

RACIAL AND GENDER BIASES IN MAGAZINE ADVERTISING

A Content-Analytic Study

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Recent evidence suggests that racial and gender biases in magazine advertisements may be increasing. To explore this possibility, a content analysis was performed on 10 years of fashion advertisements drawn from magazines geared toward White women, Black women, or White men ($N = 1,800$ advertisements from 1985–1994). The results indicated that (a) except for Black females in White women's magazines, African Americans were underrepresented in White magazines; (b) female body exposure was greater than male body exposure, and White female body exposure rose significantly during the 10 years; (c) White women were shown in low-status positions nearly twice as often as were other models; and (d) Black women wore the majority of animal prints, most of which were patterned after a predatory animal. These findings suggest that racial and gender biases in magazine advertising persisted, and in some cases increased, between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s.

Advertisements. They have been called ubiquitous, inescapable, and one of the most important cultural factors affecting modern society (Williamson, 1978). They have also been described as one of the great vehicles of social communication, a vast system with “unsurpassed communicative powers” (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1986, p. 7). Recently, one writer even characterized American culture as an *Adcult*—a culture awash in a sea of advertising (Twitchell, 1996).

How large is this sea? Each day, more than 184 billion classified advertisements

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and 12 billion display advertisements pour forth from daily newspapers in the United States, another 6 billion advertisements appear in magazines and other periodicals, 2.6 billion commercials are broadcast via radio, and 330 million commercials are shown on television (Bogart, 1990). All told, advertising occupies almost 60% of newspaper space, 52% of magazine pages, 18% of radio time, and 17% of television prime time (Collins & Skover, 1993). On an individual level, this means that American teenagers will have watched an average of more than 350,000 television commercials by the time they are 18 years old (Kern-Foxworth, 1994), which is roughly equivalent to watching advertisements nonstop from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM every day for a year.

Although the cumulative effects of this exposure are difficult to determine, several studies on gender stereotyping suggest that advertisements profoundly influence how people perceive and relate to one another. For example, one study found that, compared with members of a control group, male interviewers who had watched sexist television commercials later judged a female job applicant as less competent, remembered less biographical information about her, and remembered more about her physical appearance (Rudman & Borgida, 1995). Another study found that children who were raised in a community without television had less gender-typed perceptions than did children who were raised in comparable communities with television, and that gender-typed attitudes increased significantly once television was introduced (Kimball, 1986). In still another study, heterosexual men who were exposed to attractive women in magazine erotica later rated their romantic partners as less attractive (Kenrick, Gutierrez, & Goldberg, 1989). And in another investigation, women who were exposed to gender-role-reversed advertisements later became more self-confident and independent in their judgments (Jennings, Geis, & Brown, 1980).

Gender Biases in Advertisements

The first content analysis of gender biases in magazine advertisements was published by Courtney and Lockeretz (1971). Those authors found that magazine advertisements reflected four general stereotypes (a) "A woman's place is in the home," (b) "Women do not make important decisions or do important things," (c) "Women are dependent and need men's protection," and (d) "Men regard women primarily as sex objects; they are not interested in women as people." Since the time of this study, a number of other content analyses have replicated these results (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Busby & Leichty, 1993; Culley & Bennett, 1976; England, Kuhn, & Gardner, 1983; Lysonski, 1983; Sexton & Haberman, 1974; Venkatesan & Losco, 1975; Wagner & Banos, 1973). During the past 40 years, only one of the stereotypes found by Courtney and Lockeretz (1970) has shown evidence of amelioration: the image of women as homebound. As women have entered the workforce in growing numbers, advertisements have increasingly shown them in work settings outside the home (Busby & Leichty, 1993; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988).

At the same time, increases in work-role equality seem to have been offset by a concomitant trend toward displaying women as decorative and sexualized. For example, Lazier-Smith (1989) found that the percentage of advertisements portray-

ing women as decorative/sex objects increased from 27% in 1973 to 37% in 1986. Likewise, Ferguson, Kreshel, and Tinkham (1990) found that the percentage of *Ms.* magazine advertisements with alluring women went from 6% in 1973–1977 to 48% in 1983–1987. Busby and Leichty (1993), using an inclusive definition of “decorative,” found that the percentage of women portrayed in decorative roles increased from 54% in 1959 to 73% in 1989. And Sexton and Haberman (1974) found that the percentage of advertisements with “obviously alluring” women went from 10% in 1950–1951 to 27% in 1970–1971. Several content analyses of magazines and other media have also found that women are far more likely than men to be portrayed as nude, scantily clad, or sexualized in some way (Hall & Crum, 1994; Hawkins & Aber, 1988; Rudman & Verdi, 1993; Signorielli, McLeod, & Healy, 1994; Soley & Reid, 1988; Ware & Stuck, 1985).

This emphasis on female beauty and sexuality suggests that progress toward gender equality has been uneven at best. In the words of Busby and Leichty (1993, p. 259), American women seem to have “exited the home and stepped up to the department store beauty counters.” Yet it may be premature to conclude that there has been an increase in sex-related portrayals of women. For one thing, the rating categories that have been used in previous research (e.g., “sex object,” “alluring,” “scantily clad”) vary widely from study to study, and not all studies have found an increase over time (Lysonski, 1983, 1985; Soley & Reid, 1988; Venkatesan & Losco, 1975). Second, categories such as “sex object” and “alluring” are quite subjective, which has the effect of reducing interrater reliability both within and across studies (Culley & Bennett, 1976). Third, perceptions of what is sexually provocative change over time, thereby confounding comparisons between early and recent studies (somewhat akin to a wage comparison that does not adjust for inflation). Finally, and perhaps most important, longitudinal studies have not tended to control for differences in the products that are advertised; hence, observed increases in alluring models may simply be the result of an increased number of advertisements for fashion and beauty items (Soley & Reid, 1988; Sullivan & O’Connor, 1988). In the present content analysis, we attempted to overcome these limitations in various ways (as described later in the article).

Racial Biases in Advertisements

Unlike studies of gender bias in advertisements—which have focused on everything from clothing to body position to facial expression and beyond—content analyses of racial biases have concentrated almost exclusively on two variables: minority representation and role portrayal. The first content analysis of racial biases in advertising was published by Shuey, King, and Griffith (1953). These authors analyzed magazine advertisements from 1949 and 1950, and they found that (a) only 0.6% of magazine advertisements contained African Americans; (b) when African Americans did appear, they were shown as unskilled laborers 95.3% of the time; and (c) in the remaining cases, African Americans were invariably portrayed as athletes or entertainers.

As in the case of gender stereotyping, subsequent research on racial biases in advertising has shown a mixed record of progress.¹ For example, several studies

have found a reduced tendency to portray African Americans as servants and unskilled laborers, but much of this decline has been balanced by an increased tendency to depict African Americans in equally stereotyped roles as athletes, entertainers, and recipients of charity (Colfax & Sternberg, 1972; Cox, 1970; Green, 1991, 1992; Humphrey & Schuman, 1984; Kassarian, 1969). Likewise, although the percentage of advertisements with African Americans grew throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the percentage never reached demographic parity and appears to have fallen since the early 1980s (Green, 1991, 1992; Kern-Foxworth, 1994; Zinkhan, Qualls, & Biswas, 1990).

A 1991 study by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs summarized the current situation as follows:

The civil rights movement and its aftermath led to major image adjustments: Aunt Jemima was given a facelift so she wouldn't look like a mammy, the "Sambo's" chain went out of business, and the Frito Bandito was retired. Minorities can be found in print ads for automobiles, deodorant, toothpaste, and other products with which they had never been associated. Yet while some of the most blatant exclusion and stereotyping in print advertising has abated, further progress seems to have stalled. (Green, 1991, p. 39)

In fact, advertising continues to be so racially segregated that separate advertising and modeling agencies specialize in African Americans and Latinos, and within large agencies "ethnic" divisions handle minority media and products (Green, 1991).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Despite the valuable work that has been done in previous content analyses of print advertisements, several unaddressed questions remain. First, no study has examined how racial and gender differences *interact* in the portrayal of models in magazine advertisements (e.g., by comparing differences in the depictions of Black women, White women, Black men, and White men). For example, it is unclear whether racial and gender biases combine to put Black women at a particular disadvantage relative to men and White women, as some authors have contended (Collins, 1990; Lerner, 1992). The present study will directly compare the portrayals of Black women, White women, Black men, and White men.

Second, although several studies have compared minority representation in women's magazines and men's magazines, no studies have assessed racial segregation by crossing the gender and race of models with the gender and race of the magazine audience. In other words, previous research has examined the percentage of advertisements with minority representation, but it has not looked at racial segregation along gender lines (e.g., the percentage of Black men appearing in magazines that are read mainly by White women, the percentage of White men appearing in magazines that are read mainly by Black women, and so on). In the present study, we will provide a preliminary assessment of this type of racial segregation.

Third, content analyses of racial stereotypes have rarely distinguished between male and female portrayals, and most studies have concentrated on racial images that are associated mainly with men (e.g., Blacks as athletes or musicians). In the

current study, we will explore a racial stereotype that has been central to the experience of women: the image of Black women as predatory and animal-like. According to Collins (1990), Black women have a long history of being portrayed as animal-like, particularly in pornographic and sexual contexts (see Mayall & Russell, 1993 for recent evidence on this point). Other studies have shown that slang terms often use animal imagery when referring to women of color (Allen, 1984), and that the general public continues to hold stereotypes of African Americans as unevolved and animal-like (Plous & Williams, 1995). These findings led us to hypothesize that Black women would be shown disproportionately often wearing animal-print clothing and striking animal-like poses, and that a majority of animal prints would be patterned after predatory animals.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, previous content analyses of gender biases in advertisements have not tended to control for changes over time in advertised products or in public perceptions concerning sexuality. In addition, measures of sexual content in print advertisements have focused almost exclusively on female models, so it is difficult to know whether the observed trends toward sexual objectification apply only to women. In the present study, we addressed these issues in two ways. First, in order to avoid the confounding effect of temporal changes in advertised products, we restricted our analysis solely to fashion advertisements (we chose fashion advertisements because in many ways they are prototypic of magazine advertising in general, given their emphasis on creating idealized images of beauty and desirability). Second, we developed a detailed coding procedure to estimate the amount of body exposure contained in an advertisement—a less subjective measure than judgments of whether a model is sexually alluring, and one that is suitable for both male and female models. By applying this metric uniformly to models in advertisements published between 1985 and 1994, we were able to assess whether sexual explicitness had increased during this period.

METHOD

Sample

Six fashion-oriented magazines were examined: two with a predominantly White female readership (*Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*), two with a predominantly Black female readership (*Ebony* and *Essence*), and two with a predominantly White male readership (*Esquire* and *Gentleman's Quarterly*). These magazines were chosen on the basis of their large circulations and their use in previous content analyses (magazines with a predominantly Black male readership were not examined, because none of these magazines had a comparable circulation and fashion orientation during the period we examined).

The selection of advertisements proceeded in two stages. First, a sample frame was constructed from all full-page fashion advertisements, fashion layouts, or fashion-related covers appearing in odd-numbered months between January 1985, and November 1994. Layouts and covers were included in the sample frame because their primary purpose is similar to that of advertisements (i.e., to model and sell clothes). For purposes of the study, advertisements and layouts were included only

if they attempted to sell nonaccessory clothing and if they contained a photograph of at least one adult. In all, 12,472 advertisements, layouts, and covers (henceforth, referred to collectively as “advertisements”) were enumerated during this stage.

In the next stage, five advertisements were randomly selected from each issue.² This sampling procedure generated a final collection of 1,800 advertisements (5 advertisements per issue \times 6 issues per year \times 10 years \times 6 magazines).

Coding Categories

Each advertisement was coded along the following four dimensions.

Racial/Gender Representation

This coding dimension concerned the number of Black women, White women, Black men, and White men appearing in a given advertisement (coded as “zero,” “one,” or “more than one” for each category).³

Body Exposure

For this dimension, specific definitions were developed to reliably score whether a particular body area was exposed. For example, shoulders were scored as exposed if the entire shoulder (from the base of the neck to the upper arm) was visible and unclothed. Similar scoring rules were developed for other body areas that are commonly associated with sexual display, including buttocks, cleavage (females only), upper leg, stomach, and back.⁴

Body Position

Models were scored as appearing in a low-status, or animal-like, position if they were pictured on all fours, kneeling, crawling, lying down, or sitting on something other than a surface designed to be sat on (e.g., the floor or ground).

Clothing

This dimension involved two categories: *sexual attire* and *animal prints*. The first category was defined rather restrictively—models were scored as wearing sexual attire if they appeared in form-fitting underwear or a bikini swimsuit.⁵ Animal prints were scored as present if fabric patterns representing animal fur, hair, or skin were worn or held by a model (excluding reproductions of whole animals, such as safari prints containing lions).

Interrater Agreement

All ratings were made by a college-aged Black female. These judgments were independently checked for reliability by having a second person code one randomly selected advertisement from each of the 360 magazine issues examined (i.e., one fifth of all advertisements).⁶ The second rater, a college-aged White female, agreed with the first rater between 92% and 100% of the time, depending on the variable in question. Averaging across all variables, the median level of interrater agreement was above 99%. Thus, the coding system succeeded in yielding highly reliable judgments.

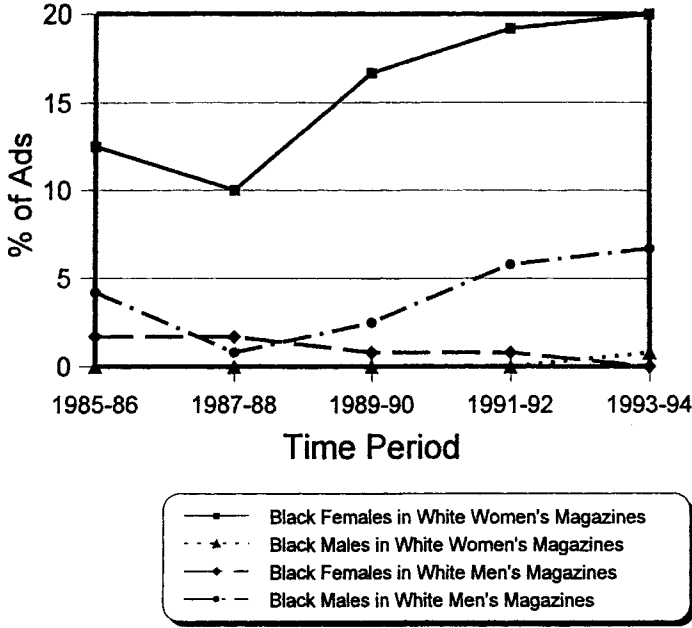


FIGURE 1. Time trends showing the percentage of advertisements containing African Americans in magazines with a predominantly White readership.

RESULTS

Minority and Gender Representation

Overall, African Americans appeared in 10.1% of advertisements carried by magazines with a predominantly White readership (for present purposes, we will refer to these magazines as “White women’s magazines” and “White men’s magazines”). Although this figure falls short of demographic parity,⁷ it constitutes an increase over the results of other recent content analyses (Green, 1992; Kern-Foxworth, 1994). Moreover, the percentage of advertisements with African Americans increased significantly over time, growing from 8.3% in the 1980s to 11.8% in the 1990s, $\chi^2(1, N = 1200) = 4.05, p < .05$.

As shown in Figure 1, however, these aggregate percentages mask a dramatic race \times gender interaction. Once gender is entered into the analysis, it becomes clear that virtually all of the gains over time have been made in one category: Black females appearing in White women’s magazines. By 1993–1994, one out of every five advertisements in White women’s magazines contained at least one Black female. In contrast, only 0.8% of advertisements in White women’s magazines contained a Black male during 1993–1994, 6.7% of advertisements in White men’s magazines contained a Black male, and no advertisements in White men’s magazines contained a Black female.

Table 1
 Percentage of Advertisements with Various Models

<i>Type of Model</i>	<i>Type of Magazine</i>		
	<i>White Women's Magazines</i>	<i>Black Women's Magazines</i>	<i>White Men's Magazines</i>
Black female	15.7	94.7	1.0
White female	88.8	8.7	20.5
Black male	0.2	19.7	4.0
White male	15.2	3.0	93.2

Note: Each percentage is based on a sample of 600 advertisements. For example, of the 600 advertisements drawn from White women's magazines, 15.7% contained at least one Black female. Amounts do not add to 100% because an advertisement could have more than one figure.

Table 1 provides summary information for the 10-year period investigated. As this table shows, the greatest amount of racial segregation in advertising takes place across gender lines. Averaging over all 10 years, only 0.2% of advertisements in White women's magazines contained a Black male, 1.0% of advertisements in White men's magazines contained a Black female, and 3.0% of advertisements in Black women's magazines contained a White male. This "gendered" form of racial segregation was reinforced by the relative absence of interracial couples. Of the 1,800 advertisements studied, 7 advertisements presented a White male alone with a Black female, and none presented a Black male alone with a White female.

Body Exposure

In order to directly compare the body exposure of male and female models, a composite index was formed. Models were considered "exposed" if any of the following body areas were displayed in the advertisement: buttocks, upper leg, stomach, shoulders, or back. Using this index, advertisements with exposed women were approximately four times more common than advertisements with exposed men (Black women were exposed in 37.7% of the advertisements they appeared in, White women in 42.5%, Black men in 13.3%, and White men in 9.9%). We also found that the body exposure of White women increased substantially throughout the period studied (see Figure 2). This change in the exposure of White women was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 708) = 10.37, p < .04$, and is consistent with previous content analyses showing an increase in the sexual portrayal of women in magazine advertisements.

Similar trends were apparent with respect to the breast exposure of White female models. As seen in Figure 3, the percentage of advertisements displaying the cleavage of White women nearly doubled during the 10-year period. By 1993-1994, 42.8% of the advertisements with White women contained a display of cleavage or breasts, compared to 22.8% in 1985-1986. This change in exposure was highly

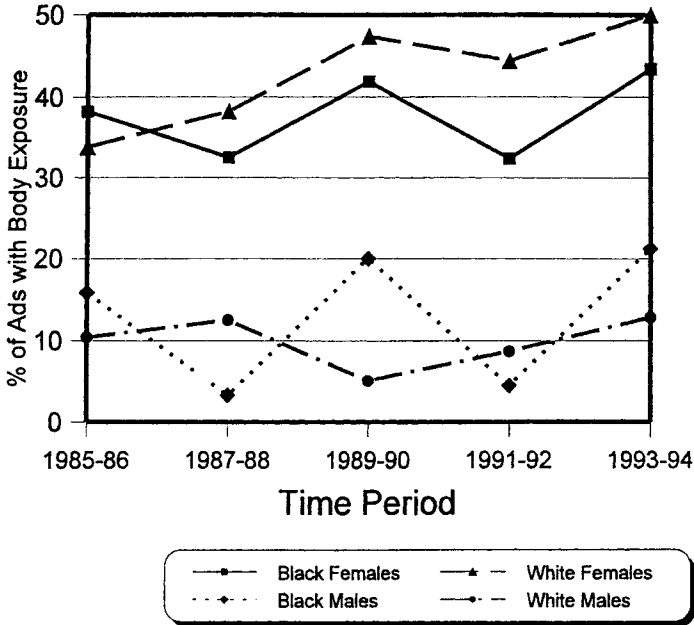


FIGURE 2. Time trends showing the body exposure of Black females, White females, Black males, and White males. All percentages are computed from the total number of advertisements featuring a given subgroup (e.g., of the advertisements with Black males in 1989–1990, 20% displayed a Black male with his body exposed).

significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 708) = 17.48, p < .002$, and suggests that the breast exposure of White female models in magazine advertisements may be at an all-time high.

The breast exposure of Black female models also increased to more than 40% during the time period studied—in fact, the levels of exposure for Black women and White women were virtually identical between 1991 and 1994—but because Black women began the period with a higher rate of exposure, this change was not significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 668) = 6.10, p = .19$. It is clear, however, that the exposure of breasts, cleavage, and other areas of the body has become commonplace for both Black and White female models. If breast exposure is included with other types of body exposure, the percentage of 1993–1994 advertisements with body exposure rises to 52.9% for Black women and 61.6% for White women—a majority in both cases.

In a related analysis, we assessed whether there were differences in the degree of breast exposure across different types of magazines (though the lack of Black females in White men's magazines limited our analysis of racial differences to women's magazines). The results, as given in Figure 4, showed a pronounced cross-over interaction: Black women were exposed more frequently in Black women's magazines than in White women's magazines, whereas White women were exposed more frequently in White women's magazines than in Black women's magazines.

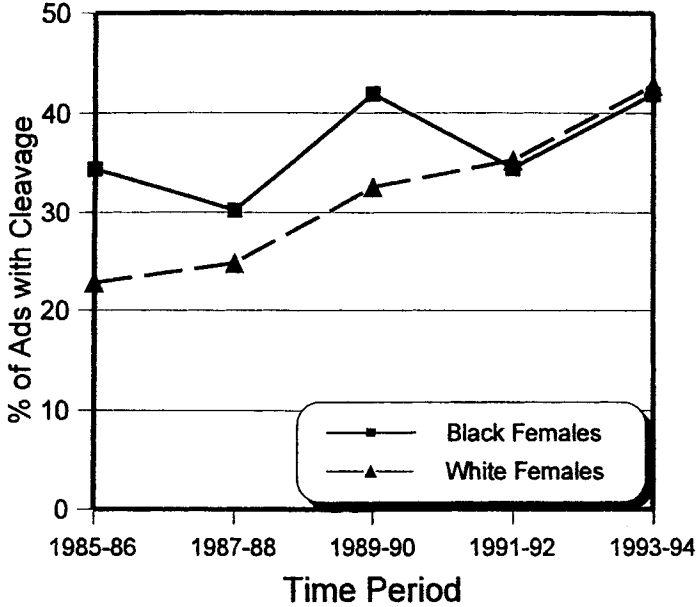


FIGURE 3. Time trends showing the percentage of advertisements that displayed the breasts or cleavage of Black and White women. All percentages are computed from the total number of advertisements featuring a given subgroup (e.g., of the advertisements with Black females in 1987–1988, approximately 30% displayed the breasts or cleavage of a Black woman).

The cleavage of White women was displayed with nearly the same frequency in White men's magazines as in Black women's magazines (21.1% versus 21.2%, respectively).

Body Position

We had hypothesized that African American women would be portrayed in low-status positions more often than would men or White women, but this proved not to be the case. Instead, we found that White women appeared in low-status positions nearly twice as often as Black women, Black men, or White men. Of the advertisements containing White females, 17.4% showed a White woman in a low-status position (e.g., on her knees), compared with corresponding figures of 9.3% for Black women, 9.1% for Black men, and 9.1% for White men. These results suggest that the symbolic "lowering of women" identified by Goffman (1979)—that is, the depiction of women as physically lower than men, prostrated, or on the floor—may apply more to White women than to Black women.

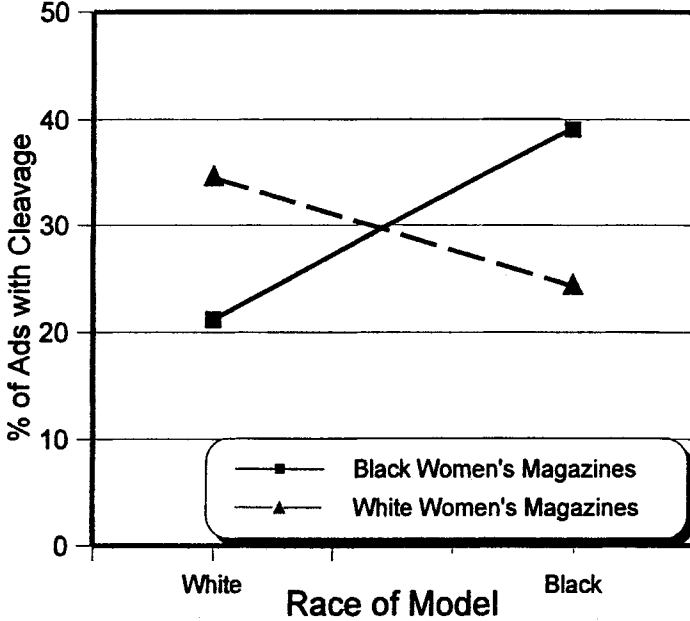


FIGURE 4. The percentage of advertisements with breast or cleavage exposure, broken down by the race of female models and the race of magazine readership. This Figure shows that White models were exposed more frequently in White magazines than Black magazines, whereas Black models were exposed more frequently in Black magazines than White magazines.

Clothing

In keeping with the results of previous research, women were more likely than men to be shown in sexual attire. Of the advertisements that contained women (either Black or White), a total of 9.2% presented them in undergarments or a bikini-style swimsuit. In contrast, only 2.0% of advertisements with male models showed men this way. No significant differences by race or magazine type were found for this variable.

As hypothesized, animal prints were worn more often by Black women than by White women, White men, or Black men. Of the 43 advertisements that displayed animal prints, 30 (69.8%) showed a Black woman wearing the print. In the remaining cases, animal prints were worn by White women in 10 advertisements, by White men in 2 advertisements, and by both a White woman and a White man in 1 advertisement. None of the advertisements showed a Black man wearing an animal print.

We also found evidence of the predatory and sexualized nature of animal prints. In 70.0% of the advertisements that displayed animal prints, the clothing was patterned after a predatory jungle cat (e.g., leopard, cheetah, tiger), and in several

cases, the sexualized meaning of animal-print clothing was apparent from provocative poses, body exposure, and the text that accompanied photographic images. For example, advertisements included phrases such as "call of the wild . . . your animal instincts will be right on the mark," "creates provocative allure," "perfect for romantic fall interludes," and "You Jane? Hunt for your Tarzan . . ."

DISCUSSION

Don't your editors have any imagination when it comes to representing women of color? From Naomi Campbell in an animal-skin bikini to . . . the distasteful, racist, and colonialist depiction of a woman in Ralph Lauren's [interpretation] of Masai clothing, you consistently blow it when it comes to women of color. . . . You are smart and imaginative people; could you please get it together and stop fetishizing nonwhite women?

—Letter to the Editor, *Vogue*, April 1997

According to the results of recent opinion surveys, most Americans feel that advertising contains too much sex, and roughly two thirds of female respondents think that advertisements treat women mainly as sex objects (Ford, LaTour, & Lundstrom, 1991; Roper Center, 1992a). Surveys have also shown that most marketing and media executives believe advertising has played a role in America's racial problems, that a majority of African Americans feel most advertisements "are designed only for White people," and that nearly half the public feels advertising has had a negative effect on the values of American children (Holman, 1993; Roper Center, 1992b; Ward, 1992). The results of our study lend credence to these concerns.

In a content analysis of 1,800 fashion advertisements, we found that the body exposure of women increased between 1985 and 1994—significantly so in the case of White women. Indeed, of the advertisements that featured female models during 1993–1994, a majority contained female body exposure of one kind or another. Female body exposure was approximately four times more common than male body exposure, in part because women were displayed in underwear and bikini swimsuits more often than were men.

We also found evidence of racial bias in magazine advertisements. With only one exception—Black females in White women's magazines—the percentage of advertisements with African American models remained well below demographic parity. For example, the percentage of White magazine advertisements with Black males averaged 2.1% between 1985 and 1994, with no significant trend toward improvement over the period studied. In addition, we found a high degree of racial segregation along gender lines, and a near absence of interracial couples. These results parallel other recent studies that have documented the persistence of racial segregation in American society (e.g., Massey & Denton, 1993), and they suggest that segregation should be thought of in broader terms than geographic location or economic stratification.

Finally, our analysis yielded partial support for the hypothesis that Black women are stereotypically portrayed as predatory and animal-like. Of the advertisements

that contained an animal-patterned print, 70% featured a Black woman wearing the print. Furthermore, in most of these cases the print was patterned after a predatory animal (e.g., leopard, tiger). Contrary to the animal-imagery hypothesis, however, White women were presented in low-status body positions nearly twice as often as Black women. Thus, the predatory animal stereotype did not extend to differences in the body positioning of models.

What Do These Results Mean?

Although content analysis is a powerful tool for quantifying media portrayals and tracking changes over time, one weakness of this method is that the results tend to be correlational and are often open to multiple interpretations. For example, one might argue that our findings on female body exposure are simply the result of changes in women's fashion, rather than a trend toward sexualizing female models in magazine advertisements. Along similar lines, it might be argued that the association of African American women with animal prints is simply a matter of Black women showing pride in their African heritage, rather than the enactment of a racial and sexual stereotype. If these interpretations are correct, perhaps the trends we found are not so serious after all.

Despite the plausibility of these alternative explanations, we feel they do not adequately account for the results we found. For one thing, fashion trends tend to be cyclical rather than linear, yet we found a linear increase in breast exposure and total female body exposure over the 10-year period studied. Second, there is no evidence that women's clothes are more revealing today than they were 10 years ago (to account for our results, there would have had to be a considerable change in this respect). Third, even a casual comparison of magazine models and actual women suggests that magazine models do not accurately reflect the amount of female body exposure found in everyday life.

The thesis that animal prints are simply a sign of African pride is also problematic. First, several of the animal prints—such as tiger prints or rattlesnake prints—were patterned after animals that do not come from Africa. Moreover, if wearing these clothes were simply a matter of African pride, we would have expected to see an equal number of males and females wearing animal prints; instead, only female African Americans were observed wearing the prints. In addition, an explanation based on African pride does not explain why the majority of animal prints were patterned after predatory cats, rather than giraffes, zebras, or other African animals. And of course, African pride does not explain why White women were shown wearing animal prints more often than White men.

There is also research evidence suggesting that animal prints evoke sexual stereotypes. In an experiment on "why women choose particular fashions," Gladden (1993) asked people to evaluate various articles of female clothing, one of which contained an animal print (participants did not know that the focus of the study was on sexual stereotypes). Gladden found that animal prints were thought to make women feel more sexy, wild, seductive, and beautiful than matched control prints, and that the most common reason given for wearing animal prints was that men find them attractive or sexy. Participants also believed that women who wore animal

prints were more sexually active than other women, less educated, lower in income, more concerned about their physical appearance, less concerned about society's problems, less supportive of the feminist movement, and more likely to be African American. Finally, participants were asked, "If a woman wearing this fashion were sexually harassed, how responsible would she be for provoking the sexual harassment?" In response, a significantly higher percentage of respondents attributed some degree of responsibility to animal-print wearers than to control-print wearers. Summarizing these and other findings, Gladden (1993, p. 26) wrote that the individuals in his study viewed animal-print wearers "in much the same way as they might view animals: motivated by instincts, concerned only about their own welfare, unintelligent, and a challenge to tame."

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although our results suggest that significant racial and gender biases exist in magazine advertisements, it is worth noting a few limitations that should be considered in interpreting these findings. First, our study focused exclusively on fashion-oriented magazines and advertisements, which leaves open the possibility that other magazines or print advertisements contain a lesser degree of bias. Second, the investigation examined a relatively restricted set of indices, ignoring various occupational and workplace measures that may have yielded more positive findings. And third, each magazine category was represented with only two magazines. These limitations suggest the value of replicating the study with additional magazines and content-analytic measures.

The present study also raises several questions that should be followed up through further research. For example, why has there been a trend toward increased female body exposure? Why do White women's magazines expose the breasts of White women more often than the breasts of Black women, and why do Black women's magazines show the reverse pattern? What does it mean that White women's magazines—which are run and read primarily by females—portray White women in low-status body positions? And perhaps most important, why are racial and gender biases so resistant to change?

It is tempting to explain the persistence of these biases on purely economic grounds (e.g., "sex sells"), but in our view, such an explanation is incomplete. Aside from the fact that an economic explanation rather cynically portrays advertisers, editors, and publishers as interested only in the bottom dollar, it cannot easily account for the full pattern of findings we obtained. For example, what is the economic advantage of presenting models in low-status positions? And if there is such an advantage, why does it apply principally to White women? If sex sells, why is it only White women whose body exposure increased significantly during the past decade? And why is female body exposure greatest when the race of models matches the race of magazine readers?

A purely economic explanation has even more difficulty accounting for the continued underrepresentation of African Americans in magazine advertisements. Indeed, according to the results of advertising research, advertisers should be economically motivated to *increase* the number of African American models they

use (Green, 1991, 1992). After reviewing several decades of research on the effects of Black models in advertising, Kern-Foxworth (1994, p. 162) summarized the experimental literature on this issue as follows:

Study after study has shown that white consumers do not base their purchase decisions on the race of the person who advertises the product. . . . There is overwhelming evidence, however, that suggests that blacks, on the other hand, are more prone to purchase products that use black models to advertise them.

Likewise, in its report on minority representation in magazine advertisements, the New York Department of Consumer Affairs had this to say:

We reviewed the extensive literature in this field, and conducted numerous interviews with advertising industry executives and observers. Our conclusion: There is no rational marketing justification for excluding people of color from magazine advertisements. (Green, 1991, p. 33)

Why, then, do racial biases persist in magazine advertisements? To probe this issue, researchers at the Department of Consumer Affairs spoke with advertisers, advertising agencies, industry officials, magazine representatives, and publishers. Nearly all interviewees gave one of two responses: *There is no problem* or *The problem is not our responsibility*. A typical comment was made by a representative of *Gentleman's Quarterly*:

It's not like we're picking and choosing or anything. Whatever the advertiser gives us, we print . . . I'm just telling you a fact. If you ask any other magazine, they'll tell you the same. (Green, 1991, p. 81)

In our opinion, the psychology behind this hierarchical, chain-of-command conception of responsibility merits further investigation. After decades of research on racial and gender biases in magazine advertising, ample evidence exists that there is a problem. The challenge now is to understand why this problem has been so resistant to change.

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Initial acceptance: February 12, 1997

Final acceptance: May 14, 1997

NOTES

1. In the 40-odd years since Shuey et al. (1953) published their study, nearly all race-related content analyses of print advertisements have focused mainly on African Americans. This emphasis is probably due to the large size of the African American population relative to other minority groups, as well as the difficulty of classifying light-skinned models by race. In those rare cases when Latinos, Asians, and other minorities have been studied (Green, 1991, 1992; Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1985), the results have typically been similar to those for African Americans (i.e., underrepresentation and a notable reliance on stereotyping).
2. Some issues of *Ebony* and *Essence* contained fewer than five full-page fashion advertisements.

- In these cases, we randomly sampled advertisements from adjacent months to secure the desired number of advertisements.
3. These categories excluded models who were neither Black nor White. We confined our attention to Black and White models because of the low frequency of other models (e.g., Asians) and because of the difficulty involved in making reliable judgments of other racial and ethnic categories (e.g., Latina).
 4. A complete copy of the scoring rules is available on request from the first author.
 5. Bikinis were included in this category on the basis of previous research suggesting that swimsuits are frequently used as sexual attire in magazine advertisements (Duquin, 1989; Poe, 1976). According to one widely circulated industry study, only 30% of bathing suits bought by women are actually used for swimming (Salholz, McAlevey, & Jackson, 1985).
 6. Due to conditions beyond our control, the independent rater was unable to complete 11 of these judgments.
 7. According to government statistics, 12.6% of the U.S. population is African American (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1995). Because many advertisements contained more than one person (thereby providing multiple opportunities for an advertisement to be counted as "Black"), demographic parity would be well above this figure.

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