstrates the percentage of covers with a certain color text, by decade. Some covers have more than one color used in the text. Every decade the colors varies greatly. But in most decades the colors white and black are used most often.

Table 23: Text Color (percentages)

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
50s	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	100	0
60s	60	20	20	0	60	0	0	0	0	40	0
70s	0	0	0	4.8	4.8	4.8	0	14.3	57.1	14.3	9.5
80s	23.8	0	33.3	0	14.3	4.8	9.5	9.5	85.7	4.8	0
90s	20	20	5	0	10	10	10	5	50	60	0
00s	33.3	19.1	47.6	4.8	23.8	19.1	9.5	4.8	95.2	95.2	0

Years	Red	Orange	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Green	Purple	Neut.	White	Black	Unable to Det.
10s	60	30	60	0	30	10	30	0	80	90	0

Table 24, below, demonstrates the percentage of topics that are mentioned on each cover, divided by decade. In the 1950s the major topics were love, sex, celebrities, and career. In the 1960s the major topics were love, celebrities, and career, In the 1970s the topics were pretty varied. In the 1980s the major topics were love, sex, celebrities, and health. In the 1990s the major topics were love, sex, and celebrities. In the 2000s the major topics were love, sex, celebrities, and health. And in the 2010s the major topics were love, sex, celebrities, beauty, and health.

Table 24: Cover Topics (percentages)

Years	Love Relationship	Sex	Celeb	Celeb on Cover	Beauty	Style	Career	Health/ Fitness/ Weight	Unable to Det.
50s	50	50	100	50	0	0	50	0	0
60s	100	0	40	40	0	20	60	40	0
70s	28.6	28.6	28.6	0	9.5	4.8	9.5	28.6	61.9
80s	100	81	85.7	0	9.5	9.5	38.1	66.7	9.5
90s	95	60	75	25	25	20	25	45	5
00s	100	95.2	71.4	61.9	47.6	42.9	23.8	57.1	0
10s	100	100	100	70	80	40	20	90	0

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Previous research has found that thin Caucasian women with blonde hair and blue eyes have been the ideal for beauty in America since the 1950s with the creation of the cosmetics industry and Hollywood stars such as Marilyn Monroe. There have been moments since the 1950s that indicate this ideal may be changing, such as Nina Davuluri's winning of the Miss America title in 2014, becoming the first winner of Indian descent. This study used content analysis to examine the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine over the past 55 years to see if they follow this trend and if the women they put on the covers has changed over the years. Helen Gurley Brown has stated that she wanted the women on the covers to be women that other women would look up to (Landers, 2010). Due to *Cosmopolitan* being one of the top five circulated women's magazines in the United States and because of this statement by Helen Gurley Brown, this magazine was the best choice for this study.

Discussion

Although Helen Gurley Brown was the magazine editor from 1965-97, she still worked for the company until 2012, so she may of still had some type of influence on the women for the covers. In 1997, Bonnie Fuller became the editor, and in 1998, Kate White became the editor and retired in 2012. Joanna Coles became the editor in 2012, but for

the purposes of this study, there were not enough covers under her leadership to determine if she made a significant change in the women that she chose for the covers. Overall, Brown had a say in the women on the covers from the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and the majority of the 1990s. From the 2000s to 2012, White had a say, but Brown was still an influential presence.

The majority of women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* magazine from the 1950s through the 2010s were Caucasian, an ideal that has not changed over 50 years. The ideal of beauty as a young woman also has not changed, and it has likewise consistently been represented in these covers — not one woman looked to be over the age of 30, and over the decades, more of these women looked to be in their 20s.

However, against the norm described in literature, the majority of the women were not blonde. Through the 1970s, the women had an array of hair colors, and in the 1980s, the majority of women were brunette. In the 2000s, the majority of women were blonde, and in the 2010s, half were blonde. It is remarkable that *Cosmopolitan* did not have a majority of blonde women in the 1950s and 1960s when that hair color was the norm in America's ideal of beauty, but it did feature a majority of blonde women later on. This difference could be attributed to the shift in editors, considering that the majority of women were brunette or they had varied hair colors when Helen Gurley Brown was editor, and when the majority of women were blonde, Kate White was editor.

In the 1950s, all of the women had blue eyes, but in the 1960s through the 1990s, there were an array of eye colors. In the 2000s, the majority of women had brown eyes, and in the 2010s, the majority of women had blue eyes.

The women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* all fit the ideal of being thin. Not one woman was over a “5” on the body type chart.

The length of hair has changed over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of women had short hair, and in the 1970s, over half of the women had short hair. In the 1980s through the 2010s, the majority of women had medium length hair.

The majority of women in every decade except for the 2000s were not smiling. About half of the models had heavy makeup, and about half had natural makeup most years. In the 1970s and 2010s, the majority of models had heavy makeup, and in the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of models had natural makeup.

In the 1950s, 1970s, and 2000s, the majority of models had curled hair. In all other decades, the models were split between having straight or curled hair. Until the 2010s, the majority of models did not have their hair blowing in the wind, but this trend first showed up in the 1970s.

In the 1950s, the majority of models had visible imperfections, but from the 1960s on the majority of models did not have any visible imperfections. In the 1960s, 20% of models had visible imperfections while after that no more than 5% of the models had imperfections.

The changes in the portrayals of hair color and style, eye color, makeup, and body type show a conscious effort to produce images that make models appear perfect in visual appearance, but perhaps not relative to a societal ideal. Also, with the increase in the wind blown look models appear more glamorized and may show that even more production is being put into making these covers perfect.

Through the 1970s, the perspectives and angles of shots featuring models varied. In the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of models were in a shot between three-quarter and full body. In the 2000s and 2010s, the majority of models were in a three-quarter shot. This change puts an emphasis on the model's body instead of her face and was made while Kate White was editor.

The majority of models in the 1950s and 1960s were either demurely or suggestively dressed. In the 1970s through the 2010s, the majority of models were demurely, suggestively, or partially clad dressed.

The color the models wore varied throughout every decade. The majority of women in every decade had red or pink lips. The majority of women from the 1980s through the 2010s had clear or white nail polish on. Through all of the decades, jewelry included only rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. In the 2010s, the majority of models were wearing earrings and a ring. Until the 2010s, not one model had visible tattoos. In the 2010s, 40% of the models had visible tattoos, which was when Kate White was editor.

There was no consistency in the background color of the covers. The majority of the word “*Cosmopolitan*” was varied in colors, but in the 1970s and 1980s the majority were white. The major colors that show up the most in the text are red, black, and white, and moving into the 2000s and 2010s, an increasing amount of yellows. The majority of most covers had the topics of love, sex, and celebrities. Moving into the 1980s, sex and celebrities were more common, and moving into the 2000s, beauty became more common as well.

Based on the findings, the editors of *Cosmopolitan* may have their own ideal of beauty. The publishers did conform to societal expectations by having thin Caucasian women primarily on the covers, but they did not always have the majority of women have blonde hair and blue eyes, although in some years they do have that as the majority. Although the other elements of beauty in the women on the covers do not exactly fit into that mold, there are constant themes over decades. This may show that the editors of *Cosmopolitan* have a specific look they are trying to promote with each cover that they believe to be, at the time, the ideal. They may be trying to be the trendsetter instead of a trend-follower.

Also, with the models becoming more sexually dressed and more topics of sex being present over time, it is clear that this magazine is continuously bringing the image of the women into a more sexualized image. Also with the dominance of red in the text and on the lips of the women, this represents passion and sexiness as well. This was one of Helen Gurley Brown’s goals — she wanted the magazine to be sexy.

Helen Gurley Brown took over as editor of the magazine in 1965, so the majority of these covers she did help to produce. Even after she “retired,” she still worked at *Cosmopolitan*. It can be seen that she continuously pushed the edge, seeing what she could get away with in the sexualization of the women on the covers. Helen Gurley Brown passed away in 2012, so although right now there are not enough covers since her passing to determine if the women used on the covers has changed, it would be an interesting future study.

Kate White apparently had more blonde models, less imperfections, and more details put into the covers, such as the use of fans blowing on the model and more topics being included on the covers. More of the models White used on the covers also had tattoos. When White left *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 2012, she wrote a “good-bye” letter to the readers. In this letter, she describes the read of *Cosmopolitan* as a “fun fearless female.” This could explain why she pushes the edge in her covers, as she believes that that is what the reader wants (White, 2012). In a 2012 interview with *Huffington Post*, Kate White said she felt the legacy at the magazine she left would be that she had made it relevant for a new generation of twenty-first-century readers, keeping the magazine a top seller for 14 years. “I think there are lots of mature brands that don’t make it after a certain point in time,” she said. “To take a strong brand but one that needed revitalization and [make it successful] — it was fun and exciting to pull that off.” This could explain the changes visible under her tenure. She felt it needed revitalization and wanted to gear the magazine towards the “fun fearless female.”

In a snapshot, a woman on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in the 1960s would be a Caucasian woman in her 30s with brunette hair and brown eyes. She would not be smiling; she would have short hair that would not be blowing in the wind; she could have heavy or natural make-up and would most likely be wearing earrings; she would be in a close up shot and would have no visible tattoos. Her body type and clothing would be unable to be determined since she would be in a close-up shot. Her hair may be curled or straight and most likely, she would not have any visible imperfections. She would have pink or red lipstick on. Her nail color would not be able to be determined since her hands would not be shown in the cover.

The woman described above is not the exact same woman that is described by researchers as what the media portrayed as the ideal beauty during this era. The majority of the women on *Cosmopolitan* during the 1960s were Caucasian and this does fit into this mold. In America, racism was still prevalent during this time, it was not just the beauty industry nor the media. Although laws had been placed in America against racism in the 1800s, racism was still a prevalent issue throughout America into the 1960s. In 1887 Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867. In 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified which proved the right to vote. And racial segregation in accommodations was prohibited in 1870 with the Civil Rights Act of 1875.

But racism was still being fought into the 1960s. The 1960s Civil Rights Movement, or the African-American Civil Rights Movement, proves that and resulted in

the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

This racism was also seen in the beauty industry and in the media. According to Geoffrey Jones' *Blonde and blue-eyed? Globalizing beauty, c. 1945-c. 1980* (2008), all Miss America contestants had to be Caucasian for the first three decades of the contest (p. 132). Barbie dolls, which were created in the late 1950s were predominately Caucasian until 1980. Even Hollywood Starlets in the 1950s were Caucasian with actresses like Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield.

The majority of women on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine were Caucasian in the 1960s so it is clear that it was geared towards Caucasian women at this time and was not making much of an effort to demolish racism in America.

Although it is not mentioned much by researchers, it is important to mention that the majority of these women were in their 30s. Although this is young, it is not extremely young and could be another look into the magazine's targeted audience at the time. Women 40 or over were never seen on the covers of this magazine, which indicates that *Cosmopolitan's* ideal of someone who is beautiful is in their 20s and 30s.

Against the norm, according to researchers, the women on the covers of *Cosmopolitan* in the 1960s did not tend to have blonde hair or blue eyes. The majority of these women had brown hair and brown eyes. Because blonde hair and blue eyes were so prevalent in other media outlets during this time, such as Hollywood starlets, pageants, and Barbie, this is an important detail. But it makes sense because at the time putting

“pretty” or “sexy” girls on the cover was not the goal. Putting celebrities and including more entertainment into the magazine was the goal at this time in hopes of gaining more readers. In the 1950s, television threatened magazines and in the 1960s caused financial problems for *Cosmopolitan*, which is when this change towards having celebrities on the covers took place.

In 1965 Helen Gurley Brown took over as editor of the magazine and the purpose behind who was on the covers changed. She did not want celebrities on the covers, she wanted models that were pretty or sexy. She wanted to inspire women to live and continuously made the magazine more bold and sexual. This resulted in a sexualized image of the women. So the women on the covers weren't necessarily the “American norm of beauty” they were a sexualized version of it and they were what Helen Gurley Brown thought to be pretty.

The women on the covers did still follow some of the American norms of being the ideal women, the few that showed their bodies, were all thin. Thin women in the media is heavily studied and has shown to cause women to feel negatively towards themselves. This is an interesting factor considering this magazine claims to want to make women feel alive. Women being glamorized with heavy make-up and having no visible imperfections has also been shown in research to cause women to have lowered self-esteem. The majority of these women were in some type of a shot that mainly showed their face, so it put an emphasis on their facial beauty and make-up and de-emphasized their body type. About half of the women on the cover in the 1960s had

heavy make-up on and the majority of these women had no visible imperfections. This contradicts Helen Gurley Brown's supposed motive of making women feel empowered. According to research, certain women compare themselves to women in the media, like the women on these covers and when they are thin and glamorized, the women feel negatively towards themselves because they do not rail in comparison to these women.

Gurley admitted to modeling the magazine after *Playboy* in being a much focused magazine. Some of the topics *Cosmopolitan* discussed at this time included divorce, infidelity, mistresses, one-night stands, sexual satisfaction, masturbation, and abortion once in 1967. The magazine rarely referred to children. This gives a sense to the type of woman the magazine was aiming for. It was not aiming for the stay at home mom soccer mom, it was aiming for women that are sexually free and curious. It was not aiming for the American norm, which could explain why the women on the covers did not completely fit that norm.

The magazine was criticized by feminists for its materialism and ideas on "man-hunting." In 1970, Gurley claimed, "Cosmo feels it was in the forefront of the Women's Liberation Movement and supports the movement totally" (p. 259). The feminists have the same concerns that were discussed earlier here, women feeling negatively towards themselves due to these women all being Caucasian, thin, and glamorized. On top of that the women were increasingly sexualized and so was the content of the magazine. It seems that *Cosmopolitan* did want to liberate women, just in a more sexual way than many feminists saw fit.

Because this is one of the top five selling women's magazines, even though the women on the covers don't necessarily fit the norm, enough women may see the magazine that these women could be considered the norm to many women. Because this magazine has such a high circulation it could actually create its own norm and women could see this magazine month after month and believe it to be normal to be this sexualized and glamorous.

Moving into the 2010s, in a snapshot, a woman on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine would be a Caucasian female in her 20s with blonde hair or brunette hair with blonde highlights. She would have blue eyes; she would not be smiling and she would have medium hair that would be blowing in the wind; she would be wearing heavy make-up and would have on earrings, rings, and a necklace; she would likely have at least one visible tattoo. The shot she would be in would show off her thin body and her suggestive clothing. She may be partially clad in clothing. Her hair may be curled or straight and she would not have any visible imperfections. She would have pink or red lipstick on and clear nails.

The women described above is very similar to the American ideal of beauty. The woman being a thin, Caucasian woman, with blonde hair and blue eyes and no visible imperfections is why they fit this mold.

The majority of women being Caucasian raises the question of the prevalence of racism still in America in the 2010s. Although some of the models were of other races, these women were always well know women such as singers, Beyonce Knowles or

Rihanna Fenty. There are many Caucasian women on the covers that are unknown models. Which makes it seem that they will only put a women on the cover that is not Caucasian if she is a well-known celebrity, but will put even an unknown Caucasian women on the covers. Although America has made strides towards equality, even electing the first African American president of the United States in 2009, it is clear that Caucasian people are represented in the media more often than any other race and *Cosmopolitan* is no exception. One could question if this means that this magazine is geared towards Caucasian women and not women of other races.

Again, it is important to mention the age of the majority of these women, even though it has not been heavily researched. The majority of these women are in their 20s, very few are in their 30s, and not one appears to be over 30. This could show both that this magazine is geared towards younger women and that young women is what this magazine finds to be beautiful. In the media in general, older women are rarely portrayed as the beautiful or sexy character so this is a norm that can be seen throughout several media platforms during this time.

Following the norm, according to researchers, the majority of the women on these covers do have blonde hair and blue eyes. The research was done on the start of the beauty industry not the 2010s so it is interesting that *Cosmopolitan* did not start with the majority of their women having this look but have gone to it in the 2010s. As mentioned earlier, *Cosmopolitan* is modeled after *Playboy*, and this magazine is known for having a prevalence of blonde women so that could be where this look is coming from, both in

hair color and in the sexualization of women. One big difference between the two magazines, is that *Playboy* is a magazine geared towards men to look at sexy women, *Cosmopolitan* is a magazine geared towards women on how to be sexy.

The women on the covers during this time also followed the norm of being thin. Again, thin, glamorized, and imperfection free women in the media has been heavily studied and have shown to cause women to feel negatively towards themselves. Most of the women on the cover in the 2010s had heavy make-up on and the majority of these women had no visible imperfections. Just like in the 1960s, This contradicts Helen Gurley Brown's supposed motive of making women feel empowered. Again, according to research, certain women compare themselves to women in the media, like the women on these covers and when they are thin and glamorized, the women feel negatively towards themselves because they do not rail in comparison to these women. The majority of women in the 2010s are in a shot that show off their body, which leads readers to believe that having this body type is important since it is show off in almost every cover. The majority of these women also have a lot of jewelry on, which could also be viewed as making them more glamorous. Because of how *Cosmopolitan* portrays women, many feminists are still against the magazine.

Cosmopolitan is still one of the top five selling women's magazines, so it still holds true that even though the women on the covers don't necessarily fit the norm 100%, enough women may see the magazine that these women could be considered the norm to

many women. With the magazine's high circulation, women could see it month after month and believe it to be normal to be this sexualized and glamorous.

Limitations

This study encountered a few noteworthy limitations. One of the categories for text on the covers was if the celebrity that the cover is talking about was the same celebrity that was on the cover. For the covers in the 2000s and 2010s, this was easy to code because the women were easily recognizable since they are still in the media today. But in the early issues it was difficult to recognize all of the women since they are not in the media today. So the woman on the cover may have been the woman that the cover was talking about but this could not be determined due to the coder being unable to recognize who the woman was. Also, the topics chosen to code for were based on what the magazine now states its main topics to be, in 2015. These topics include relationships, sex, celebrity, beauty, style, career, and health. Many of the covers in the earlier issues included topics that were not in these categories because the magazine no longer uses those topics, such as mystery novels. The topics that are in earlier issues should be included in future research so they can be coded for as well.

Future Study

Future research could focus on if the women being different from the stereotypical beautiful American women, effects how women react to these women,

regarding their self-esteem. The majority of these women are still thin and Caucasian so it would be interesting to see if the other variables studied affect women readers adversely. Future research could also conduct a similar study on a different popular women's magazine in order to see if they fit with the ideal American beauty, or if they go on their own path as well.

If this study were to be recreated, or if this study was done using a different magazine, the model's poses would be a good category to add. Adding this category would aid in telling if the models poses became more sexualized over time as well. Just visually, it can be seen that they have been, but having the numbers to back it up would make this point stronger.

Another interesting developing point about *Cosmopolitan* is a recent change in their advertisements. In 2015, customers getting the magazine delivered to their home through a subscription will notice that some months there is a full page advertisement over the cover of the magazine that is sticky and can be pulled off. These have been anything between a sexy perfume advertisement to an advertisement for the Dove Love your Body Campaign with women actually showing off their "imperfections". This is a major change, and although that advertisement can be peeled off and the perfectly airbrushed model that is actually on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* can be seen, this may be showing a move towards the magazine putting less emphasis on the women featured on the covers. These cover covering advertisements are not in stores though, so the

magazine may seem to think they need the perfect covers to sell the magazines to those who haven't already agreed to buy it for at least the next year.

It is clear the Helen Gurley Brown wanted all of the women to be young beautiful thin Caucasian women that the female audience would admire. She also made these women very sexualized. Kate White took the sexualization of the women even a step further than Brown did by never using head-shots and only using shots that would show off the model's body. White also sexualized the women more by having them wearing more provocative clothing. It seems that *Cosmopolitan* may actually be continually worse in having the women of their covers fit the American ideal of beauty even more so as time goes on.

APPENDIX
CODING DOCUMENT

Coding Instrument (Coder 1 or Coder Number 2):

_____ 1 OR 2 _____

Cover Number: _____

Month of Cover: 1-12 _____

Year of Cover: _____

Directions: Please code each of the following variables using the woman featured on each cover.

1. Race

1. African American: Black ethnic groups including persons with origin from Africa.
2. American Indian/Alaskan Native: Individuals having origin with the original people of North America.
3. Asian/Pacific Islander: Individuals with descendants from the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian subcontinent, and the Pacific Islands. Such areas include China, India, Japan, Korea, Samoa, and the Philippine Islands.
4. Hispanic: Individuals with origins from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central or South America. Regardless of race, a person can be of Hispanic origin when they originate from a place of Spanish culture.
5. White: White ethnic groups, including persons from the Middle East or Arab descent. (The ideal race previously represented in American media.)
88. Unable to Determine

2. Facial Expression

1. Smiling
2. Not Smiling

3. Perceived Age

1. Very Young (Less than 20)
2. Young (20s)

3. Middle Aged (30s)
4. Older (+40s)

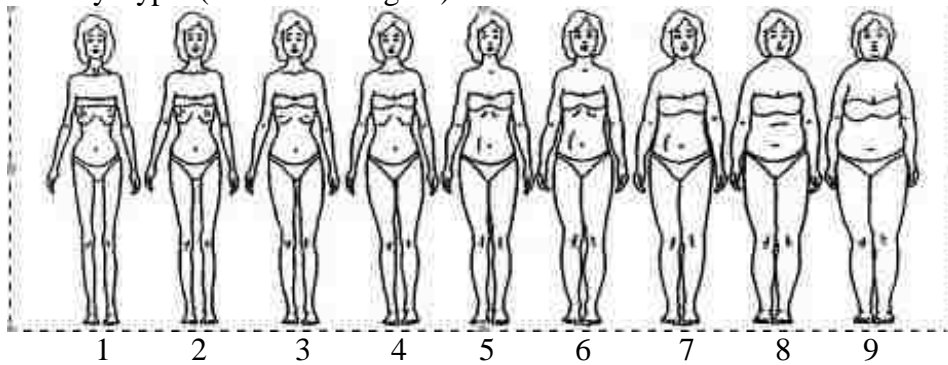
4. Hair Color: (Select all that Apply)

1. Blonde (The Norm)
2. Brunette
3. Red
4. Black
5. Unnatural Hair Color (i.e. Blue)
6. Unable to Determine

5. Eye Color:

1. Blue (The norm)
2. Green
3. Brown
4. Hazel
88. Unable to Determine

6. Body Type: (Circle One Figure)



88. Unable to Determine

7. Hair Length:

1. Short (Above the shoulder)
2. Medium (Below the shoulder but above the bra line)
3. Long (Below the bra line)

8. Makeup:

1. Heavy (Dark makeup around the eyes and/or lips)
2. Natural (Light makeup - light pinks and tans)
3. Other
88. Unable to Determine

9. Hair Style:

1. Straight
2. Curled/Wavy
3. Pulled Up (Evening Style/ Up-do)
4. Pulled Up (Casual/ Ponytails)
5. Braids

10. Does the Model's Hair Look like it's Blowing in the Wind? (By a Fan)

1. Yes
2. No
88. Unable to Determine

11. Does the Model have any Visible Imperfections? (Blemishes, Moles, Freckles, Cellulite)

1. Yes
2. No

12. What Type of Shot is the Model in?

1. Close-up (Face only)
2. Semi Close-up (Shoulders up)
3. Three-Quarter Shot (Breasts up)
4. Further Three-Quarter Shot (Waste up)
5. Between Three-Quarter Shot and Full Body Shot (Mid-Thigh up)
6. Full Body Shot (The model's Entire Body is Shown in the Shot)
7. Other

13. How is the Model Dressed?

1. Demurely Dressed ("Every-day" Dress, including Walking Shorts and Tennis outfits, but Excluding Evening Gowns which Exposed Cleavage and Mini-skirts).
2. Suggestively Dressed (Mini-skirts, "Short"-Shorts, "Muscle"-Shorts, Full-length Lingerie, unless "See-through" that Exposed Cleavage or Chests, and "Hiked" Skirts that Exposed Thighs).
3. Partially Clad (Bathing Suits, Wearing Under Apparel and Three-quarter Length or Shorter Lingerie, and "Close-ups" Where the Shoulders of the Models were Bare).
4. Nude (Unclothed Models, Including Silhouettes, Translucent under Apparel and Lingerie; Models Clothed in Nothing except a Towel; and "Medium Shots," where the Models are Depicted with No Clothing, except Perhaps a Towel Draped over their Shoulders).
88. Unable to Determine (Headshot)

14. What Color Family is the model's outfit mainly in? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88 Unable to Determine

15. What other colors is the model wearing? (Check all that Apply) Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100. White
- 200. Black
- 88. Unable to Determine

16. What Color are the models eye makeup? (Not including Mascara or Eyeliner unless they are not black or brown) Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88 Unable to Determine

17. What Color are the models lip makeup? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88 Unable to Determine

18. What Color are the Models Nails? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88. Unable to Determine

19. How many of each piece of jewelry/accessories does the model have on? Choose the number, then how many of the items.

1. Rings
2. Earrings
3. Necklaces
4. Nose Ring
5. Lip Ring
6. Belly Button Ring
7. Bracelets
8. Body Chains
9. Watch
10. Eye Glasses
11. Sunglasses
- 88 Other

20. Does the Model have any Visible Tattoos?

1. Yes
2. No

21. What Color Family is the Background Color in? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)

100. White

200. Black

88. Unable to Determine

22. What Color Family is the word “*Cosmopolitan*” in? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88_ Unable to Determine

23. What Color(s) is the rest of the text in? Choose the color family, then enter the color(s) that are closest to the color(s)

- Reds (light pink 11, dusty pink 12, bright pink 13, bright red 14, brick red 15, deep red 16)
- Oranges (peach 21, coral 22, tangerine 23, vibrant orange 24, ginger 25, terra cotta 26)
- Yellows (light yellow 31, bright yellow 32, golden yellow 33, amber 34, gold/metallic 35)
- Browns (tans 41, chocolate/coffee brown 42, earth brown 43)
- Blues (light blue 51, sky blue 52, bright blue 53, periwinkle 54, deep blue 55)
- Greens (light green 61, bright green 62, emerald 63, foliage green 64, dark green 65, chartreuse 66, lime 67, olive green 68, aqua 69, turquoise 70, teal 71)
- Purples (lavender 81, mauve 82, amethyst 83, blue purples 84, red purples 85, deep purples 86)
- Neutrals (neutral gray 91, charcoal gray 92, taupe 93, off-white ivory/bone cream/ecru beige 94, silver/metallic 95)
- 100 White
- 200 Black
- 88_ Unable to Determine

24. How Many Times is each of the following topics mentioned on the cover? (These are the topics *Cosmopolitan* lists on their website. Except “sex” which they include in “love” but it was separated here to be more specific in coding. “Health/Fitness/Weight Loss” was added as well.)

Choose the number, and how many times

1. Love/Relationships
2. Sex
3. Celebrity
4. How many times is it the celebrity on the cover?
5. Beauty
6. Style
7. Career
8. Health/Fitness/Weight Loss

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES (MAGAZINE COVERS)

Cosmopolitan (1959-2014, January to December), covers.

Secondary Sources (Books)

Barry, P. (2012). *The advertising concept book: think now, design later: a complete guide to creative ideas, strategies, and campaigns* (2nd ed.). London: Thames & Hudson.

Boyle, C. (2012). *Operation beautiful: one note at a time*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

Brown, B. (2012). *Bobbi Brown pretty powerful: beauty stories to inspire confidence*. San Francisco, Calif.: Chronicle.

Burg, B. (2011). *The art of persuasion: winning without intimidation*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Tremendous Life Books.

Conrad, L., & Loehnen, E. (2012). *Lauren Conrad beauty*. New York: HarperCollins.

Eiseman, L. (2006). *Color: Messages and Meanings, A PANTONE Color Resource*. Gloucester, MA: Hand Books Press.

Landers, J. (2010). *The improbable first century of Cosmopolitan magazine*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

London, S. (2012). *The truth about style*. New York: Viking Adult.

Ogilvy, D. (1985). *Ogilvy on advertising*. New York: Vintage Books.

Secondary Sources (Journal Articles)

Anttonelli, Krystle Lynne, Where in the World are the Women of Time? Women and the

‘Person of the Year’ Covers for Time Magazine (2012). *UNLV*

Theses/Dissertations/Professional Papers/Capstones. Paper 1704.

Bower, A. (2001). Highly attractive models in advertising and the women who loathe

them: The implications of negative affect for spokesperson effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 30(3), 51-63.

Conley, T., & Ramsey, L. (2011). Killing us softly? Investigating portrayals of women

and men in contemporary magazine advertisements. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(3), 469-478.

Crusmac, O. (2013). Post-Feminism and Specialized Media: A Content Analysis of

Cosmopolitan Headlines. *Analyze - Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies*, 1(15), 1-22.

Cusumano, D., & Thompson, J. (1997). Body image and body shape ideals in magazines:

Exposure, awareness, and internalization. *Sex Roles*, 37(9), 701-721.

Dittmar, H., Halliwell, E., & Stirling, E. (2009). Understanding the impact of thin media

models on women’s body-focused affect: The roles of thin-ideal internalization and weight-related self-discrepancy activation in experimental exposure effects.

Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 28(1), 43-72.

- Duke, L. (2000). Black in a blonde world: Race and girl's interpretations of the feminine ideal in teen magazines. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(2), 367-392.
- Engeln-Maddox, R. (2005). Cognitive responses to idealized media images of women: The relationship of social comparison and critical processing to body image disturbance in college women. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24(8), 1114-1138.
- Engeln-Maddox, R., & Miller, S. (2008). Talking back to the media ideal: The development and validation of the critical processing of beauty images scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32, 159-171.
- Englis, B., Soloman, M., & Ashmore, R. (1994). Beauty before the eyes of beholders: The Cultural encoding of beauty types in magazine advertising and music television. *Journal of Advertising*, 23(2), 49-64.
- Frith, K., Shaw, P., & Cheng, H. (2005). The construction of beauty: A cross-cultural analysis of women's magazine advertising. *The Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 56-70.
- Goodman, R., Morris, J., & Sutherland, J. (2008). Is beauty joy forever? Young women's emotional responses to varying types of beautiful advertising models. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(1), 147-168.
- Granatino, R. (2013). Body image, confidence, and media influence: A study of middle school adolescents. *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, 29(1), 45-50.

- Jones, G. (2008). Blonde and blue-eyed? Globalizing of beauty, c. 1945-c. 1980. *Economic History Review*, 61(1), 125-154.
- Ju, H., & Johnson, K. (2010). Fashion advertisements and young women: Determining visual attention using eye tracking. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 28(3), 159-173.
- Kozar, J., & Damhorst, M. (2009). Comparison of the ideal and real body as women age: Relationships to age identity, body satisfaction, and importance, and attention to models in advertising. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 27(3), 197-210.
- Park, S. (2005). The influence of presumed media influence on women's desire to be thin. *Communication Research*, 32(5), 594-614.
- Sandlin, J., & Maudlin, J. (2012). Consuming pedagogies: Controlling images of women as consumers in popular culture. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 12(2), 175-194.
- Slater, A., Tiggemann, M., Firth, B., & Hawkins, K. (2012). Reality check: An experimental investigation of the addition of warning labels to fashion magazine images on women's mood and body dissatisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 31(2), 105-122.
- Soley, L., & Reid, L. (1988). Taking it off: Are models in magazine ads wearing less? *Journalism Quarterly*, 65(4), 960-965.
- Stephens, L., Hill, P., & Hanson, C. (1994). The beauty myth and female consumers: The controversial role of advertising. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 28(1), 137-153.

- Sumner, D. (2002). Sixty-Four Years of Life: What Did Its 2,128 Covers Cover? *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research*, 5(1), 1-19
- Thompson, M. (1995). Development and Validation of a New Body-Image Assessment Scale. *Journal of Personality and Assessment*, 64(2), 258-269.
- Thomsen, S. (2002). Health and beauty magazine reading and body shape concerns among a group of college women. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(4), 988-1007.
- Tiggemann, M. (2009). The processing of thin ideals in fashion magazines: A source of social comparison or fantasy? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(1), 73-93.

Secondary Sources (Websites)

- White, K. (2012). Editor-in-Chief Kate White's Goodbye. *Cosmopolitan*. Retrieved from cosmopolitan.com/career/advice/a3916/kate-white-goodbye
- Johnson, M. (2012). Kate White, Former 'Cosmopolitan' Magazine Editor Prepares For Her Next Chapter. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/11/kate-white-cosmpolitan-magazine-editor_n_1874477.html

CURRICULUM VITAE

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Azalee Robin Maslow

Degrees:

Master of Arts, 2015
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Beyond Convergence
Studio-G
Intern at Channel 8

Bachelor of Arts, 2012
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Rebel Yell
UNLV-TV
Intern at Channel 13

Thesis Title: Depictions of Beauty on *Cosmopolitan* Magazine: A Content Analysis of
Covers (1959-2014)

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Gregory Borchard, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Lawrence Mullen, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Oleysa Venger, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Maile Chapman, Ph. D.