

AN ANALYSIS OF FASHION MAGAZINE EDITORIAL CONTENT
FROM 1975 TO 1990 FOR ITS ROLE IN
THE RISE OF EATING DISORDERS

by
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The recent reported rise in eating disorders among young women has been attributed to many factors, among them our cultural obsession with thinness. Because of the links between pressure for thinness and onset of anorexia nervosa and bulimia, this study sought to examine how fashion magazines may have contributed to these disorders by promoting thinness in their editorial content.

This content analysis of Mademoiselle and Seventeen from 1975 to 1990 found that while an increasing number of messages have promoted less-thin body types, the thin body ideal has continued to be dominant. Its heavy mixture with health/fitness and unrestrained eating messages indicates that fashion magazine editors are sending women highly confusing messages that only propel their obsession.

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PREFACE

The idea to study the link between the recent rise in eating disorders among young women and the perpetration of the thin ideal in fashion magazines came to me, as do most ideas, unexpectedly. It was on another typical January afternoon in 1989--grey, cold and rainy--that I headed off to the Henry Jerome Weight Center on the University of Oregon campus for my daily workout. The atmosphere and activity inside the gym were typical as well: the bare and windowless walls defining the room still barely contained the mass of steel weights, floor mats, rowing machines, exercycles and young bodies packed inside. Sounds of dropped barbells and guttural grunts of rippled men determined to become stronger and more powerful still drowned out the strains of a Top 40 tune in the background.

As usual, I bypassed the weights and machines designed to make us leaner and stronger and hopped aboard the exercycle parked with three others along one wall of the gym. Pedalling furiously, heart rate steadily rising, I let my eyes and mind drift, and suddenly the day ceased to be typical.

Somewhere in those 30 minutes of prescribed aerobic activity, I realized what was transpiring before me. Of all those bodies struggling to grow more powerful, only a few were women. Of those bodies struggling to decrease by pedalling away calories, none were men. It was such a paradox that we, men and women of the same society and of similar backgrounds and educations, were subscribing to such different standards of health and fitness. Or were we? As I looked to my right to see a frighteningly thin girl pedalling vigorously, her spandex leggings baggy around her twiggy legs, and then looked straight ahead to see a perfectly toned, fatless male painfully heave a bar above his head, I realized we were not subscribing to two opposing health standards; we were not subscribing to a health standard at all. The anorexic girl now on the floor doing an endless series of sit-ups after an hour on the exercycle was not striving for a healthy body. She, like the rest of us, female and male, was striving for a fat-free, lean one. Health was not her motive but her sacrifice, a sacrifice offered by millions of women for social approval and self-worth.

It was a sacrifice being offered by women like those waiting patiently for a turn on the exercycle, killing their time by talking with each other or leafing through glossy fashion magazines. I knew what kind of thin female images

and diet articles these magazines contained but never before had I considered their possible, subtle influence in bringing these women, myself included, into this gym. Never before had I considered their possible contribution to the distorted self-images and obsessive concerns about weight that characterized too many of my female peers.

Those 30 revelatory minutes on that exercycle stimulated the idea for this thesis, a thesis that I hope will, in turn, stimulate other young women to think about the often unhealthy body and beauty standards some of our media as part of our society prescribe for women. This is a thesis that I hope will help future female editors and writers as well as readers see that women need not spend hours pedalling nowhere to be beautiful, acceptable and valuable in our culture.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Embedded in our culture, the powerful ideal of thinness that pushes us on grey days into stuffy, drab and overcrowded gyms to pedal on a bicycle going nowhere, to lift hundreds of pounds of nothing over and over again, is one that is proliferated in most major institutions of our society. It is an ideal that wakes us up each morning through radio spots proclaiming Dan's amazing progress at Nutri-Systems this past week. It joins us at lunch as we eat fat-free bagels topped with reduced-fat cream cheese, and bananas with "no fat, no cholesterol" stickers on their peels. It is there when we open up the daily paper to read about the latest medical studies linking obesity to heart attacks and early death. Even when we are looking for a laugh, we find it in comic-strip character "Cathy," frustrated by yet another failed diet or out-of-control eating binge. It waits with us in grocery store check-out lanes or at dentist's offices as we skim through women's magazines describing the latest sure-fire diets and picturing thin models on every page.

This pervasive, culturally promoted thin ideal is not one without serious consequences to our health, however. A

recent broadcast of "20/20" (Sept. 6, 1991) described the escalating use--and abuse--of steroids among young men as a "short cut" to muscular bodies, a problem that has only come to our awareness in the past few years.

Young women, meanwhile, have been travelling the long route to a thin figure for at least the past 20 years, the consequences of their arduous journey evident in the \$10-billion-a-year weight loss industry (Chernin, 1981) and in the expansion in our medical community of information, services and support groups for those suffering from eating disorders.

As many as 50 percent of college-aged women have a problem with eating and body image (Orbach, 1986), one-half to two percent of women between the ages of 10 and 30 have anorexia and five percent of women between 18 and 25 have bulimia (Jean Rubel, telephone interview, Aug. 23, 1991). It has also been argued that never before in our documented history have as many women been stricken with concern for body size and shape and caloric content of the very source of sustenance--food--as today in our Western society. Between 1971 and 1982, for instance, the number of scientific publications on anorexia and bulimia more than doubled from 59 to 165 (Russel, 1985) and continued rising through the 1980s, as shown in the MEDLINE index from 1984-1990.

The reported rise in incidence and the health consequences of such eating behaviors have moved concerned researchers of various social disciplines and medical fields to examine the reasons why these disorders and associated behaviors have developed only within the last 20 years, only among women, and only in Western societies (Brumberg 1988). Biological, psychological and familial factors that have been researched, while they provide some clues, fail to answer these nagging questions. The search for more significant clues has turned sad and interested eyes toward the source of aesthetic, moral and ethical standards and values: our society.

One such researcher, Kim Chernin (1981, 1985), has suggested that our culture's value of thinness stems from the women's movement in the 1960s when male-dominated society, out of fear of rising female power in the "real world," sought to suppress women by creating a thin, passive and weak body ideal. Another scholar, Roberta Pollack Seid (1989), traces the development of the current standard through the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, arguing that thin evolved into a moral statement because of various social crises and transitions. The rise in a thin-obsessed society, these and other researchers posit, set the stage for the emergence of eating disorders today.

While precise links may never be clear, this link between a thin-obsessed culture and eating disorders has been the subject of much research in mass communications, women's studies, psychology, sociology, medicine and business ethics.

An important area of research in mass communications has been the study of how the media have contributed to this pressure by using thinner models, writing more diet articles and representing thinness as the key to happiness and success. These studies, based on the concept that the media's messages do affect their audience in some way, implicitly or explicitly express a need and an obligation for the media to act responsibly toward society. Because of their powerful position as conveyors of social values and ideals to the general public and because of their argued capacity to serve as catalysts of social change, the mass media have been urged to reconsider the messages they send, particularly in this area of social health issues.

In the area of research pertaining to the mass media's role in the increasingly common appearance of eating disorders among young women, most attention has been focused on the advertising content in general women's magazines because of its clear, visual representation of what women should look like. Because so many other sectors and institutions of society promote the same value of thinness,

advertisements picturing overly thin women in everyday situations, these researchers argue, only reinforce women's perceptions that thin is the norm they must strive for. This promotion of thinness for women and girls on the visual level has also directed criticism at and research of the film industry, television programming and commercials, all of which address a general audience.

What many of these studies have neglected to examine, however, is the power of not only visual images but also of words, articles and tone in perpetrating the same thin obsession. Even more curious is the fact that the fashion magazine, the one medium that most explicitly speaks to young, affluent, college-educated women, the population most affected by eating disorders, virtually has been ignored in these media studies.

This study aims to fill these two significant gaps in research through a content analysis of the nonpictorial, verbal, editorial content of two leading fashion magazines for their contribution to this ideal of thinness.

Purpose of Study

The central question this study will explore is whether women's fashion magazines have increasingly promoted dieting and thinness in their nonpictorial editorial content.

"Editorial content" describes that portion of the

publication, usually around 40 percent in women's fashion magazines, that is not advertising; it includes all the articles, columns and photographs that are a product of the editor's vision. This study, however, will look only at the verbal editorial content, excluding photographs and illustrations unless they are accompanied by text. It will look at young women's fashion magazines from 1975 to 1990 for their trends in editorial coverage of diets, thinness, and fitness as well as of less-thin body types and eating disorders themselves. With the growing awareness of the eating disorders problem during this time period, what trends are we seeing in the types of verbally expressed messages appearing about eating and body image? This study will be a critical inquiry into whether fashion magazine editors have exercised leadership in light of the mounting evidence that a thin-obsessed culture is one of the factors contributing to eating disorders. Considering the fact that advertising leaders have already taken steps to avoid appealing to the self-image attitudes unique to anorectics and bulimics (Peterson, 1987), has the editorial side of the fashion magazine cleaned up its act in regard to this serious health issue?

Before answering this question, however, this study will examine in detail the phenomenon of anorexia nervosa-- why this and related eating disorders have become a common

problem today and what role the media may have been playing in their increasing incidence. In chapter three, the specific analytical methods used in this study will be discussed. Chapter four will detail the findings of the content analysis, followed in chapter five by an in-depth analysis of these results.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Eating disorders certainly are not unique to our age and society. Unusual eating behavior in the form of fasting can be traced back to the Middle Ages, while signs of the binging and purging cycle we now associate with bulimia nervosa remain visible in the ruins of ancient Rome's "vomitoriums" (Brumberg, 1988; Halmi, 1988; Orbach, 1986). Since those early days of our civilization, evidence of disturbed eating patterns, typically among women, has appeared sporadically in popular, religious, medical and psychiatric literature, but not until 1873 was the bizarre self-starvation disorder christened as anorexia nervosa (Brumberg, 1988; Russel, 1985; Seid, 1989). Bulimia nervosa, on the other hand, is not as well-documented and was not named until 1979 (Chernin, 1981; Russel, 1985), listed as a separate psychiatric disease by the American Psychiatric Association only in 1985 (Halmi, 1988).

Growing national attention in the 1970s on dieting and weight loss and their correlate, anorexia nervosa, spurred the identification of bulimia nervosa. In treating a rising number of young women for anorexia, members of the medical community discovered the silent presence of another equally

unhealthy and frightening eating control behavior among some anorectics: bingeing and purging, or bulimia. The mass media helped disseminate evidence that both nervosas were becoming more prevalent than ever before, prompting extensive research in various sciences about the causes, processes and treatment of these disorders.

Of particular concern has been locating the causes of these disorders, for such knowledge could help develop effective intervention. In the search for an explanation, researchers have found clues in the common traits of anorexic women, namely their obsessive fear of fatness, distorted body image, and desire to make their already emaciated bodies even thinner. "In recent years there has been a shift in emphasis on the nature of the central psychopathology of anorexia, with a greater stress on the patient's morbid preoccupation with her body and her dread of fatness" (Russel, 1985, p. 103).

Noticing these fears in the context of our society's intensifying idealization of a thin body has led some researchers to probe the link between culture and eating disorders, and the role of specific social institutions, particularly the media, in creating and promoting the values that possibly motivate these destructive disorders in women. The ideas that the mass media's messages influence people and that the media have a responsibility to society have

drawn these researchers' attention to the media's role in the rise of these disorders, although few have systematically studied an important and influential medium for many young women: the fashion magazine.

The Eating Disorders "Epidemic"

In October 1990, clinical psychiatrist Craig Johnson optimistically reported that, based on his study of a group of high school girls, eating disorders have finally decreased, along with the emphasis on thinness and dieting (USA Today, 1990). Johnson's hopeful claims, however, stand alone in the crowd of other statistics. Jean Rubel, president of Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, says that the rate of eating disorders has "held steady" since the mid 1980s, the height of their publicity. "The peak of interest in eating disorders has passed. Now [people] are into dysfunctional families and substance abuse" (telephone interview, Aug. 23, 1991). But while interest may have waned, the dimensions of the problem have not; one-half of one percent of women between 10 and 30 still suffer from anorexia and five percent between 18 and 25 suffer from bulimia (Chernin, 1985; J. Rubel, telephone interview, Aug. 23, 1991). And these rates are on the conservative end of the scale; estimates have gone as high as 10 percent for anorexia and 50 percent for bulimia in

certain populations, with one to two percent for anorexia and 10 to 20 percent for bulimia as averages (Lachenmeyer & Muni-Brander, 1988; Seid, 1989; Wooley & Wooley, 1982).

"Eating disorders are no longer cases of individual pathology but a national epidemic" (Seid, 1989, p. 21), striking one million Americans and resulting in 150,000 deaths a year (Brumberg, 1988).

The Eating Disorders Population

These disorders and subsequent deaths are not striking Americans of various classes and both genders equally; rather, they have increased among only one sector of the Western population: young women between the ages of 12 and 30 (Rubel, 1986). Few studies have found more than 10 percent of anorectics to be males, although their number seems to be increasing with the overall rate (Lachenmeyer & Muni-Brander, 1988). The age of onset of anorexia is in adolescence, of bulimia at age 18 (Bauer, Anderson & Hyatt, 1986; Lachenmeyer & Muni-Brander, 1988). Because of the lifelong nature of the disorders, however, about 25 percent of bulimics and anorectic women are 30 or over (Chernin, 1985). In addition, most victims are white, educated and economically affluent (Peterson, 1987), although this too is changing. As ethnic minorities and immigrants "move up the social ladder, however, their vulnerability to the disorder

increases. In fact, the so-called epidemic seems to be consistently restrained by age and gender but promoted by social mobility" (Brumberg, 1988, p. 13).

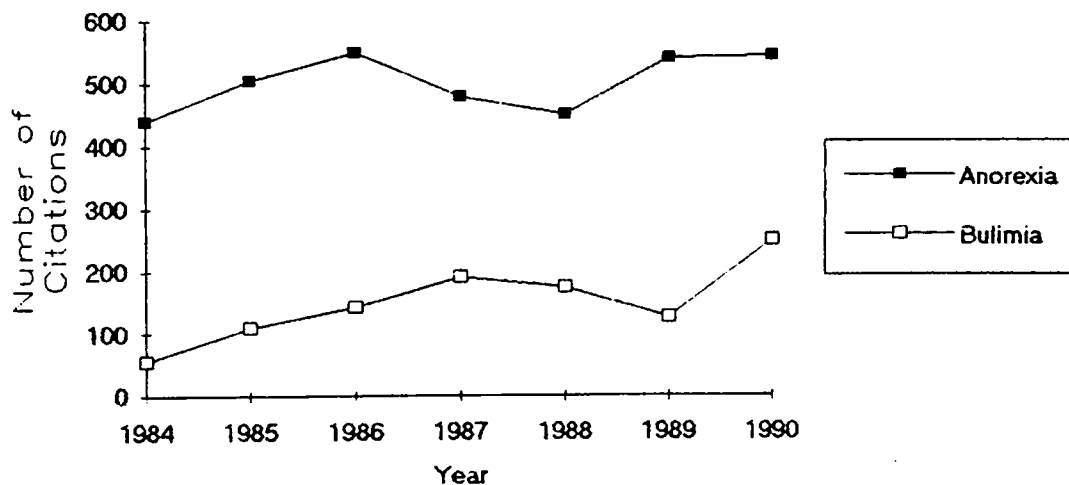
Growing Incidence

"Epidemic" is an appropriate word to describe the dramatic rise in eating disorders among women in the past 20 years. While researchers have had difficulty assessing exactly how many women are afflicted, they have demonstrated that these disorders are more prevalent now than ever before. A 1970 study noted a fivefold increase in anorexia in Sweden between the 1930s and 1950s, while the incidence in northeast Scotland almost tripled between 1966/69 and 1978/82 (Russel, 1985). In Monroe County, New York, incidence almost doubled between 1960/69 and 1970/79, and in London, one out of 200 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 reported a severe case of anorexia in the 1970s (Halmi, 1988). Brumberg (1988) notes that the University of Wisconsin Hospital typically admitted one anorectic a year in the 1960s, but in 1982 admitted more than 70.

The upsurge in scientific publications on eating disorders from 59 in 1971 to 165 in 1982, along with the establishment of the International Journal of Eating Disorders in 1981, reinforces these statistics of rising incidence (Brumberg, 1988; Russel, 1985). Had the need not

existed, eating disorder organizations and clinics would not have opened when they did, ANRED in 1979 and the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association (AA/BA) in 1978, for example (Brumberg, 1988; Rubel, 1986). The MEDLINE index of medical and scientific publications shows a distinct rise in citations for anorexia from 1984 (the first year indexed) to 1986, with a drop in 1987-88, and another increase from 1988-90. Citations for bulimia have increased dramatically, from 56 in 1984 to 109 in 1985 to 250 in 1990, reflecting the need for research on this disorder (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of Anorexia and Bulimia Citations in Scientific and Medical Journals as Indexed by MEDLINE, 1984-1990



Diagnosing Anorexia and Bulimia

A number of researchers point out that the statistics documenting substantial increases in anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa should be taken with reservation:

The dimensions of the recent increase are hard to ascertain, however, because of the problems in collecting and interpreting data as well as lack of standardization in diagnostic criteria. Not all patients with anorexia nervosa have exactly the same symptoms in the same degree or intensity....There is also the matter of how anorexia is related to bulimia (Brumberg, 1988, p. 12).

One of the ways by which medical personnel diagnose anorectics and bulimics is by following the American Psychiatric Association's criteria, even though they have been criticized for being too broad. According to the APA, in order for an individual to be anorectic, she must refuse to maintain a body weight over a minimal normal weight for age and height, fail to make expected weight gains during growth periods, have an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat (even if she is already underweight), perceive her body in a disturbed manner, and miss at least three consecutive menstrual cycles (Halmi, 1988). Anorectics are classified into two groups, those who binge and purge-- "bulimarexics"--and those who restrict food intake-- "restrictives."

A bulimic is classified by her recurrent episodes of binge eating, feelings of lack of control over eating

during the binges, regular self-induced vomiting, use of diuretics or laxatives, strict dieting, fasting or vigorous exercise to prevent weight gain, minimum average of two binges a week for at least three months, and persistent overconcern with body weight and shape (Halmi, 1988).

Clinical Cases or Eating Disorder Behavior?

Two other sets of diagnostic criteria devised in 1982 and 1983, the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT) and Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI), offer another explanation for researchers skeptical about the "epidemic" rate of eating disorders. Researchers Hesse-Biber (1989) and Garner, Olmstead, Polivy and Garfinkel (1984) used these scales that measure psychological and behavioral factors associated with eating disorders to show that while many women exemplify the behaviors associated with eating disorders--preoccupation with thinness, binge eating, extreme fasting and dieting--they do not all possess the deeper psychological traits unique to anorectics and bulimics. "Although our female college sample display the behavioral symptoms associated with anorexia and bulimia, they exhibit few of the constellation of psychologic traits associated with these disorders" (Hesse-Biber, 1989, p. 71). According to the EDI, perfectionism, interpersonal distrust, sense of ineffectiveness, body dissatisfaction and maturity fears are

measures of the central psychopathology of anorexia nervosa, while the drive for thinness and bulimia are measures of anorexic behavior. Garner et al. (1984) have found extremely weight-preoccupied women to score equally high or higher than anorectics on the drive for thinness, perfectionism and body dissatisfaction scales, but anorectics scored higher on sense of ineffectiveness and interpersonal distrust. "While it could be speculated that chronic dieters may be motivated more by a desire for physical attractiveness and social approval, the anorexic patient may limit intake to gain a sense of psychological organization" (Garner et al., 1984, p. 264).

The Consequences to Women's Health

Although these findings may diminish the number of clinical cases, these researchers stress that the increase in eating disorder behavior is just as disturbing and dangerous as the full-fledged disorders themselves (Garner et al., 1984). Even if the actual numbers are lower than reported, "considering how rare bulimia has been in the population until the last few decades, any occurrence above one to two percent is cause of concern" (Hesse-Biber, 1989, p. 76). Not only are such behaviors and attitudes destructive to women psychologically, but also physically in terms of their dangers to health.

One of the biggest problems of dieting and exercising for women is amenhorrea, or the absence of the menstrual cycle, which results when the body fat level is too low. Studies show that 20 percent of women who exercise to "stay in shape" and 50 percent of endurance athletes have menstrual irregularities, which in turn can cause infertility (Seid, 1989). Hormonal imbalance, another problem, has been shown to lead to ovarian and endometrial cancer and to increase the risk of osteoporosis. Dieting women and anorectics alike live in malnourished states, the emotional ramifications of which are irritability, tension, depression and inefficiency (Seid, 1989) as well as sleep disturbance and preoccupation with food (Halmi, 1988). Even more dangerous are the risks in yo-yo dieting, the lose-gain cycle 97 percent of dieters experience because they cannot maintain their lower weights (Chernin, 1981; Lissner et al., 1991). As a study in a June 1991 New England Journal of Medicine reports, "Persons whose body weight fluctuates often or greatly have a higher risk of coronary heart disease and death than do persons with relatively stable weights" (Lissner et al., 1991, p. 1843), a frightening finding indeed when 50 percent of fourth-grade girls and 80 to 90 percent of eighth grade girls are dieting because they think they are too fat (Chernin, 1985; Orbach, 1986; J. Rubel, telephone interview, Aug. 23, 1991; Seid, 1989).

When dieting and body dissatisfaction merge with the psychological traits outlined earlier (EDI scale), eating disorders are likely to set in, and the risks to health escalate. "Dieting, the very method we use to control our now-suspect appetites and to vanquish our unruly bodies, itself may provoke obsessive behavior and binge-eating" (Seid, 1989, p. 32). Halmi (1988) defines bulimia and anorexia as being triggered by a period of strict dieting, successful or not.

The immediate physical consequences of anorexia nervosa are painfully obvious: a puffy face, prominent eyes, blotchy skin, a skeletal body (Orbach, 1986). But the effects go far beyond the surface. In addition to feeling cold, having insomnia, an excess of energy, constipation and a distended stomach, anorectics experience drastic changes in normal body functioning due to starvation. They have stunted skeletal development, low blood pressure, slow heart beat, circulatory disturbances leading to cold extremities, impairment of the immune system, and irregular heart beat. As Orbach describes the syndrome, "It is as though the body's motor has gone into hibernation and is fulfilling its basic mechanical functions on one cylinder with cheap-quality petrol" (1986, p. 183). By far the biggest risk is heart attack and, subsequently, death. Karen Carpenter's fatal heart attack in 1983 while recovering from anorexia

nervosa illustrates just how serious this disorder is in respect to physical health. It is particularly serious in that the majority of those who seek treatment and survive still suffer from the psychological aspects of the illness their entire lives (Halmi, 1988).

The health risks of bulimia are similar. Because of frequent self-induced vomiting, bulimics often tear their esophagus and suffer from severe dental problems, including tooth decay and gum disease. Due to dehydration from fasting, their blood potassium levels fall, inducing muscle weakness, paralysis, kidney problems, occasional neurological disturbances and heart attack (Halmi, 1988; Orbach, 1986). In essence, women suffering from these eating disorders and from chronic dieting are risking more than their appearance: They are putting their lives and futures on the line.

Possible Explanations for Eating Disorders

The life-threatening nature of anorexia and bulimia nervosa, particularly in light of their growing incidence, has driven concerned medical personnel and social scientists to search for explanations for their recent development. In their quest for answers in hope of developing effective intervention, researchers have come to only one concrete conclusion: There is no one simple answer. "No one

model...explains the current rash of eating disorders....Anorexia nervosa is clearly a multi-determined disorder" (Brumberg, 1988, p. 24). Like most psychological disorders, anorexia and bulimia are puzzling in their origins and pathology, differing for each individual case. The fact that they manifest themselves in visible physical deterioration only adds to their complexity. In trying to understand these disorders, researchers have identified several contributing factors.

Predisposing Factors

Women with particular individual psychologies, familial backgrounds and biological disturbances are more likely than others to develop eating disorders. Young, overachieving, perfectionistic women who are attractive, well-groomed, overactive, independent and moody typify anorectics (Peterson, 1987). "The anorectic is ...a 'good girl' who alternates between compliance and rebellion" (Brumberg, 1989, p. 29). Despite their outward success, anorectic women have low self-esteem, feel inadequate and are needy of external approval and acceptance (Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz & Thompson, 1980; Rubel, 1986).

In addition to these personality traits, researchers provide various theories about deeper psychological problems predisposing women to eating disorders. Some believe

anorectics have a phobic avoidance of food because of the sexual and social stress produced by physical changes in puberty (Halmi, 1988). Freud's observation of anorectics as sexually repressed is in accord with his theory that eating is an expression of the sex drive or libido (Bruch, 1978; Brumberg, 1988). Bruch, on the other hand, posits that the anorectic opts for control of her body because of her sense of ineffectiveness and anxiety about her identity, with the body representing the life she cannot control (Bruch, 1978). The debate continues with Orbach (1986) and Chernin's (1985) argument that anorexia emerges because of the mother-daughter conflict, where the daughter identifies herself, her position in society and her values with and, at the same time, struggles to surpass and separate from her mother.

Brumberg, Garner et al., Halmi and Rubel all note that certain types of families encourage passive response and defiance and make it difficult for children to become individuals. Anorectic families tend to be controlling, perfectionistic and nonconfrontational, where mothers assume traditional roles with frustration, depression, passivity, perfectionism and dependency, and cannot see their daughters as autonomous human beings.

One other focus of study in predisposing factors has been biology. Hormonal imbalance, dysfunction in the satiety center of the hypothalamus gland, irregular output

of certain toxins and lesions in one system of the brain have all been cited as biological causes of anorexia (Brumberg, 1988; Halmi, 1988). As seen in the MEDLINE index, the biomedical perspective has been studied intensely through the present, supporting the assumption that body dysfunctions are in part responsible.

Precipitating and Perpetrating Factors

When any or a number of these factors are present in individuals--though latent for years--certain stressors may precipitate the onset of an eating disorder (Brumberg, 1988; Garner et al., 1984; Garner et al., 1980; Halmi, 1988; Rubel, 1986). Losses such as divorce, death, broken relationships expose the deeper feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and insecurity, leading the individual to diet to regain control. With the progression of weight loss, hunger and preoccupation with food take effect. This preoccupation is accompanied by feelings of irritability and depression and also of power and success, for initial weight loss is generally approved by family and friends. These feelings of control and power propel the anorectic to continue dieting: "It is in the nature of anorexic 'accomplishment' or 'achievement' that depression--i.e., feeling helpless, worthless and ineffective--must, like hunger, be transformed into something else. Feelings of powerlessness make

starvation necessary in the first place" (Wooley & Wooley, 1982, p. 64). The anorectic develops bizarre food and exercise rituals, weakening her body and mind to the point that she sees her skeletal body as still too fat and lives in a malnourished state. Her misperception of her size drives the disorder.

The bulimic, however, begins dieting to improve her appearance and self-esteem, not to gain feelings of power and success as anorectics do (Rubel, 1986; Silverstein & Perdue, 1988). In response to feelings of hunger from the strict dieting, triggered by the same stressors of loneliness, rejection, anger, the bulimic binges, then feels guilty and afraid of gaining weight, and therefore purges. "Fairborn and Cooper (1984) found that a rigid diet was the most commonly reported precipitant to binge-eating behavior, and a gross bingeing bout was the most common precipitant for initiating vomiting behavior" (Halmi, 1988, p. 761). Bulimics view this cycle as the best of both worlds because they can eat and not get fat, a perception that becomes a powerful habit, one that ultimately leaves them feeling out of control and ashamed. In some women then, severe dieting for purposes of enhancing appearance, elevating self-esteem or gaining feelings of success, competence, control and acceptance can lead to the development of an anorexic or bulimic eating disorder.

The Role of Culture

The fact that dieting and a thin figure are perceived as a viable and acceptable solution to these personal fears and insecurities by so many women has prompted worried researchers to ask where and when such an unhealthy correlation developed. Observing too that this "solution's" extreme--eating disorders--has become commonplace only in the past 20 to 25 years and only among socially affluent or upward-moving young women of Western societies has moved social and medical scientists alike to call our culture and its values to the witness stand. Insecure and approval-needy young women may believe that a thin figure will assuage their negative feelings because society tells them it will: "Personal effectiveness may come to be defined in terms of dietary restraint or weight loss which are exaggerations of a prominent contemporary value endemic to women of our culture" (Garner et al., 1980, p. 655).

That our culture has in part contributed to the recent rise in eating disorders among women has been studied in medicine, sociology, psychology, business ethics, women's studies and mass communications. A number of these studies have displayed strong evidence that our cultural pressure to be thin can lead to eating disorders in some women. Garner et al. (1980), in a key study, have tested female models and dancers, women who by the nature of their profession are

required to be slim, and have found that they are more likely than other women to develop eating disorders. If the professional pressure to slim down causes a higher rate of anorexia, these researchers reason, then a similar pressure from our culture would have parallel effects on women in general. "Individuals who must focus increased attention on a slim body shape are at risk for anorexia nervosa" (Garner et al., 1980, p. 652). Silverstein, Peterson and Perdue (1986b) and Hesse-Biber (1989) have also documented that in other periods of a thin standard in our history, eating disorders have been more prevalent, though by no means as prevalent as today. "The results indicate that eating disorders are not just instances of individual psychopathology. They are rooted in societal pressures experienced by women. When the standard of bodily attractiveness becomes very thin, many women develop eating disorders" (Silverstein et al., 1986b, p. 904).

Although they acknowledge evidence supporting the biological, familial and psychological models, these researchers find in them a number of gaps that only the sociocultural model can fill. For one, as Orbach (1986) points out, the biological model is deficient by implying that eating disorders are involuntarily caused by body dysfunctions and best treated with drugs when little evidence supports the success of drug treatment. The

psychological model too "fails to answer the same thorny problems of social address, changing incidence, and gender" (Brumberg, 1988, p. 31). The sociocultural model takes these factors into account and also can be used to explain the rise in nonclinical eating disorder behavior.

Our Obsession With Thinness

Researchers purporting that cultural factors have played one of the most critical roles in the eating disorders epidemic of the current college-aged female population point to the obvious social obsession with thinness and "fitness" as the driving force. It does not take a particularly keen eye to see that a thin figure is the one to acquire today; even fourth-grade girls are conscious of this goal, call themselves fat, and put themselves on diets along with up to 50 percent of the adult American population (Bouchard, 1991). Health clubs lure us with their promises of trim and sleek bodies, as do the low-cal, low-fat, light, cholesterol-free products lining our grocery store shelves. "The massive effort of our culture to eradicate fat--measureable in... billions of dollars spent on research and ineffective treatment; in the millions of lives totally ruined chasing after the elusive silhouette of youth--attests to a mass psychosis that leaves no one untouched" (Wooley & Wooley, 1982, p. 68).

Although this ideal has become a fact of everyday life for us--indeed, the current 20-year-old cannot imagine a time when thin was "out"--a number of social researchers argue that this body type has emerged as the ideal within the past 20 to 25 years, not earlier (Garner et al., 1980; Silverstein, Peterson, Perdue & Kelly, 1986a). While other periods of modern society may have esteemed slender figures, such as the 1920s with the flat-chested flappers, these figures were never so unrealistically and unachievably slim nor, due to modern technology, so pervasive (Seid, 1989). Although the flappers may have been as skinny as Twiggy, their body type was not admired by all social institutions. As both Seid (1989) and Silverstein et al. (1986b) point out, there was considerable disapproval for this body type as unattractive and unhealthy, a disapproval difficult to find for today's ideal.

In order to document the increasing slimness of the ideal body for women, researchers Garner et al. (1980) have studied the measurements of Playboy centerfolds and Miss America contestants and winners from 1959 to 1978. As cultural ideals, both Miss Americas and Playmates have become progressively thinner, and the Miss America winners have always been thinner than the other contestants. At the same time, the Metropolitan Life Insurance weight tables (1983) indicate that women have gotten heavier due to better

nutrition: "The new figures indicate that today's adults can weigh more than their 1959 counterparts and still anticipate favorable longevity." In fact, numerous studies cited in Wooley and Wooley show that "heavy people are as, or more, healthy than thin people" (1982, p.66), and tend to live longer.

Gagnard (1985), in an analysis of three general women's magazines, found too that the proportion of thin models in advertisements has increased each decade since 1950, and that in all decades the female subjects interviewed associated the thinner models with attractiveness and success, a finding that further shows why thinness is seen as a "solution" for young women uncertain about how they fit into society.

One other group of researchers, Silverstein et al. (1986a), has shown that the standard of attractiveness is thinner now than in the past and that it is thinner for women than for men. In a study similar to Garner et al. (1980), Silverstein et al. measured the bust-waist ratios of popular film actresses and Vogue and Ladie's Home Journal models in the 20th century, finding that since 1965 has been "the longest period of such a small ratio during the century" (1986a, p. 528). These actresses and models serve as a representation of what 95 percent of the actual female population must diet and exercise to look like (Seid, 1989).

By studying television characters' body size, Silverstein et al. (1986a) also found that 69.1 percent of women were thin, compared to only 17.5 percent of males, indicating that women are more pressured to be more thin than men.

The Origins of the Thin Standard

While these studies provide evidence that our culture's body standard is thinner than ever before, and current statistics about dieting and eating disorders provide evidence that we have become obsessed with achieving this elusive ideal, the questions of why we have created this standard and who has created it have continued to frustrate those aware of its serious health consequences to young women. Why have women come to detest their natural form and yearn for one that is not even feminine in appearance nor, when amenhorrea and infertility set in, feminine in function?

The origins of any cultural value, standard, taste or belief are extremely difficult, if not impossible to locate. Researchers Chernin, Orbach and Seid have undertaken this task in order to provide a foundation for changing this thin ideal that has disrupted and destroyed the lives of so many women. Chernin and Orbach, two feminist experts on anorexia, have correlated the rise of the thin ideal to the feminist movement in the 1960s. Chernin points out that

weight loss clinics, followed in the next decade by eating disorder clinics, appeared at the same time as the women's movement: "This society had divided itself into two divergent movements, one of which is a movement toward feminine power, the other a retreat from it, supported by the fashion and diet industries which share a fear of women's power" (1981, p. 99). The male-dominated and controlled society, she argues, feared the strong woman and promoted instead the passive, thin adolescent, one who would not command too much space or attention in the workplace, an assessment with which Rubel (telephone interview, Aug. 23, 1991) and other feminists agree. Studies document that increasingly younger models, such as Twiggy and Christine Olman, have been used in addition to increasingly thinner ones (Gagnard, 1985).

Orbach, on the other hand, suggests that the entrance of the thin woman in the early 1960s after the voluptuous woman of the 1950s symbolized freedom for women. The thin English model, Jean Shrimpton, broke from rigid upper-class England through her clothing and size, "proclaiming a new womanhood that was single, sexy, adventurous and free" (1986, pp. 72-3). This ideal was further reinforced by the young, thin Jet Set rebels of the decade.

Seid, however, traces the beginning of the present-day standard of thinness to the industrial revolution in the

late nineteenth century. This period triggered the series of major societal transitions in the next 100 years that would topple nearly all our traditional values, institutions and beliefs. The obsession with thinness is not a feminist one, according to Seid, but an ethical one. The growth of industrialization leading to increased isolation, the fighting of two world wars with the subsequent post-World War II abundance, the women's movement, the youth rebellion against social institutions, and the rise of consumerism have all combined to create a society in crisis, forcing the individual to turn to the self and the body for control. Thinness has become a symbol of self-control, Seid documents, as well as of beauty, success, status, morality and character. Ultimately, it has become a symbol of youth and immortality in what Seid calls our valueless, morally bankrupt society.

As these scholars and other researchers have noted in their study of the present thin ideal, thinness can only come to symbolize success and goodness in times of abundance. Only during prosperity can thinness be valued; in societies where famine is rampant, fattened bodies come to be identified as those with enough wealth and status to be well-fed. As Bauer et al. (1986) point out, anorexia is not documented in third world countries. Because of the

prosperity in Western societies since World War II, thinness has become another symbol of high class and success.

The Thin Standard Becomes a "Fit" Standard

More recently, however, the thin body ideal seems to have been replaced in our society by a fit, toned and "healthy" one. It is no longer sufficient merely to be thin, but now we must destroy all fat on our bodies and replace it with firm, defined muscle. As Seid writes, the ideal of fitness "fits" into our democratic ideology--everyone has a chance to be fit (meaning thin above all else) if they just work hard at it. "Simply put, we pursue thinness and fitness in response to a now-invisible aesthetic and moral structure. We believe them (thinness and fitness) to be healthier, more beautiful and good" (Seid, 1989, p. 11).

In the 1980s especially, the fitness craze has become a central part of our lives. It is evident, as Seid and others point out, in the massive growth of the exercise wear and health club industries and in the phenomenal increase in popularity of and participation in running events, particularly marathons. The emphasis on fitness is apparent in other areas as well: Miss America contestants, formerly judged on "appearance in a swimsuit" are now judged on "health and fitness in a swimsuit," parading their toned

legs and strong backs across the stage. The success of health magazines such as Shape and American Health also exemplify this reverence for a fit figure.

But while some societal observers claim that the pursuit of health and fitness has replaced the pursuit of thinness, thinness is actually the foundation of the fitness model. As various studies in Wooley and Wooley (1982) and Seid (1989) point out, a fat body is abhorred by all of society, by fitness fanatics as well as anorectics and dieters. "Exercise also became central to weight loss efforts because the new definition of slenderness as a lean, fat-free body required it. Fat, not just high body weight, was unhealthy and ugly" (Seid, 1989, p. 183).

Evidence that the fit standard is essentially no different from the thin standard is provided by the new 1992 Miss America. This 24-year-old who enjoys several physical activities is 5'10" and weighs only 128 pounds. According to the Metropolitan Life Insurance weight tables, this is far below normal weight, especially when we know that muscle weighs more than fat. In effect, the rise in exercise and fitness has only expanded and deepened our obsession with our bodies and keeping them true to one form. Not only must we be careful of what we eat, we must also schedule at least four hours of workouts into our busy weeks. Women, who by nature have more fat than men, must work doubly hard to

attain this fit and thin ideal. "The new muscled ideal seemed too good to be true. It was. For it deepened, profoundly, women's battles with their flesh. It exacerbated their preoccupation with their bodies and their body shape....Eating disorders continued to spread" (Seid, 1989, p. 246).

Toned or untuned in its form, and wherever and whenever its birth, thinness reigns supreme over this Western society today. That becoming thin is a worthy goal rewarding us with acceptance, beauty, health and success is a widely held belief, one that every cultural institution has contributed in creating and perpetuating. The scientific community has contributed, with its flood of formulas for calculating fat-to-lean ratios, losing pounds and burning calories. The medical community has contributed, with its reams of studies--increasingly questioned, however--warning us of the fatal links between obesity and heart disease, high blood pressure and a plethora of other health problems. The business community has contributed, with its discriminatory hiring practices against fat people (Wooley & Wooley, 1982) and investments in exercise, health and diet products and programs. And the sports community has contributed, with its glorification of super athletes without an ounce of fat on their bodies.

The Media, the Thin Obsession and Eating Disorders

But because it serves as a vehicle for the delivery of the goods of these institutions to the public and, in addition, produces its own goods, the institution of the mass media is perhaps one of the biggest thin value creators and perpetuators of all. The media are not just a cursory entertainment or information network but are "a deeply institutionalized social system that is tightly integrated with the whole of the American economic institution" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982, p. 180). In the past century, the growing mass media have infiltrated our lives and culture, serving as informers, entertainers, persuaders and socializers while functioning as a huge business entity. Where they acquire the values and images they sell us--do they get them from us, or do they create them independently--has been a much-discussed and circular debate in mass communications.

Michael Schudson examines this question from the perspective of advertising's role in changing consumption patterns and shaping cultural values. His study and insights can be applied to the role of the mass media in general in society. In trying to show that advertising does not necessarily cause large-scale social change, Schudson studies the legitimization of cigarette smoking for women in the 1920s, finding that women had already been smoking in

public before the first cigarette advertisement targeted explicitly at them appeared in 1929. Advertising then did not cause women to start smoking, as some observers have argued, but instead picked up on changes already occurring in society and reinforced them. "This change in consumption patterns, like many others, has roots deep in cultural change and political conflict that advertising responds to but rarely creates" (Schudson, 1984, p. 197).

While this evidence indicates advertising--and the media--follow rather than create, the debate is by no means resolved so simply. Schudson also points out that "advertisements are a pervasive part of the American aural and visual environment. It is impossible to ignore their role in providing people a general education in goods, status, values, social roles, style, and art" (1984, p. 208). Even though advertising may not shape consumer trends and buying habits, it does have power in shaping the values and attitudes that esteem consumption more highly than other social values. It does so by taking social ideals and presenting them as realities: "The advertisement does not so much invent social values or ideals of its own as it borrows, usurps, exploits what advertisers take to be prevailing social values" (Schudson, 1984, p.221).

Other media occupy the same position in our society as advertising, on the one hand sensing trends and reinforcing

them and, on the other, using social values to create pictures of reality where the presented values support this media's own economic interests.

This chicken-and-egg debate will undoubtedly continue as long as the media retain the prominence they now hold in our lives. For now, this question of what comes first where the media are concerned is one that is perhaps best resolved by understanding the media as complex "social systems that operate within a specific external system--the set of social and cultural conditions that is the American society itself" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982, p. 170). Like any other dynamic social institution--church, school, business, science--the media both reflect who we are and create who we should be. "On the contemporary level, media constantly reinforce the consensus of society's values, while continually introducing the seeds of change. It is this factor that leads to the enigma surrounding the mass media; they are simultaneously the conservator of the status quo and the vehicle of change" (Black & Whitney, 1989, p. 13).

Such a prominent, dichotomous position in society has repeatedly implicated the media in social developments and changes. Some have noted the media's positive contributions to our society, such as in furthering cultural understanding, increasing information, educating the public. But many critics have implicated the media negatively in a

myriad of social problems--drug abuse, high crime, alcoholism, sexual disease, even AIDS (Howitt, 1982).

The recent rise in another health problem, eating disorders, has once again turned media critics to examine the media's contribution. As in the other cases mentioned above, critics here see the media as reflecting a social ideal of thinness and creating an unrealistic world where everyone in it epitomizes the ideal. Researchers, medical personnel and anorectics themselves assert that the media have added to the eating disorders "epidemic" by furthering the preoccupation with thinness that has been linked to the onset of anorexia and bulimia in some women. One social researcher writes that "the modern visual media...fuel the preoccupation with female thinness and serve as the primary stimulus for anorexia nervosa" (Brumberg, 1988, p. 33). Another researcher and former anorectic presses for more realistic portrayals of female bodies in the media: "If the pages of Vogue presented us with pictures of large women, their bodies muscular...if the pages of the daily newspaper showed women wearing clothes that emphasized the beauty of a powerful back...the word 'bulimarexia' might never have had to be created, in 1974, to describe our unique cultural disorder" (Chernin, 1981, p. 88).

Studying the Media Connection

To assess these bold assertions, some researchers have examined various media for their promotion of thinness. As mentioned earlier, Garner et al. (1980), Garner and Garfinkel (1980), Silverstein et al. (1986a) and Gagnard (1985), have studied the measurements of models in women's magazine ads and of Playboy centerfolds, the number of diet articles in general women's versus men's magazines, the size of television characters and the measurements of popular film actresses to show that thin is the expressed cultural standard, that this standard is directed more often and more intensely at women, and that the standard is thinner now than before, all which correspond to the rise in eating disorders.

Other studies by Ogletree et al. (1990), Silverstein et al. (1986b), Lazier-Smith (1985) and Wooley and Wooley (1982), present similar findings. Ogletree has studied the role of children's TV commercials in emphasizing female appearance, and has suggested that "the media differentiates between males and females...in the importance of appearance for the female; this differential emphasis may start in...childhood...and may affect females', compared to males', higher incidence of eating disorders" (1990, pp. 796-7).

To assess the media's role, Silverstein et al. (1986b) have correlated the noncurvaceous standard of the 1920s with the number of articles cited in the Reader's Guide about obesity, and with the reported body weights of college girls. Their findings, unlike those of others, seem to support the argument that the media follow rather than lead in social trends: "As the standard becomes noncurvaceous, the proportion of articles appearing in popular magazines that deal with obesity tends to increase but with a one-year delay. Public attention to weight and eating does appear to be related to the standard" (1986, p. 900).

Lazier-Smith (1985) gave three groups of women questionnaires about their attitudes on attractiveness, and then asked them to evaluate models in print ads. She found that these women associated thin models as most successful, fat models least, and found the presence of "an ideal body shape to which American women are expected to conform"--a size seven-and-a-half.

Finally, Wooley and Wooley (1982) anecdotally examine the diet book industry, namely the success of The Beverly Hills Diet, a diet they show sells anorexia: "That training in anorexic psychopathology is selling so well holds a message. It reveals a degree of desperation heretofore unknown...that women are so afraid of fat they are no longer

willing to wait for a safe method of weight control" (1982, p. 65).

The Media, Social Responsibility and Health

Although these studies analyze different aspects of the media, they are all based on the underlying assumptions that the media exert some influence on our lives and perceptions of ourselves. Because of the media's prominent and powerful position in our culture, a number of these researchers explicitly or implicitly call on the media to be more responsible instead of merely responsive toward their audience. As Silverstein et al. conclude, "As the media appear to be able to influence people's thoughts, desires, and self-concepts, their role in promoting obsession with weight, chronic dieting, and eating disorders among women deserves...pressure for change" (1986a, p. 532).

It is this suspected influence on our thoughts, attitudes and, in the long run, behaviors, that leads many researchers to examine the messages coming from the mass media, as in the studies just discussed. Whether they see the media as leaders of change or as followers of changes, both sides place a heavy responsibility, an obligation on this industry to instigate positive changes or, on the other side, to follow positive social changes.

When the media have failed in this responsibility, citizens have pressed for change, albeit not always successfully. This has been the case particularly in areas related to public health. After the connection between smoking and lung cancer became evident, for instance, the FCC applied the Fairness Doctrine to the broadcast media's cigarette advertising in 1967, prompting the ban of cigarette ads from TV in 1971 (Weis & Burke, 1986).

More recently, the state of California has launched anti-smoking ads on TV to combat lung cancer, a plan which "represents a new trend to fight cigarette advertisers' appeals with their own techniques" (Vollmer, 1991). According to figures from the State Department of Health, smoking has dropped by 14 percent in California since the ads began airing in 1989. A similar campaign is underway in Toronto, but via print advertising instead (Vollmer, 1991).

Some mass media have demonstrated their responsibility to the public in another area of health: alcoholism. The television industry in 1982 established an Entertainment Industries Council to deglamorize drug and alcohol use (Montgomery, 1991) by setting up specific guidelines for a more realistic portrayal of the effects and consequences of alcohol abuse in television shows. Harvard University's School of Public Health launched a similar campaign in 1988,

to which 95 popular TV episodes have responded positively (Montgomery, 1991).

Women's Magazines and Health Issues

While the broadcast media have shown some concern for remedying two health problems they may have contributed to escalating by glamorizing smoking and drinking, the print media, especially magazines, have noticeably scurried from similar action. The continuing rise in lung cancer among women and decline among men prompted a recent study into women's magazines' editorial responsibility about this health issue (Kessler, 1989). Kessler found that of the six magazines studied, all but one--the one with a no tobacco ad policy--virtually ignored mentioning lung cancer in their editorial content between 1983 and 1987.

This is a disappointing finding since magazines, because of their specialized nature, have an even greater responsibility to their audience than most media. Unlike newspapers, radio and television, which are geared toward wide audiences of both genders and various ages, magazines are targeted to specific audiences. "Because magazines are delivered directly to subscribers, they are a very targeted medium. Their audiences are much easier to define than the audience for a TV program" (Biagi, 1989, p. 51). The editors of these publications know exactly who their audience is,

what their audience wants and what their audience needs.

"Women's magazine editors truly act as gatekeepers of the female world. It is they, the high priestesses, who decide the what as well as the when of social changes permitted to pass through the pearly gates of editorial discretion"

(Ferguson, 1983, p. 10).

When considering health issues related to women, therefore, a logical place to look is the medium targeted most exclusively toward women, as Kessler has done. When considering the media's connection to the recent health problem of eating disorders that is occurring specifically among young women, the most logical medium to examine is, ironically, the one that has been examined the least: the fashion magazine.

Young Women, Fashion Magazines and Eating Disorders

The various studies of links between media and eating disorders discussed earlier have examined general women's magazines, written for mothers and older women, advertisements in both fashion and women's magazines, television programming and popular films. Yet, as the first part of this chapter described, the woman who is most prone to developing an eating disorder is not the 35-year-old mother of two buying a Ladies' Home Journal or Woman's Day: She is the self-conscious, insecure adolescent woman who

"seeks confirmation and understanding outside the family in...the magazines written explicitly for the teen-age market" (Orbach, 1986, p. 47).

The women's magazines studied by Silverstein et al. (1986a), with their readership's median age of over 40 years, as market research reports show, are clearly not written for this teen-age market. The fashion magazine is.

Adolescent women in general and anorectics in particular have a desire to conform, a desire to be like everyone else. The fashion magazine is so popular among them because it not only describes and portrays what society deems acceptable and likeable in women, but it also provides directions on how to achieve these standards. As Betty Friedman, author of The Feminine Mystique writes, these magazines play "a significant part in the socialization of women to acceptable societal roles" (cited in Prisco, 1982, p. 131). In regard to the fashion content that floods these magazines, Chernin says, "Fashion creates and it reflects. Creates...an image few women in this culture are able to realize...creates longing--and we all know this longing to win the approval of our culture" (1981, p.98).

As discussed earlier, anorexic girls typically feel especially uncertain about themselves. In their desperation for security and acceptance, they overachieve in school, sports, activities in order to be the "Best Little Girl in

the World" (1983 film about a victim of anorexia). Much of the anorectic or bulimic's struggle stems from this attempt to meet perceived social standards of acceptance--beauty, success, intelligence--a struggle felt more often by young women than by any other age or gender group (Gould, 1987). As Gould finds, young women "orchestrate their roles in society with greater attention both to themselves as social objects and to external cues, such as advertising, that address their needs in those roles" (1987, p.223).

The fashion magazine thrives on "helping" young women gain this sought-after security. Seventeen, for example, advises future writers to submit articles that are "helpful to young women" (Neff, 1990). These magazines "are pervasive in the extent to which they act as agents of socialization, and the remarkable degree to which they promulgate values and attitudes....They tell women what to think and do about themselves" (Ferguson, 1983. p.2).

General Hypotheses

In light of the fact that fashion magazines, as a form of mass media, play a role in the creation or reflection of social values of beauty and success for women, clearly aim to serve and educate their young readers, and understand exactly who their audience is, this study will examine how this medium has promoted the thin ideal which has been

linked to the rise in eating disorders. It will do so by examining two general hypotheses:

1) Women's fashion magazines, targeted toward the demographic group of women shown to be most susceptible to eating disorders, are presenting an increasingly mixed message to their audience about the need to be thin and the dangers involved in the pursuit of thinness. They are doing so by increasing the amount of articles about eating disorders and the risks of dieting, but continuing to write the same amount or slightly more diet- and thinness-related articles.

2) Women's fashion magazines have shifted their emphasis from dieting for appearance to dieting for health and fitness in the 1980s, a shift that has only camouflaged the thin standard and thus created an even more confusing message for women.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This study sets out to analyze whether women's fashion magazines have contributed in their editorial content to the reported recent increase in eating disorders among young women. A content analysis of two leading fashion magazines provides the basis for answering this research question.

Content Analysis

Researchers have relied extensively upon content analysis to answer a wide scope of complex questions in all areas of the social sciences and humanities, including mass communications. By definition, content analysis is "any technique for making inferences objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). It differs from other forms of analysis in that it is "developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inference....In general terms, content analysis is the application of scientific methods to documentary evidence" (Holsti, 1969, pp. 2-5). Although social scientists continue to debate on the precise forms content analysis should take, they agree that all

valid analyses must be systematic, objective, and theoretically relevant in their approach.

As to the issue of whether such study should be purely quantitative or qualitative in nature, proponents of both methods have conceded that the two actually work together rather than independently of each other in each investigation. Qualitative study, the "drawing of inferences on the basis of appearance or nonappearance of attributes in messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 11), provides insight into the topic while quantitative study, the mechanical means for validating hypotheses, adds precision to conclusions and improves the quality of interpretation. As Holsti concludes, "the content analyst should use qualitative and quantitative methods to supplement each other. It is by moving back and forth between these two approaches that the investigator is most likely to gain insight into the meaning of his data" (1969, p. 11).

Object of Analysis

Two women's fashion magazines are the objects of content analysis in this study. From the mass of fashion magazines available on the market, Mademoiselle and Seventeen from the years 1975 to 1989 have been selected for evaluating the hypotheses because both are established fashion institutions, influential on large numbers of

American women and targeted toward a readership shown to be most susceptible to developing eating disorders. One scholar who has extensively researched the development of eating disorders in the late twentieth century has examined the number of citations for articles about eating disorders indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature from 1974 to 1984. In this study, Joan Jacobs Brumberg finds, "Not surprisingly, the three magazines that generated the largest volume of national coverage on anorexia nervosa--People, Mademoiselle and Seventeen--all cater to the primary constituency for the disease: adolescent and young adult women" (1988, p. 9). Since Seventeen focuses on teen-agers and Mademoiselle on college-aged women, the magazine editorial content geared towards the 12-to-30-year-old range of women most affected by eating disorders will appropriately be examined.

Mademoiselle

Mademoiselle has been on the women's magazine market since 1935, serving as a "completely rounded guide, philosopher, and friend to intelligent young women" (Prisco, 1982). It has played a major role in the socialization of young women to "acceptable" societal roles, Prisco finds, and has reflected the "changing woman in a changing society" through the 1970s (1982). Currently the Mademoiselle

editorial staff, as described in its 1988 Research Report, is promoting an image of a woman who "always looks her best. She's young, single, educated, career-oriented and going places. As she establishes her independence, her entire lifestyle is changing and so are her buying habits...She puts a tremendous emphasis on her appearance."

This image of the young, successful and beautiful woman is reaching an audience of 4,448,000 American women, according to 1989 data from Mediamark Research, Inc. (MRI). MRI also reports that of the 22 women's and fashion magazines surveyed, Mademoiselle has the third-youngest audience, with only Elle and Seventeen's being younger. Data from the Simmons Market Research Bureau (SMRB, 1988) show that the median age of Mademoiselle's readership is 28.3, with 66.8 percent aged 18 to 34. Of the total readership, 49.2 percent have some college education, 68.1 percent are employed, and 20.6 percent have professional or managerial positions. The median household income for Mademoiselle readers is \$34,335.

When compared with SMRB data for American women in general, it is clear that Mademoiselle's audience is of higher social class, better educated and younger than the average woman. The median age for American women is 41.2 years, with only 38.2 percent in the 18- to 34-year-old range, and 63.1 percent between 18 and 49. Only 32.6

percent have some college education, 53.8 percent are employed and 13.8 percent have professional or managerial positions. Their households have a median income of \$29,426.

Seventeen

Seventeen magazine, too, is an established social and fashion institution for young women, emerging onto the market in 1944. Since then, it has served to inform and teach its readers about the world and their place in it: "Articles and features [are] of general interest to young women who are concerned with the development of their lives and the problems of the world around them; [there is] strong emphasis on topicality and helpfulness" (Neff, 1991, p. 596). According to the Standard Rate and Data Service, "Seventeen is a general service magazine for young women emphasizing fashion, beauty, and lifestyle information, including health, food, careers, relationships, sports and entertainment" (1991).

As MRI reports, Seventeen commands an even larger audience than Mademoiselle, with a total readership of 5,442,000 women (1989). Seventeen is also geared toward a younger, more adolescent audience, with 40 percent of readers between 12 and 17 years of age. Even though Seventeen's median age of 27.3 years (MRI) may appear high

in respect to this large share of teen readers, it is the lowest median age of the 22 magazines surveyed by MRI in 1989.

Of the readers, 30.6 percent are college-educated, 66.4 percent are employed, and 18.6 percent have professional or managerial positions. Their median household income is \$30,233. Although it seems that Seventeen readers are not as well-educated or affluent as Mademoiselle readers, it is important to remember that 40 percent of Seventeen readers are still in junior high or high school, and that they are still above national averages for American women in general.

Time Period Studied

The testing content for this analysis is further narrowed by selecting a specific time period of study. In selecting the years of 1975 to 1990 for this study, the approximate time that anorexia nervosa and bulimia became common medical terms to American women was considered. According to Seid (1989), Chernin (1981) and Russell (1985), bulimia was not even identified until the 1970s, being called bulimarexia for the first time in 1974. Beginning the study in 1975 allows these magazines to familiarize themselves with the disorder and pass its name along to their readers. Moreover, as Russell (1985) points out, the "fear of fatness" characteristic was not adopted as one of

the diagnostic criteria for anorexia until 1970. Prior to such recognition, the fashion magazine's hypothesized promotion of thinness, often through describing fat in negative terms, could not be as strongly implicated in the eating disorders problem. And, while the media/eating disorders relationship has been studied through 1980, no studies appear to have examined the decade itself.

Also, as mentioned earlier, the intention of this research project is to understand why the 1991 college-aged woman is so susceptible to developing anorexia or bulimia and, more importantly, what role the magazine medium to which she has been exposed during her development has played in contributing to the rising incidence of these related disorders. In order to understand today's woman, we must look at influences during her lifetime, from about 1970 to present. Based on the research question, the years 1975 to 1990 have been selected.

Issues Studied

Both Mademoiselle and Seventeen publish monthly, providing a total sample size of 360 issues over the 15-year period. Because these magazines consistently include beauty- and food-related articles in their content, the likelihood that a thinness-related or fitness-oriented article will appear in every issue is high, making it

unnecessary to analyze all 360 issues to determine trends. "Fortunately, there is ample evidence that properly selected samples can give adequate descriptions of very large quantities of content....If the content to be analyzed is homogeneous, it is possible that a small sample can be very precise" (Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967, p. 21). Using a table of random numbers as suggested in Budd et al. (p. 17), three issues per year of each magazine were chosen for a total sample of 90 issues. Seventeen issues were obtained from the Eugene Public Library along with some issues of Mademoiselle. The remaining Mademoiselle issues came from the Knight Library. In cases where the selected issues were missing or badly damaged, the next available and readable issue was obtained.

Framework for Content Analysis

Once the sample has been selected, the process of content analysis requires that the researcher formulate explicit rules for coding and categorizing the material. "Each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures...that minimize--although probably never quite eliminate--the possibility that the findings reflect the analyst's subjective predispositions rather than the content of the documents under analysis" (Holsti, 1969, p. 4). In

order to devise these rules, the analyst must first rely upon the qualitative approach of scanning content and deciding what elements of content to count (and not to count), how to count the content (units) and how to classify the content (categories). Several attempts at and revisions of coding schemes are usually necessary before an effective and efficient system can be established for the study.

Countable Content

For purposes of best answering the research question posed in this study, this content analysis is restricted to the manifest, nonpictorial editorial content of Mademoiselle and Seventeen. Because the editors usually exercise little control over the design and messages of advertisements in their magazine, all advertising, which composes roughly 60 percent of each magazine's content (Mogel, 1988), is excluded from consideration, including advertising created to promote sales of the magazine.

In terms of editorial content, all textual, nonpictorial editorial content--articles, stories, letters, news briefs and so forth-- is counted except tables of contents, mastheads and staff boxes. Photographs and illustrations are counted only when they compose part of an article or when they are accompanied by text that can be coded. Titles, subtitles, pull-quotes and other emphasized

portions of content are counted along with the body of text they represent (they are not counted separately).

Units of Analysis

After deciding what content is relevant to the theoretical question, the analyst must next decide how to count this content. This step involves establishing the unit of analysis and defining how one unit is distinguished from another.

This study uses an Editorial Content Unit (ECU), based on what Budd et al. call a Basic Space Unit, to count relevant editorial content. The ECU satisfies the four criteria a unit should meet, as set by researchers Danielson and Mullen in Budd et al. (1967): the ECU is large enough to yield meaning, small enough not to carry too many meanings, easily identifiable and easily obtainable for sampling. Because the goal of this study is to determine how fashion magazines' editorial content has or has not promoted thinness and dieting, short pieces of text promoting or discouraging the thin ideal are just as significant as four-page cover stories. The ECU gives equal weight to short and long samples of content and takes into account the variety of content found in fashion magazines, two advantages a different counting unit, such as the column inch, would not provide.

Determining What Constitutes an ECU

ECUs are distinguished on the basis of central ideas or themes rather than on set length. A ten-page fiction piece counts as one ECU, for example, just as does a one-paragraph news brief. Because the content of these magazines is so varied, it is difficult at times to assess where one ECU begins and another ends, a difficulty that can be overcome in most cases by using the following guidelines. More detailed explanations of each type of content are given in the next section of this chapter.

Each coverline, varying on average from one to three lines of type, is counted as one ECU, as is each reader letter, editor's letter and column. In columns based upon reader questions (with answers provided by editors), each question/answer pair is one ECU, unless all questions are about the same topic. Mademoiselle runs a "Beauty Q and A" column made up of four or five questions dealing with skin, hair, body, makeup. Each question focuses on a different aspect of beauty and equals one ECU. In Seventeen, however, Kathy McCoy writes a "Sex and Your Body" column where she focuses on one aspect of sexuality each month, occasionally using reader-submitted questions about one issue, such as AIDS, to construct the outline for her column. The entire column equals one ECU.

In departments or articles broken up into numerous subarticles of shorter lengths, each containing different types of information, the subarticles are each one ECU. Feature articles with sidebars or distinct subsections, or of longer than three full pages, are also divided into several ECUs. Mademoiselle, for example, ran a feature article about four beauty make-overs that was 15 pages long but counted as four ECUs, one for each separate make-over. Each fashion spread (two face-to-face pages) and opening page is given one ECU, even if ten sequential pages fall under one big "Summer Swimwear" title.

Categories of Content

The next step in setting up this study involves defining categories that will effectively answer the research question. Because each content analysis aims to answer a different question, no one standard categorizing scheme can possibly suit all analyses. Researchers have, however, devised some basic guidelines for formulating the necessary categories.

First and foremost is that the categories be both broad and narrow enough to capture the data necessary in answering the theoretical question. As Budd et al. (1967) write, the goal here is "to find the simplest schemes which will yield the data wanted," based on preliminary examination of

content and its complexities. Too many narrow categories, for instance, can obscure trends that would otherwise emerge under a less complicated scheme.

In addition, these researchers agree that effective category systems are exhaustive and mutually exclusive, meaning that all relevant items under analysis can be placed in one category and that each item can fall into only one of the categories (Budd et al., 1967; Holsti, 1969). To meet the exhaustive requirement, most analysts include a miscellaneous or "other" category into their schemes, for "to fit an item into a category where it does not rightly belong injects error into the findings" (Budd et al., 1967).

Double Coding Content

While the stipulation that categories be mutually exclusive is widely regarded among social scientists using content analysis, some have found it necessary to violate this "law" by coding items twice in order to remain true to their theoretical question. Researcher Paul Deutschmann, for example, found it necessary to double code because of the complexity of his study: "'An exceedingly large number of newspaper items are complex. You can hardly begin to say 'what' they are about, if you are restricted to only one category. While double-coding can produce sums over 100 percent, that disadvantage is offset by the reliable

information about the relative emphasis given to a kind of content'" (cited in Budd et al., 1967, p. 45).

All textual editorial content in this study was sorted into one of eight categories: coverlines, letters, columns, departments, features, fiction, fashion and miscellaneous. Each ECU fell into one and only one of these categories, satisfying the requirements that categories be exhaustive, mutually exclusive and appropriate to the original research question (Budd et al., 1967).

"Type of Content" Category

This study utilizes two basic sets of categories to collect the data: one for type of content and the other for tone of content.

First, all textual editorial content is sorted into one of eight categories denoting the type of content it is: coverlines, letters, columns, departments, features, fiction, fashion, and miscellaneous. Each ECU falls into one and only one of these categories.

Coverlines are the sentence fragments on the cover of the magazine that highlight features in the issue. Letters include letters from readers and from the editors. Columns are opinion pieces, usually written in first person and including a byline. Question/answer, how-to, money matters, "His" and "Sex and Your Body" are some examples of columns.

Departments are regularly occurring sections of the magazine with variations on subject matter. Movie reviews, horoscopes, health news, diet news, beauty sections and so forth are typical departments. Department ECUs range from brief announcements a paragraph or two in length to three-page "Spotlight" interviews with movie stars in Seventeen. Features are longer in-depth articles at least two pages in length (plus jumps to back pages), often given colorful graphics and photographs. They deal with personalities, issues, appearance, home decor and cooking, and are typically located one after the other in the back half--the "editorial well"--of the magazine.

Fiction content includes short stories, poetry and novel excerpts. Each poem, albeit only a few lines long, is one ECU, as is a 3,000-word short story.

Fashion content includes two-page spreads as well as single-page photos, columns and departments dealing with clothing or accessory trends. Miscellaneous includes content that does not fall into any of these categories, such as short reader-contributed pieces that are not fiction, columns or departments. This category is used as sparingly as possible.

"Tone of Content" Category

The "tone of content" category is the heart of this study, where the hypotheses about the promotion of thinness, dieting and health/fitness are supported or refuted. This category scheme actually has two sets of subcategories: once the ECUs are determined and categorized as coverlines, letters, features, they are evaluated for their discussion about (1) beauty/appearance or (2) food/eating. ECUs discussing or merely mentioning physical appearance are then evaluated for their discussion of body size or shape: is the attitude or subject of the article promoting thinness/dieting, promoting health/fitness or promoting less-thin, natural body types? ECUs discussing or mentioning food/eating are evaluated for their discussion: is the attitude or subject promoting unrestricted eating, promoting dieting or promoting healthy eating?

Beauty/Appearance Content

Appearance-related content is that which describes overall physical appearance, skin, make-up, hair, clothing or body size and shape. Even content that focuses on topics other than appearance, such as a movie review, but includes a physical description of a person is counted as appearance-related.

ECUs designated as appearance-related are further considered to see if they are body-related. All appearance content that focuses on or refers to body size or shape, even if it is a three-word description of a fictional character as tall and slim, is included in this category. All fashion content is counted as appearance-related because of the nature and meaning of fashion. An exception to this is a small percentage of fashion ECUs that deal with non-clothing trends, such as trendy stereotypes, which do not enhance personal appearance in any way. Although clothing is inextricably related to the body, only text that incorporates body-specific terms to describe clothing (i.e., long lean lines, skinny jeans), or clothing that is blatantly body conscious (such as bikinis), fitness-promoting (workout wear) or body-hiding (big, baggy clothes), is counted as body-related. This distinction allows any trends to emerge in the fashion area of content. Body-related content is then classified into one of three main categories: promoting thinness, promoting health/fitness, or promoting other body types. In the table used for coding, these categories are abbreviated "pro-thin", "health/fitness" and "anti-thin." The category "other" serves as a fourth category for content that deals with body size but cannot accurately be classified into any

of the three categories (thus satisfying the goal of categories being exhaustive).

"Pro-thin" content includes all body-related content that encourages weight loss or a thin figure. It includes all content that condemns fat and inactivity, or that encourages or does not discourage fat- and weight-reducing techniques, such as fat camps, liposuction or weight-loss clinics. Words such as petite, willowy, slender, slim, lithe, lean, thin, skinny, svelte denote content that is pro-thinness. When weights are given or body size is referred to in interviews/profiles or in descriptions of people, that ECU falls into the pro-thin category unless the tone is of a heavy, healthy body.

"Health/fitness" content includes all ECUs that contain information about exercising to reduce in order to improve health (cardiovascular fitness, heart rate, lung capacity, energy levels, stress reduction). It includes articles detailing exercises designed to improve body tone, strength or flexibility, or with an overall emphasis to "get in shape." The health/fitness category does not include ECUs that are specifically disease-related, such as articles about breast cancer or osteoporosis, unless they recommend exercising or eating "healthier" as prevention or treatment. Otherwise, these ECUs are not coded because they do not deal with outer body appearance.

The "anti-thin" category includes ECUs that promote all body types--thin, fat, chubby, average, fit--as being acceptable in our society. These ECUs encourage self-acceptance rather than dieting or exercise, and discuss problems caused by the overthin ideal established by our culture. Content about eating disorders, dangers in overexercise, negative aspects of liposuction, futility of diets and so forth, falls into this category. Interviews with heavier-than-ideal people that acknowledge and accept this heaviness instead of depicting the individual as unhappy or attempting to lose weight, also belong here.

Food/Eating Content

The hypotheses outlined for this study can also be examined in the non-appearance-related food and eating content of Seventeen and Mademoiselle. Content focusing on or merely mentioning food in passing is examined for its message about eating, categorized as promoting unrestrictive, enjoyable eating of all types of foods, promoting restrictive or pre-calculated eating of a limited variety of foods, or promoting a conscientious eating of healthy, nutritional foods. Book reviews of cookbooks or diet books, fiction describing a character's meal or eating habits, or an interview with an actress eating cottage cheese for lunch are a few examples of subtle food messages

found in content not focusing explicitly on food, but which nonetheless form guidelines about what is and is not acceptable for women to eat.

In the "unrestrictive eating" category is content that depicts food in an everyday context as a source of sustenance and pleasure. Food is eaten freely, without concern for calories, fat content, sugar or sodium levels, and appetite is encouraged. The recipes provided celebrate eating and utilize those ingredients that dieters and fitness-fanatics shun: butter, shortening, oil, beef or pork, eggs, creams, sugar. Caloric information is not included in recipes under this category. (For all categories, recipes are not counted as one ECU apiece; rather, each collection of recipes [in a department or feature, for instance] equal one ECU).

The "diet" category includes all ECUs that designate specific diet plans (e.g., "The Partnership Diet", "The Fruit Juice Diet"), or provide lists of information about low-calorie and low-fat foods with weight loss as the clear goal. This category includes content encouraging fasting or skipping meals, eating less than 1,400 calories per day, or paying excessive attention to the eating process. Recipes in this category are described as "light" or "reduced calorie", and provide fat and calorie facts.

"Health food" content is identified by its "good for you" nutritional emphasis. Vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, vitamins, herbs, organic and natural foods--all of these characterize health food. Also, foods cited as remedies for illness or prevention for disease belong here. Good health and energy are the dominating messages in these ECUs.

Double Coding the Content

Although one requirement of categorizing content, as cited by both Holsti and Budd as well as other social researchers, is that categories be mutually exclusive, it is necessary to double- and even triple-code some content in this analysis in order to best evaluate the hypotheses. The research goal, again, is to see how Mademoiselle and Seventeen magazines may have contributed to the rise in eating disorders in their editorial content. One of the general hypotheses is that the message these editors are sending to their female audience about being thin has evolved into a message to be fit--but thin and fit, not fat and fit. As in all processes of change and evolution, the transition from one ideal to another is not abrupt and defined; instead, the transition stage is gradual and indistinct, with messages of both ideals overlapping or appearing alternately. In order to identify this overlap or

alteration, therefore, it is necessary to code some content into two or even three categories. "Slendercises," for example, is the title of an article in Mademoiselle that combines equally the ideal of slenderness with the ideal of fitness. Counting such an article as "pro-thin" only would neglect its prominent fitness aspect, and vice versa. Also, content that is a mixture of food-related and body-related information is vital in evaluating the first hypothesis about the increasingly mixed message for women. For this reason, articles that include both day-by-day diet menus and exercise regimines are coded as both body-related/fitness and food-related/diet.

Reliability of Analysis

Before analyzing the data, it is first necessary to show that the devised content analysis scheme meets the requirement of objectivity, namely that the methods outlined are reliable. As Budd et al., Holsti and other social scientists agree, some degree of reliability, where "repeated measures with the same instrument on a given sample of data should yield similar results" (Holsti, 1969, p. 135), is necessary before the gathered results and subsequent conclusions can have any meaning.

Testing reliability procedures can be done in numerous ways, depending again on the nature and complexity of the

study. To determine the reliability of this particular study, intracoder test-retest methods were utilized, drawing upon the Holsti formula for coefficient of reliability for numerical values. Because one coder analyzed all 90 issues, it was important to assess whether the issues coded early on in the study had been coded in the same manner as those at the end and in between.

Due to the limitations of the study, it was impossible to train people who could provide intercoder reliability. Instead of training an outside coder, then, the analyst, after completing data collection, recoded two issues--one of Seventeen and one of Mademoiselle--that were analyzed at the beginning of the coding process.

The coefficient of reliability formula devised by Holsti-- $C.R. = 2(C_{1,2}) / C_1 + C_2$, where $C_{1,2}$ is the number of coding decisions the coder agrees upon in both first and second analyses, and where $C_1 + C_2$ equals the total number of decisions made in both first and second tests--was used to assess the reliability of this scheme for both magazines. A .85 coefficient value was decided upon before the reliability check as an acceptable level of reliability for this study, a level determined again by the analyst and the nature of the research question. As Holsti writes, "Defining an acceptable level of reliability is one of the many problems in content analysis for which there is no

single solution" (1969, p. 142). Usually, the more complex the study, the lower the level of reliability necessary: "As categories and units of analysis become more complex, they may yield results that are both more useful and less reliable" (Holsti, 1969, p. 142).

Because of the complexities of this study, namely the large degree of mixed and ambiguous content, but because of the coder's familiarity with the analysis, a .85 level of reliability for each layer of content was considered sufficient. As the analysis involved several layers of content, the multi-step reliability evaluation required first attaining sufficient agreement on body-related and food-related ECUs, then on pro-thinness, anti-thinness, health/fitness, unrestricted eating, dieting and health food ECUs. The average reliability for Seventeen and Mademoiselle at the appearance level was .97; at the food-related level, .96; at the body-related level, .96; at body-related subcategories, .90; and at food-related subcategories, .89.

Mode of Analysis

This study employs descriptive statistical techniques to assess the posed hypotheses. Data tables and graphs derived from calculations suffice in illustrating any trends over the 15-year period under study.

The percentages graphed and examined are derived from the combined data of the three issues of each magazine coded each year. The method of examining the year overall rather than the three issues individually resolves in part the natural variation in content due to seasonal influences, a problem which arises when a random sample is taken.

The total number of editorial content units in the three issues is added first, followed by adding the total ECUs in each category (appearance-related, body-related). The data is examined for the magazines collectively and each magazine individually. Dividing these totals reveals how much of total content mentions appearance, how much of appearance-related content mentions body size, and how much of body size-related content promotes thinness, anti-thinness or health/fitness. The same calculation process is followed for content related to food as well as for combined food- and body-related content. When combined, body-related subcategories are added with their food-related counterparts--pro-thinness with dieting, anti-thinness with unrestricted eating, and health/fitness with health food.

These percentages from both magazines are then placed in tables and on graphs for analysis of trends within each magazine and between the two magazines.

Specific Hypotheses

The content analysis framework now established aims to evaluate the two general hypotheses posed at the end of chapter two. Based on these general hypotheses, three more-specific hypotheses have been devised to produce a simplified and more focused mode of assessing the broader assumptions of this study:

H₁: The percentage of editorial content units promoting dieting and the thin body ideal will stay the same or increase between 1975 and 1990.

H₂: The percentage of ECUs discouraging the thin ideal by discussing the hazards of dieting or eating disorders and by encouraging natural body types or unrestricted eating behavior will increase during the 15-year period studied.

H₃: The percentage of ECUs promoting a "fit" body type by emphasizing health/fitness and healthy eating will increase from 1975 to 1990.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The data collected from a sample of Seventeen and Mademoiselle provide substantial support for the fundamental hypotheses underlying this study. As will be detailed in the following pages, the findings show that women are being sent an increasingly mixed message from fashion magazines about the need to be thin and the dangers involved in the pursuit of thinness. The findings also indicate that these magazines have been repackaging the unattainable ideal of thinness into a seemingly more attainable one of health and fitness--merely thinness redefined--for women.

Although Mademoiselle and Seventeen are not entirely consistent in their editorial content related to food and eating and body size and shape, both magazines exemplify several similar overall trends. These trends are: (1) an increase in promotion of total thin-body and diet-food messages over the 15-year period analyzed, (2) a slight decrease in overall attention to "anti"-thin body and food issues, and (3) a steady promotion of all fit-body and health-food messages.

Examining these trends in body-related and food-related components of editorial content separately, however, reveals

important differences between the type of food women are encouraged to eat and the type of body they are urged to strive for. Where the overall trends just summarized do not always appear to do so, these differing and surprising trends in body- and food-related content separately provide at least some support for the three specific hypotheses set forth in this study. An evaluation of the hypotheses established in chapter three brings these main primary and secondary trends to light.

Trends in Appearance-, Body-, and Food-Related Content

Before examining the three specific hypotheses, however, it is important to obtain a broader picture of the general editorial emphasis on physical appearance and food in these two magazines. Understanding whether Mademoiselle and Seventeen have been giving appearance, body size, and food an equal amount of attention over the 15 years studied, or whether they have noticeably increased or decreased such attention, will put subsequent findings in proper perspective. Finding that the percentage of total editorial content promoting thinness has remained steady, for example, will become more meaningful if it is found that content dealing both with appearance and body size in general has declined since 1975.

Such a decline in emphasis on women's appearance would be ideal from the standpoint of this study, but it does not occur in either Mademoiselle or Seventeen. As seen in Fig. 2, the discussion about physical appearance has clearly increased in both publications from 1975 to 1990, from 43 to 53 percent. Overall, the magazines delegate just under half of their total editorial content to appearance-related topics alone (45.5 percent), with Mademoiselle delegating considerably more (51.6 percent) than Seventeen (40 percent) (Table 1). More importantly, body size-related content takes up a fairly consistent, one-third proportion of the combined magazine's appearance content (33.5 percent) (Figure 2A and Table 1A). However, Mademoiselle increasingly emphasizes body size and shape as the years progress, from 35 percent of appearance content in 1975 to 44 percent in 1987 (37.1 percent overall), whereas Seventeen, from 31 percent in 1975 to 20 percent in 1989 (29.4 percent overall), appears to de-emphasize this body-related aspect of appearance.

As a share of total editorial content, the percentage of body size messages in the two magazines rises slightly, averaging 15.3 percent over the 15 years (Figure 3 and Table 2). Body-related messages as a proportion of total content in Mademoiselle, however, rise more distinctly and comprise

Table 1. Percent of Total Content Related to Appearance, 1975-1990

	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
Percent of ECUs related to appearance	45.5% (N=3,533)	51.6% (N=1,908)	40.0% (N=1,625)

Table 1A. Percent of Appearance Content Related to Body Size, 1975-1990

	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
Percent of appearance ECUs related to body size	33.5% (N=1,185)	37.1% (N=708)	29.4% (N=477)

Figure 2: Percent of Total Editorial Content that is Related to Appearance

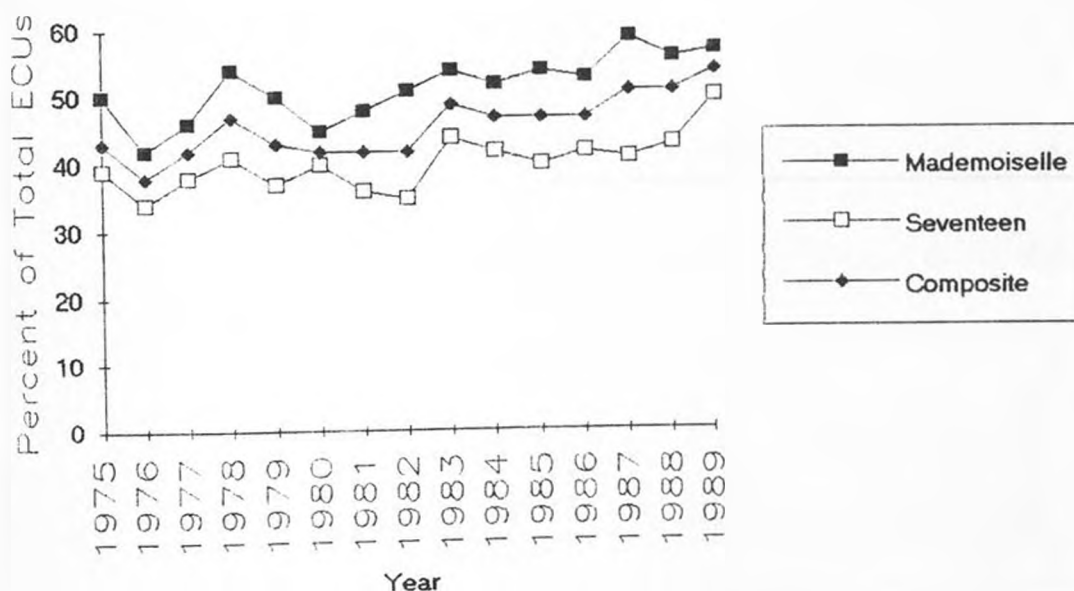


Figure 2A: Percent of Appearance Content that is Related to Body Size

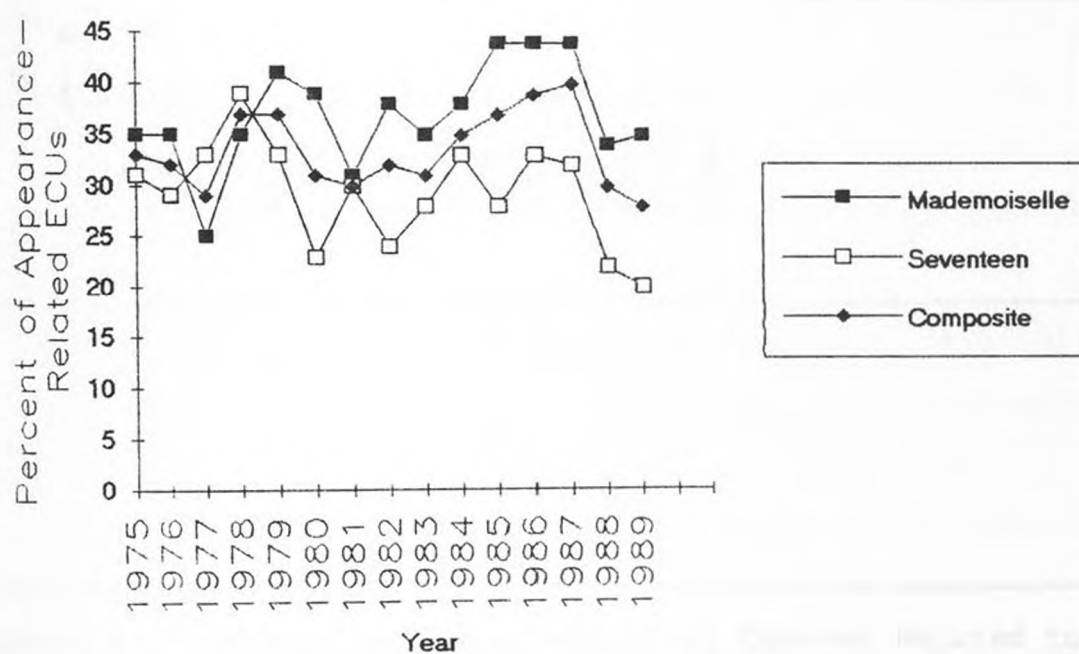


Figure 3: Percent of Total Editorial Content Related to Body Size

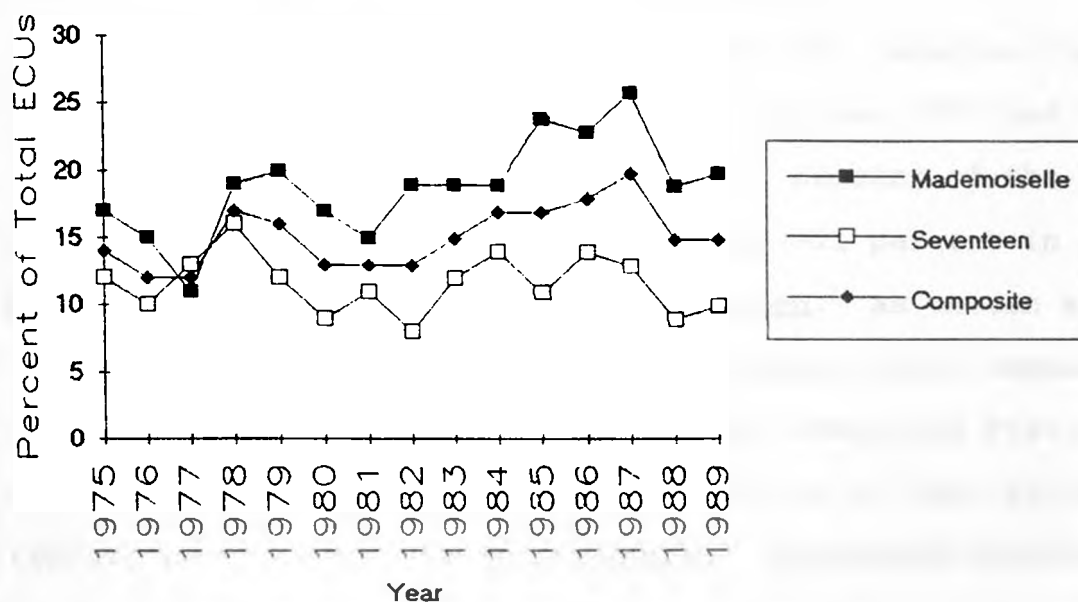


Table 2. Percent of Total Editorial Content Related to Body Size and Percent of Total Editorial Content Related to Food, 1975-1990

	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
Percent of total ECUs related to:			
Body Size	15.3% (N=1,185)	19.1% (N=708)	11.7% (N=477)
Food/Eating	10.4 (N=810)	11.0 (N=406)	9.9 (N=404)

almost one-fifth of the magazine's total editorial content overall. Seventeen shows no major change.

Food-related content in both magazines receives roughly the same level of editorial attention between 1975 and 1990 (Figure 3A and Table 2). Overall, 10.4 percent of the two publications' total ECUs deal with food--11 percent in Mademoiselle and 9.9 percent in Seventeen. As we can see from these data, the magazines place almost equal emphasis on food- and body-related topics. When comparing Figs. 3 and 3A, however, we find greater attention on body-related topics, particularly in Mademoiselle. Seventeen continues to discuss the two topics at the same level.

The percentage of editorial content dealing with body size or food together shows a small degree of increase in these fashion magazines over the 15-year time span, averaging 25.7 percent overall, but Mademoiselle emphasizes these topics more heavily than the composite, especially in 1985-87 (Figure 4 and Table 3). This jump in total body- and food-related content in Mademoiselle may be attributed to the high number of November and December holiday issues drawn for the sample during these years. Holiday issues typically are more concerned with fashion, food and body figure than summer or fall issues. In general, Mademoiselle focuses more on body size and food than Seventeen, with 30.1

Figure 3A: Percent of Total Editorial Content that is Food-Related

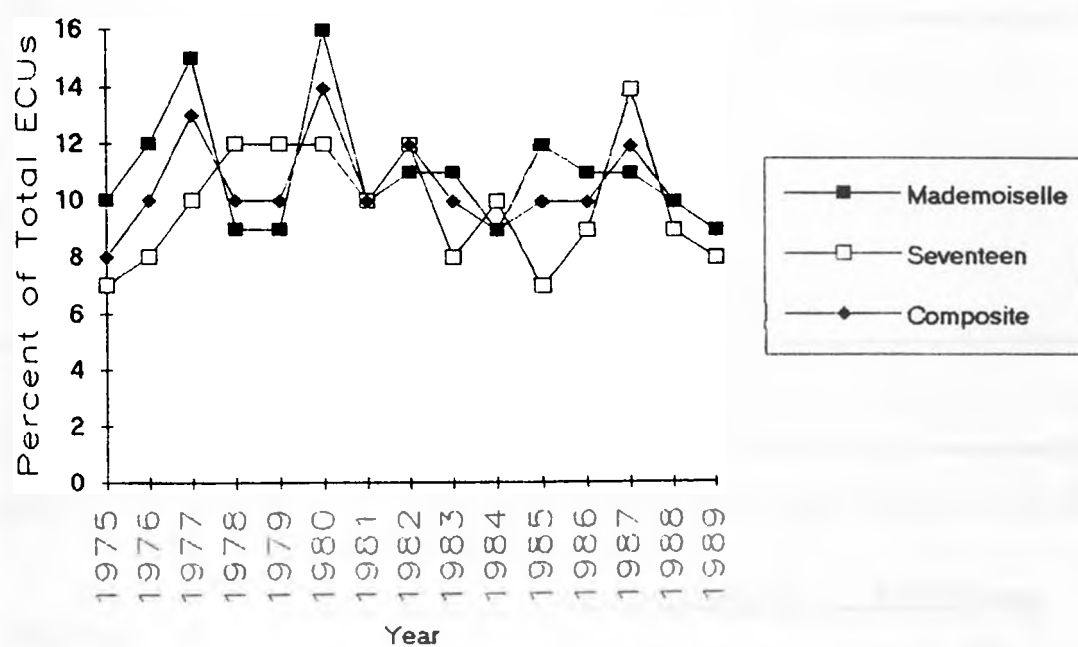


Figure 4: Percent of Total Content that is Body- or Food-Related

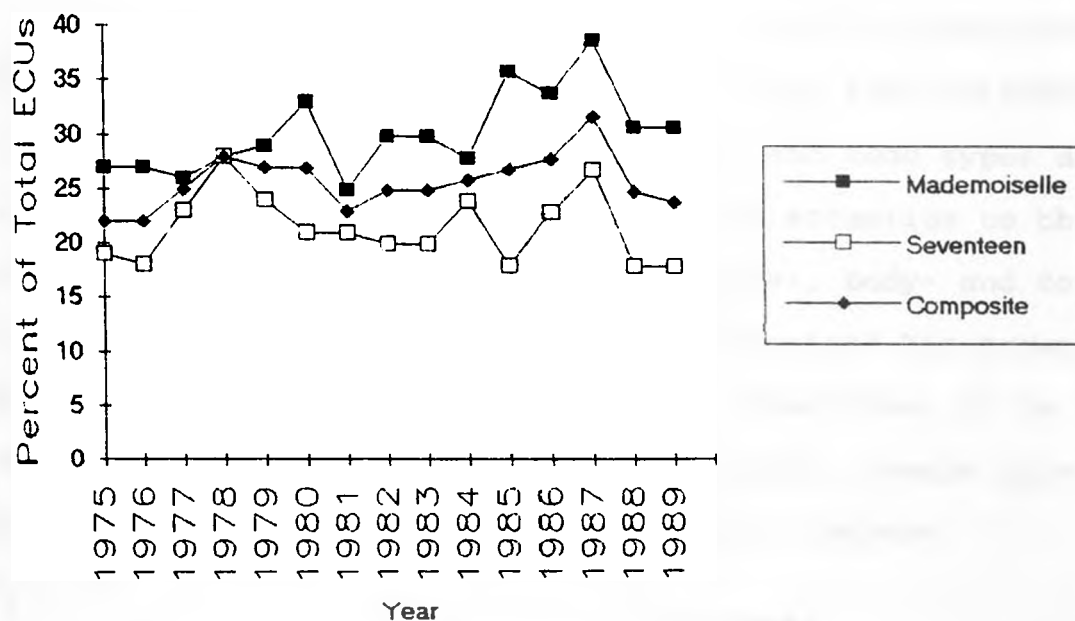


Table 3. Percent of Total Editorial Content Related to Body or Food, 1975-1990

	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
Percent of total ECUs related to body or food	25.7% (N=1,995)	30.1% (N=1,114)	21.7% (N=881)

percent versus Seventeen's 21.7 percent of total ECUs classified as body- or food-related.

In summary, this examination of trends in appearance-, body-, and food-related content shows that the forthcoming collected data on specific body shapes and food types are not distorted by a reduction in general attention to those topics. Rather, attention to appearance-, body- and food-related issues in these two fashion magazines has grown. In evaluating the individual hypotheses, therefore, it is important to keep in mind these preliminary trends prior to making any conclusions about subsequent findings.

Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The percentage of editorial content promoting dieting and the thin body ideal will stay the same or increase between 1975 and 1990.

An analysis of the editorial content provides strong support for the first hypothesis set out in this study. Both Mademoiselle and Seventeen, despite their differing degrees of emphasis on physical appearance and body size, have consistently promoted a thin body shape and dieting behavior over the past 15 years. Support for H_1 is found in the percentage of total body- or food-related editorial content units coded as "pro-thinness" or "dieting," in the percentage of body-related units alone coded as "pro-

thinness," and in the percentage of food-related units alone coded as "dieting."

We look first at all body- or food-related content that contains messages promoting a slender body or dieting behavior. Although food messages were distinguished from body messages at the coding stage of analysis, the thin-body and diet-food counterparts can be looked at together here because they represent two dimensions of the same phenomenon: the idealization of thinness. As shown in Fig. 5, these two publications increasingly discuss thinness over the 15-year period. Table 4 indicates, moreover, that thinness is promoted in a larger share of total body- or food-related ECUs than either of the other two body/food types examined in this study, at 41.8 percent overall. Looking at Mademoiselle and Seventeen individually, however, we find important differences. Mademoiselle follows the trend set by the composite data but Seventeen shows an unchanging rather than increasing thin ideal emphasis. Over the 15-year period, Mademoiselle promotes thinness in 51.7 percent of its body- or food-related content, compared to Seventeen's 29.3 percent.

The thin ideal's prominence in these magazines is further revealed in the separate body-related and food-related dimensions of editorial content. Looking at Fig. 5A, we see that in the two magazines' composite data, the

Figure 5: Percent of Body-/Food-Related Content Coded Pro-Thin or Dieting in Tone

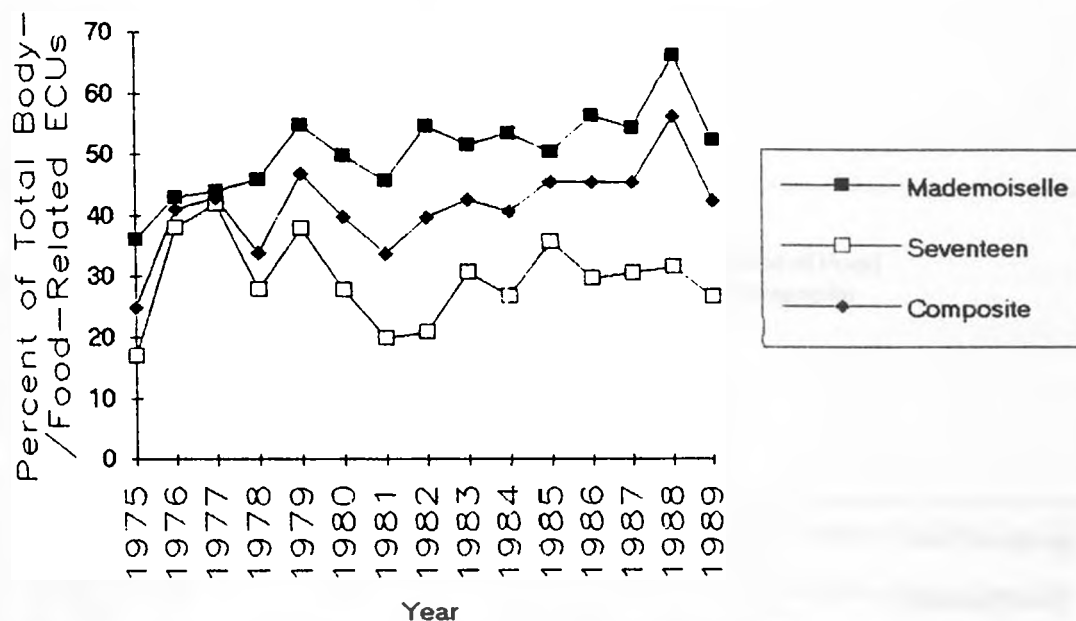
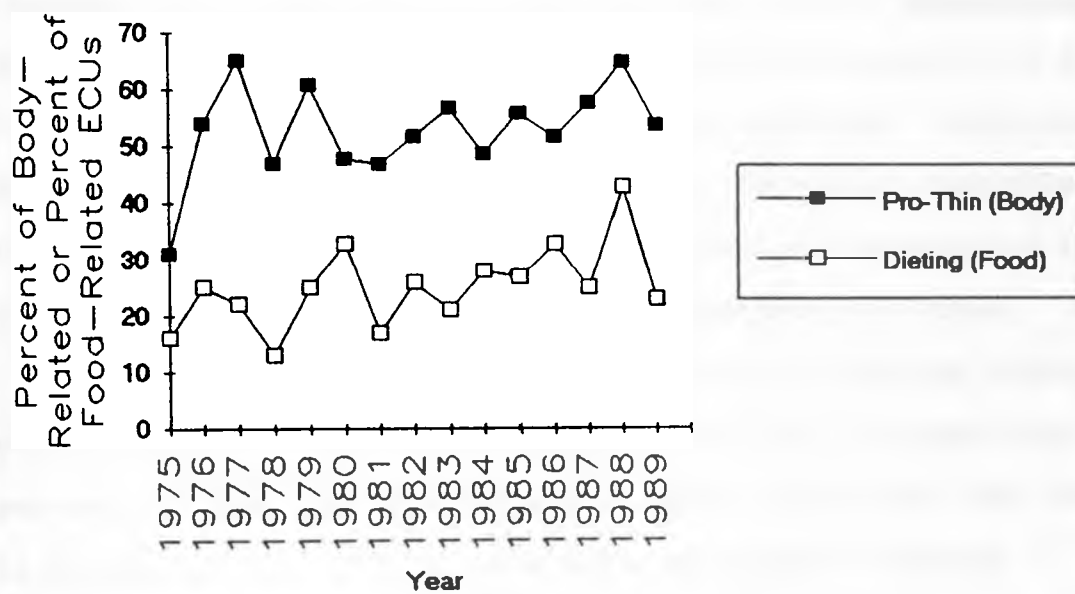


Table 4. Percent of Body- or Food-Related Editorial Content by Tone of Content Category, 1975-1990

	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
Percent of body-/food-ECUs that are:			
Pro-thin/ Dieting	41.8% (N=834)	51.7% (N=576)	29.3% (N=258)
Anti-thin/ Unrestricted	29.6 (N=591)	21.5 (N=240)	39.8 (N=351)
Fitness/ Healthy	31.0 (N=619)	30.3 (N=337)	32.0 (N=282)
Other	3.4 (N=68)	2.7 (N=30)	4.3 (N=38)

*Note: Some content units fall into more than one category

Figure 5A: Percent of Body Content Coded Pro-Thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Dieting in Mademoiselle and Seventeen's Composite



thin-body and diet-food curves follow the same upward trend direction as the combined body/food curve just discussed. Individually, Seventeen neither increases nor decreases its emphasis on thin body type or dieting, while Mademoiselle again increases its emphasis on both (Figures 5B and 5C). In all cases, H_1 is supported.

In Table 5, however, we discover important differences between the proportion of body-related content Mademoiselle and Seventeen allocate for thinness and the proportion of food-related content they allocate for dieting. Because dieting and thinness go hand in hand, we would logically expect the coding to show some equilibrium between the two over a large sample. What we find instead is a huge imbalance in the body type promoted and the eating behavior suggested. In the composite picture of the two magazines, 53 percent of body-related ECUs are coded "pro-thin" but only 25.4 percent of food-related ECUs are coded "dieting." This contradiction is even more obvious in Seventeen's 44 percent pro-thin to 11.9 percent diet results. It is apparent too, though less pronounced, in Mademoiselle's 59 to 38.9 percent thin body/dieting difference.

Hypothesis 2: The percentage of editorial content discouraging the thin ideal by discussing the hazards of dieting or eating disorders and by encouraging natural body types or unrestricted eating behavior will increase during the 15-year period studied.

Figure 5B: Percent of Body Content Coded Pro-Thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Dieting in Mademoiselle

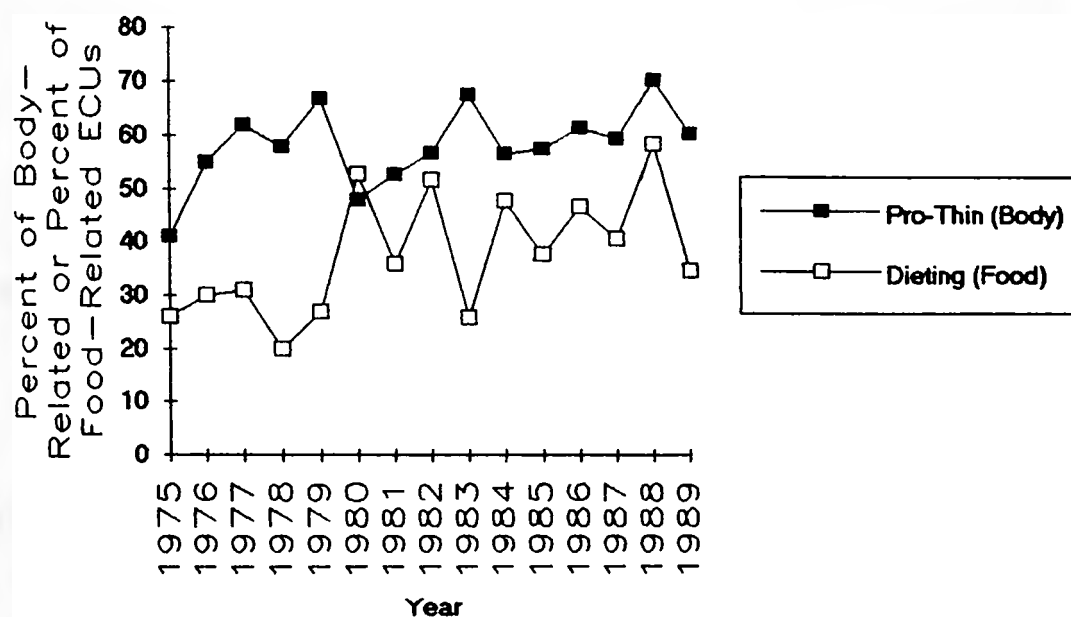


Figure 5C: Percent of Body Content Coded Pro-Thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Dieting in Seventeen

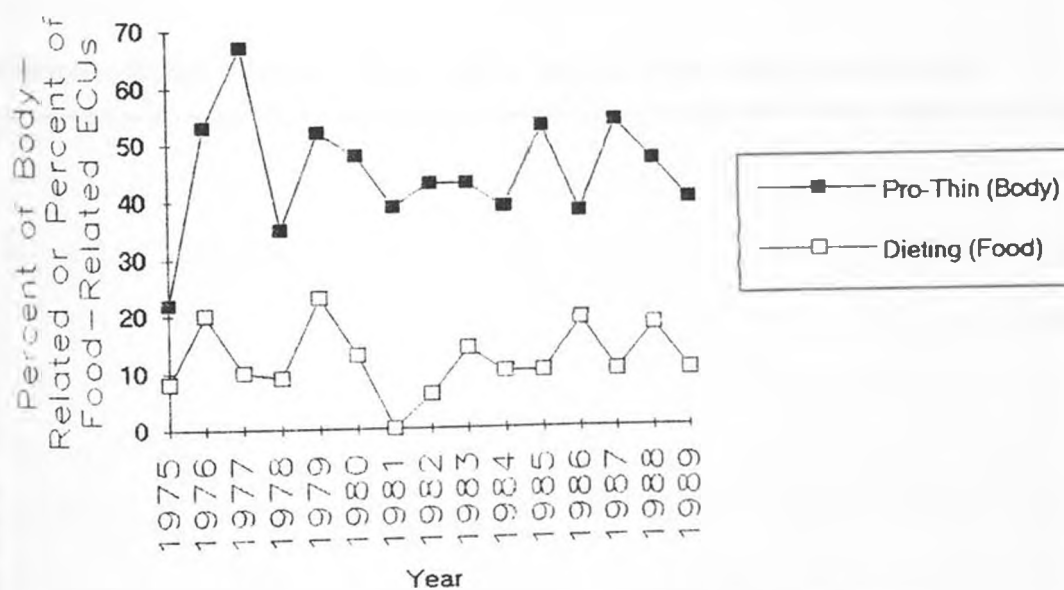


Table 5. Percent of Body-Related and Food-Related Editorial Content by Tone of Content Category, 1975-1990

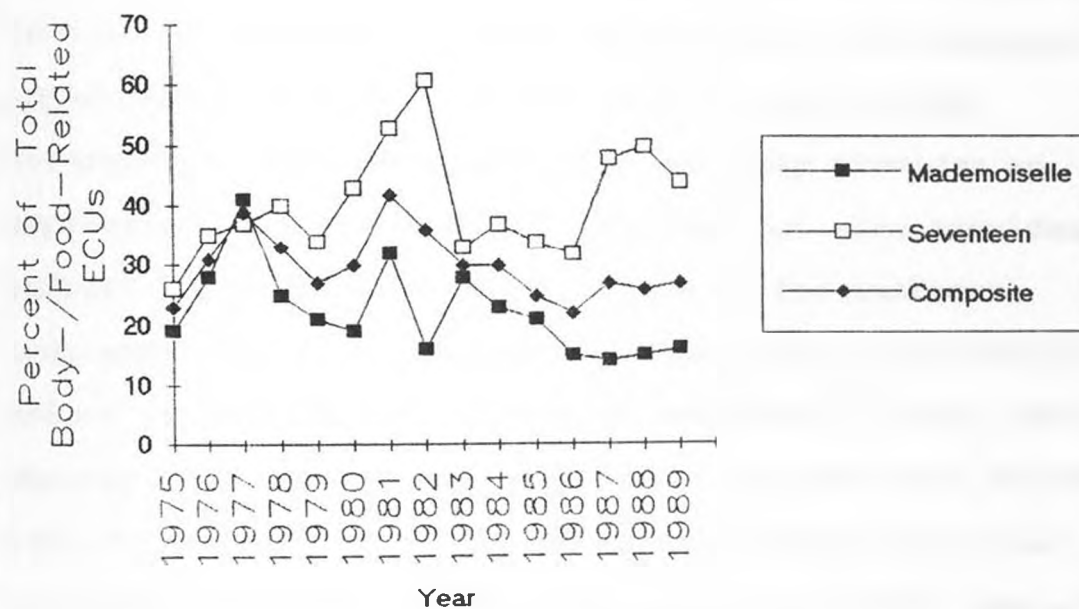
	Pro-thin (body)	Dieting (food)	Anti-thin (body)	Unrest'd. (food)	Fitness (body)	Health (food)
<u>Comp</u>	53.0% (N=628)	25.4% (N=206)	8.7% (N=103)	60.2% (N=488)	41.3% (N=489)	16.0% (N=130)
<u>Madem</u>	59.0 (N=418)	38.9 (N=158)	8.6 (N=61)	44.1 (N=179)	36.7 (N=260)	19.0 (N=77)
<u>Seven</u>	44.0 (N=210)	11.9 (N=48)	8.8 (N=42)	76.5 (N=309)	48.0 (N=229)	13.1 (N=53)

*Note: Some units fall into more than one category

A similar examination of editorial content for its body- and food-related messages lends sufficient support for the second hypothesis established in this study. Although a graph of the percentage of total body- or food-related units coded as "anti-thinness" or "unrestricted eating" may show that H_2 is invalid, separate graphs of the body-related anti-thinness units and food-related unrestricted eating units provide support for this hypothesis.

The findings presented in Fig. 6 are indeed surprising, for they show that, contrary to the second hypothesis, the prevalence of total anti-thin-ideal messages in Seventeen and Mademoiselle together does not increase. A defined decline appears in Mademoiselle, but in Seventeen an opposite and predicted trend occurs: the emphasis on anti-thinness grows. Corresponding data in Table 4 show that Seventeen gives substantially more attention to non-thin body shapes or natural eating behaviors than the composite magazine--39.8 percent as opposed to 29.6 percent of all body- or food-related content. Furthermore, according to this table, Seventeen gives almost twice as much attention to anti-thinness as Mademoiselle (only 21.5 percent) and, in fact, dedicates more editorial content units to anti-thin messages than to either pro-thin or health/fitness ones. Mademoiselle meanwhile, just as the composite of the two

Figure 6: Percent of Body-/Food-Related Content Coded Anti-Thin or Unrestricted Eating in Tone



magazines, devotes the least amount of its ECUs to anti-thin content.

When considered from the perspective of these two magazines' continued emphasis on women's bodies, the total results appear to indicate that the fashion magazine, namely Mademoiselle, has neglected to discuss or promote adequately the eating behavior and body types that could perhaps curb the unhealthy eating disorders trend. Before drawing that conclusion, however, we must examine anti-thin messages appearing in body-related and food-related content separately. Such an examination not only provides an explanation for the original findings but also provides more support for this hypothesis. Table 6, for instance, indicates that both publications have made a noticeable effort to include anti-thin body messages in their content. Whereas only seven out of 18 issues included such content in 1975-77, by 1987-89, 17 of 18 issues sampled contained anti-thin body messages. This effort to include more realistic body ideals and natural eating processes has been made just as strongly by Mademoiselle as by Seventeen.

In addition, Figs. 6A, B and C provide more precise support for H₂. These graphs demonstrate that both publications, not just Seventeen, steadily increase their attention to anti-thin body issues from 1975 to 1990. In fact, Seventeen and Mademoiselle promote anti-thin body

Table 6. Number of Coded Mademoiselle and Seventeen Issues With Anti-Thin Body Messages

Years	Composite	Mademoiselle	Seventeen
1975-77	7	3	4
1978-80	10	5	5
1981-83	12	6	6
1984-86	13	7	6
1987-89	17	9	8

Note: 9 issues were coded in each 3-year period for Mademoiselle and Seventeen, 18 for their composite total

Figure 6A: Percent of Body Content Coded Anti-Thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Unrestricted in Mademoiselle and Seventeen's Composite

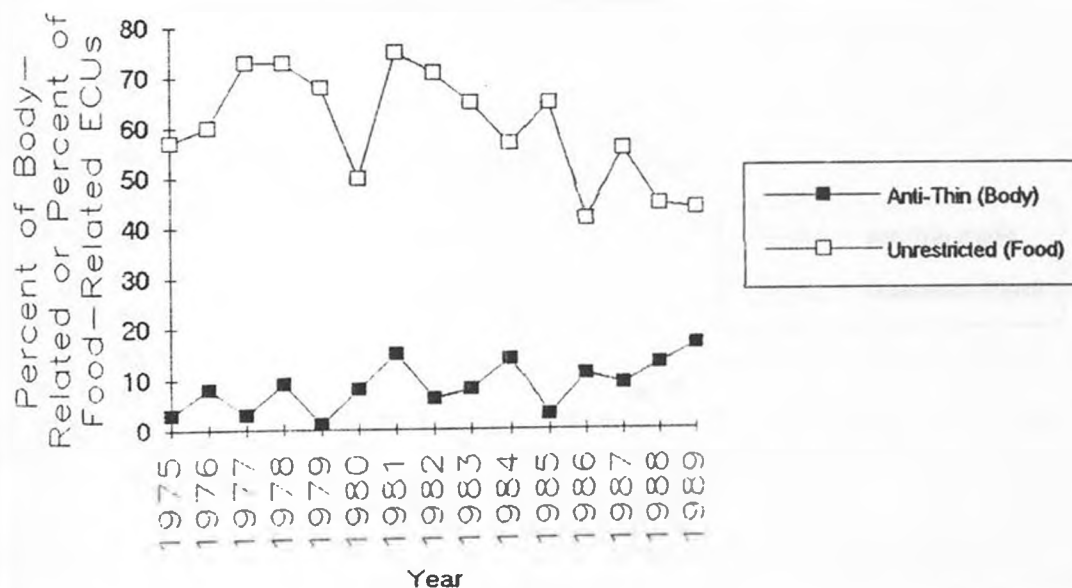


Figure 6B: Percent of Body Content Coded Anti-thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Unrestricted in Mademoiselle

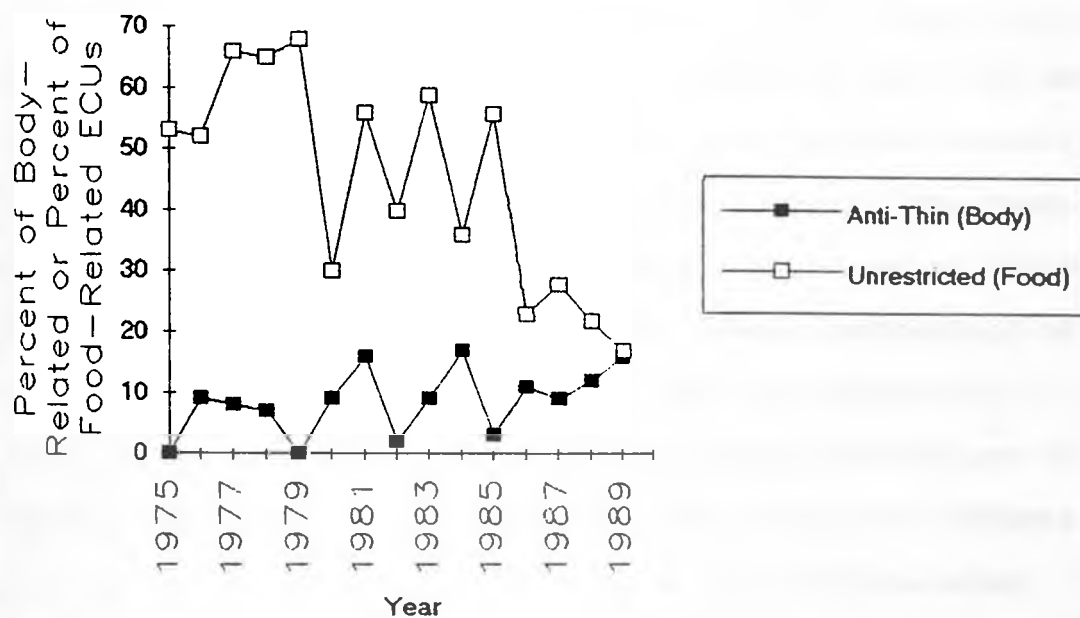
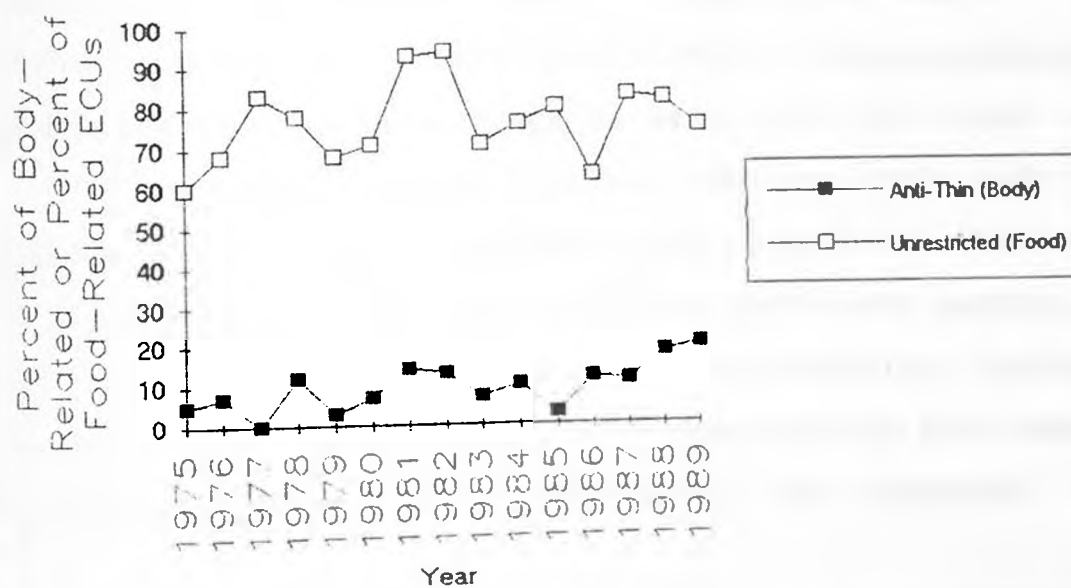


Figure 6C: Percent of Body Content Coded Anti-thin and Percent of Food Content Coded Unrestricted in Seventeen



types almost equally at 8.8 percent and 8.6 percent respectively of their body-related content.

How can these data documenting a rise in anti-thin body messages in both publications be reconciled with the data showing a distinct decline in anti-thin content overall? Important clues to this question are found in the food-related aspect of editorial content. As shown in Table 5, anti-thin body messages occupy the lowest percentage of body-related ECUs, but anti-thin food messages (e.g., "unrestricted eating") occupy the highest percentage of food-related ECUs. As a result, when these two aspects of content are combined, as in Fig. 6, the overwhelming appearance of anti-thin eating units obscures the small but meaningful rise in anti-thin body units. Food-oriented content, then, essentially dictates the total anti-thinness trends we first observed--when "unrestricted eating" emphasis drops, as it does specifically in Mademoiselle, the general anti-thin curve drops as well, and vice versa.

In conclusion, these findings that anti-thin body-related content units have increased through the 1980s in both Mademoiselle and Seventeen lend sufficient support for H₂. The corresponding anti-thin eating behavior, however, has been highly prevalent in both publications from even before 1975, and has decreased overall (but remained

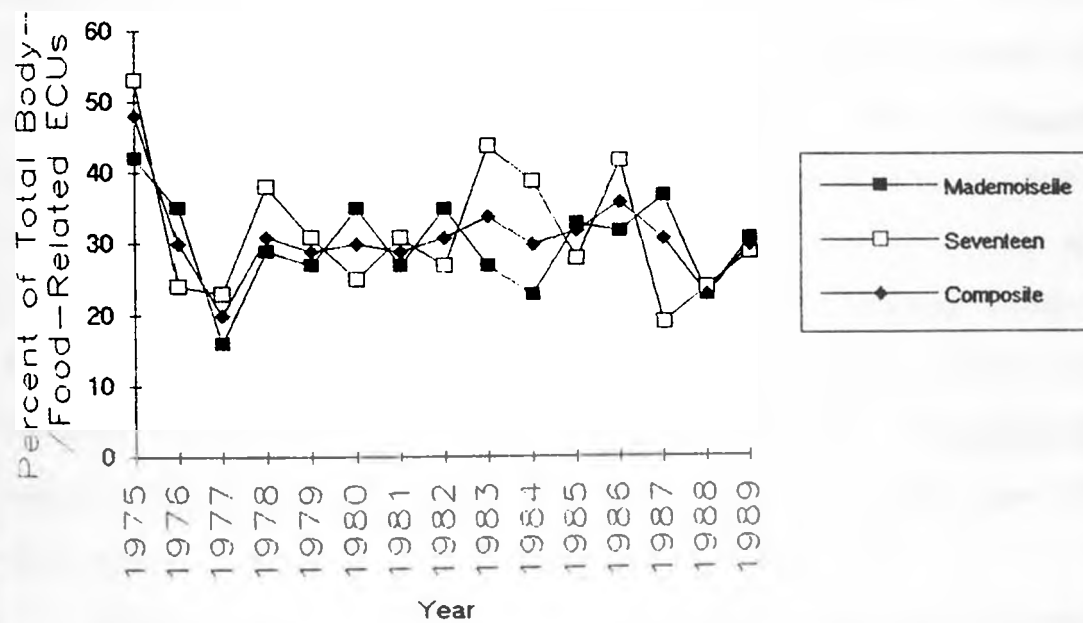
constant in Seventeen) as other types of food/eating messages have escalated.

Hypothesis 3: The percentage of editorial content promoting a "fit" body type by emphasizing health/fitness and healthy eating will increase from 1975-1990.

While an analysis of editorial content from several perspectives has produced sufficient evidence to support the previous two hypotheses, such an analysis does not produce similar support for the third hypothesis. Although H_3 is not completely refuted, as the findings here will show, insufficient data exists to support it on the whole.

Instead of rising rather dramatically in the 1980s as expected, fit and healthy body- and food-related messages had already been prevalent at the onset of this study. As Fig. 7 shows, the health/fitness curves for both Seventeen and Mademoiselle were high in 1975 and have remained fairly constant over the next 15 years, even declining slightly in Seventeen. Even though both publications have incorporated healthy/fit-ideal messages into nearly one-third (31 percent overall) of their total body- and food-related editorial content (Table 4), the visible lack of incline in this data's curve does not support the third hypothesis. It must be stressed, however, that the considerable and steady amount of emphasis on health and fitness clearly indicates

Figure 7: Percent of Body-/Food-Related Content Coded Fitness or Healthy in Tone



that this body type has been more prominent than obscure in both magazines from 1975-1990.

The preliminary observation from this data that the third hypothesis does not hold is substantiated by separating the body- from the food-related messages, as illustrated in Figs. 7A, B and C. We see here that the percent of fit-body ECUs decreases distinctly in both publications, contrary to the stated hypothesis. At the same time, the proportion of food-related ECUs promoting healthy eating rises distinctly in general and in Seventeen and Mademoiselle in specific. It is interesting to note, again, the imbalance between emphasis on the fit body and emphasis on its food-content counterpart, healthy food--the fit- body ECUs appear at a substantially higher rate than healthy food ECUs. Also interesting to note is Seventeen's overall slightly greater promotion of a fit body type than a thin one in its body-related content (Table 5).

Despite the evidence of "healthy's" important position in these two fashion magazines from 1975-1990, the data, when examined closely, do not lend sufficient support for the third hypothesis.

Additional Findings

The unexpected lack of support for H_3 , devised so as to answer the question of whether fashion magazines have

Figure 7A: Percent of Body Content Coded Fitness and Percent of Food Content Coded Healthy in Mademoiselle and Seventeen's Composite

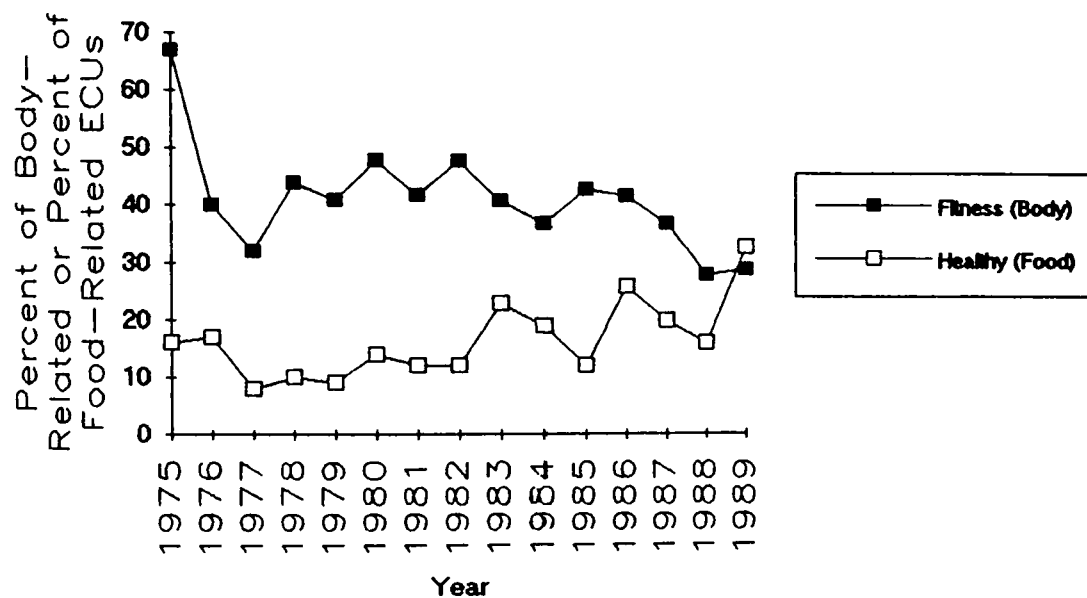


Figure 7B: Percent of Body Content Coded Fitness and Percent of Food Content Coded Healthy in Mademoiselle

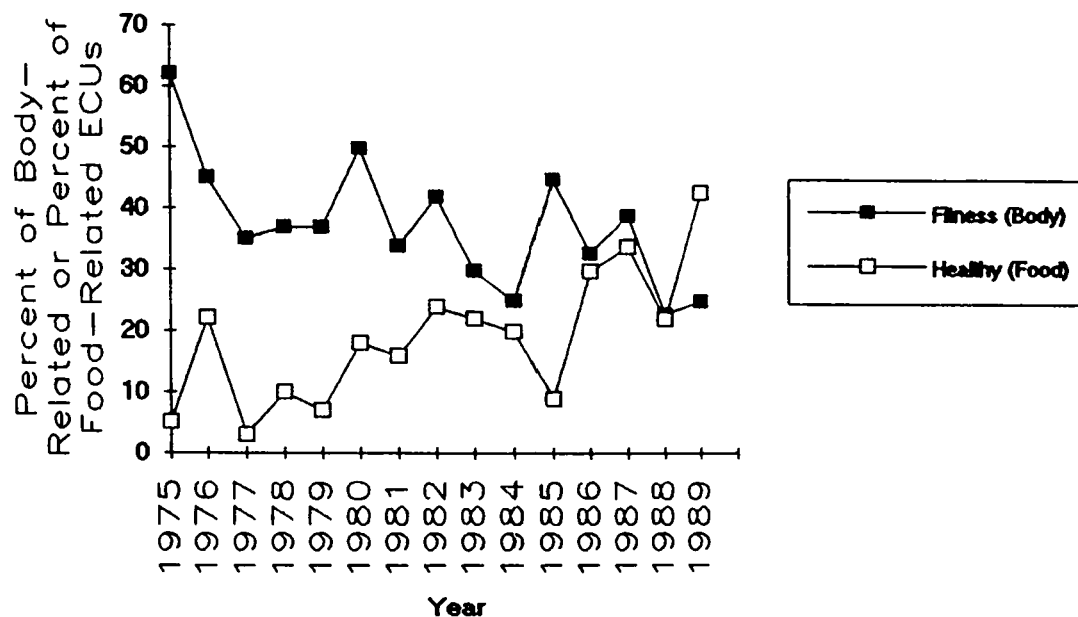
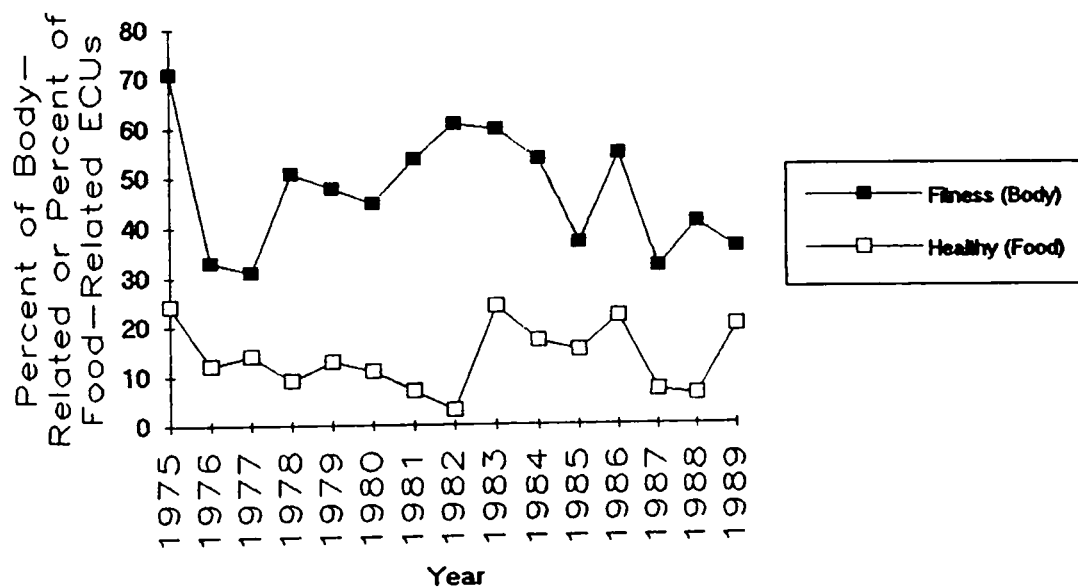


Figure 7C: Percent of Body Content Coded Fitness and Percent of Food Content Coded Healthy in Seventeen



shifted their body-related emphasis from thinness to health, has prompted a second look at the findings from an additional perspective.

A look at a graph of thin- and health-related messages together provides a better understanding of this perplexing phenomenon. As seen in Fig. 8, the health/fitness body ideal has been closely promoted with the pro-thin body ideal in these magazines from 1975-1990: when pro-thin messages have been high or have increased, health messages have been low or have decreased, and vice versa. Of particular interest is Seventeen's high degree of overlap in "fit"-body and "thin"-body ideals, an overlap which indicates that Seventeen has been promoting a body ideal neither purely thin nor purely healthy in form but a confused combination of both (Figure 8B). In this confusion it remains clear, however, that this mixed ideal of thinness and health distinctly dominates over the non-thin, natural body ideal.

In Mademoiselle, the picture of combined health and pro-thin body ideals is considerably different (Figure 8A). Rather than finding an overlap of the two, we find the pro-thin ideal visibly increasing while the healthy/fit one is decreasing, a pattern approximating more closely the trend seen in the two magazines' composite graph. In Mademoiselle, as in Seventeen, fitness was a prominent body message in the mid-1970s, mixed with thinness until 1980,

Figure 8: Percent of Body-Related Messages by Tone in Mademoiselle and Seventeen's Composite

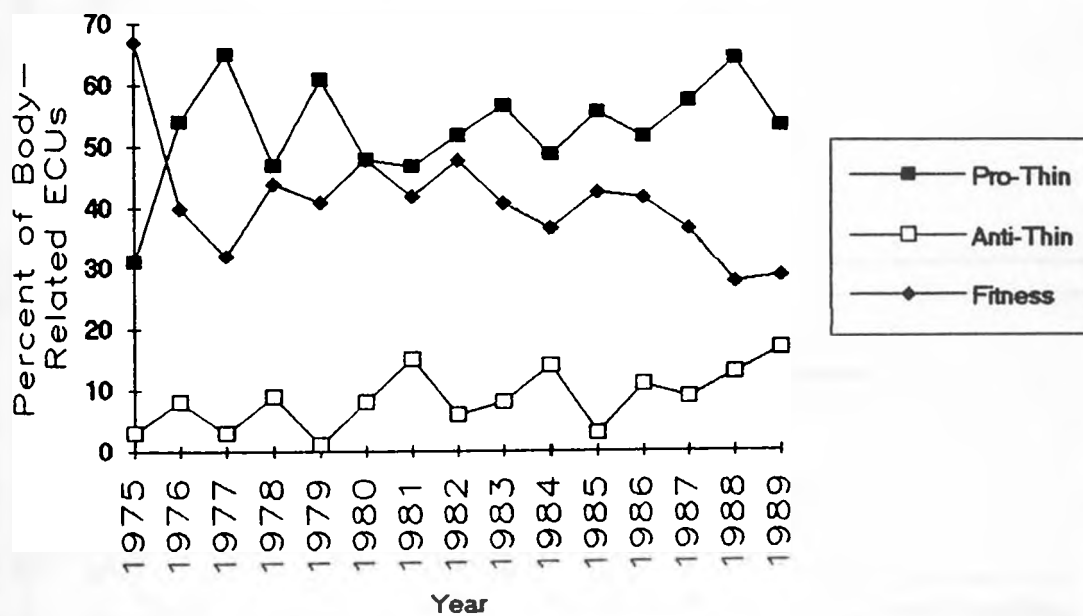


Figure 8A: Percent of Body-Related Messages by Tone in Mademoiselle

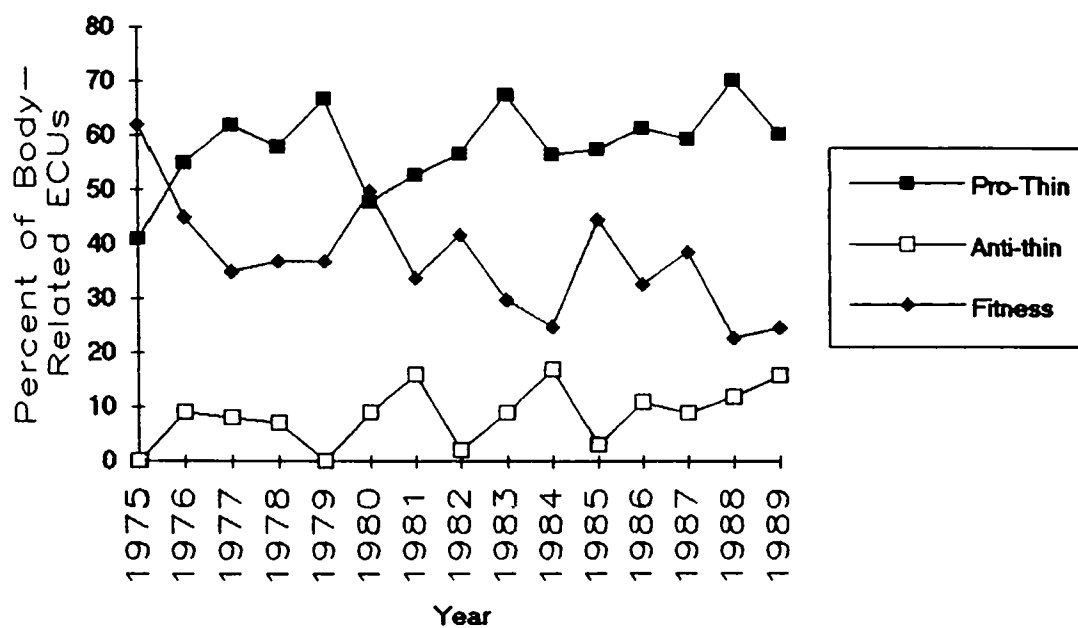
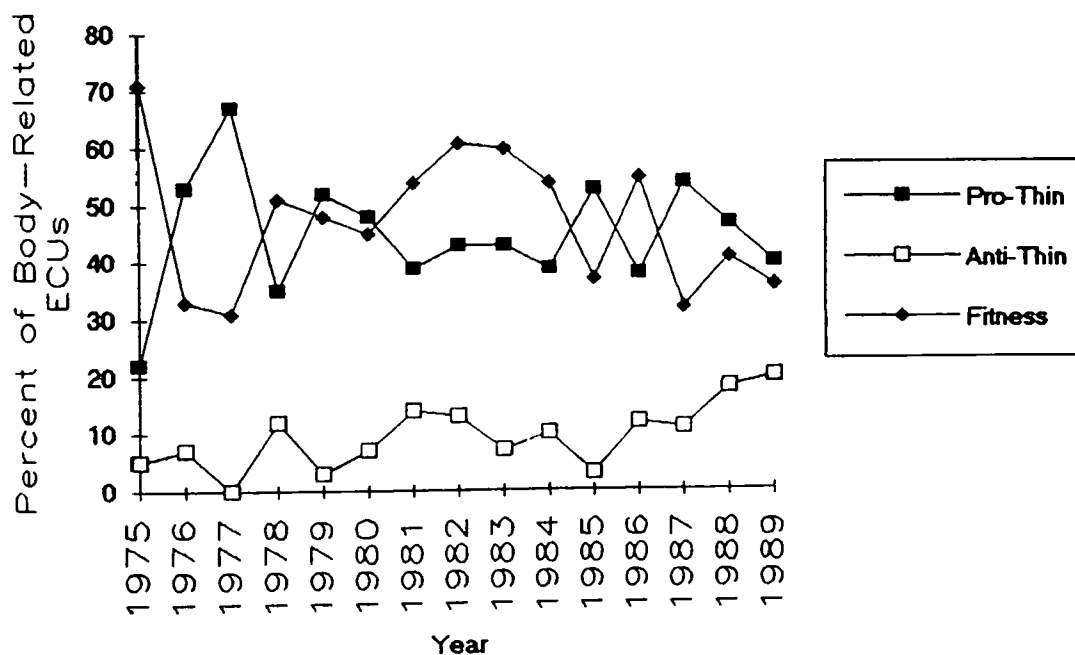


Figure 8B: Percent of Body-Related Messages by Tone in Seventeen



when the two ideals diverged and thinness became predominant. Despite this contrast between the two magazines, they both clearly promote "healthy" and thin bodies over non-thin, natural ones.

In food-related content dealing with dieting and healthy eating, we make additional interesting observations. In the combined data of the two magazines, dieting and healthy eating are closely aligned, following the same upward trend over the 15 years but at considerably lower percentages of food-related content than unrestricted eating (Figure 9). As Table 5 shows, 60.2 percent of all food-related ECUs are coded "unrestricted eating," as opposed to 25.4 percent coded "dieting" and 16 percent coded "healthy."

In Seventeen, the dieting and healthy eating aspects show a high degree of overlap but no change in direction (Figure 9B). Instead of diet and healthy categories taking up the same large share of food-related content as their thin- and fit- body counterparts take of body-related content, however, these two categories comprise only a small portion of food-related ECUs. As shown in Table 5, 11.9 percent and 13.1 percent of Seventeen's food-related content is about dieting and healthy eating respectively, with an overwhelming 76.5 percent about natural, unrestricted eating.

Figure 9: Percent of Food-Related Messages by Tone in Mademoiselle and Seventeen's Composite

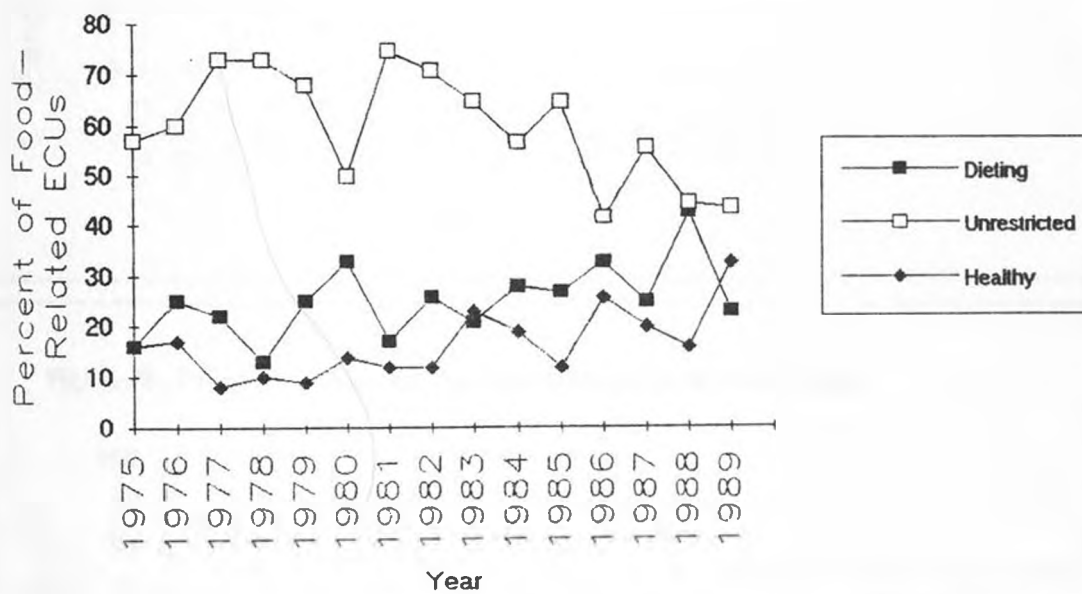


Figure 9A: Percent of Food-Related Messages by Tone in Mademoiselle

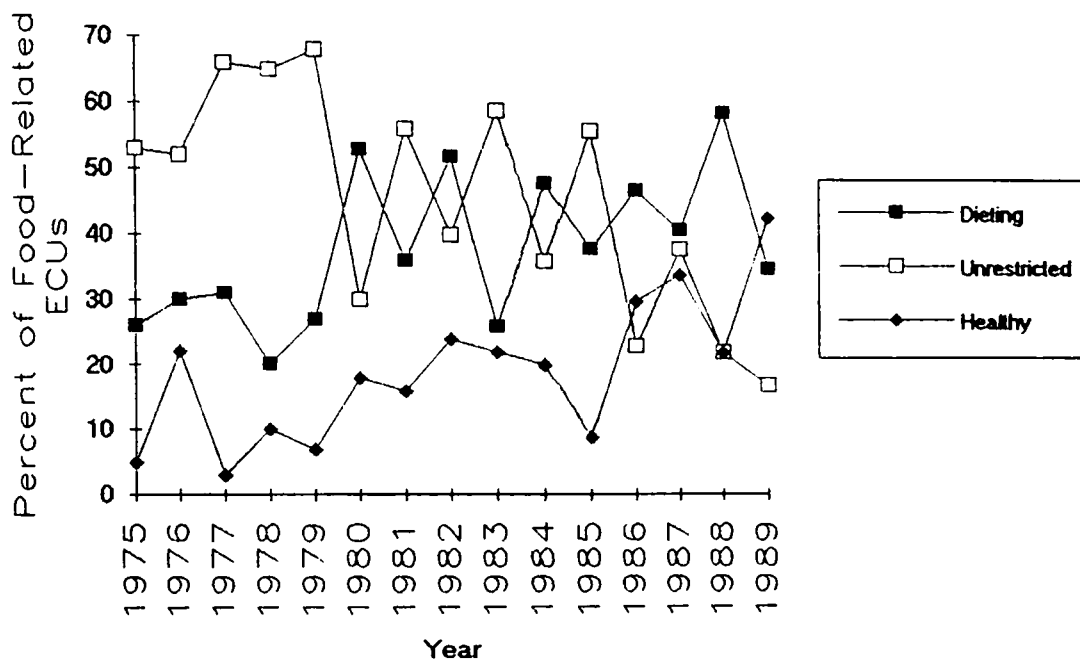
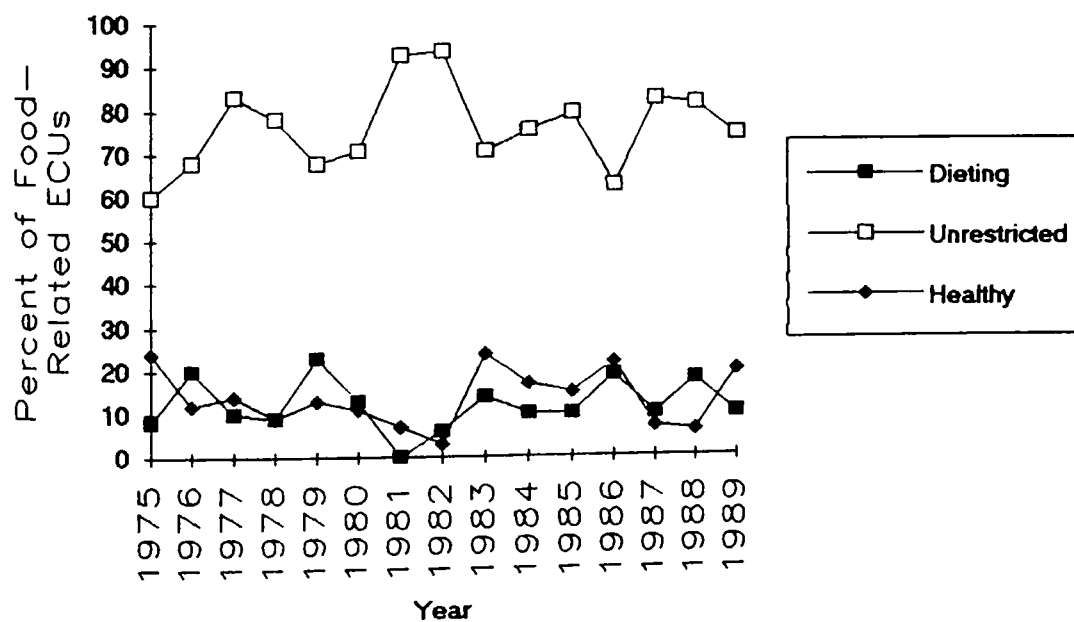


Figure 9B: Percent of Food-Related Messages by Tone in Seventeen



In Mademoiselle, the trends differ again from Seventeen and the composite of the magazines (Figure 9A). Unrestricted eating messages and dieting messages show a high level of constant overlap, while health food shows a strong rise. From 1986-1990, health food as a percentage of food-related content dominates over unrestricted eating due to a large drop in unrestricted eating content. Overall, as Table 5 displays, 38.9 percent and 44.1 percent of Mademoiselle's food-related editorial content deals with dieting and unrestricted eating respectively; only 19 percent deals with healthy eating.

In summary, the validation of the first two hypotheses, refutation of the third hypothesis, and discovery of considerable mixture of body ideals suggest that the fashion magazine has indeed been sending a confusing message to women, simultaneously stressing the importance of becoming thin and the dangers in doing so. These findings also indicate that, although the fitness concept is not emphasized more now than 15 years ago, it has been steadily promoted alongside the thin ideal, raising the question of whether "fit" and "thin" essentially describe the same body ideal women are encouraged to attain.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The results gathered from this analysis of Seventeen and Mademoiselle's editorial content provide some meaningful answers to the major questions posed in this study. As detailed in the first three chapters, this study set out to discover to what extent women's fashion magazines have promoted the thin body ideal and dieting from 1975 to 1990. It aimed to locate trends in the editorial discussion of thinness and dieting as well as of other body types and eating behaviors during the period when anorexia nervosa and bulimia were reportedly rising among young women. Because of the growing evidence that social pressure for thinness is a factor contributing to the development of these eating disorders, the central question this study sought to answer was whether fashion magazine leaders have promoted thinness, despite its connection to the eating disorder epidemic, in their nonpictorial editorial content. More precisely, have fashion magazine editors exercised leadership and responsibility toward their young female readers in regard to this serious health issue?

The findings indicate that the editors of these fashion magazines have indeed exercised some leadership in their

promotion of body types and eating behaviors--on the surface. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that this leadership is more superficial than genuine. Although the editors of Seventeen and Mademoiselle have demonstrated an awareness of the eating disorders problem among their readership and have discussed in positive terms a less-thin, natural body type, the findings show that they have nonetheless advocated the thin body ideal at a much higher and increasing rate overall.

Moreover, the findings illustrate that the messages these editors are sending to their readers about body size and eating habits are extremely complicated and confusing, with major discrepancies between the body ideals glamorized and the food types that create these bodies. The high degree of overlap between thinness and fitness messages compounds the complexities of these editorial messages being sent to women.

Lastly, the findings indicate that any conclusions made about the leadership of fashion magazine editors in general should be made with reservation. Since Seventeen and Mademoiselle show important differences in their discussion of and tone toward body shape and food topics, other fashion magazine editorial staffs most likely exhibit different editorial priorities as well.

This chapter will provide further detail of these findings first by addressing hypotheses for which support was found and second, by providing an explanation for hypotheses not supported. In addition, important but unanticipated findings will be noted and explained, followed by a summary of conclusions drawn from the study as a whole. The chapter will close with a discussion of this study's limitations and with suggestions for further research.

Explanation of Findings

In the process of evaluating the data, strong support for the first hypothesis and sufficient support for the second were found. While such support provides valuable insights into the research questions probed, additional and perhaps more valuable insights come from examining why all the hypotheses, namely Hypothesis 3, were not equally well-supported. Similarly, meaningful answers for the main research questions come from looking beyond the stated hypotheses and noting unexpected patterns in the content.

An Explanation for Supported Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

As suspected in the developmental stages of this content analysis, these two fashion magazines have not only maintained their unnecessarily high coverage of thinness and

dieting but have actually increased it during the past 15 years. The results for Hypothesis 1 indicate that the editorial section of Seventeen and Mademoiselle has continued producing messages encouraging women to be obsessed about their bodies and the food they put into them. The articles that in 1975 told women to "list in advance all the food you will eat in the next 24-hour period" and "pay total attention to your eating so that you're aware of every bite you put into your mouth" (Mademoiselle, May 1975) are no worse than those in 1988 advising party-goers on how to resist tantalizing holiday fare. Mademoiselle permits readers to sample apple or pumpkin pie for dessert as long as it is "only several bites of the slice, leaving most of the crust behind....Taste everything, finish none of it" (Nov. 1988).

That the encouragement of a thin figure and dieting has remained constant or risen in these magazines can be attributed to our culture's static and solitary thin body ideal. As researchers Seid (1989), Orbach (1986), Brumberg (1988) and others cited in chapter two agree, the fundamental pursuit of thinness is unchanged; it has only intensified and enlarged itself by taking on an additional dimension: The all-out elimination of fat. While not explicitly glorifying thinness or providing instructions on how to lose pounds, the editorial messages condemning fat,

cellulite, adipose tissue promote none other than a thin body. In the pages of these magazines, fat is not only unhealthy, it is bad, ugly, repulsive and evil. "Facts About Fat: Before You Fight It, You've Got to Know Your Enemy" (Mademoiselle, Nov. 1986) is just one example of Mademoiselle's blatantly negative tone toward less-than-thin body shapes, a severe tone found rarely in Seventeen, however, a difference discussed later in this chapter.

This unabating cultural obsession with thinness driven by an intensifying fear of fatness provides an explanation for the support found for Hypothesis 1 in this study. Mademoiselle and Seventeen have reflected this social value and perpetuated it, more out of concern for their economic benefit than for their female readers' health.

Hypothesis 2

As expected when constructing this study, the amount of editorial content discussing eating disorders, the hazards of dieting or the beauty of less-thin body types has risen in both publications since 1975. Although the parallel unrestrained, natural eating behavior has declined and so refuted this second hypothesis in a broader sense, the evidence that anti-thin body-oriented messages have increased has important implications.

Foremost, it indicates that Mademoiselle and Seventeen editors have been fully aware of the health consequences of pursuing thinness to excess. By including articles such as "Why Are Girls Obsessed With Their Weight?" (Seventeen, March 1988) and "What Can Go Wrong When You've Been Losing For Too Long" (Mademoiselle, Oct. 1985), these editors give the impression of being concerned for their readers' well-being, educating them about anorexia and bulimia in order to, ideally perhaps, diminish the scope of the problem. They benevolently advise readers to eat complete, balanced meals when trying to lose weight in order to "reach a normal weight...not to become a 'stick'" (Seventeen, June 1985), and direct them to outside sources for help if their eating becomes obsessive: "To stop worrying about your weight (and start eating healthier meals) write for a free copy of The Gender Gap at the Dinner Table" (Seventeen, Dec. 1988).

When looking at these positive and educational messages in respect to the clear support for Hypothesis 1, however, their power and the editors' leadership is severely undercut. In the same October 1985 Mademoiselle that focuses on the ill effects of dieting, for example, appear two features entitled "Get Your Body Better--Fast Fixes for Three Problem Figures" and "Finally Getting Physical: The True-Life Adventures of a Former Blob." On the one hand then, these editors seem to be responding to

the eating disorders problem among their readership, but on the other hand, they are guilty of perpetuating the obsession with thinness that has repeatedly been linked to their development.

An Explanation for Unsupported Hypotheses

Hypothesis 3

Although Hypothesis 1 and the body-related aspect of Hypothesis 2 were strongly supported by the data, the expected rise in health/fitness messages between 1975 and 1990 did not occur, a finding that deserves further attention and explanation.

Because of the reported and documented rise in popularity of exercise and fitness in the 1980s, it was expected that Seventeen and Mademoiselle, conscious of social trends in order to survive economically, would reflect and promote this fitness frenzy. It was assumed then, that health/fitness messages would not appear in notable amounts until the late 1970s or early 1980s, an assumption that seems to have been mistaken.

The expected trend in health/fitness content did not materialize for several possible reasons. As noted in the results and from observations, the health concept was already highly prevalent in 1975 and simply maintained its level of prominence through the end of 1989. In the reading

of the magazines, it was noted that fitness was essentially being used as an instrument by which to sell beauty and appearance values back to the recently liberated woman, a woman who, while rejecting traditional, male-created beauty values as oppressive to her sex, still purchased these fashion magazines. In order to attract these readers establishing themselves as assertive, independent thinkers and workers not wanting to be treated as sex objects for men, Seventeen and Mademoiselle had to adjust their editorial slants. They did so by featuring numerous career- and women's liberation-oriented articles in the 1970s; their fashion spreads pictured the "men's look" for women; their departments gave hints about how to climb to the top in the workplace. Women had moved out of the home and into the office. They were working women now, active women, women in control of their lives and choices, and women in control of their bodies. Mademoiselle describes this concept succinctly: "What young working women are finding is that working hard at their bodies and working hard at their jobs are two ways of saying they care about themselves. They're fit, limber and vital, and they're ready to rule the world" (March 1980).

To retain the support and readership of these women, the fashion magazine had to repackage the beauty and body concepts that women, due to the women's movement, no longer

readily accepted. One way to make the thin ideal more acceptable was by turning it from an outer, purely physical beauty into an inner health issue, first by labelling it with work-oriented terminology--"work-out"--and then by presenting it as an achievable and worthwhile goal for success-driven women. An article in the July 1975 Mademoiselle sums up this repackaging of beauty ideals: "A real woman has...a figure that's echt-female, and probably puts on lipstick before she sits down to type. But what he sees when he sees her is a 'person'....Clothes, make-up, whatever are courtesies to the beholder. Don't be afraid they'll keep you from being seen." The fit body became another "courtesy," one that could be achieved by every woman who worked at it and one that would bring fulfillment to life, as Seventeen describes: "Follow this diet and exercise plan that combines to give you the energy to lead a vital, thin life" (Feb. 1977). The influences of the feminist movement could have contributed in these ways to the unexpected and high level of health/fitness content in these magazines in the 1970s.

Another explanation for the lack of support for Hypothesis 3 is that while the thin, fatless body type idealized in these magazines did not change, the terms used to describe it did. After the feminist movement subsided, these magazines may have dared to express thinness more

explicitly in their content. Also, the period 1975-1980, roughly, seemed more concerned with fitness and exercise for their own sake, for feeling good and improving overall health, as in Seventeen's "Exercise! It keeps you looking good, feeling fit" (July 1977). Later, health and fitness were promoted more for slimming down, rather than for purposes of strengthening the heart or prolonging life. In November 1985, for example, Mademoiselle offers "Six Waist-Down Workouts--One Great Reason to Whittle Your Middle." Because of the subtle shift in the purpose of exercise, more content units may have been categorized as pro-thin rather than health/fitness.

Another possible explanation for the overall constant rather than increased rate of health/fitness promotion is provided in the description of findings. As seen in chapter four, while overall trends depict constancy, the subdivided graphs detect opposing trends in healthy food and body messages. While body-related health messages actually drop in both magazines, the food-related messages show the anticipated increase. When the two curves are combined, the overall constant trend emerges. This lack of correlation within editorial content, to be discussed again in this chapter, explains the lack of support for this hypothesis.

One last area to examine for an explanation is the methodology of the study. As mentioned in chapter three,

editorial content units could be coded twice if they did not clearly fall into one of the three specified categories. An ECU promoting pro-thinness and fitness equally, for instance, was counted twice while ECUs containing both messages with one predominating, however, were coded according to that dominant ideal. Counting even these slightly mixed ECUs twice perhaps, or devising a fourth category for "pro-thin/fitness mix" could have helped produce the anticipated results here.

It must be stressed, however, that this very difficulty in discerning which examples of content denote thinness and which denote fitness is an important finding in and of itself. If the trained analyst, familiar with the organization, editorial concepts and style of these magazines--and a young, college-educated woman herself--rereads a title or news brief and cannot quickly identify what is actually being promoted, can the average female reader of these magazines easily make the same distinction? In the steady promotion of fitness and rising promotion of thinness, along with their overlap as detailed in chapter four, it becomes increasingly apparent that the lack of support for Hypothesis 3 is due more to the absence of distinct definitions of thinness and fitness in these magazines, as in our society, than to poorly defined categories. What better example of the confusion than

Mademoiselle's own "Ask the Expert" defining "figure control" as "really another name for physical fitness" (June 1980). Since the line between fitness and thinness is so blurry, the two concepts cannot be separated easily solely for the sake of meeting the rigor of precise constructs in a social science study.

Hypothesis 2

In addition, while it was hypothesized that the percentage of editorial content dealing with "anti-thin" messages would generally increase over the 15-year period, only the body-related aspect of editorial content supported this hypothesis, as already discussed. As seen in the findings chapter, the food-related aspect of anti-thin content, because of its disproportionately high yet declining presence in Mademoiselle and Seventeen, is to blame for the lack of overall findings for this hypothesis. The drop in unrestricted, natural eating messages can be explained in part by the rises in dieting and healthy eating. Because the attention given to food topics does not change over the 15 years, the increase in these two food areas must be balanced by a drop elsewhere, meaning in unrestricted eating.

But why have dieting and health food increased and unrestricted eating fallen? As sources cited earlier have

observed as well (Brumberg, 1988; Chernin, 1985; Orbach, 1986; Seid, 1989), society has turned eating into a precise, calculated process. Labels on everything from soup cans to candy bars give us a numerical evaluation of every morsel of food we put into our mouths. We no longer choose our meals based on their taste and satisfaction but based on how these numbers add up by the day's end.

The increased attention to nutritional values and "bad" foods and the subsequent onslaught of diet, "light" and "reduced" products on the market has been reflected in Mademoiselle and Seventeen. "25 Snacks Under 100 Calories," cheers Seventeen's June 1985 issue: "Nutritious, delicious and, best of all, low in calories." As discussed in chapter two, the media both mirror and mold social values and trends, one of which recently has been this obsession with food. As a consequence of the dissection of food for its various benefits and detriments to our bodies, the traditional unrestrained form of eating for both sustenance and pleasure has become almost immoral. Everything we eat must have a justified purpose--to provide nutrients, alleviate stress, boost energy, provide emotional therapy, decrease body size. And this picture of food's function is vividly painted in Seventeen and Mademoiselle. Foods that would have been coded as unrestricted in 1975 could not be coded as such in 1985. Ice cream, for example, is "not only

good for you, it's surprisingly low in calories"

(Mademoiselle, June 1982). So are hot dogs and even chocolate: "Chocolate helps prevent cavities, helps heal a broken heart and doesn't even cause acne. Who knew that the food you hated to love would actually be good for you?"

(Mademoiselle, Nov. 1983). The general arousal in society about food composition and its health effects is perhaps one reason why the natural, unrestricted eating content declines in Mademoiselle and Seventeen.

Lastly, the categorizing scheme established in this study may once again have contributed to the absence of expected results in total anti-thin messages. None of the three categories took into account the "guilt factor" present in some of the seemingly positive eating messages. While an article's overriding focus may have been on carefree, enjoyable food and therefore was coded as such, hints of the presented treats being "sinful" and "indulgent" may have appeared as well but escaped the coding scheme: "New Ways to Sin," for example, is an article about new ice cream desserts in Mademoiselle's June 1982 issue. Perhaps a fourth category for negative as opposed to positive attitude toward eating could have been created to minimize this problem. Once again, however, the complexities of the content imposed difficulties in devising a flawless coding scheme.

Explanation of Unanticipated Findings

Differences Between Food- and Body-Related Messages

While evaluating the three specific hypotheses, two other important but unanticipated observations were noted. First, the messages these magazines have been sending women about food and eating differ greatly from the messages they are sending about acceptable body size, and second, Mademoiselle and Seventeen differ substantially in their attention to these issues.

The contrast between the body ideal these magazines have been urging and the food they have been encouraging women to eat has only compounded the already confusing message being sent to women. Not only has the distinction between thinness and fitness been erased by fat-phobia in the last two decades and the emphasis on fat-free thin bodies continued despite a rise in incidence and information about eating disorders, but rich and fattening recipes have also been printed alongside slim figures and diet plans. While several girls are given advice on how to look thinner in a September 1976 Seventeen feature, saucy beef enchiladas and sausage recipes appear several pages later. Mademoiselle, after running a "Tricks for Beating Overeating" article, features recipes for Chocolate Almond

Butter Crunch and Hot Buttered Rum in the same December 1982 issue.

In both magazines, thin is the predominant body ideal while unrestrained eating is the predominant eating behavior, even though we all know that it is impossible to consume a full-course dinner and delectable desserts regularly if we want to lose five pounds or even maintain our weights. Yet this is precisely what both Mademoiselle and Seventeen advocate. Because they identify themselves as women's service magazines, as mentioned in chapter three, we would expect these two publications to promote thinness, fitness and anti-thinness in the same proportion as dieting, healthy and unrestricted eating respectively. If they are serving their female readers in the area of beauty and self-improvement, should not these magazines provide a viable means by which women can achieve the ideal bodies glamorized? Instead, these tempting images of figure-dooming food only make the already difficult journey toward a socially subscribed body ideal all the more rocky.

Why Seventeen and Mademoiselle have been motivated to present such conflicting messages, aside from reasons of economic survival and profit, cannot be explained. Because the disparity in content is so consistent, the procedures of this analysis most likely are not the reason for this unexpected trend.

Editorial Differences Between Mademoiselle and Seventeen

The other unanticipated finding that emerged during the course of this study is the considerable difference in trends between Seventeen and Mademoiselle. At first, it was assumed that all fashion magazines would exemplify similar patterns in their content, with Seventeen and Mademoiselle effectively representing the fashion magazine industry. Although Seventeen and Mademoiselle show some parallels, as in their anti-thin body-related trends, the data show that this assumption was largely incorrect and that the magazines differ editorially in many ways.

According to the results of chapter four, Mademoiselle generally places more emphasis on food- and, especially, body-related issues than Seventeen. Of the body-related topics, Mademoiselle allocates the majority of its content to thin messages while Seventeen allocates the majority for health/fitness messages. Dieting behavior too is encouraged more in Mademoiselle than Seventeen, the magazine which promotes unrestricted eating far more than either healthy or diet eating.

Qualitative observations reveal characteristics in tone that the systematic coding did not capture. Mademoiselle, as seen examples cited already, is extremely direct and open in its message that thinness is important. In addition to

publishing full-page articles on the topic, Mademoiselle tucks the thin message into less obvious places, such as in fashion text--"get that long, lean look" in "ultra slim-fitting skirts"--and in fictional heroines happy about losing 10 pounds during an illness. The thin ideal is so pervasive that the occasional messages appearing to check it make little impact overall.

Seventeen, on the other hand, appears to have made a greater effort to promote more genuinely healthy and non-thin body types, urging its readers to accept themselves as they are instead of risking their health by trying to change. "Womanliness doesn't consist of measurements and whatever the fashion--it's the whole person that counts," writes the beauty editor back in 1976, a message that still resounds in 1987: "We live in a society that hates fat, especially in women. In movies, in magazines, on TV....the message is clear: Thin is happy and the thinner, the happier. But real life doesn't work that way. Beauty doesn't come in only one package, and anyone who tells you it does is either lying or crazy" (July).

Because it is geared toward a younger and more vulnerable audience, Seventeen may feel more of a parental responsibility to its readers. Since female teens are particularly attune to social images and are needy of social approval (Ferguson, 1983; Gould, 1987), they often look to

magazines like Seventeen for guidance, putting these magazines in more responsible positions to promote healthy and positive role models and ideals.

Mademoiselle, on the contrary, is targetted toward an older, success-oriented and career-woman audience that is generally less impressionable than a teen-aged one. Part of Mademoiselle's goal, as stated in chapter three, is to promote success according to society's definition of it, a definition of which thinness or fitness is an inextricable part (Gagnard, 1985; Wooley & Wooley, 1982). It is in Mademoiselle's economic interest to promote success, even if it means promoting obsessive and unhealthy concern for food, body size and weight.

Because these two magazines have exhibited differences in their content, due in large part to their targetted audiences, the applicability of these results to other fashion magazines must be reconsidered. From these findings, it is better understood that magazine editorial staffs vary in their priorities and agendas and that one or two publications cannot fairly represent the entire industry. It is also evident from the results of Seventeen that this type of magazine can include more positive messages encouraging female readers to appreciate the beauty of their natural body form without losing its established position on the magazine rack.

Conclusions

What these findings--anticipated and unanticipated alike--suggest is that neither Seventeen nor Mademoiselle have been whole-heartedly willing to help their readers change how they perceive food and their bodies. While they have been fully aware of the eating disorders epidemic of the past 15 to 20 years, these fashion magazines have put their true effort into fueling women's obsession with thinness rather than minimizing it. They have done so not only by continuing to promote thinness and dieting but also by mixing health and fitness concepts into the thin ideal. The frequent overlap of thinness and fitness in Seventeen and Mademoiselle's editorial content suggests that these two seemingly separate body types actually represent two dimensions of only one ideal: the fat-free body. That slimness and fitness are tightly interwoven parts of one ideal is evidenced by their simultaneous appearance in articles, sentences, even in single words, such as "dietcising" (Mademoiselle, Feb. 1981). Thinness has not stood as the lone ideal before readers of these magazines, and neither has fitness. Rather, the glamorized body type has been trim, toned, sleek and lean--in essence, fatless. It is this abhorrence, this fear of fatness that has united the concepts of thinness and fitness from at least 1975.

This added dimension to thinness has merely doubled the obsession with body size, for to attain a fat-free figure demands dedication and work--hence the term "workout"-- as well as near-starvation. The obsession about bodies, weight and food that is characteristic of so many anorectics and bulimics has only grown because of this simultaneous pressure for thinness and fitness. It is a pressure that has not subsided over the past 15 years in the editorial content of these fashion magazines.

While maintaining this level of pressure, Seventeen and Mademoiselle have recognized the eating disorders problem among their readers. Having included articles about anorexia and bulimia periodically from 1975 to 1990, these editors clearly cannot claim ignorance as the reason behind their continued propagation of a thin/fit ideal. Their inclusion of such articles as Seventeen's September 1986 "Anorexia Nervosa: An Update," in effect shows an awareness of social problems and a capacity for responsibility to readers.

Unfortunately, this responsibility is only skin deep. While apparently concerned with womens' well-being by delegating editorial space to the problem, Seventeen and Mademoiselle have not, in the final analysis, practiced what they have preached. Their covers continue selling diets, shape-ups and slim-downs; out of 45 issues of Mademoiselle,

for instance, 37 covers incorporated body-related coverlines, 35 of them focusing on how to become "fit" or thin. Their recipes for chocolate cake, cheesy pizzas and gourmet dinners are juxtaposed with step-by-step workout plans, creating a deepening conflict for women about how to have that cake--the slim figure--and eat it too.

The pervasiveness of these thin, fit and confusing images in Seventeen and Mademoiselle's editorial content collectively counteracts any positive steps the editors may have taken to steer women from the rocky, obsessive path that too often leads to eating disorders. In these perplexing messages to women, Seventeen and Mademoiselle are not standing by their commitment to service, nor are they fulfilling their responsibility, as socializers of young women, to promote images and behaviors that are of benefit rather than detriment to women's health. Instead of using the power of their written word to encourage diversity in body shape and size, these fashion magazine leaders have elected to promote one form of beauty, to revere one shape of body for at least 15 years. Shamefully, they have elected to urge their female readership to conform to one unhealthy body beautiful when it is in diversity that true beauty lies.

Limitations of Study

As in all studies, numerous factors limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the results. Although the procedures followed here in assessing the hypotheses were methodical and sound, several important limits must be kept in mind when looking at the findings.

First, because of the lack of resources at this level of research, only one analyst coded the content. Even though the analyst followed a pre-tested coding scheme as objectively as possible, the fact remains that these results are based on just one individual's reading of this particular content. Had funds been available, additional coders would have been hired and trained. Also, although intracoder reliability was good, no intercoder reliability test was run because of the complexity of the content and unavailability of additional coders.

The relatively small sample size posed another limitation on the study. Had time allowed, at least 180 rather than just 90 issues would have been coded to combat the seasonal differences in the data. Other fashion magazines would have been included in the analysis as well.

In addition, no statistical tests were employed to test for the significance of the differences in the data. This is very common for exploratory studies whose aim is to gain an understanding of the field of research and to provide a

basis for further study. Because the purpose of the study was to obtain a thorough understanding of the editorial content of these magazines, it was necessary to deal with complex categories and coding schemes, a complexity that would have been sacrificed in order to meet the requirements of a statistical test. But as in all studies, trade-offs must be made. While this study traded the precision produced by statistics for a richer understanding of the content at hand, it did not sacrifice the challenge and experience of the research process.

Lastly, the complexities of the content evaluated and the resultant coding scheme pose a limitation to the value of the results. As mentioned in several points of this chapter, the overlap of messages pertaining to body ideals and eating habits created difficulties in devising a coding scheme to capture all the trends noted.

Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study suggest that the fashion magazine's nonpictorial editorial aspect has been an important proponent of the thin body ideal and source of confusing messages contributing to women's generally excessive preoccupation with food and their bodies. Yet few other studies have examined this side of the magazine for its role in the rise of eating disorders among women.

Additional research of editorial content in other fashion magazines could provide further insights into this phenomenon. Duplicating this study but adjusting the coding so that a statistical test could be run, or by interviewing the editors and

their assistants for another perspective, could garner much-needed information about the role of this particular medium in the socialization of young women about this difficult physical aspect of their lives.

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