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## Trabajo Fin de Grado

An analysis of the representation of women in  
contemporary adolescent girls' magazines

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## **Abstract**

A number of scholars (Biagi, 2013; Salesses & Romain, 2014; UNESCO, 2014) have claimed that the media are one of the institutions that exert a most profound influence on our society in shaping beliefs, sense of oneself, and acceptance of the status quo. In particular, it has been shown that media exposure to messages about body ideals and sexualized images of women can induce people to assent stereotypical ideas about gender roles, and foster sexist attitudes, discrimination and even violence against women. As the process of identity formation takes place during adolescence, this study seeks to analyze the discourse on femininity in contemporary magazines aimed mainly at teenage girls. First, it examines the use of language in this type of magazines to verify if it influences the reader to absorb gender-related notions, and second, it explores whether there is sexualization and objectification of women by applying the variables contained in the APA task force report on the sexualization of girls (2010). In the first case, evidence suggests that certain stylistic elements are used in these written texts for the purpose of persuading the audience to acquire products or to encourage them to follow their advices about physical appearance. In the second case, findings indicate that to some extent sexualization and objectification of women occurs in these magazines since they basically instruct girls that physical attractiveness is a highly valuable asset that they should strive to attain. Therefore, this study claims that by presenting stereotypical gender- related notions, the media content contributes to the prevalence of a sexist society, and thus the existence of gender inequalities.

## **Introduction**

Over the past centuries, different organizations have been fighting against the mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality. Although in Western countries there has been progress in some areas, such as education, employment, law, or in leaving behind ancient beliefs about the social role assigned to men and women, it seems that the contemporary society is still quite sexist. For example, the questionnaire on gender equality and culture conducted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2014, p. 24-25) indicates that there are significant gender gaps in cultural consumption and higher education, and gender stereotypes within cultural fields. When considering all the data presented in the UNESCO report, gender imbalances appear to be related to cultural conceptions of feminine and masculine. In the case of the academic world, for example, since women were given access to universities, some fields such as Arts and Culture somehow started to be seen as predominantly feminine. In Butler's view (as cited in Felluga, 2011), gender is "a corporeal style" which has no relation to fundamental truths about the body, as it is completely ideological. It is a cultural and social construction, and it is real to the extent that it is performed (Felluga, 2011). In other words, those who are constantly surrounded by stereotypical representations of sexuality are likely to internalize them and behave according to gender role norms. Unfortunately, gender inequalities are embedded in many societies' institutions, which have a significant influence in shaping beliefs, sense of self, and acceptance of the status quo (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15-18). One of the key institutions is media industries. My contention, as numerous studies have claimed (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010; Montiel, 2014; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008) is that through the sexualization and objectification of women, media content reinforces gender inequalities.

Considering that the media content contributes to the prevalence of a sexist society and both transmits and reflects the existence of gender inequalities, the current paper explores the representation of women in the media. In particular, it analyzes the discourse on femininity in magazines aimed at teenage girls. I chose this audience as specially relevant for the analysis since the development of a sense of identity as a sexual being is an important task of adolescence (APA, 2010, p. 7). First, I will examine some relevant examples of the type of language used in these magazines to verify if its use contributes to the persuasion of the reader to accept messages and views regarding gender-related notions. Then, I will try to check if my initial claim about the current contribution of these publications to the sexualization and objectification of women may be confirmed through the results of discourse analysis.

### **Importance of the media in the contemporary society**

In the last few years there has been a proliferation of media technologies and products, to such an extent that they now form a central part of everyday life (Browne, 2014, p. 187). According to communications regulator Ofcom (Miller, 2014), UK adults spend an average of eight hours a day on media devices, which points to the fact that mass media have become significant sources of information, recreation and pastime. People are constantly exposed to images and messages through television, computers, mobile phones, magazines, newspapers, and radio among the others. In the light of the extended use of media technologies and products, the main concern of many sociologists and psychologists has been whether and to what extent mass media exert an influence on contemporary society. Some of their arguments can be seen in the following summary:

At the turn of the century, some Postmodernists began to state that people live in a world shaped by the media since their view of reality is formed through media imagery and interpretations rather through personal experience (Browne, 2014, p. 191). In Baudrillard's view (as cited in Browne, 2014, p. 191), society has become media-saturated, in which the media control and alter the vision of reality. He also argued that media imagery and representations can become realities for people who do not have experiences on their own by which to question them (as cited in Browne, 2014, p. 204). Similarly, Strinati (as cited in Browne, 2014, p. 192) claimed that the media form people's sense of reality and dominate the way they define themselves. He believed that the media generate desires and needs to consume, and influence the sense of oneself (as cited in Browne, 2014, p.192).

More recently, it has been pointed out that the media content both reflects and affects politics, society and culture (APA, 2010; Biagi, 2013). According to The Glasgow Media Group (as cited in Browne, 2014, p. 204), media representations and stereotypes tend to conform to the dominant ideology of society, reinforcing the cultural hegemony of the dominant social class and justifying inequality in wealth, power and social status. For instance, Murnen and Smolak (2012, p. 725) have indicated that representations of sexuality are formed according to gender role norms, promoting male control over female sexuality. Moreover, a number of writers have noted that the media exert influence in shaping people's subjectivity. They state that the media are one of the key socialization agents, as they can affect the way people think and behave (Salesses & Romain, 2014; Biagi, 2013). As Murnen and Smolak (2012, p. 729) have suggested, media exposure to heterosexist portrayals of sexuality could encourage gender stereotyped attitudes about sexual roles among females and males.

Taking into account that the media have become ubiquitous nowadays and that they are one of the key socialization agents, the next issue to consider is media images and representations regarding women.

### **Representation of women in the media**

Numerous studies have shown that the media generally depict women in a sexualizing manner and encourage the audience to accept a view of sex that legitimizes their role as an instrument for sex (APA, 2010; Murnen & Smolak, 2012; Hatton & Trautner, 2013). It has been outlined that this sexual objectification of women "can involve basing women's primary value on their sexual appeal to men, and defining appeal based on narrow standards of attractiveness" (Murnen & Smolak, 2012, p. 726). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the main component of idealized female beauty in Western cultures is "an unrealistically thin body, curvaceous slender, and physically appealing" (Perloff, 2014, p. 364). This type of woman's body image predominates in the mass media (Perloff, 2014, p. 365), promoting the message that "thin is normative and attractive" (Murnen & Smolak, 2012, p. 726). In the case of women's magazines, the images of women are beautified, glorified and idealized versions of reality which present a model of "ideal woman" (Salesses & Romain, 2014, p. 23.1-23.2). The APA task force report on the sexualization of girls (2007, p. 7) also indicates that one of the major themes about sexuality in magazines is that women should present themselves as sexually desirable since their main aim is to gain the attention of men.

Exposure to appearance-oriented media and sexualized images of women has been related to a number of negative effects. As was observed earlier by Wolf (2002, p. 10), images of female

beauty are used as a political weapon against women's progress, since they foster a sexist treatment of females by males. In Wolf's view (2002), the beauty myth preserves male dominance over the female by asserting that "woman must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it" (p.12). Likewise, Murnen and Smolak (2012) discuss that Western beauty practices expected of women, such as the use of make-up, sexy clothing and cosmetic surgery, are "harmful cultural practices" that might harm women's health, are done for the benefit of men, and contribute to create stereotypical gender roles (p. 731). Other writers also argue that sexual portrayals of women are not empowering to them, but rather a way to manage and contain their power (Hatton & Trautner, 2013; Murnen & Smolak, 2012). One of the disempowering consequences of the sexual objectification of women is self-objectification, the process by which girls and women come to view their bodies as objects to be looked at (APA, 2010; Murnen & Smolak, 2012; Perloff, 2014). When women start to check their bodies to see whether they meet cultural standards of attractiveness, common outcomes, such as eating disorders, low self-esteem, depression and sexual dysfunction (APA, 2010; Murnen & Smolak, 2012) are a likely result. Other negative effects linked with the sexualization of girls and women are sexism, development of sexist attitudes and acceptance of violence against women (APA, 2010; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008).

Nevertheless, as I mentioned before, sexual objectification and messages about body ideals not only affect women but particularly teenage girls.

## **Adolescent girls and the media**

In Western cultures identity formation is an important task of adolescence, and sexualization might make it more difficult (APA, 2010, p. 2). Girls develop their identities and learn the socially acceptable ways of involving in relationships by imitating what older girls and women do and the ways in which women are depicted in the media (APA, 2010, p. 3). Findings indicate that media exposure to sexualized images of girls and women can affect girls' conceptions of femininity and sexuality, inducing them to accept more coercive and stereotypical ideas about gender roles (APA, 2010, p. 26). The sexualization and objectification of women in the media also seem to instruct girls that they should put all their effort into improving physical appearance (APA, 2010, p. 27).

According to APA task force report on the sexualization of girls (2010, p. 8), most of the content of magazines aimed at adolescent girls and young women highlights the centrality of heterosexual relationships for women and the necessity to attain strict norms of physical attractiveness through the purchase of articles such as cosmetics and fashionable clothing. Much of the research demonstrates that in these magazines girls and young women are frequently advocated to look and dress in a specific way in order to be more attractive to and desirable by males (APA, 2010, p. 7). It seems that self-improvement is mainly directed towards getting the attention of men, since advice about hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing, diet, and exercise are given to turn the reader into an object of male desire (APA, 2010, p. 7). Additionally, girls may be promised rewards of looking sexy such as appearing older, gaining attention for their appearance, and being more popular and socially successful (Murnen & Smolak, 2012, p. 728). In Murnen and Smolak's view (2012, p. 728), these rewards could encourage girls to believe that looking sexy is favorable, without comprehending that there may be negative consequences linked with a

sexualized appearance. The motivation of sexualization practices in girls might persuade them to internalize the sexualized female role as both normative and ideal, thus contributing to self-sexualization (APA, 2010; Murnen & Smolak, 2012).

All the data mentioned above lead to the hypothesis that the media are one of the principal institutions that contribute to the prevalence of a sexist society, and therefore gender inequalities, by depicting women in a sexualized manner. If both males and females are exposed to and persuaded to accept constrained and stereotypical ideas about masculinity and femininity, and sexuality at a very young age, they are likely to internalize these standards as both normative and ideal. Let us analyze, to explore and illustrate this idea, several examples of the use of language and the discourse on femininity in adolescent girls' magazines.

## **Methodology**

Six adolescent girls' magazines were selected for the study; these included *Shout*, *Teen Vogue*, *Seventeen*, *Popstar*, *We Love Pop*, and *Top of the Pops*. April and May 2015 issues of each magazine were used for the study. As there were differences in the content of these magazines, they were divided into two groups. The first group comprises those magazines that are more devoted to celebrities and gossip: *Popstar*, *We Love Pop*, *Top of the Pops* and *Shout*. The second group includes those that deal more with the world of fashion and beauty: *Teen Vogue* and *Seventeen*.

In order to test the hypothesis that the media content contributes to the prevalence of a sexist society, and therefore gender inequalities, through the sexualization and objectification of women, data were collected from common sections such as the style, fashion, shopping, beauty, and body/beauty and health. First, I analyzed the type of language that is used in these magazines to test if its use exerts influence on the audience to make them accept specific messages and views more easily. Second, I explored whether there is sexualization and objectification of girls by applying the variables contained in the APA task force report on the sexualization of girls<sup>1</sup>. Data collection and analysis was also guided by the following research questions: What kind of idealized female is produced and promoted in the adolescent girls' magazines? How does the use of rhetorical strategies and particular words and phrases structure discourses and subject positions? What are the implications for the reader?

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<sup>1</sup>The Report of the APA Task Force on the sexualization of girls (2010, p.1) indicates that sexualization happens when:

- a person's value comes only from her sexual appeal or behavior;
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness with being sexy;
- a person is sexually objectified;
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

## **Findings**

The writing style of most adolescent girls' magazines appears to be remarkably informal. By employing vocabulary associated with youth culture and speaking as if they were teenagers they achieve impact and create a direct dialogue with their readers. In this way the audience is persuaded to accept messages and views regarding particular notions such as the significance of self-improvement in order to become "the ideal woman", or the importance of being physically attractive in order to be admired and respected. The use of language and the image of femininity in this type of magazines are explored in greater detail below.

## **Use of language**

Findings indicate that the use of language in the magazines selected for this study is highly informal. The written texts not only contain features that are normally found in speaking, but also some characteristics of social media. It seems that these magazines are written in an informal style for the purpose of getting closer to the reader and convincing her to think or act in a particular way. The main features of spoken language that can be observed in the writing style are: deictic items, contractions, discourse markers, interjections, and abandoned or incomplete structures<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the characteristics commonly associated to social media are mainly: informal and non-standard vocabulary, and a variety of symbols, such as at sign (@), hashtags (#) and graphic images<sup>3</sup> (e.g. frames, likes, emoticons, etc). Furthermore, other elements were

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<sup>2</sup>The list of characteristics of spoken language was taken from Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup>The list of features of social media was taken from Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., & Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer Mediated Communication*. Great Britain: Alden Press Limited, Osney Mead, Oxford.

noticed in the writing style of these magazines such as the specific use of certain rhetorical devices. Let us analyze and provide examples of some of these features of spoken language and social media, and other stylistic elements that were found in the magazines selected for this study.

A common feature of spoken language found in these texts is **deixis**. There are references to the immediate situation of speaking by means of determiners such as "this" and "that", adverbs such as "here" and "there", and personal pronouns such as "we", "us" and "you". The following examples contain deictic items which orient the listener interpersonally and spatially:

“Put a spring in your step (see what we did there?) with this essential guide” (*Shout*, May, 535),

“We’re obsessed with how Rowan Blanchard keeps her look crazy cool and age appropriate” (*Popstar*, April, 2), or

“We don’t think we’ll ever stop wanting to be a princess, just for one day” (*Shout*, April, 534).

In these examples the meaning of “we” alternates between being inclusive and exclusive. It is exclusive in the first example because it refers only to the content of the magazine, and it is inclusive in the rest because it also includes the speaker and the listener, thus creating the necessary rapport. The second characteristic is the use of **contractions**, which in this case could be associated to both informal and non-standard language. Some of the contractions which are mainly used in informal language are “you’re”, “we’ll”, “what’s”, “didn’t”, or “can’t”. Whereas examples of contractions which tend to occur in non-standard language but have made it into this type of media are “wanna”, “gonna”, “gotta”, or “see ya”, trying to make the audience feel identified in their way of speaking. The third feature of informal language is the use of **discourse**

**markers.** "Eh" and "well" are the most recurrent discourse markers in these magazines, and they are used to direct attention by addressing the reader or focus to on a topic of the talk:

“Where's the untag button when you need one, eh?” (*Shout*, May, 535)

“Wanna beat bullies, boost your confidence and sassify your life 110 %? Well get reading - this advice from G.R.L. is GR8!”(*We Love Pop*, April, 49).

The fourth characteristic is the use of **interjections** and the most predominant items are "oh", "wow", "oops", and "awww". They are used to express emotional reactions such as surprise, pleasure or feeling sorry, and to add a sense of immediacy. Some examples of this function would appear when the reader is told

“The sassy singer on haters, happiness and awks dates - ooops!” (*Top of the Pops*, May, 262)

“...and 64 % of boys reckon they've been in love. Altogether now - awww!” (*Shout*, April, 534).

The last aspect of informal language is **abandoned or incomplete structures**, a clear projection of “false starts” which is a characteristic feature of spoken language but clearly used as a rhetorical device in written texts. The following sentences illustrate this idea:

“What to say when... How to support your friend through any situation...” (*Shout*, May, 535)

“Save up for these...or maybe just enter our comps to win them” (*We Love Pop*, May, 50).

Regarding social media, informal and non-standard vocabulary is the most predominant attribute. Informal vocabulary is basically characterized by **abbreviations**, and the most recurrent words are:

boho	bohemian
celeb	celebrity
fab	fabulous
fave	favourite
glam	glamorous

Non-standard vocabulary has been classified into three groups: compounds, acronyms and words that present changes in spelling<sup>4</sup>. **Compounds** have been formed from two bases following the standard form, but are clearly new concepts associated to this specific area; some examples of the creation or the adoption in these texts of recently created word compounds are:

insta-gag (Instagram+gag)	a picture on Instagram that makes you feel like you are going to vomit
insta-glam	refers to the app's "magical power" to make girls to look attractive with the use of filtering and colouring
insta-worthy (Instagram+worthy)	when a picture is good enough to be posted on Instagram

<sup>4</sup>*Urban Dictionary* was used to define word compounds and acronyms.

promblem (prom+problem)	any problem associated to the prom
promposal (prom+proposal)	a proposal to invite somebody to the prom

**Acronyms** have been formed from the initial letters of two or more words, and are used in accordance with the rules of Text messaging, the media where they originated. For instance:

DIY	do it yourself
BFF	best friends forever
FOMO	fear of missing out
LOL	laughing out loud
OOTD	outfit of the day
YOLO	you only live once

Other words suffer **changes in spelling** in order to reproduce particular sounds (onomatopoeia) or to evoke emotion and imagery, as for example, "huuuge", "celebzzz", "boyology" and "traumarama", showing the creativity of the informal use of language. Another characteristic of social media is the use of symbols such as at sign (@), hashtags (#) and graphic images (e.g. frames, likes, emoticons, etc). The first two types of symbols are employed to represent certain words, for instance:

“Here’s looking @ you” (*Seventeen*, April, 4),

“What’s your \$\$\$ M.O.?” (*Seventeen*, April, 4),

“☆ Styling Tips ☆” (*Top of the Pops*, April, 261),

“Most ♥’D #OOTD” (*Seventeen*, May, 5).

Despite the fact that the latter is normally utilized on social networks to categorize a message for searching, sharing or other motives, in these magazines it is chiefly employed to connote context around particular topic or idea. It can show enthusiasm, sympathy, appreciation, or cheerfulness. The subsequent sentences illustrate this claim:

“Adjust your #OOTD goals accordingly” (*Seventeen*, April, 4),

“Are you a #trendsetter or # trendfollower?” (*Popstar*, April, 2),

“#Like love laugh” (*Shout*, May, 535).

Apart from these features, other significant elements characterize the writing style of these magazines, as the use of **figurative language**. In this case, it is also employed to persuade or evoke an emotion on the part of the reader. One of the rhetorical figures is **alliteration**, as for example, of the consonant <S> associated to the Sun for the purpose of inducing the audience to buy sunglasses:

“9 of the sunniest sunnies around. Sound the sunshine klaxon” (*We Love Pop*, May, 50).

Another common device is **epistrophe**, and in the following sentence the word “out” is repeated twice so as to convince the reader that she does not need to spend much money on an outfit to look brilliant:

“Cute outfits for every budget. Sun's out, fun's out” (*Seventeen*, May, 5).

The last figure in our list is **homeoptoton**<sup>5</sup>, or the repetition of similar case endings, such as those of the words “tress” and “stress” in order to emphasize the idea that it is possible to avoid stress by following these beauty advices:

“Say "See ya!" to morning tress stress. These game-changing hair hacks are your new BFFs” (*Top of the Pops*, April, 261).

### **Group 1: *Popstar, We Love Pop, Top of the Pops and Shout***

As I mentioned before, this group of magazines mainly deals with celebrities and gossip and there are very few pages devoted to fashion and beauty. Neither are there advertisements of any kind. The main focus of attention is celebrities and there are comments on what they do, what they like, and how they look. Even in those sections like fashion and beauty stars play the central part. It seems that this group of magazines is aimed at a younger audience since they tend to look for models and are the major followers of famous people.

In these magazines celebrities are beautified and glorified to such an extent that they appear to be perfect. This perfection can be found not only in their pictures, but also in the description of their physical appearance, which is generally characterized by adjectives like "flawless", "glowing", "chic", "amazing", or "awesome". They seem to embody the ideal female, that type of woman who is "thin, curvaceous slender and physically appealing". Consequently, they are used, though

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<sup>5</sup>Homeoptoton: a rhetorical figure in which there is a repetition of similar case endings in adjacent words or in words in parallel position.

indirectly, to give advice about how to look and dress by purchasing articles such as cosmetics and clothing. Some examples of this “surreptitious” advertising can be found when the reader is told that

“You'll be ready to glow with help from Tanya Burr. Wake Me Up Concealer from Rimmel has a great consistency. It really brightens the area under my eyes” (*Top of the Pops*, April, 261)

“Take a tip from Beca-bare legs and tartan are right on trend” (*Top of the Pops*, May, 262).

Another strategy, which is used to encourage the reader to look and dress in a specific way, is challenge. In several occasions the young, easily influenced reader is told that if she does not follow a new look or trend, she is apathetic or a coward. This conception is illustrated in the following sentences:

“Glitter parting. Catwalk cool or too much like dandruff? If you're brave enough to try this trend, good for you” (*Top of the Pops*, April, 261), or

“Dare to be different in neon brights! It'll stand out in the best way” (*We Love Pop*, May, 50).

Furthermore, girls are promised rewards by looking and dressing in the ways that they have been advised in the magazines. They are told that by following their advice about self-improvement they will look like their favorite stars, and thus will be perfect and successful. For instance,

“Get Zoe's look! Follow her fashion and be flawless” (*Top of the Pops*, May, 262),

“Why not shine like Tylor, or shimmer like Ariana and be the centre of attention this season? Whether you go for an all-over gleam, Tay-Tay style, or just a hint of glitz a la Miss Grande, watch heads turn” (*Shout*, April, 534).

All the data mentioned above suggests that these magazines reproduce one of the major gender stereotypes about femininity: the assumption that women should be “physically appealing” in order to be successful. The physical appearance of both celebrities and girls is shown as extremely important, and thus everything seems to be directed towards this form of self-improvement. We could claim that, to some extent, sexualization occurs in these magazines, as the reader is taught that physical appearance and success are interrelated. Evidence also indicates that these magazines promote superficiality since they seem to focus just on the aspect, the surface of celebrities. They mainly advise the reader how to “look” like famous people by wearing the same style of clothing and make-up in an indirect, but equally effective, form of advertising.

### **Group 2: *Teen Vogue* and *Seventeen***

As alluded to in the methodology, this group of magazines mainly deals with the world of fashion and beauty since there are only a few additional pages devoted to famous people. Instead, these magazines are full of advertisements of beauty products and fashionable clothing, which appear almost every two pages. The texts in this group are targeted at an audience of “older” adolescent girls and everything is directed, this time in a more straightforward way, towards consumerism.

Unlike group 1, these magazines use beauty and fitness experts to give instructions on how to look and dress in a specific way. There is advice about hairstyle, cosmetics, clothing, and exercise in order to improve the physical appearance. For instance, the reader is instructed on

how to emphasize or dissimulate certain parts of the body by wearing specific dresses and swimsuits, or how to get thin and fit legs:

"Play up your shape in... bold swimsuits. Give your bass more boom with a ruched back. The scrunchy detail adds volume" (*Seventeen*, May, 5).

"Leg envy. Legs on fleek! Get yours strong, smooth, and glowy, just in time for prom" (*Teen Vogue*, April, 3).

Additionally, girls are promised rewards for looking and dressing in the ways they have been told, such as gaining attention of people, looking pretty and flawless, or getting compliments.

The following sentences illustrate this idea --notice the use of imperatives:

"Give your hair a free-spirited touch, post it on Insta, and watch your likes rack up" (*Seventeen*, April, 4),

"Look flawless in all your prom pics with these foolproof makeup and hair hacks" (*Teen Vogue*, April, 3), or

"With these forever-pretty options, you'll get tons of compliments at graduation and on TBT's to come" (*Seventeen*, May, 5).

Therefore, in these magazines "the ideal female" is produced and promoted indirectly, as advice about self-improvement reveals that the reader is encouraged to achieve specific physical characteristics that could be primarily associated with this type of woman's image. Some of these features are a curvaceous and slim body, and a stunning appearance.

Examples show that in these magazines there is sexualization of girls since the physical appearance is valued far more than the inner qualities. There is emphasis on the necessity to attain rigid standards of physical attractiveness in order to be admired and respected by other members of the community. Sexualization of girls is also indicated in the beauty complements

and practices. For instance, the reader of these popular magazines is encouraged to use red lipsticks, or to wear high heels or bustier tops:

"A matte red lip is the ultimate sign of glamour" (*Teen Vogue*, April, 3)

"Make your pic stand out in everyone's feed with a can't-miss shoe-and-bag pairing"  
(*Seventeen*, April, 4)

"Take the crop top up a notch with this super-flattering, feminine shape" (*Seventeen*, May, 5).

Like those in group 1, these magazines propagate one of the major stereotypes about femininity and passivity, the belief that woman should be physically attractive to please the others and that their main goal is to be looked at.

## **Conclusion**

The study has explored the representation of women in the media, and in particular, the discourse on femininity in magazines targeted at adolescent girls. It has identified the type of female portrayed in these magazines, the main messages and views surrounding femininity, the possible implications that these notions have on the reader, and the strategies used to structure discourses. The overall theoretical framework on this issue suggests that women are sexually objectified in the media, and correspondingly, exposure to this type of images produces a variety of negative outcomes. In particular, it can affect teenage girls' vision of femininity and sexuality by inducing them to assume stereotypical ideas about gender roles. Thereupon, the study has attempted to answer the following questions: Does the use of language influence the reader to absorb specific

ideas with regard to femininity? Do these magazines contribute to sexualization and objectification of women?

The chief empirical findings have been presented within the corresponding sections: Use of language, Group 1: *Popstar*, *We Love Pop*, *Top of the Pops* and *Shout*, and Group 2: *Teen Vogue* and *Seventeen*. The empirical findings have been synthesized to answer the study's two research questions.

1. Does the use of language influence the reader to absorb specific ideas with regard to femininity?

The most compelling evidence indicates that these magazines attempt to recreate the atmosphere of a chat in order to get closer to their audience. By employing discourse markers, interjections, and a variety of symbols, they are capable of expressing emotions about ideas and issues being discussed. The use of deictic items such as “we” also strengthens a sense of empathy and involvement for the reader. Additionally, the writing style is also characterized by the use of figurative language, which attempts to persuade the reader to purchase articles or follow advices regarding physical appearance.

2. Do these magazines contribute to the sexualization and objectification of women?

The main concern of these magazines appears to be the physical appearance. They not simply advertise fashionable clothing or cosmetics, but advise the reader what type of clothes to wear or how to wear make-up so as to get a better look. In addition, they use celebrities, beauty and fitness experts to help the reader to achieve the attributes of idealized female beauty. In doing so girls are promised attractiveness and triumph. Therefore, the content of these magazines contributes to the sexualization and

objectification of women, inasmuch as their central argument is that physical attractiveness is a highly valuable asset that girls should try to attain.

On account of the data presented above, this study supports the APA's claim that most of the content of adolescent girls' magazines accentuates the necessity to attain strict standards of physical attractiveness in order to please the others and be looked at. It also underpins the arguments of Perloff (2014), Murnen and Smolak (2012), and Salesses and Romain (2014) that the media produce and promote a model of "idealized female".

Finally, we could conclude that by presenting constrained and stereotypical ideas about femininity and sexuality, this type of magazines entrench gender inequalities, and thus contribute to the prevalence of a sexist society.

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