

Socialization and Teen Magazines: What are the Messages?

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Abstract *As fashion magazines are important socialization influences, our purpose was to examine the content of articles in two teen magazines: one with a long publication history (Seventeen) and one relatively new market entry (Teen Vogue). We addressed the following questions: (1) What are the patterns of content of the feature articles? (2) How frequently is this content related to appearance management or fashion consumption? and (3) What, if any, differences exist in contents between the traditional teen magazine and the new market entry? A content analysis of 1,191 articles published during 2008 and 2009 revealed the largest percentage of content in both magazines was fashion. Other than the topic of fashion, Seventeen concentrated on teen life issues whereas Teen Vogue focused on celebrities. Understanding these are fashion publications, we suggest there are opportunities for both magazines to allocate further attention to other issues in the lives of teens in addition to beauty and consumption.*

Key words *content, girls, magazine, media, socialization, teenager*

Social learning theory posits that people learn by observing the behavior of others and then modeling that behavior (Bandura, 1977). The mass media present a variety of behaviors that could be viewed and copied in a variety of formats including television, advertisements, and magazines. Examining the potential impact of mass media (e. g., magazines) on adolescents has been the focus of several researchers (Peirce, 1990; 1993; Schlenker, Caron, & Halteman, 1998). These researchers found that teenage girls were frequently offered traditional messages about roles and appearance expectations of women. For example, Peirce (1990) in her analysis of *Seventeen* found the content focused on appearance, finding a man, and learning how to take care of a house. Much has happened since the early 90's when this research was conducted. Thus, as we enter into the second decade of the 21st century, it is appropriate to examine if the messages to adolescent girls in teen magazines have changed.

Social learning theory

Socialization involves a variety of processes including identificatory learning (Bandura, 1969). The typical

steps of identificatory learning include observation of important socialization agents, retention of what was seen, motivation to reproduce that behavior, observation of outcomes associated with that behavior, and reproduction or modeling of the behavior (Bandura, 1977). In other words, identification occurs when a person patterns her/his thoughts, feelings, or actions after another person who serves as a model. Bandura (1969) noted that it would be difficult to imagine a socialization process in which everything that needed to be learned about a society and a culture was learned without the “guidance of models who exhibit the accumulated cultural repertoires in their own behavior” (p. 213).

Socialization agents can include those we have direct contact with including parents, peers, and teachers as well as individuals depicted through the mass media (Hurrelman, 1988; Peirce, 1993). Social learning theory suggests that frequently observed and rewarded behaviors are likely to be copied (Bandura, 1977). Thus, the media could serve as an important socialization agent because of the prevalence of certain directive messages and behaviors and the incentives or rewards linked to following those messages and/or modeling those behaviors (Kim & Lennon, 2006).

Adolescent and young adult readers indicate that the content in magazines is an important influence on their views. They rely on magazines as an important way to obtain advice regarding their personal lives (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004) especially when readers are not free to openly discuss topics with their parents or friends (Treise & Gotthoffer, 2002). Teen magazines introduce young female readers to the most prominent themes of adolescence, emphasizing problems and pleasures, and instructing readers how to reconstruct themselves from girls into women (McRobbie, 1991). According to a focus group of 7th through 11th-grade girls, teen readers wanted the content in their magazines to reflect their lives and they relied on magazines as a sounding board, a fashion and beauty consultant, and as a close confidant (Magazine Publishers of America, 2000). Another survey conducted by Taylor Research & Consulting Group (2003) indicated that 12- to 15-year-old girls look to magazines almost as much as their friends for the coolest trends. In-depth interviews with regular readers of teen magazines found that girls used the magazines to formulate their concepts of femininity and relied heavily on articles that featured boys’ opinions about how to gain male approval and act in relationships with males.

Evidence that images in magazines and depicted in television influence a range of behaviors of young adults and adolescents comes from several researchers. These researchers have documented links between observation of magazine and televised images¹⁾ and young women’s and adolescents’ behaviors including dieting (Field et al. (1999), disordered eating, appearance anxiety (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Harrison, 2000; Monro & Huon, 2005), body dissatisfaction (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004), and body shame (Monro & Huon, 2005). For example, Brashich (2006) in her study of teen girls found 59% percent reported that they were dissatisfied with their body shape, 66% desired to lose weight, and over half reported that the appearance of models in magazines affected their own image of a perfect female body.

1) For a review of research on the impact of exposure to thin images on young women see Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002).

There is also evidence that cultural background may mediate the impact of magazines on young women's attitudes and behaviors. In a study making comparisons between White and African American adolescents, Duke (2002) found African American adolescents considered the feminine ideals in magazines to be unrealistic and irrelevant while White adolescents regarded teen magazines as a form of reality, identified with the images and information presented therein, and tried to find transformation through reading the magazines.

As there is evidence that the content of teen magazines may serve as an important socialization agent and provide models for teenage attitudes and behavior, our research purpose was to uncover the content and frequency of the messages conveyed through articles located in two popular teen magazines, one a relatively new market entry (*Teen Vogue*) with a fashion focus and the other with a general focus and a long publication history (*Seventeen*). Our research questions were 1) What are the patterns of content contained in the feature articles? 2) What is the relative importance of content on appearance management or fashion consumption? and 3) What, if any, differences exist in contents of the articles between these two popular teen magazines?

Literature Review

Teen Magazine Content

Previous researchers have investigated the themes located in teen magazines²⁾ published in a variety of countries. These researchers have documented that the content of these teen magazines emphasized attracting men and concern for appearance (Evans et al., 1991; McRobbie, 1978, 1991; Inch & Merali, 2006; Peirce, 1990, 1993), eating disorders (Inch & Merali, 2006; Morry & Staska, 2001; Thomsen, Weber, & Brown, 2002), sexual health issues (Carpenter, 2001; Jackson, 2005; Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005), and occupational issues (Massoni, 2004).

Analyses published in the 1970s through the 1990s revealed an emphasis on traditional female gender roles and heterosexual relationships. McRobbie (1978) identified themes of romance, fashion, beauty, personal and domestic life, and pop music in a content analysis of *Jackie*, a British teen magazine. Peirce's (1990) analysis of *Seventeen* suggested the content strengthened traditional ideology and roles for female adolescents through content that emphasized physical beauty as the defining characteristic for women. Evans et al. (1991) in their analysis of three U.S. teen magazines (i.e., *Seventeen*, *YM*, *Sassy*) found that fashion-related features made up 35% of the content. The idea that self-improvement could be obtained through physical beautification and dressing fashionably was frequently present. They also noted that articles and advertisements presented many topics related to physical beautification and heterosexual attraction. Completely absent from the publications were issues of career, education, morals, international

2) In the U.S. (e.g., *Teen*, *Seventeen*, *YM*, *Sassy*) (Peirce, 1990, 1993), in Britain (e.g., *Jackie*, *More!*, *Sugar*) (Burgess, 2003; Evans et al., 1991; Kehily, 1999; McRobbie, 1991), in Australia (e.g., *Girlfriend*) (Jackson, 2005), and in Germany (e.g., *Bravo!*) (Carpenter, 2001).

issues, identity development, and citizenship. Peirce (1993) analyzed teen magazine fiction in two US teen magazines (i.e., *Teen*, *Seventeen*). Her findings indicated that the short stories published involved women's stereotypical roles and half of the "complications" within the stories portrayed relationships with men.

Analyses published in the first decade of the 21st century revealed content that focused on sexual health and other issues related to sexual activity. Carpenter (2001) examined 76 stories about virginity and virginity loss in a German teen magazine (i.e., *Bravo!*) and in a U.S. teen magazine (i.e., *Seventeen*). *Bravo!* and *Seventeen* featured dissimilar content regarding virginity loss indicating that distinct patterns of media socialization concerning sex existed between the two publications. Specifically, *Bravo!* described virginity loss in terms of its positive aspects (e.g., teens experienced lots of pleasure) while *Seventeen* focused on the negative aspects. In related research, Walsh-Childers, Gotthoffer, and Lepre (2002) found in their analysis that overall, 48.4 percent in teen magazines articles contained sex-related content. Subsequently, Jackson (2005) analyzed sexual health problems and sexual identity issues within an Australian teen magazine (i.e., *Girlfriend*). The results indicated the need to engage in sexual activity and a focus on the risk and danger aspects of sex rather than on the pleasure-related aspects. Pardun, L'Engle, and Brown (2005) found that 8% of all teen magazine articles (i.e., paragraphs, headlines) presented sexual content and that 4% of such content included information about sexual health (e.g., refusal of sexual advances/abstinence, masturbation, sexually transmitted diseases, emotional consequences, contraception).

Another topic frequently featured in magazines during the early 21st century is eating disorders. Morry and Staska (2001) noted that reading beauty magazines was associated with concerns about physical appearance and eating behaviors. Their analyses revealed that a thin body type was the only body type present and that teen girls interested in obtaining this ideal might develop disordered eating habits. Inch and Merali (2006) analyzed 42 popular magazine articles for information related to eating disorders. Specifically, they coded illness type, mention of weight loss, disordered behaviors, and impact on health. Their findings demonstrated that popular magazine articles tended to present uncommonly underweight individuals with eating disorders (e.g., anorexia nervosa).

On the other hand, Massoni (2004) examined occupational issues within *Seventeen* magazines in both quantitative and qualitative terms. According to the analyzed content, entertainment careers were both a glamorous and realistic career field, men were the norm as workers and maintained the power in the workplace, and fashion modeling was the highest level of women's work.

Researchers during this time period have also analyzed the content of online magazines written for teen readers. Burgess (2003) identified content themes in both the print and online version of 'teen magazine. She found that body and grooming advice was the dominant theme. The content often prescribed socially acceptable appearances for body parts such as skin, hair, and nails. Such body and grooming advice and solutions to diverse grooming concerns were frequently associated with messages about product consumption or a commitment to specific products and brands. Another recent investigation regarding the body-related content in online teen magazines demonstrated that *Girl Zone* differentiated it-

self from other online magazines by providing critiques of the ideal body as thin, stimulated teens to emphasize their inner selves rather than their outward appearances, and evoked assertive strategies for managing the sociocultural pressures to be thin (Ogle & Thornburg, 2003).

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Method

To answer our research questions, we completed a content analysis of the articles published in two teen magazines during 2008 and 2009. A content analysis was an appropriate research strategy as it is one of the qualitative analysis methods that has been used to examine the patterns and themes of messages presented by media (Altheide, 1996).

Sample

We selected *Seventeen* and *Teen Vogue* for our analysis because they were market-leading teen fashion magazines and both targeted teenage girls. *Seventeen* has a long publication history. It was first published in 1944 and has the highest readership in the teen magazine market with 13 million readers. *Teen Vogue* entered the teen magazine market as a version of *Vogue* for a younger audience in 2003. The magazine targets teenage girls who are conscious of fashion and trend. The content of *Teen Vogue* has not been previously analyzed although it is a popular teen magazine. Because it is a recent addition to the marketplace, analyzing articles contained therein provided an opportunity to determine if this publication provided content that would emphasize other strategies for young women than the pursuit of beauty or a young man. Feature articles ($n = 1,191$; *Seventeen* = 670, *Teen Vogue* = 521) from 38 issues (19 issues each publication) over the two year period comprised the data³).

Theme development procedure

Three researchers were involved in the content analysis and development of the coding schemes. The table of contents of two magazines was used as a starting point to categorize article contents. Each researcher independently reviewed the articles in both magazines and noted the major contents of the articles. Then these researchers discussed the contents and negotiated the final labels to be used to designate the coding categories. After developing the major categories, three of the researchers coded the contents of the articles of the remaining issues. The results from each coder were compared in order to determine consistency between coders. Inconsistent codings were identified, discussed, and negotiated until agreement was obtained. Amendments were made to the coding categories. The reliability of coding was determined by dividing agreements by total items (agreements and disagreements). Intercoder reliabilities were .97 for *Seventeen* and .89 for *Teen Vogue*.

3) Three issues of *Seventeen* and one issue of *Teen Vogue* were not available at the time of data collection. Because the pattern of article type showed minor variation, it is unlikely the omission of these issues and corresponding articles skewed our findings.

Themes developed

Six themes emerged from the content of the articles: fashion, celebrity, beauty, health, teen life, and social issues. The fashion theme contained two sub-categories: trend and consumption information. Articles introducing new appearance trends (e.g., hairstyles), new styles of apparel, or suggesting how styles could be coordinated in new ways were coded as trend information. Articles providing information and tips about how and where to purchase fashion items (e.g., apparel, accessories, and shoes) were coded under consumption.

The celebrity theme contained articles reporting on what celebrities wore and how to look like specific celebrities as well as articles dealing with celebrities' life experiences. The beauty category contained two sub-categories: advice and consumption. How-to-do-it articles on beauty (e.g., how to wear cosmetics, how to hide blemishes) were coded as advice. Articles providing product information (e.g., price, brand name) were coded as consumption. The health category contained two sub-categories: physical health and mental health. Articles dealing with issues of maintaining health and preventing the spread of disease were coded as physical health. Articles dealing with issues of mental health (e.g., depression) were coded as mental health.

The teen life category contained six sub-categories: career, relationship (friend/parents), love, real life, entertainment, and events. Career was concerned with issues such as how to successfully enter college or successfully get an internship. Relationship was concerned with interactions with friends or parents. Love-related issues included how to meet a guy or build relationship with a boy. The real life category included articles concerning issues that adolescent face inside and outside of school life. Articles concerning review of music or movies as well as horoscopes were coded as entertainment. Articles dealing with special occasion activities were coded as event. (see Table 1 for major themes, subcategories, and sample article titles).

Table 1.
Sample Article Titles for Each Sub-Category in each Theme

Theme	Sub-Category	Seventeen	Teen Vogue
Fashion	Trend	"Top 10 Fall trends"	"Fall fashion from a to z"
	Consumption	"Smart shopping guide"	"Back to school- schoolbag shopping"
Celebrity	Style	"Steal her Cool Look - Beyonce"	"Fashion rising style stars"
Beauty	Advice	"Best colors for your skin tone"	"Crazy beautiful - chic beauty looks"
	Consumption	"17 best beauty buys"	"Beauty awards-must haves"
Health	Physical	"Body peace- Breasts"	"Diet soda jeopardizing your health?"
	Mental	"Invisible attack - digital abuse"	"Secrets and lies- how to deal with rumors"
Teen Life	Career		"Hot topic: college pressure"
	Relationship	"What your best guy friend really thinks"	

	Love	“Everything wanted to know about guys”	
	Real life	“Ultimate guide to college”	“Web of lies- bullies in cyberspace”
	Entertainment		“People are talking about- movie”
	Events	“Have fun this fall”	
Social Issues		“What really goes into celeb pics”	

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Results

The total number of issue pages, the total number of pages allocated to each article, and the number of articles in each issue were coded to examine the proportion of articles dedicated to each theme. The total number of pages per issue in the two magazines ranged from 128 to 270 ($m = 199$). The total number of pages dedicated to featured articles ranged from 66 to 115 (excluding advertisements). The total number of article pages within a category was summed and divided by the total number of article pages to determine the percent of pages dedicated to a category.

Contents of articles in Teen magazine

Table 2 shows the results of our content analysis for both magazines. The largest percentage of content in each of these magazines was fashion (*Seventeen*: 31.7%, *Teen Vogue*: 51.7%). Within the category of fashion, style guides such as “get your hottest date look” and trend issues such as “Top 10 Fall trends” were the main focus. These featured articles were generally composed of photographs or illustrated fashion spreads of clothing and accessories. They were intended to serve as examples for young readers to follow. Typical of this type of article was a series of articles featured in *Seventeen* that provided instruction on how to dress and select clothing items according to different body shapes. Another type of article in the fashion category was articles that addressed aspects of appearance that needed to be hid or fixed. One piece that was typical of this article type was a seven page article titled “Get your best body ever” that gave tips to readers about how to assess their own body type and find the right outfits to cover their all-pervading figure flaws.

The articles also routinely encouraged readers to consume specific brands of products featured in the articles. Articles titled “Smart shopping guide,” “Shopping spree,” and “Gotta have it” routinely included where and how to purchase information. By default, these articles are promotional vehicles for brands.

For *Seventeen*, the second largest percentage of magazine was teen life (27.8%) followed by beauty (25.6%), celebrity (11.1%), health (1.8%), and social issues (1.6%). For *Teen Vogue*, the second largest category was celebrity (20.5%) followed by teen life (12.6%), beauty (8.3%), health (3.9%), and social issues (1.8%). The actual content of the articles within these categories was extremely similar between the publications.

Table 2.
Contents of Articles in Two Teen Magazines

Theme	Seventeen		Teen Vogue	
	# Pages (%)	# Articles (%)	# Pages (%)	# Articles (%)
Fashion				
Style guide/Trend	498 (26%)	149 (22%)	663 (43%)	155 (30%)
Consumption/Shopping	108 (6%)	41 (6%)	118 (8%)	33 (6%)
Celebrity				
Celebrity style & stories	211 (11%)	50 (8%)	310 (21%)	130 (25%)
Beauty				
Beauty advice	406 (21%)	129 (19%)	92 (6%)	44 (8%)
Beauty consumption	83 (4%)	33 (5%)	33 (2%)	29 (6%)
Health				
Physical health	22 (1%)	14 (2%)	47 (3%)	17 (3%)
Mental health	12 (1%)	8 (1%)	12 (0.8%)	3 (0.6%)
Teen life				
Career	3 (0.2%)	2 (0.3%)	15 (1%)	8 (2%)
Relationships (friend/parents)	33 (2%)	6 (0.9%)	2 (0.1%)	1 (0.2%)
Love	213 (11%)	86 (13%)	0	0
real life	197 (10%)	92 (14%)	63 (4%)	25 (5%)
entertainment	70 (4%)	37 (6%)	108 (7%)	60 (12%)
events	14 (0.7%)	4 (0.6%)	2 (0.1%)	1 (0.2%)
Social issues	31 (2%)	15 (2%)	27 (2%)	6 (1%)
Others	8 (0.4%)	4 (0.6%)	19 (1%)	9 (2%)
Total	1909 (100%)	670(100%)	1511(100%)	521(100%)

In the teen life category, almost half (46%) of the articles addressed dating, safe sex, and how to attract boys. Typical of a dating article was one titled “Why guys dump girls they still like.” This article featured boys talking about their love life and provided reasons why they left relationships. Other articles featured skill building techniques such as “How to be a better flirt” and “Be the best kisser ever.” The other large group of articles (38%) within the teen life category addressed school life and issues such as selecting a college and being bullied.

Articles in the beauty category offered detailed editorial advice on how to groom the female body and enhance one’s attractiveness. Editorials such as “50 hot hair style ideas”, “shake up your make up”, and “17 best beauty buys” were not only how to articles but often promoted the purchase of products that were related to beauty, health, and body care. *Seventeen* regularly carried articles regarding diet and exercise. “Get totally toned by New year”, “Best workout for your body”, “pick the perfect snack”, and “your fast-food fix” are typical article titles providing content on eating right and proper exercise with the goal of obtaining a better-looking body.

In the celebrity category, the contents of the articles featured the lives of celebrities and what they

consumed (e.g., wearing, eating, driving). *Seventeen* frequently carried articles designed for readers to be able to copy the look of their favorite celebrities including information about what products were used to achieve a specific appearance.

The health category contained articles that addressed physical and mental health issues such as sexually transmitted disease (STDs), anorexia, and depression. These articles gave facts and advice regarding these health issues. For instance, an article titled "Is it a STD?" gave detailed information about what STDs are, what the symptoms are, and how readers can be tested and treated for STDs.

Finally, the social issue category included special editions on general social problems or topics (e.g., teen pregnancy, drug abuse, self-harm). For example, an article titled "51% of Seventeen readers self-harm- get help now" was a four-page exclusive article about what *Seventeen* found after surveying its subscribers about whether or not they inflicted harm on themselves. One of the readers shared her story about feeling so bad about herself that she carved the words "fat" and "worthless" into her skin, cut her wrists, and poured boiling water on her legs.

Difference in contents between Seventeen and Teen Vogue

There were differences in the amount of space and frequency of content between the two magazines. To investigate whether *Seventeen* and *Teen Vogue* differed in the allocation of articles within each category, a chi-square statistic was used. In terms of the first theme "Fashion", the two magazines were significantly different from each other on trend information ($\chi^2 = 8.31$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .01$) but not on consumption/shopping content ($\chi^2 = 0.001$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$). *Teen Vogue* was likely to have more trend content than *Seventeen*. For the second theme "celebrity", the two magazines were significantly different ($\chi^2 = 68.52$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .001$). *Teen Vogue* was likely to have more celebrity content than *Seventeen*.

In terms of the third theme "beauty", the two magazines were significantly different on beauty advice content ($\chi^2 = 26.71$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .001$) but not significantly different on beauty consumption content ($\chi^2 = 0.13$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$). *Seventeen* was likely to have more beauty advice content than *Teen Vogue*. For the fourth theme "health", the two magazines were not significantly different on either physical health content ($\chi^2 = 1.16$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$) or mental health content ($\chi^2 = 0.64$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$).

In terms of the fifth theme "teen life", the two magazines were again significantly different on career ($\chi^2 = 4.00$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .05$), love ($\chi^2 = 70.18$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .001$), real life ($\chi^2 = 25.40$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .001$), and entertainment ($\chi^2 = 13.29$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p < .001$). However, the two magazines were not significantly different on relationships ($\chi^2 = 1.43$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$) or events ($\chi^2 = 0.39$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$). *Teen Vogue* was likely to have more career and entertainment contents than *Seventeen*. *Seventeen* was likely to have more love and real life contents than *Teen Vogue*. In terms of the sixth theme "social issues" the two magazines were not significantly different ($\chi^2 = 1.42$, $df = 1$, $N= 1191$, $p > .05$).

More than half of the content addressed in *Teen Vogue* was fashion (52% [pages], 36% [articles]). *Teen Vogue* also had a heavy focus on celebrities (e.g., actress/actor, singer) who might serve as models for teenager's identificatory learning (21% [pages], 25% [articles]). *Teen Vogue* took into account teen life issues especially focusing on career and entertainment whereas *Seventeen* carried fairly balanced levels of content among fashion (32% [pages], 28% [articles]), teen life (28% [pages], 34% [articles]) and beauty (26% [pages], 24% [articles]). Other than the fashion category, *Seventeen* addressed issues especially focusing on teen's dating, love life, and real life issues related to school and social relationships. Significantly less content focused on celebrities and their consumption habits. In addition, *Seventeen* regularly provided guidance on how to improve primarily young girls' appearances by using clothing (3% [pages]), exercise, and eating healthy (5% [pages]) whereas *Teen Vogue* did not.

Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the content of the articles in two teen magazines (*Seventeen*, *Teen Vogue*) as a means to uncover the messages present in teen magazines directed at adolescent girls. Our findings showed that fashion trend information and how to improve one's appearance through fashion, diet and exercise, and the application of beauty products has continued to be a major focus. This finding is consistent with those of Evans et al. (1991) who found that beauty and fashion were the major contents of teen magazines (e.g., *Seventeen*, *Sassy*, *Young Miss*) nearly twenty years ago.

The content of the articles in teen magazines (outside of the influence of advertisements) were also associated with consumption of products. Readers were often instructed to manage their appearance (with the goal of obtaining a level of beauty) by using specific branded products, making many articles simply another form of advertising. Our finding is consistent with those of Labre and Walsh-Childers (2003) who found that teen magazine websites contained the message that beauty was a requirement for teenage girls and teenage girls could attain beauty through products featured and through following the guidance offered by the magazines.

Our findings also showed that the content in these magazines covered celebrities-related issues. Increased coverage of celebrities is also not surprising as adolescents are interested in this content and publishers want to sell magazines. This finding indicates that the reported behaviors of celebrities could be a powerful socialization influence on readers. Celebrities are likely serving as models for teenage girls as success stories are shared knowledge of how they achieved their bodies or their level of fitness as well as their careers.

Even though both publications are fashion magazines and fashion content is expected, there are opportunities for both magazines to allocate space and attention to other factors in the lives of teens in addition to fashion and the pursuit of beauty. Increasing magazine space dedicated to information about good health practices, for example, could be very impactful as adolescence is a time when young girls are feeling self-conscious about their changing bodies. Increasing magazine space to disseminating information on issues related to teen sexuality would also benefit young readers. Our analysis revealed

Seventeen included at least one article dealing with exercise or a diet/food concern in every issue yet this is not an outstanding record. On the positive side, articles related to diet, food, and exercise were associated with attaining physical attractiveness by exercising and having healthy eating habits rather than implementing a strategy where dieting (i.e., reduction of food intake) is the primary means to achieve an attractive appearance. Although few articles were dedicated to teen health in both magazines, teen fashion magazines can contribute to teenage girls ability to build their own standard of health and beauty in a positive way when magazines promote healthy guidelines for appearance, move away from the constant message that teen appearances need to be fixed, and provide a range of appearance ideals.

Future research directions

Durham (1999) noted that girls often use print magazines as part of their peer group interaction. Our next steps are to identify what specific messages young readers take away from teen fashion magazines. How do young girls interpret and use the messages of teen magazines? How do these messages influence life goals? What kind of information do young readers look for and find most useful? How does interaction with peers mediate the influence of these messages?

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