(Im)perfecting Perfection: Socially Conscious Marketing and The Professional Communicator

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(IM)PERFECTING PERFECTION:SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS MARKETING AND
THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Professional Communication

by
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Accepted by:
Dr. Cynthia Haynes, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that examines the beauty and advertising industries with regard to young women and body image, specifically with respect to body weight. By analyzing America’s obsession with perfection, the problem with perfection, and why organizations are or are not “jumping on board” the socially conscious bandwagon when it comes to advertising and body image, this thesis will provide my audience, marketing professional communicators in the beauty industry, with necessary information so that individuals may serve as advocates for young women while providing their employers with quality dedication to their organization. The six main takeaways professional communicators should get from this thesis are to:

- Realize the impact professional communicators have both individually, and collectively, on the identity formation of adolescent females
- Consider educating youths about images early on in their lives
- Look at successful beauty business organizations that are currently employing socially conscious marketing
- Conduct research on alternative marketing strategies
- Prepare professional presentations to educate colleagues of this issue
- Use personal and professional ethics to lead the discussion of alternative marketing strategies

This thesis also adds to the contributions made to the debate about perfection, the body, as well as organizational and personal responsibility.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all young women with body image issues. Growing up in a society that values appearances, oftentimes above all other qualities, I understand what many women struggle with. Young women have a duty to recognize their internal beauty and educate themselves to survive in this superficial environment. My hope is that one day the Western world will view women as productive, intelligent beings, not merely beautiful objects, because we are so much more.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have assisted in not only my growth as a woman, but the development of this thesis and I would like to recognize their contributions. My committee has unconditionally supported me in this rather challenging endeavor. I would like to especially acknowledge the chair of my committee, Cynthia Haynes, for her constant encouragement as I would not have been able to complete this without her help.

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CHAPTER ONE

MARKETING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATORS AND IDEOLOGY

Body weight is one of the most prevalent body image issues that women struggle with because it usually does not fit in with the ideal. Women of all ages around the world, especially in the Western world, are constantly dealing with body image problems based on the thin ideal. Images women see daily perpetuate negative body images which can lead to what I like to call “disordered thinking.” Television shows and popular music have been quite influential in sending messages and portraying pop culture to American youth. For example, in the past ten years, many reality television shows have been particularly interesting to watch because they give competing messages about the body. These include, but are not limited to, The Swan, Extreme Makeover, The Biggest Loser, Celebrity Fit Club, and How to Look Good Naked. With the small exception of How to Look Good Naked, these self-improvement/body reality television shows are not only buying into America’s obsession with perfection, but are actually fueling this mentality.

This critical thesis primarily concerns the problem of perfection. I examine and critique the social condition that creates and perpetuates this problem. Common themes that I identify are ideology, advertising, marketing, and body image issues. As a woman with a background in marketing, struggling with my own body image issues, I have been drawn to write about how images and ideas set forth by organizations have influenced and maintained an ideology of perfection in the American media. Because thinness is the most important issue to me, I decided to conduct research only in the area of body weight for this thesis. Future studies may lead to avenues of research about other body image
issues, but for this project, body weight is the most dominant issue. The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to show how current marketing strategies in the beauty industry are dangerous to adolescent females and to suggest what professional communicators can do about this terrible problem.

As members of my target audience, marketing professional communicators in the beauty industry need to comprehend why many young women have disordered thinking and all the repercussions that go along with a skewed mentality. By understanding the information in this thesis, professional communicators can actively make alterations that may lead to more positive body images, which will reduce the obsession with perfection.
in the Western world. Images in the American media present women as objects. Attitudes about women will change if professional communicators are informed through education; without education, changes are much less plausible. The problems associated with disordered thinking are social and cultural; therefore, professional communicators equipped with knowledge, in addition to professional and personal ethics, can affect change.

Disordered thinking occurs from the internalization of the ideology of perfection and can lead to disordered behaviors such as aesthetic procedures and eating disorders. To reorder the thinking in adolescent females, professional communicators in the beauty industry need to alter the desire that these young people have to fit the ideology of perfection, or even attempt to alter their organizations portrayal of the ideal since that is where disordered thinking originates.

Body images in young women have been the subject of numerous empirical studies; yet, negative body images have not been resolved because although studies are being conducted, communication between different disciplines is not occurring. Thus, this thesis brings together multiple disciplines to evoke a call to action for marketing professional communicators. Hopefully by bringing many disciplines and professionals together, and by adding to the discourse through a feminist lens, America will see a reduction in the number of young women who have body image issues.

It is in an organization’s best interest to have healthy and happy customers; companies benefit (and profit) more from consumers who trust them and believe that the company is looking out for the best interest of the consumer. I would like to stress that I
am not condoning unhealthy behaviors by any means. Being obese is just as dangerous as
having disordered thinking which can lead to eating disorders. Obesity is on the rise in
the United States and I do not wish to contribute to that unhealthy lifestyle. But
organizations need to be more cognizant of their actions, should use more realistic
models in their advertising, and realize the impact that they have on young women
consumers of their marketing.

This thesis creates awareness about marketing strategies that may be dangerous to
the health of young women, specifically to marketing professionals in the beauty industry
and in academia. Advocacy within the professional communications field must exist for
any changes to come about. Using the information that I have provided within this thesis,
communicators will be educated enough to combat some expected hesitant behavior from
their superiors in their organizations when suggesting alternative socially conscious
marketing strategies. Chapter One builds the foundation for understanding the theoretical
components of professional communications and ideology as a whole. In the second
chapter, I compare the Nazi’s ideology of perfection with the Western world’s ideology
of perfection today. The third chapter examines the history of body image issues because
much can be learned from the past. If we understand where we come from, then we know
how to fight similar battles in the present and in the future. Some organizations have
already implemented more socially conscious marketing strategies; however, too many
continue to use ultra-thin models in their advertising. A discussion of these exemplars
appears in Chapter Four. In the fifth chapter I note how marketing professional
communicators can become involved in a social movement toward healthier images for
adolescents to look up to in the media. I believe it is the ethical duty of the professional communicator to make sure that their organization looks out for the individuals within the communities in which they work.

In January 2008, Lifetime Television introduced the television series, *How to Look Good Naked*, hosted by Carson Kressley. In each episode, Kressley attempts to create a “perception revolution” by getting women to see the good things about themselves and their bodies. He gets women to accept their bodies as they are, despite the years of negativity and depression caused by not fitting into the mold that society dictates. This revolutionary show differs from the other body reality television shows because the goal is not to try to alter the way a woman looks – only how she feels about the way she looks. Overall, the genres of television and popular music have had and will continue to have a great amount of power over the American population, especially popular forms such as reality television and what we know as pop music.

In the 1950s, pop music became a genre of its own with crossover songs from country, folk, Big Band, and rock and roll. Although women have individually been recognized for their contributions to pop music, it was not until the 1990s when women as a whole truly began to receive major recognition with leading women such as Paula Abdul, The Spice Girls, TLC, Mariah Carey, and Jewel. The women from the 1990s opened the door for women in the 2000s not only to produce music in a genre generally dominated by men, but to do so successfully. In 2006, R&B/pop artist Pink, delivered an incredible message about what she thinks about media images of women with her song “Stupid Girls” from her fourth album, *I’m Not Dead*. Pink’s song came primarily from
Figure 1.2 Various images from Pink’s music video of *Stupid Girls* (Pop).
her annoyance with young girls looking up to women who have been glorified by the media. Pink depicts stereotypical images in her music video which can be seen in Figure 1.2. In her article, “How Pink Got Her Groove Back,” Jennifer Vineyard from MTV notes that according to Pink, the images that are put out there for young girls ultimately tell them that they must be a “size zero, have a certain bag, not contribute anything to the world, and dumb yourself down to be cute because it makes you less challenging as a female.” Pink’s message was quite clear and well-received, as she appeared on TRL, Oprah, Dateline, Live with Regis & Kelly, and The Ellen DeGeneres Show, all in the same week to discuss her song and the meaning behind the lyrics. Although the album did not receive the recognition that Pink had hoped for from the music industry, the International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals praised Pink for “highlighting the culture’s relentless and unrealistic pursuit of thinness” (Vineyard).

One of the most recent body image issues that has been seen in 2007, and early on in 2008, is commentary about Hillary Clinton and her physical attributes during her presidential campaign. In an article in The Washington Post, Robin Givhan describes Hillary Clinton’s cleavage. The Clinton campaign was irritated with this commentary and senior Clinton advisor addressed Givhan in an email stating, “Frankly, focusing on women’s bodies instead of their ideas is insulting” (Wheaton A13). A number of anti-Hillary websites have appeared, just as anti-Barack websites have as well; however, on the anti-Hillary websites, they refer to her thighs and breasts. Outside of skin color, I have yet to find a comment about Barack’s (or any of the other candidates’) physical attributes and none relating to the fact that the rest of the candidates are men. While
addressing nonsensical topics on a person in the public eye is commonplace, going so far as to talk about a woman’s features purely because she is a woman is sexist, especially if her male counterparts are not being held to the same treatment.

As mentioned, this thesis is an interdisciplinary study and will draw from the fields of professional communications, mass communications, marketing, psychology, and health science. In addition, through a feminist lens, I explore America’s obsession with perfection, how organizations play a role in maintaining an ideology of perfection, how this line of thinking affects adolescent girls, and the ethical duty of professional
communicators to act as a proactive agent for a company’s constituency. Since ideology is at the forefront to the specific problem of America’s obsession with perfection, understanding ideology is of utmost importance.

Whether the discussion is about television shows, pop music, or politics, it all surrounds an ideology of perfection that women are supposed to uphold. Michael Billig et al. explain that “most social scientific concepts lack clear and precise definitions which are accepted by all theorists” and the concept of ideology is no exception (25). Ideologies surround the dominant power structure’s beliefs, norms, representations, and values, even though it may seem like a variety of representations by marginalized groups are present.

**Ideologies**

The values, and/or guiding principles, held by the dominant power structure reflect the goals and acceptable conduct for a particular society. According to Feliks Gross, “every society creates a world outlook – a metaphysical or philosophical idea system, a dominant way of perceiving and interpreting phenomena, explaining human existence and the surrounding world and setting the limits of such understanding” (26-27). Through the ideology of a society, knowledge and experiences are shaped. Michel Foucault describes power and reality through the eyes of the dominant power structure:

The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an “ideological” representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called “discipline.” We must cease once and for all to describe the effects
of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (qtd in Fox and Fox 51)

Foucault’s passage exemplifies the reality of being a part of the dominant power structure. Of course, those with power do not want the marginalized to feel like they are being overpowered, even though they are, or feel hostile toward the empowered.

Foucault also insists that the one who controls language, controls everything: “Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (1461). Institutions, or dominant power structures, want to keep marginalized people at a distance and silent, as that best serves the needs of the institution. Foucault goes on to say that “if discourse may sometimes have some power, nevertheless it is from us and us alone that gets it” (1460-1461). Foucault insinuates that the institution recognizes its own power through discourse and wants to keep the hegemonic discourse in its favor.

Ideologies exist in all communities and are maintained by the dominant power structure. The dominant power structures’ ideologies always determine the discourse, which in turn controls the marginalized and makes sure that those with power, stay in power. Nancy Kaplan explains: “Ideology delineates and constrains human expectations, circumscribing what can be done about what exists and by whom: it outlines what we
understand to be possible and what we consider impossible” (13). For a dominant group, through the internalization of the ideologies of the dominant power structure, the goals and values of that group, in addition to the hegemonic discourse that shapes them, can thrive. The problem is that if discourse creates and maintains power, it also establishes a version of reality.

In Kenneth Burke’s “Language as Symbolic Action,” he coins the term, “terministic screen” and explains how the language that we use serves as symbols based on our orientation (1340). Terministic screens are filters through which we view and understand the world around us. Burke says, “we must use terministic screens, since we can’t say anything without the use of terms” (1344). Terminology indicates which terministic screen matches the terms used, which ultimately points our attention in one way or another (1344). Burke also notes that “there will be as many different world views in human history as there are people” (1345). There are no two people who have the same exact experiences and terms for which to describe those particular experiences; thus, they cannot have the same orientation or terministic screen. Nevertheless, using Burke’s idea of continuity and discontinuity, people can choose to find continuity and share parts of one another’s terministic screens; they may not share everything, but they may share a great deal more than they may be aware of on the surface (1345-1346). Dominant power structures use power to alienate a marginalized group even further through recognition and application of discontinuity of terministic screens, otherwise known as collective relativism (1346). Using the dominant power structure’s terminology to further the hegemonic discourse allows for dominant ideologies to persist.
In one of his earliest and most notable pieces, *Permanence and Change*, Burke examines human orientation at length. As he illustrates, our orientation is our worldview or state of being; it is one way that shapes how we interpret and accept ideas and experiences. Our orientation (as humans) is different from an animal’s orientation as “the experimental, speculative technique made available by speech would seem to single out the human species as the only one possessing an equipment for going beyond the criticism of experience to a criticism of criticism” (6). With Veblen’s concept of “trained incapacity” in mind, Burke begins to look at how orientation can affect changing discourse. Burke states that “by trained incapacity [Veblen] meant that state of affairs whereby one’s very abilities can function as blindness” (7). We learn, based on prior experiences, how to behave. To exemplify his point, Burke describes how a trout became skeptical of food because it learned from the previous attempt to get food, that he would get a hook in his mouth. Luckily, as humans we possess “an equipment for going beyond the criticism of experience” and are able to criticize criticism (7); however, due to trained incapacity, we are unable to always make the best decisions despite our abilities to discern current experiences from prior experiences.

Burke also describes the reflection, selection, and deflection of discourse: “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (Language 1341). Joan Rothschild says, “to label someone or some group…is to have the power to set and enforce societal standards” (38). If a dominant power structure decides on a term because it is the reflection of that power structure’s reality, it is
automatically selecting the said reality, and therefore, suppresses the reality of the marginalized through deflection.

Ben Barton and Marthalee Barton, in “Ideology and the Map,” explore power and ideology through the visual. Most importantly, Barton and Barton want readers to recognize that we need to shift our “positivistic view of visuals as autonomous structures to a view of visuals as embodiments of cultural and disciplinary conventions” (49). Essentially, dominant power structures use maps/visual rhetoric to privilege the empowered which promotes the marginalization of the Other, as maps/visuals serve “to sustain relations of domination” (50). Some may view maps as a “‘neutral’ view of reality” or an “innocent” practice or simply “factual,” but that is not the case (51); “the map is not the territory,” and people, especially those with power, may have difficulty understanding this concept because of their terministic screen and/or orientation (52).

Barton and Barton allude to Burke’s selection, reflection, and deflection: “Certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded,…reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture” (53). Just as Burke pointed out, if something is included, something else is automatically excluded. By including something on a map, a mapmaker is expressing the importance of that object, yet if something is neglected, the mapmaker is not acknowledging its importance, much less its very existence (59). According to Barton and Barton, “prime targets for exclusion are members of the nonhegemonic groups, what is commonly referred to…as the other” (60). For example, if an advertiser chooses to use very thin models for their advertising
campaign, the importance is placed on being thin. By not including average-sized women in advertisements, advertisers deflect the importance of being average-sized.

An ideology that puts thinness or perfection on a pedestal must be thoroughly examined and challenged due to the dangers that such a strong ideology can bring. Although changing ideologies is a difficult task, it is important for professional communicators to be aware of the difficulties and try to circumvent any obstacles, as an ideology of perfection can have harmful ramifications on the young women of America, as well as in many other countries around the world that glorify American ideals.

Changing Ideologies

Renata Fox and John Fox believe that a change in ideology is feasible, necessary, and does occur, if influenced by social changes such as globalization, the fall of communism, traditional cultural values, and so on (16). Professional communicators, making a stand against disordered thinking and eating disorders, are no different. Nevertheless, many researchers believe that changing ideologies is much more complicated and does not occur as Fox and Fox describe. As Gross so succinctly puts it: “Changes occur slowly and rarely; at times they mature rapidly in violent revolutions” (29). Professional communicators have the ability to have an impact on changes within the field.

Unfortunately, not all organizations and people value change, making changes to ideologies that much more difficult. Carl Herndl does believe that change can occur
through resistance to the dominant culture: “Resistance becomes possible when agents recognize the recursive relationship between themselves as social agents and the structural properties of the social practices in which they participate” (353). Herndl believes that resistance and change are feasible whenever there is education: “Because discourse is related recursively to social practice and institutions – each shaping the other – we have to face the fact that in teaching discourse we are unavoidably engaged in the production of professional and cultural power;” however, what is done with that power can determine what happens in the future (353-354). Professional communicators have an opportunity to play a part in shaping power in the future, both professionally and culturally, through education and actions that take place today.

It is very difficult to create a “paradigm” shift, especially with ideologies (Kuhn viii). Educating people is one way that paradigms can shift; however, because dominant power structures use their hegemonic discourse to communicate, even to educate, it becomes that much more difficult, as Burke has shown us. Foucault uses education to exemplify the social appropriation of discourses. With education, we have access to many discourses. Foucault notes that “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry” (1469). If the dominant power structure attempts to educate the marginalized, hegemonic discourse will be used which will perpetuate the system that keeps the empowered in power and the marginalized further marginalized. Billig et al. state that “we are not viewing individual thinkers as blindly following the dictates of ideological schemata,” rather, “we see them thinking, but within the constraints of
ideology and with the elements of ideologies” (27). Ultimately, ideologies shape the way that people think.

Because education can be used as a way through which ideologies can change, understanding education principles and the discourse surrounding using education as a tool to change current thinking is imperative. Paulo Freire, an educational theorist, educator, and activist for the oppressed, points out that “alienated men…cannot overcome their dependency by ‘incorporation’ into the very structure responsible for their dependency” and from his point he states that “the illiterate is no longer a person living on the fringe of society, a marginal man, but rather a representative of the dominated strata of society” (402). Educators must assume a role that teaches illiterates that they are not marginal, that they are marginalized within the dominant power structure. The marginalized can become empowered through education, not only by learning to read, but by thinking critically. With regard to mixed media messages, young women who feel marginalized in a society that privileges and admires thinness can educate themselves about organizations that promote healthy body images through their advertising and marketing efforts; however, this can only be accomplished if more organizations alter their current messages circulating through the media.

The dominant power structure is responsible for what language and discourse is permitted and who is allowed to speak. In order for the discourse to be challenged, the marginalized need to be critical thinkers (Freire 402), and Herndl exemplifies this through the voice of Patricia Bizzell:
Our dilemma is that we want to empower students to succeed in the dominant culture so that they can transform it from within; but we fear that if they do succeed, their thinking will be changed in such a way that they will no longer want to transform it. (350)

Herndl and Bizzell’s point is that students must conform to the hegemonic discourse in order to function at all. Making changes to the dominant culture will prove to be difficult, especially if a student becomes a part of that culture. The empowered do not see a reason to make changes since the power they hold is in their favor – it is outside of their orientation to see how they are marginalizing others. It is this trained incapacity that prevents complete paradigm shifts from occurring. Professional communicators can make significant changes, but since changes can only occur from within an organization, communicators must want to make changes and must also actively pursue change.

In the United States, we live in a culture that is obsessed with unattainable standards of beauty. This thesis will serve as an opportunity to resist these standards and allow for change by serving as a message to marketing professional communicators in the beauty industry. As pointed out above, changing a dominant ideology is not an easy task; however, because professional communicators are members of the dominant power structure, they do have a chance to affect change, and it is the duty of the professional communicator to do so.

By conducting an interdisciplinary study and using a feminist lens, this thesis examines the advertising industry with regard to young women and body image. Although there are many important facets of this body image problem, the focus of the
research within this thesis is on the affect of weight on body image. There are numerous issues surrounding body image, such as physical appearance, athletic abilities, sexuality, and so forth; however, weight is of particular interest to me and is an area that needs to be examined due to the sometimes fatal consequences that poor body images bring.
CHAPTER TWO

IDEOLOGIES OF PERFECTION

The ideology of perfection has infiltrated multiple societies, including the American society, as perfection tends to be an issue mainly for the Western world. The politics of perfection have been recognized over time as a major problem, from the Nazi’s desire for racial purity to America’s obsession with physical beauty. Perfection is a major issue today, and I offer a critique of the “ideology of perfection” in order to reduce potential harm to the public that an ideology of perfection can cause, without compromising corporate benefits such as profits.

The Aryan Ideology of Perfection

Although the Aryan ideology of perfection was not created by the Nazis, they implemented a plan that put the ideology of perfection into action, best known as the Final Solution. Through the genocide of millions of Jews, the Nazis used the Final Solution to execute their desire for a master race. Some theorists may not feel as though an ideology of perfection is as terrible as the Nazi connotation implies, but many would disagree. Adolf Hitler projected the Nazi ideology of a master race onto the German people, who in turn internalized this ideology to create one of the most horrific events of all time.

According to Richard Koenigsberg, the Nazi’s ideology of perfection came from Hitler’s “fear that the German people will lose the purity of their blood,” which would be
sustained by having sexual relations with Jews (29). Hitler believed that the Jewish youth
was the cause of the contamination of German purity. In Mein Kampf, he said,
“systematically these black parasites of the nation defile our inexperienced young blond
girls and thereby destroy something which can no longer be replaced in this world,”
referring to the last Aryan values of the German people (29). Hitler believed that his
priority was to assure the life of the people. Because Hitler thought the Germans were
“perfect,” the Jews were therefore not German in Hitler’s mind. Jews were foreign objects in the body that was Germany and had to be eliminated.

John Lukacs trusts that Hitler used a democratic, acceptable means to achieve power, “not by a dramatic uprising against the state and the social order but by convincing the masses of the German people, reminding them that in their hearts they would know that he was right” (83). In statements located in Mein Kampf and public speeches, Hitler let the public know that he believed the Jews were at the base of the problem for Germany, and they were going to be the reason for Germany’s fall. By blaming the Jews for the fall of Germany, Hitler was able to gain the support of many Germans.

Through his terminology and ideology, Hitler was able to not only get the support of the Germans, but also create a sense of unity between the Germans, which granted him power over many people. Irrespective of where Hitler’s hatred for Jews came from, he projected it upon the public through his nationalistic and racist comments and thinking. Burke would say that because of the strength of Hitler’s terminology, it allowed the German’s to seek continuity with his terministic screen. Obviously, discourse is very compelling and the empowered seek control over the discourse in order to maintain power, just as the Nazi’s did in Germany.

Hitler also used discourse to sustain his power over the German people. His discourse granted him a certain amount of authority and influence, despite the abhorrence of his message:
We want to prevent our Germany from suffering, as Another did, the death upon the Cross. We may be inhumane, but if we rescue Germany we have achieved the greatest deed in the world. We may work injustice, but if we rescue Germany then we have removed the greatest injustice in the world. We may be immoral, but if our people is rescued we have once more opened the way for morality. (Koenigsberg 21)

Lukacs establishes that Hitler’s influence over the Germans is apparent and precise as Hitler created a “national mentality” that attracted people to him and his message (106-107). As any good orator would, Hitler acknowledges some of the issues that the Germans may have with his ideology (“we may work injustice”; “we may be immoral”), yet explains that they will be doing greater good by joining his cause.

From his research, Lukacs states that “from the very beginning, all kinds of biographers and commentators of Hitler recognized – indeed, emphasized – the revolutionary character of his ideas, his rhetoric, his plans, and their execution” (79). Even so, because of Hitler’s order of the mass murder of millions of Jews, his rhetorical prowess and ideology have been vastly studied, and in turn, have been condemned.

Koenigsberg explains that within the Third Reich, Hitler “attempts to create two ‘separate’ objects: a ‘perfect’ Germany (which generates pure love); and a ‘perfectly evil’ Jew (which generates pure hate)” (68). Rothschild says that by encouraging reproduction among the Nazis and the execution of Jews, Hitler attempted to reach a purified German race (51). Although the difficulties surrounding changing ideologies have been discussed, Hitler’s rhetoric is responsible for one very important change – the idea of anti-Semitism:
“It was because of [Adolf Hitler] that anti-Semitism became unacceptable, if not unthinkable, intellectually as well as politically after the war, and especially in Germany” (Lukacs 176). The Nazi’s ideology of perfection (a perfect nation, a perfect people, a perfect race) resulted in the mass murder of millions of innocent Jews, which is something that will never be forgotten.

By looking at the Nazi’s obsession with perfection, it is easy to understand how an ideology of perfection can be taken to extremes. In the United States, an ideology of perfection has indisputably developed over the past half century. Through the various beauty businesses within the beauty industry, perfection is something that, as Americans, we have internalized to a point of desire.

America’s Obsession with Perfection

The American society maintains an ideology of perfection for women through images seen in the media. Although not solely, it is widely known that the Western world places a tremendous value on physical beauty, especially for women. According to Nancy Etcoff:

More women than men diet and women outnumber men in eating disorders nine to one. Eighty-nine percent of patients for “aesthetic procedures” done by members of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons in 1996 were women. Women are more likely than men to dye their hair, shop for clothes, wear jewelry and makeup,
wear perfume, and pinch their toes into ill-fitting shoes for the sake of beauty. (59-60)

Etcoff suggests that men are the main culprit behind this desire for beauty that women seek, as men value looks in a partner more so than women; men, in most cultures around the world, value appearance more than their female counterparts (60-61). As animals, humans are just as likely to behave in a manner that will ensure a mate. Looks are important when seeking a partner which is partially why women are so concerned with appearances. Women care about beauty primarily because they want a mate, and secondly because they want to check out the competition between themselves and other women (67). Because of this competition, women tend to compare themselves to other women much more than they look at men (62). And although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, there are three types of businesses in the beauty industry that try to “empower” women to take control over their own beauty: aesthetic surgery, grooming, and cosmetics. Nevertheless, due to the beauty industry and the media, it is unattainable societal standards that women are comparing themselves with more so than with other women.

Etcoff points out that “with more than one third of the United States population obese, and the number growing steadily, there is no indication that the plethora of thin beauties is creating a society of thin people at all. The media contribute to greater dissatisfaction with real bodies by crowding our minds with examples of extreme body types” (26). Women have turned to exercise equipment, liposuction, diets, and even girdles to reduce the appearance of having too much fat on their bodies. The fact of the
Figure 2.2 Versace models exemplifying their rare features, particularly, their long legs (Carstarphen and Zavoina 128).
matter is that no matter how much a woman diets, exercises, or undergoes surgical procedures, she will never look like a model because a model’s body is rare, exemplified in the above Figure 2.2. Obesity has had such a great influence over the perception of beauty in the United States, that American culture has been deemed a “fat-phobic” culture (194). It is clear that American’s have become obese because we have access to more than enough food to survive and have technologies available to us that allows for less physical activity. Although Etcoff points out that “in the United States and in much of the Western world, to be beautiful means to be lean and lithe, as sylphlike as a ballerina and as self-denying,” our communities are becoming more obese every year (195). There must be a balance that we can create between overindulgence/obesity and self-denial/extreme thinness.

The ideal – thinness – is maintained through diet and exercise. It is also a social status, achieved by the upper class that has the ability to maintain their thinness with the help of personal trainers, access to expensive gym facilities, and liposuction. With eating disorders and plastic surgery on a rise, the thin ideal has been considered oppressive to women by feminists and cultural critics, not to mention dangerous to women (Etcoff 201-202). According to Sander Gilman, some women turn to surgery to achieve happiness; however, seeing happiness as a result of undergoing aesthetic surgery is unrealistic and harmful, just as is a thin ideal (28). Gilman clarifies that “the idea of ‘unhappiness’ is closely tied to that of a psyche impacted by the social or cultural definition of the body” (30). The American culture is responsible for creating an ideology that associates beauty and thinness with happiness. Since appearance is “the most public part of the self,” it is
not a surprise that the human image has been manipulated in so many ways to create an ideal image (Etcoff 7). More and more women are turning their desire for beauty, and happiness, over to aesthetic surgeons. According to Etcoff, nearly 700,000 people voluntarily underwent aesthetic surgery in 1996 and what is more appalling is that number has at least doubled in the past decade just for women (5). Gilman states that because ideal beauty is created in the mind, it is the goal of the surgeon to “provide the possibilities whereby to achieve the yearnings of the mind” which is by far an overwhelming task for a surgeon to take on (25). Cosmetic surgeries (and non-surgical procedures) are becoming more and more commonplace despite the harm that it could cause to the patient.

Women have daily grooming rituals that has in turn, created the grooming industry. With the assistance of hairdressers, manicurists, pedicurists, and so on, the importance of beauty has grown with the industry. To illustrate where Americans put emphasis, Etcoff says, “we [in the United States] spend more than twice as much money on personal care products and services as on reading material” (95). Annually, the cosmetic and toiletry industry compounds more than forty-five billion dollars worldwide and North America is responsible for over thirty percent of that market (95-96). Although the media is visually responsible for the proliferation of the cosmetic industry, grooming – in the sense that we are most familiar with – has been important to women for well over forty thousand years (96). Makeup and hair removal have been a tradition for women all over the world for centuries. Removal of hair from the face and body is not uncommon for women of many cultures, even though women have much less body hair than men.
Etcoff suggests that women remove hair to “accentuate the difference between the male and female body” so that men are more attracted to them (97). Women are willing to purchase cosmetics, groom themselves daily, and undergo surgical procedures all to attract men, and the beauty industry has certainly capitalized on American women’s desire to become more attractive and to find a mate.

Lois Banner claims that prior to the 1960s, the ideology of perfection was reflected in films; however, once television became a dominant force in American culture, the media became responsible for reflecting perfection (286-287). Mass media comes directly from an organization’s marketing strategy. A powerful organization controls the discourse and gets its message in the media; therefore, individual organizations also make up the whole that we recognize as the media. Organizations have a duty to engage in public discourse through the media to meet organizational goals; however, organizations also have a duty to meet the needs of any and all stakeholders – including community interests. It is in the community’s best interest for organizations to engage in socially conscious efforts, especially with regard to an organization’s marketing and advertising strategies.

**Problems That Arise from an Ideology of Perfection**

Obviously an ideology of perfection may not seem so glamorous and, from the earlier discussion of the Nazis, can result in violent ends; however, an ideology of perfection that is not on the surface so racially motivated and disastrous can also result in
oppressive structures in cultural attitudes that can affect health and lives dramatically. In
the United States, an ideology of perfection can be found in television advertisements,
print advertisements, spokesmodels, products, services, and even in a doctor’s office.
Ideal images that are found in the media become the basis for our terministic screens so
we lose sight of what is real.

One of the biggest problems with harmful ideologies is the internalization that
occurs within those who are not a part of the dominant power structure. Michael Freeden
illustrates this point using a member of the proletariat who had internalized the dominant
bourgeois ideology: “An exploited worker actually believed that it was a good idea to get
up in the morning and work 14 hours for a pittance in her employer’s factory, because
she had internalized the ideological view that such dehumanizing work was an inevitable
part of the industrial order” (6). This is the same as organizations pushing an ideology of
perfection onto the American public. American’s have internalized a desire for perfection
so much, that they are desperate to conform to the ideal through any and all possible
means. For some, it can be as simple as getting a makeover, and for others, it can be as
dangerous as cosmetic surgery procedures or eating disorders.

Many American women want “to identify with glamorous figures of stage,
society, and especially screen; and the commercialization of the beauty culture and the
concomitant emphasis on a youthful appearance as the desideratum of beauty” (Banner
271). To be beautiful in American culture, women must take on artificial means as they
are comparing themselves to the unattainable ideal. According to Rothschild, “the billion-
dollar beauty, health, and fitness industries owe their success in promoting and selling
their images in no small measure to tapping into the central role that physical attractiveness plays in our culture and in forming self-concepts” (141). Physical attractiveness is associated with good, whereas physical unattractiveness is associated with malevolence (141-142). Westerners equate beauty with success and good, and it is this mentality, which stems from an ideology of perfection, that has damaged our society. Numerous problems can arise from a dominating ideology of perfection: shame for not conforming to cultural norms, stress, depression, resorting to desperate measures to conform, and as the Nazis showed us in an extreme version, prejudice and racism. Ideologies are the way in which we function in society; nevertheless, an ideology of perfection is extremely hazardous to the well-being of society.
CHAPTER THREE

ADOLESCENCE, BODY IMAGE, AND DISORDERED THINKING

Although everyone – men, women, young, old – experiences some sort of body image issue at some point in their lives, young women have received the most attention, and rightfully so. Young women are the ones who internalize perfection more so than any other group and have reportedly had more severe cases of body image issues and more cases of potentially fatal eating disorders. Because of the difficult time many teenagers have when trying to form their own identity, adolescence is a time period when disordered thinking can materialize.

Disillusions about a teen’s being and body can arise from a number of sources such as peers, family members, and the media. Even though disordered thinking can never be completely removed from our society, with education and discussion about the issues teens face, disordered thinking can be significantly reduced through action.

Adolescence and Identity Formation

Starting in the early twentieth century, adolescence was recognized as a life stage for the first time. Adolescence is when a person develops the most, as they are forming their identity and values. Understanding adolescence, and that process, may answer some questions about why young people are influenced one way or another, in addition to what can be done to combat negative influences that come from a variety of sources, especially the media.
C.B. Hindley compares the terms puberty and adolescence to clarify the subject and to assist with the associated discourse. According to Hindley, when the term puberty is used, this means the time that “physiological and anatomical changes occur which transform the child into a physically mature organism, capable of reproduction” (28). Alternatively, adolescence refers to the indefinable time period between childhood and adulthood that is marked by physical, psychological, and social changes in a person’s life (28). Although puberty is related to adolescence, it is important to use the appropriate terms in the context. This thesis is primarily concerned with adolescence, as puberty is merely the physiological part of this time period in a person’s life.

The first thing for professional communicators to realize is that adolescence is cultural. Not all cultures have a time period in which a person is in hiatus between childhood and adulthood. Lea Dasberg explains that modern Western cultures have created this phenomenon, as it did not exist as we know it today until the late 19th century (3). Although biologically adolescence indicates the point when a person reaches sexual maturity, the socialization of adolescence is purely cultural. Dasberg suggests that adolescence is marked by curiosity and fear of adulthood (5); whereas adulthood is described as a time of sexual freedom, economic independence, financial accountability, and political rights (11). Sheila Green explains that the age that girls enter puberty has dropped significantly over the twentieth century, which has reduced the amount of time that they spend as a child (81-82). Adolescents may gain some sexual freedom for instance, but because of the missing additional factors that define adulthood, they are not adults, but they are no longer in childhood either; they are in limbo – in adolescence.
Because Western culture values individuality and independence, Western beliefs include the idea that it is the individual who maintains control over the body. According to Gerry Bloustien, control over one’s body is another factor that marks adulthood (69). Adolescents are trying to adjust into adulthood by figuring out their own bodies in a culture that places the burden on the individual. Bloustien states that “for young people, and especially adolescent females [control over their own bodies] is where a great deal of the sense of struggle and concern about the body resides” (69). The body is a constant struggle for teenagers in a world that values perfection, at a time when the body is evolving in size, structure, and a variety of other elements that would constitute imperfection.

Debra L. Gimlin believes that “maintaining a positive identity requires that individuals distance themselves from characteristics and acts that violate social standards” (50). Since the adolescent body is continuously changing, teens are often times more aware of their development in comparison to idealized images, more so than any other group. Michel Foucault argues that all bodies are subjected to surveillance by both external and internal sources (Bloustien 68). Young women objectify themselves by examining and scrutinizing their own bodies regularly; they are constantly comparing themselves with their peers and images approved by the media.

Women are relentlessly trying to figure out who they are and their place in this world. For many women, control is the one thing that gives women peace when trying to identify themselves. Some women gain control through overachievement, while others resolve this issue by controlling two major aspects of their lives, the food they consume
and the bodies they maintain. Shelia Greene identifies theorists Bruch, Brown, and Gilligan for noting how adolescent females deal with understanding what it means to be an adult female in Western culture; they do so with eating disorders, a loss of confidence, and a loss of voice (85). Identity formation for females tends to be a complicated process, one that is not simplified with adolescence.

**Body Image**

Professional communicators can learn much from the disordered thinking that plagues adolescent girls and hopefully assist in reducing the number of young people who are dissatisfied with their bodies. Linda Smolak claims that “body image is a complex construct and its definition and measurement have not been uniform or even consistent” (69). This makes understanding body image and body image problems that much more difficult, and that much more important. The most evident, pressing, and common knowledge that our society has about body image is that women tend to focus on thinness and have higher rates of body dissatisfaction and distorted views of their bodies, also known as body dysphoria, than men.

In the late 19th century, women enrolled in universities were proud of the fact that they were not only gaining an education, but also weight. Young women were spending more time in the gymnasiums and were improving their athletic skills, which resulted in gaining inches. Body images were improving as women were expanding their academic and athletic abilities.
Although body dysphoria has not always been as big of a concern as it is today, body image concerns really began to grow in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but did not affect many college women at that time. Actually, for women, gaining weight during college years was expected and considered a healthy phenomenon. According to Margaret Lowe, dieting spread rapidly during this time period; however, college females were not concerned about losing weight for aesthetic reasons (30). Losing weight at that time for women actually mirrored a stereotype that women were frail, fragile, and could not handle the pressures of college life.

Enjoying indoor picnics with massive amounts of food, known at that time as spreads, with fellow students was a major part of the college experience for young women. Lowe explains that women would not express feeling guilty or regretful for overindulging at parties as women today may feel, rather they would express pleasurable experiences among friends and good food (37). Similar to women of today, women from over 100 years ago would use food to manipulate certain situations, particularly social pressures from peers, family members, and men. Although women today are dealing with the opposite problem with their weight as women from the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, women have been using food as a way to combat burdensome social pressures for an extended period of time.

The early 20\textsuperscript{th} century was a progressive time for women as they were figuring out their place and identity. Were they mothers? Wives? Professionals? Athletes? Healthy? Sexy? The women from that time were not quite sure, but they wanted it all. They wanted children and husbands, but they wanted careers as well. Women were able
to discern, as “scientifically trained domestic experts,” that what they put into their body affected what they looked like on the outside (Lowe 135). Women also began to associate their looks with potential personal and professional gains. This is when women began to really have issues with their bodies and the food they ate.

Changes with regard to women and their bodies erupted during the early 20th century. It was widely accepted that “educational institutions created an arena where girls and women could nurture and experiment with [adolescence]” (Lowe 45). While universities across the United States were trying to promote positive living and learning environments, they may have been negatively influencing women at that time without knowing it. Nevertheless, women felt pressure from their universities from the onset of their academic careers. Before even getting accepted into a university, a photograph had to accompany the application so that faculty members could discern a woman’s likelihood to succeed in a college setting, based on their appearance (Lowe 142). Weight was of particular interest at this time, as it was believed that weight was one of the most important, if not the most important, factor determining a woman’s success. Young women felt the pressure once they entered the university setting, as Lowe clarifies: “Whether young women were seeking weight gain or weight loss, college officials as well as popular writers encouraged them to carefully and continuously ‘watch their weight’” (143). By the 1920s young women were watching their weight unlike ever before. Since their weight was constantly an issue, some women controlled their weight the healthy way, by watching their caloric consumption and exercising, while others were taking a more reckless route.
Even though faculty members were not condoning a dangerous weight loss program for college women during the 1920s, they were endorsing a slimmer figure. Women would starve themselves, skip meals, and even follow a popularized restrictive 585 calorie diet called the “Hollywood Eighteen Day Diet” that limited dietary consumption to grapefruit, oranges, melba toast, green vegetables, and hard-boiled eggs (Lowe 145). Roberta Pollack Seid notes that women would sustain the use of “obesity-removing creams,” drink sour milk, take three hot baths a day to melt off the excess fat, and even use emetics and laxatives to help reduce the amount of extra fat in or on the body (88-89). Thirty years prior, women would not feel guilty for overindulging; however, women from the 1920s would feel anxiety about gaining weight – “the gain that had once symbolized health now suggested weak willpower and a potential loss of feminine appeal” (Lowe 145). Weight gain was not considered aesthetically pleasing or socially acceptable, so women began to take control over their food through either healthy or unhealthy dieting practices.

After World War I, women were quite aware and heavily convinced of the need for a slimmer figure. The fashion world dictated the shape that was considered most attractive – thin, flat-chested, and more androgynous than any other time period, mostly because of the postwar prosperity. “Flappers” – and those who admired the flapper look – wore shorter skirts, flattened their breasts, and cut their hair (Seid 91). Prior to the war, women would make their own clothing to fit their frame; however, with the spread of the media, ready-made articles of clothing were available, which meant that “the woman had to fit the dress” (94). At this time, fashion also took on the role of class identifier. With
Figure 3.1 Flapper from the 1920s, exemplifying the androgynous style of the time (Johnson, “Flapper”).
the new fashion trends came new clothing to fit the style. At this point, the flapper look was associated with the upper classes, and therefore, so was a thin ideal. Lower classes were coupled with round figures, not able to handle the fashion of the times.

Although slimness was a trend for women during the 1920s and 1930s, other standards were just as competitive, unlike today: “Competing regional, local, and ethnic standards were still powerful” (Seid 98). Even though a part of the Western world, Europeans did not buy into the thin trend quite like the Americans. Many popular American women’s magazines would stress the need for women to lose weight, much more so than other Western publications.

The 1940s saw a pretty momentous change in the ideal body shape for American women. Pinup girls were seen as fashion icons. They were on the thin side, but unlike the flappers, pinup girls were shapely – an hourglass figure with a small waist and emphasized hips and breasts which can be seen in Figure 3.2. However, this trend was short-lived and the second half of the 20th century saw a mixed trend of both an acceptance and abhorrence to the thin ideal and an ideology of perfection.

During the 1950s, America saw an incredible increase in the number of weight loss articles published. Body weight became “Americans’ most important measure, a way to gauge health, beauty, and character” (Seid 103). Since body weight had become such a concern of American women, the press tried to stress the need for a balanced, healthy diet with articles such as November 1956 McCall’s article entitled “Why Fad Diets Fail” (Seid 104). Health and nutrition became more important than the aesthetics of the body.
Figure 3.2 Pin-up girl, with a shapelier figure (Johnson, “Pin-Up”).
Many diet foods were either produced for the first time during the 1950s or were popularized at that time.

From the 1950s into the 1960s, the American ideal had proved to be much thinner than in the past: “American women…wanted to be slim, but what they meant by slimness was different than what we mean today” (Seid 136). Twiggy, world-renowned waif-like model, appeared in Vogue and thus, the thin ideal was furthered. Although a turbulent time in the world, women found it necessary to become more like the thin models of the time for social status. Diet groups, such as Overeater’s Anonymous and Weight Watchers, were also formed during the 1960s.

By the 1970s, exercise and a healthy diet became ritualized within the United States. Running had become the new pastime for Americans. Technology had been improving over the decades and a trend was established: the daily output of energy had reached an all time low in American lives, and exercise was the way to make up the difference. Food and exercise had become so powerful by the 1980s, that weight control had gone from concern to obsession (Seid 187). Technology associated with food production was also a cause for Americans reaching the highest level of obesity ever. Mass-produced, processed foods had become a major component in the American diet.

Peter N. Stearns remarks how ludicrous America’s obsession with perfection is: “No study of the modern American hostility to fat would be complete without exploring its great anomaly: during the very century in which diet standards have been ever more rigorously urged, average American weight has gone up, rather markedly” (127). For decades, scientists, physicians, and even educators have pressed the issue about
Figure 3.3 The women from the 1970s and 1980s became preoccupied with exercise and nutrition (Johnson, “Exercise Lady”).
maintaining a healthy diet and exercise regimen only to find that their efforts are not being regarded properly. We now know more in the 21st century about health and weight, yet more people are considered overweight and obese and are becoming so at a younger age. The problem is not a knowledge issue; it is a self-confidence issue. Lowered self-esteem is raging now because of negative body images formed by the increasingly thinner ideal. Those with body image problems find control through the food they consume even though the ideal is not truly attainable by the average American.

When a girl goes through puberty, she gains fat in areas such as her breasts, hips, and buttocks, and this moves her further away from the ideal. Valerie Whiffen and Natasha Demidenko claim that “as a result [of puberty], body dissatisfaction is [considered] normative among adolescent girls,” which is a problem because physical attractiveness is essential to any adolescent’s self-esteem (53). However, body dissatisfaction may or may not begin during adolescence: “By age 9 or 10, approximately 40% of girls express concerns about their weight” (Smolak 70). When girls reach middle school, right at the beginning of puberty, their self-esteem and body satisfaction drop because girls are moving “away from the culturally prescribed body ideal of thinness” (Smolak 70). The age at which body image becomes negative is getting younger and younger as time progresses because of the earlier onset of menarche.

Smolak notes that since the medical field is not able to effectively determine the age at which body dissatisfaction develops, it is difficult to ascertain the cause of body dissatisfaction; however, she states that it is much easier to identify sources that sustain and/or intensify body dissatisfaction: peers, family members, and the media (70-71).
Although she explores all three, Smolak explains that the media is at least responsible for the internalization of the thin ideal which in turn has been found to be a huge factor in the development of body dissatisfaction in women (72).

Young women develop their body images from an important group – their peers. Peers to adolescent females may be people that they physically interact with on a daily basis, such as people they go to school with or that live in their neighborhood; however, peers can also be found on the internet. Delyse M. Hutchinson and Ronald M. Rapee says that “empirical research has demonstrated that young people tend to resemble their friends in appearance and social attributes, as well as interests, attitudes and behaviours” (1558). Peers can be a great influence over adolescent females because of their closeness and similar thinking. Hutchinson and Rapee continue: “Given that body image concerns and eating disturbances typically develop during adolescence, it has been suggested that adolescent friends might also share similarities in mutually valued body concerns and eating behaviours” (1558). Although Hutchinson and Rapee’s research concluded that adolescent friends do not share body image concerns like they do with eating patterns, an individual’s perception of peer influence seriously affected body image concerns. The results of their study support “theoretical models that emphasise the significance of sociocultural factors in the development of body image disturbance and disordered eating patterns” (1571). Simply put, adolescent females are influenced by their peers. They internalize the idea that other members of their social group are concerned about their bodies just as they are (even if they are not), and in turn, develop body dysphoria themselves.
Adolescents are online and are communicating with other teens in a variety of formats. One particular site that has become quite popular with teens is Teen Second Life. Mark Piesing from *Times Educational Supplement* estimated that approximately 40,000 teens are logged on to this virtual world exclusive to people aged 13 – 17 (58). Second Life boasts over 4 million members, in which teenagers are quickly becoming a significant portion. In order to interact in Second Life, an avatar must be created to communicate with others in this 3D chat room. Avatars are the reflection of the user’s appearance and preference. Linden Research, Inc. even boasts about how avatars can easily be altered to fit your inclination: “The tool to personalize your avatar is very simple to use and allows you to change anything you like, from the tip of your nose to the tint of your skin” (Create). Avatars allow teens to choose their features, even if they differ from themselves. Is this a healthy exercise? Either way, adolescents are getting online and are logging into virtual worlds and they are altering their appearance based on what they feel will get them approval by their peers.

Due to the fact that adolescent females are seeking more independence, family members may have less influence than a teens’ peers or the media (Hutchinson and Rapee 1572); however, family members do play an important role in the development of body images in young women. In households in the United States, women “developed a sense of their physical imperfection from family members,” and do not feel like men in the same household are held accountable for maintaining ideal bodies (Gimlin 59). Some family members and peers may provide support for developing adolescent females; however, Rheanna Ata et al. claim that family members, and even peers, “may also
increase adolescents’ body image concerns through teasing or increasing pressures youth feel to change their appearance” (1026). Some women note that comments about their physical selves come from male family members more so than anyone else. According to Ata et al.’s research, pressures from the family lead adolescent females to negative feelings about their bodies and eating, in addition to believing they need to lose weight (1033). On the other hand, the media is equally responsible and should be held accountable for sustaining and/or intensifying body dissatisfaction in adolescent females.

The media is responsible for the internalization of the thin ideal and for furthering the ideology of perfection through visual elements found in mass communication. Ata et al. maintain that “female adolescents in particular seek out magazines, internalize the messages presented, and use the media as a source of information about how to improve their physical appearance” (1025). Since young women are the largest group of people to utilize the media as a way to understand their place in the world, including what their bodies should look like, the media’s visual elements need to be closely examined.

Kim Walsh-Childers begins her examination by stating, “first – and almost without exception in mainstream media – sexy women are thin. Whereas slenderness may be healthier than being overweight, the thinness portrayed as sexy almost always goes below healthy body weight” (141). The media is inextricably linked to body dissatisfaction in adolescent females. Images that portray the ideal body type as ultra-thin and waif-like are ultimately injuring young women in the Western world – convincing them that they must emulate this image or they are not acceptable.
In the American Psychological Association text, *Featuring Females: Feminist Analyses of Media*, Stefanie Gilbert, Helene Keery, and J. Kevin Thompson state that “the media are believed to promote eating disorders by consistently portraying only thin, stereotypically attractive bodies, glorifying thinness as the essence of beauty and success, and denigrating fatness by linking it to such negative characteristics as laziness, ugliness, and failure” (41); however, there are organizations that are trying to break the mold which will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Not only do the media control our standards by reflecting the dominant power structure’s goals, they could be responsible for the consequences of having an ideology of perfection surrounding thinness. Most cases of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are diagnosed in young women. Both anorexia and bulimia, in addition to binge eating disorder, can have a major effect on a woman’s medical, social, and psychological development. Kathryn Zerbe claims that in addition to the lethal effects eating disorders can have on a person, they can also coincide with psychological symptoms including depression, in addition to anxiety and personality disorders (162). Obviously a negative body image can have immense consequences. Eating disorders are the most detrimental of the consequences derived from negative body images in young women because of the possibility of death.

Body dissatisfaction for young women can be “a risk factor for eating disorders and cosmetic surgery, both of which can be fatal” (Smolak 69). Bloustien explains that although dieting is not a new trend, “the late-twentieth-century manifestation of concern
about image and weight has reached epidemic proportions” (100). The disordered thinking that can come from body dysphoria can clearly lead to multiple issues.

**Disordered Thinking and Eating Disorders**

The Western world has instilled an ideology of perfection on the women in the developed world. Gilbert, Keery, and Thompson examined cross-cultural studies that indicated that women not exposed to Western culture (television, advertising, etc.) had more positive attitudes toward their bodies “and are less likely to exhibit eating pathology than are their female counterparts who have migrated to westernized countries” (43). The internalization of perfection and the thin ideal by women in the Western world is the source of disordered thinking that can lead to negative body images which can then lead to extreme behavior.

Gilman also notes that “women discover that the definition of physical perfection is ever-changing, so that they must be constantly vigilant in their self-examination, always searching for methods of correction” (142). What the Western world deems ideal is always shifting, but for the past few decades, it has centered on extreme slimness. This line of disordered thinking is dangerous because most women – even with radical dieting and exercise – can seldom reach what is considered ideal today.

Disordered thinking can lead to risky behaviors to correct an “imperfect” body based on current ideals. The decision to undergo cosmetic surgery or, the pressure felt from peers, family members, and the media, can lead to eating disorders. Cosmetic
surgery and eating disorders can be hazardous to a person’s self-image, self-esteem, and even a person’s very being because of the fatal nature of both precarious behaviors. Disordered thinking could be considered the most dangerous side effect of a negative body image because of the repercussions that may ensue.

Some women choose to undergo cosmetic surgery to alter body parts that they cannot reshape with diet and exercise alone. Gilman states that cosmetic surgery “epitomizes the astounding lengths to which contemporary women will go to obtain bodies that meet current ideals of attractiveness” (74). Although many women, even those who do not choose to undergo surgical procedures, are particularly interested in achieving and maintaining an idealized image, those who do choose to participate in cosmetic surgery seem “to be so obsessed with physical appearance that they are willing to risk their very existence to become more attractive” (75). Aesthetic procedures are not only dangerous for women with temperamental body images because of the damage it can do to one’s self-image, but also because of the side effects from undergoing cosmetic surgery. These can range from pain, numbness, bruising, discoloration, and depigmentation caused by liposuction to permanently damaged nerves from face-lifts (76). Obviously these are not the only damaging repercussions. Some of the more harmful outcomes can include, but are not limited to, fat embolisms, blood clots, fluid depletion, and death (76). Possibly the most hazardous effect from cosmetic surgery is the addiction that can come from having a successful procedure. Addictive behavior is dangerous and an addiction to surgical procedures can increase one’s chance to have complications, some of which could prove fatal.
Although there are many side effects caused by eating disorders, just as with cosmetic surgery, the most perilous is death. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are the two most documented eating disorders; however, binge eating is becoming more and more recognized as the third major type of eating disorder that is plaguing our society. According to the Academy for Eating Disorders, “eating disorders are characterized by a persistent pattern of dysfunctional eating or dieting behavior” that are “associated with significant emotional, physical, and interpersonal distress” (About). Up to 10 percent of women will experience at least some characteristics of a major eating disorder at any given time.

Lokken, Lokken Worthy, and Trautmann suggest a model that may explain why eating disorders are so prevalent in our society: “It has been suggested that sociocultural standards of beauty provide a means by which young women internalize the pursuit of thinness. Proponents of the sociocultural model of eating disorders suggest that body image disturbance and eating disorders develop in response to society’s increasing emphasis on thinness as a measure of beauty and success” (363). Zerbe agrees and says that “eating disorders…result from a combination of emotional, physical, and sociological factors and are encouraged by a society that values appearance as a measure of worth” (169). As long as society reduces the impact of appearance and body size on a person’s success, there is a possibility to change the exponential growth of eating disorders in the Western culture. Greene notes that “in Western culture being heavier than the ideal is typical but is nonetheless disdained” mostly because of the ideology of perfection that the media reinforces (82). Professional communicators who work within
the world of the media have some power to control what affects the public, to positively influence the communities in which they serve, and most importantly, they have the ethical responsibility to act.

Although body dysphoria has been around for a while, Nancy Snyderman and Peg Streep suggest that it is in the past thirty years that the disordered eating discourse has really taken flight in the medical field (255). There are four main reasons that Snyderman and Streep outline as to why eating disorders go undetected: 1) most families eat only one meal a day together, 2) skipping meals, eating on the go, and dieting are seen as acceptable female adolescent behavior by our society, 3) young women hide their disordered eating from everyone, and 4) most weight loss, even with eating disorders, are not dramatic so it is much more difficult to detect (257-258). Our entire society needs to change; however, small steps can be made that will have a large impact. Examining each of these reasons and improving communication with adolescent females would be the very first step.

Anorexia nervosa is considered the most fatal of all eating disorders. Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. (ANRED) characterizes anorexia nervosa by the following criteria for women: she refuses to maintain a normal weight for her age and height, weighs 85% or less than expected weight for her age and height, puberty is delayed if symptoms begin before adolescence, menstruation stops, sex drive disappears or severely dissipates, she denies the dangerous affect of her weight loss, she is scared of getting fat or gaining any weight, and she feels fat even though she is clearly emaciated (The Better-Known). According to Snyderman and Streep, girls who develop anorexia
internalize “what the culture associates with physical perfection” and have distorted views of themselves and their bodies, even if they are underweight or of normal weight (257). Anorexia nervosa is closely associated with depression, compulsive behavior, and petulance.

The second most highlighted eating disorder is bulimia nervosa. ANRED describes a person with bulimia nervosa as someone who diets and then binge eats, feels out of control when she eats, undoes the damage of her binge by using purging methods (laxatives, vomits, exercises, fasts), believes her self-worth is dependent on her thinness.
or lack there of, may participate in risk-taking behaviors (promiscuity, shoplift, etc.), and may be of normal weight (The Better-Known). Bulimics are still in danger of losing their lives even if they are not starving themselves like those who suffer from anorexia nervosa. They tend to suffer from depression, anxiety, and probably have some pent up anger issues.

Binge eating disorder is the third most documented eating disorder. Someone suffering from binge eating disorder feels guilty for binge eating, feels unstoppable during binges, eats very quickly and usually secretly, and has a vast history of diet failures (The Better-Known). This disorder is closely related to emotional eating and obesity. Purging is not a part of the process, and eating is used to numb emotional pain. Because body image problems and disordered thinking/eating are culturally developed and internalized, and people are not genetically predisposed, changes can be made. Altering the culture in which body dysphoria is not only accepted, but expected, is something that should be explored. Adjusting the visuals used in Western media would be a huge step in the right direction. It is important to remember, based on what Burke has taught us, that when models with ideal bodies are selected, professional communicators are reflecting the dominant power structure’s ideology, and thus, deflecting the concerns of the marginalized, women who do not have model-like features. Some organizations have taken it upon themselves to incorporate numerous images – not just frail, anorexic-looking models – into their marketing strategies, and are doing so quite successfully.
Smolak explains how and why environmental changes are necessary in the reduction of body dissatisfaction and disordered thinking:

Females do not start out with any sort of temperamental, genetic, hormonal, or neurological predispositions to judge their bodies as too fat. Instead, they receive constant and consistent messages from many sources teaching them this…Indeed, when Piran worked with an elite ballet school to change its ecology, there was a dramatic decline in the frequency of eating disorders among the students. (74)

Kristine Lokken, Sheri Lokken Worthy, and Julianne Trautmann examined a study conducted by Baker, Sivyer, and Towell that found that women who were sighted, or who became blind later in life, had higher levels of body dissatisfaction and more negative eating attitudes than those who were born blind (364). Lokken, Lokken Worthy, and Trautmann state, “this finding provides further support for the importance of the visual media in promoting eating-disordered attitudes and behaviors and suggests that media images may serve as exemplars from which young women make comparisons and self-evaluations” (364). In other words, visual rhetoric is significant in furthering ideologies that cannot be as effective through text alone.
CHAPTER FOUR
SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS MARKETING

Since the ideal body is developed and maintained through the media, Foucault has taught us that the body is merely a socially constructed, culturally developed notion, and therefore, changes are possible. Visual rhetoric is the foundation for the ideology of perfection, and thus, the internalization of the ideal body by adolescent females. Professional communicators that create images to market products are also responsible for marketing certain ideals to the public. Some organizations have taken this idea to heart and have developed marketing plans that include a variety of body shapes in attempts to change the Western culture’s creation of the ideal. Other organizations have not adopted this line of thinking; however, professional communicators have an opportunity to shift their organization’s marketing plan to both produce images that will turn a profit, as well as do civic good by altering America’s obsession with perfection.

The Beauty Industry

Organizations within the beauty business are primarily responsible for the internalization of the thin ideal in the Western world. According to the article “Pots of Promise – The Beauty Business” published in 2003 in *Economist*, the beauty business is a $160 billion industry; it includes makeup, skin care, hair care, fragrances, cosmetic surgery, and weight loss-focused businesses, such as health clubs and weight loss pills. The beauty industry is powerful because people, especially women, desire youth and
beauty (and the associated power). A beautiful woman is more likely to find a mate than a woman who is not considered beautiful, because beauty innately alerts men to healthy and fertile women. A woman may undergo surgical procedures and use cosmetics to improve her external beauty since it will also improve her chances of reproducing, or so she may think.

When mass media erupted during the 20th century, so did the beauty business. Women were exposed to the idealized image of beauty through photographs, magazines, and movies, and began to crave the ideal (Pots of Promise). Elizabeth Arden opened the first known beauty salon in 1910 and sold beauty and health at the same time. She, along with other beauty pioneers at that time, believed in a holistic view of beauty. Along with exercise and diet courses, Arden offered facials and cosmetics (Pots of Promise). Since the early 20th century, there has been a movement to separate health and beauty; however, it seems as though there is a movement to combine the two once again with the recent spread of spas, salons, and health clubs.

The increased profits of beauty businesses may be linked to members of the middle class in developing nations such as China, India, and Russia who are buying into the beauty business. Increased profits may also be associated with the excess discretionary income from aging baby-boomers (Pots of Promise). Jim Edwards notes that the baby-boomer generation and generation X are entering their 60s and 40s respectively and are looking to reduce signs of aging (9). Since there are a number of industry giants, they are all trying to compete with an innovative product type, self-categorized by the industry as "cosmaceuticals" – a blurred line between cosmetics and
non-prescription drugs (Pots of Promise). Cosmaceuticals are geared toward both the baby-boomer generation and generation X. According to Bill Schmitt, the chemicals and polymers used in cosmaceuticals is growing at a rate of 3.5% per year (42). The beauty industry has created a serious demand with the invention of cosmaceuticals, which will continue to rise as women become more educated, with more disposable income.

Cosmetic surgeries are quite popular nowadays. From 1997 until 2003, the number of procedures has dramatically increased, over 220% (Pots of Promise). The beauty industry cannot overlook this $20 billion business. More and more procedures are being completed with the most popular going to liposuction, breast implants, rhinoplasty, and botox injections. Since cosmetic surgery is much more affordable now, procedures are no longer for the rich and famous; approximately 70% of all aesthetic procedure patients earn less than $50,000 annually (Pots of Promise). The ability to look your best through cosmetic surgery is becoming more feasible.

Women in the Western world hold more equality, freedom, and power than ever before. Naomi Wolf claims that despite this change that occurred largely because of the feminist movement, women are still battling what some would refer to as frivolous issues: “Many [women] are ashamed to admit that such trivial concerns – to do with physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair, clothes – matter so much” (9). Women feel restricted because of their femininity and what the world expects them to be, mostly because of the boom in the beauty industry.

According to Wolf, feminism actually caused a backlash that we now internalize – the ideology of beauty (10). Images that reflected society’s idea of femininity were
simply replaced: “At once, the diet and skin care industries became the new cultural censors of women’s intellectual space, and because of their pressure, the gaunt, youthful model supplanted the happy housewife as the arbiter of successful womanhood” (11). Images of beauty can be found everywhere, from magazines, billboards, and the internet, to television shows and the cinema.

In the 1910s, at the time when the beauty industry really took flight, a need for beauty was created with the target audience: “The emerging beauty industry played on the fear of looking ugly as much as on the pleasure of looking beautiful, drawing on the new science of psychology to convince women that an inferiority complex could be cured by a dab of lipstick” (Pots of Promise). Wolf believes that it is this very mentality that was used to bring women back down (from where feminism had lifted them up) and put them back into their place in the patriarchal, American society. She thinks that the Western world is completely dependent upon the “underpayment of women” (Wolf 18). Wolf continues by saying that “an ideology that makes women feel ‘worth less’ was urgently needed to counteract the way feminism had begun to make us feel worth more” (18). Cosmetics brand L’Oreal attempted to alter this line of thinking with its tagline “Because I’m worth it.” However, as a whole, the beauty industry internalized this line of thinking from the early 20th century and has institutionalized it in such a way that it continues to make the business of beauty a success.

It is through images that members of the beauty industry are able to, and do, “empower” women to take control over their own beauty; however, by doing so, it is further marginalizing women by showing them that they are not acceptable the way they
are – they need help. This mindset is what hinders women and promotes the ideology of perfection, not to mention fuels America’s obsession with perfection. Naomi Wolf explains how images of beauty, and other oppressive images in Western culture, actually are dominating women:

For about 160 years, middle-class, educated Western women have been controlled by various ideals about female perfection; this old and successful tactic has worked by taking the best of female culture and attaching to it the most repressive demands of male-dominated societies. (271)

There is nothing wrong about a woman wanting to feel beautiful. And there is nothing wrong with using products or procedures to do so. The problem is that “women feel invisible or inadequate without them” (Wolf 273). The beauty industry has created this feeling in women through images of perfection in their advertising. Altering prevailing images is one way to break this cycle that convinces women they must live up to an ideal they cannot attain.

**The Business of Advertising**

Throughout modern times persuasion has served an economic purpose – to convince consumers to make a purchase; however, it was not until the 20th century, into the 21st century, that persuasion gained attention. John Giles points out that “psychology has long been at the heart of advertising since its invention” (106). Through persuasion, influence, and manipulation, advertising succeeds. Persuasion entered the world of
psychology only after the marketing field realized the benefit of using psychological theories to best sell their messages in the 1920s (108). Today more than ever, professional persuaders not only sell products and services, they also sell ideology, culture, and perfection.

The mass media is considered a subset to communications as a whole. Giles suggests that mass media is a combination between mass communications, technology, and culture (7). The various media in which “mass media” functions can range from newspapers and magazines, to technologically advanced media of our time, such as television and the internet.

Gillian Dyer maintains that advertising is a “sophisticated system of communication from the few (the producers) to the many (the consumers)” (15). Although advertising can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, modern advertising, as we know it today, developed during the 17th century and actually lead to the creation of the first newspapers in the 18th century. Britain placed a tax on advertisements in 1702, which disposed of many amateur publications until 1853 (Giles 107). At that time, the use of billboards and handbills had become widespread. The removal of the tax in Britain (with no tax of that nature in the United States) led to the growth of advertising. In turn, the press also grew, mostly because “newspaper owners found that the revenue gained through selling advertising space allowed them to lower the price of their product” (107). Selling advertisements did allow newspapers to be sold for less money; however, newspaper owners basically sold the entirety of their papers to the advertising industry. Advertisers now held a great deal of power because they had the
money newspapers needed to continue to produce their publications for the same prices they had previously.

Prior to the 1880s, newspapers designed advertisements based on information from their clients; however, during the 1880s creative organizations emerged, and thus the advertising industry was born (Giles 108). Early on in advertising’s history, advertisements were purely textual. The late 19th century brought visuals into the forefront, and since then visuals have been central to advertising campaigns which can be seen in Figure 4.1.

Jean Kilbourne, prominent social theorist and activist, examined images and advertising in her film Killing Us Softly 3. From 1979 to 1999, the advertising industry has gone from a 20 billion dollar industry to a 180 billion dollar industry. It is currently believed that the average American is exposed to over 3,000 advertisements per day. Kilbourne believes that everyone feels like they are not influenced by advertisements; however, ads are the foundation of the mass media, and therefore all Americans are affected. Ads sell more than products – they sell values, images, concepts of love, romance, success, and they depict normalcy to the public: “It tells us who we are and who we should be” (Kilbourne).

Across the decades, advertisements have had one important theme, and that is how a woman should and “does” look. The beauty industry uses the ideal image of female beauty so women learn how important it is to be beautiful and what it takes to become beautiful. Women spend massive amounts of time, energy, and money to reach the unattainable ideal. With the use of computer retouching, it is even more impossible to
Figure 4.1 Various advertisements from the *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1880 (Ohmann 177).
reach the ideal beauty because it does not actually exist – not even for those who are a part of the 5 percent of American women who can have that ideal body type. Kilbourne explains that this situation would not be that problematic if Americans did not actually believe that it was possible to reach the ideal.

The message continually presented to women and girls through advertisements is captured in a clothing brand tagline: “the more you subtract, the more you add” (Kilbourne). It is a well-known fact that female self-esteem takes a nose-dive when girls reach adolescence. America’s obsession with perfection/thinness is “really about cutting girls down to size” (Kilbourne). It is silencing them, and teaching them to be passive and vulnerable beings. More than ever, sex is being used to sell everything. But Kilbourne points out that sex is not the problem – it is the trivialization of sex that is the problem; relationships are not emphasized, only sex.

Kilbourne does note that some organizations are trying to bring about change through their advertisements. She mentions a Special K ad that featured men talking “like a woman” discussing weight loss then it says – “Men don’t obsess about these things. Why do we? Resolve to look good on your own terms. Eat sensibly” (Kilbourne). Socially conscious marketing still has a long way to go, and advertising campaigns need to be profound and global. Marketers need to not only change ads, they also need to help change the attitudes toward women in our society to really make a difference.

Advertisers did learn a substantial amount from propaganda used during the First World War. One of the most ingenious things learned from propaganda was summarized in an American advertising trade journal in the 1920s: “Satisfied customers are not as
profitable as discontented ones” (Dyer 45). Most advertising slogans, especially in the beauty industry, “sold” insecurities more so than ever before. By doing so, American consumers were more likely to make purchases to cure the insecurity they did not even know they had before the advertisement ran. This is now the main criteria for beauty industry advertisements.

It is common knowledge that many people feel they are exempt from the effects of advertisements as Kilbourne suggests in her film, *Killing Us Softly 3*. Dyer clearly explains that although people may be skeptical about products or a company in the advertisements, they probably cannot overlook the overarching theme being presented:

Although they might not believe the claims made for a product by an advertiser…they might find it more difficult to resist the more general social image or message presented along with the overt sales pitch – for example, that we can make friends by drinking the right kind of beer, get a boyfriend by using the right kind of shampoo, become a supermum to an adoring family by buying the right tin of baked beans, or avoid being a social outcast and guilt feelings if we buy life insurance. (72)

Even if the consumer is well-educated and cynical about the advertising industry, chances are they will still be influenced by the message being sent; perhaps not about the specific product being advertised, but the underlying message will be transmitted to the receiver.

Images in advertisements must serve two purposes: to catch the audience’s attention and to link the image with a product or service in a way that gets consumers to want to make a purchase. If an advertisement cannot meet these two requirements, Diana
George and John Trimbur argue that it is an ineffective piece of mass media (174). Images alone cannot fulfill these two purposes; ad copy that accompanies a visual element is just as important as it supports the message that the image is trying to convey.

Sandra Moriarty and Lisa Rohe claim that “in instrumental communication, such as advertising, designers must be aware of the appeal of their visual messages to the targeted audience and also consider the functional requirements of the message objectives” (117). Advertisers should be held accountable for creating somewhat realistic images because people do look to social codes shown in advertisements to determine how they should think, behave, and look.

In order to reach a target audience, advertisers must use cultural cues that the audience is familiar with to gain the audience’s attention. In the beauty business, the cultural cue most are familiar with is the ideal. Women of all ages may or may not be aware of the message that is marketed to them through a product; but the message is perfection. The use of exceptionally beautiful models and spokeswomen in modern advertising is commonplace and quite dangerous. From Barton and Barton we understand that by excluding normal-looking women in the media, those who do not fit the ideal are being marginalized. It is expected by the public today, and it sets women up to believe that they must have exceptional beauty to be successful in the Western world. This perception leads to negative thoughts about the self and negative body images, and can lead to eating disorders, not to mention mass purchases of products and services in the beauty business.
Women gain much of their information about the ideology of perfection from women’s magazines. Unfortunately, since advertisers “run” magazines through economic power, magazines are forced to produce and perform at the levels that their advertisers desire otherwise they will lose business. This can be considered a form of domination known as “paid censorship.” Wolf recalls a conversation that she had with a staff member from *New York Woman* who said that the editor of the same publication “was informed that for financial reasons she had to put a model on the cover rather than a remarkable woman she wished to profile” (81). This may not seem like it should be a major concern, but it set a precedent for women’s magazines all over the Western world. Advertisers control women’s magazines. They decide what additional advertisers may be present in the same issue, they determine the content, and they choose the images. Advertisers hold immense amounts of power with regard to images women pay to view.

*What a Girl Wants* is a documentary that focuses on the media culture and its impact on adolescent lives. While interviewing eleven girls and two classes of students, different issues surrounding the impact of media culture on their lives were discussed. Girls lose confidence when they see images of pop stars (such as Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Jessica Simpson, and Mandy Moore) like the one in Figure 4.2, because they see them as perfect – with perfect features. Just as viewing images of their favorite pop star decreases confidence, girls’ self-esteem becomes lower because of the images they see in advertisements; they feel like they are supposed to emulate them, but cannot.
Girls associate beauty with thinness, and while the girls who were interviewed in *What a Girl Wants* thought it was ridiculous how thin the actresses, pop stars, and models were, they still claimed that they wanted to be like them. According to the Children Now Foundation, “30% of nine year-old girls think they are too fat” and the *Boston Globe* states that, “one third of 12-13 year-olds are actively trying to lose weight” (qtd. in *What a Girl Wants*). Sienna, one of the girls in the documentary said, “the media defines sexy as a woman with a great butt, great tits, great stomach, perfect body” (qtd. in *What a Girl*...
Wants). The interviewees felt as though the media treats girls and women as objects more than as human beings. A female student from one of the classes said that she believes the media has the power to stop all of the negative things they are talking about in this film: the desire for perfection, sexualized images, and violence against women. The media has so much power, and, if geared in the right direction, could bring about positive social change.

Social change can occur through the right publicity. Social marketing is usually used to alter an audience’s behavior. For example, to get people to quit smoking, donate to a worthy cause, or register to vote. Social marketing can also be used to change the audience’s attitudes as well. Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto, and Nancy Lee suggest that social marketing is “the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole” (5). Many users of social marketing implement campaigns to convince or persuade an audience to do some sort of social good. Social marketing could be used in the beauty business to improve body images in young women through advertisements in the mass media.

Some organizations within the beauty industry are using their ability to influence women for the betterment of women as a whole, while also selling their products and making a profit. Their advertisements do not constantly feature scantily-clad waif-like models; however, others are standing their ground and are not trying to be more socially conscious, for fear of losing profits or simply because that would change their entire marketing strategy. Some of the beauty businesses that are not being socially conscious
with their advertising and marketing campaigns in regard to ideal body weight include, but are not limited to, many over-the-counter (OTC) weight loss pills, and brands such as Estée Lauder, L’Oreal, Elizabeth Arden, Neutrogena, and Revlon.

Many OTC weight loss pill brands are notorious for wildly outrageous claims while depicting an image of extreme thinness that, according to these brands, can be achieved through the usage of their products. A few examples of these brands include Trimspa, Hydroxycut, and Dex Appeal. These brands, and ones similar to them, use thin models to show the “results” from using their products with a disclaimer underneath that reads “results not typical.”

Estée Lauder, L’Oreal, Elizabeth Arden, Neutrogena, and Revlon are all skin care/cosmetic brands that have not only been prominent in the beauty world, but all are responsible for maintaining the ideal in our society. These organizations have each hired celebrities to sell their products; this gives young women the wrong impression. Most people will never look like Elizabeth Hurley (Estée Lauder), Scarlett Johansen (L’Oreal), Catherine Zeta-Jones (Elizabeth Arden), Jennifer Love Hewitt (Neutrogena), or Halle Berry (Revlon) no matter how many beauty products they use.

On the other hand, some beauty businesses are attempting more socially conscious marketing strategies. Alli, Slim-Fast, Jenny Craig, Curves, CoverGirl, and Clinique are all great examples of organizations attempting to alter the ideal through their advertisements. As the first OTC weight loss pill approved by the FDA, Alli was initially introduced in the media with information about the upcoming sales date – June 15, 2007. According to Stephanie Saul, within four months of its release date, Alli already had over
Figure 4.3 Alli advertisements focus on a healthier lifestyle and feature average-looking women (Elliott).
2 million people committed to a healthier lifestyle (C2). Normal looking, average-sized people were featured in television, print, and internet advertisements like the one in Figure 4.3. Saul goes on to say “Glaxo introduced Alli with an unusual marketing campaign that warns consumers they must be committed to a restricted diet before they take it” (C2). Alli’s campaign was different in the sense that it did warn customers of potential side effects, recommend a healthy diet, did not promise unrealistic results, and used average looking people, not traditional models, to front their advertising campaign.

Slim-Fast and Jenny Craig use realistic-looking models in their advertising campaigns too. Jenny Craig has hired celebrities to represent their brand; however, they do not maintain the traditional, ideal body size. Lately, Kirstie Alley, Valerie Bertinelli, and Queen Latifah are serving as spokesmodels for Jenny Craig. All of these women represented the average-sized woman in America before they began their weight loss plan with Jenny Craig.

Curves is a women’s only health club facility that caters to women with busy lives. Again, in their advertising efforts, Curves uses realistic-looking women with real bodies. Curves is not trying to sell false hope to women all over the world; rather, they are attempting to sell a realistic program to real women.

CoverGirl cosmetics brand has used numerous celebrities for their advertising campaigns; however, the cover girls have ranged in age, ethnicity, and even what brought about their celebrity. Two of the more recent hires by CoverGirl are Queen Latifah and Drew Barrymore. Both women have been criticized about their bodies in the past, yet
CoverGirl has taken them on as endorsers of a brand that not only sells cosmetics, but also sells an image.

One of the cosmetic brands that has had the most unique marketing campaigns in the past 40 years is Clinique – a brand that emerged in 1968 on the premise of allergy tested and 100% fragrance free products. At this point in American culture, this was a unique concept in the beauty business – but so was the marketing of these products. Fashion photographer, Irving Penn, is responsible for creating Clinique’s distinctive advertising campaign centered around the product, not the female form (Schutzman 162). Clinique has made a point to make the product the hero since the brand’s inception.

Despite all of the positive trends such organizations are helping to reshape the beauty business, one organization has gone above and beyond what all the others have done. Dove, a skin, body, and hair care brand, created one of the most infamous, socially conscious marketing campaigns ever created in the beauty industry.

**Dove Case Study**

At the end of September 2004, Dove – a Unilever brand, kicked-off a distinctive marketing campaign in the United States. Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty” is based on the premise that women are attractive, and they do not have to be supermodels to be considered beautiful. Dove’s main public goal was to increase the number of women who feel beautiful by challenging the ideology of perfection, since only 2% of women worldwide would consider themselves beautiful (Real Women). Dove’s other goal was to lift
Unilever, the parent company, from its decline in the beauty industry. The Campaign for Real Beauty is a three-phase marketing strategy that has made Dove very profitable.

Phase one consisted of a series of ads that featured a woman with two questionable statements. One was the stereotypical American response; the other was Dove’s challenge to that stereotype. The second phase featured six ordinary women in their underwear. Phase three was a video of pre-teen girls who reveal their insecurities about their physical attributes. This campaign is appealing because of its ability to reach a multitude of women – young and old – without making them feel self-doubt or self-conscious, as other beauty industry ad campaigns tend to do with overly skinny models. This campaign goes against years of proven success in advertising within the beauty business. Despite the fact that Dove is moving in the right direction and has embarked on a new way to market their products by including various types of women in their advertising, Campaign for Real Beauty is still neglecting the average woman. It may seem as though diversity is present, but especially with phase two, Dove ignores average-sized women.

Dove conducted a study in which more than 3,000 women were interviewed. One of the most astonishing results was that 68 percent of women strongly agreed that an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women can never obtain is set by the media and advertisers; and thus, the Campaign for Real Beauty was constructed. Within the Campaign for Real Beauty, Dove encoded a message of self-approval and self-acceptance. The intended audience is the all too self-conscious group of women in the Western world. Advertisements tend to be a representation of our culture and what
society deems appropriate. Having extremely thin models represent to the masses what
the average woman, between size 12 and 16, is supposed to look like is grossly
misleading and problematic on many levels.

Without the use of good technical codes, camera use, lighting, editing, sound, and
music, none of the individual phases within the campaign would have worked, not to
mention the campaign as a whole. Dove hired Ogilvy & Mather, a top advertising
agency, to create the Campaign for Real Beauty. Ogilvy & Mather then hired very
talented photographers, directors, and even musicians to make this campaign thrive. For
example, in order for phase two to be effective (and still not alter photographs), Ogilvy &
Mather hired a leading beauty photographer, Rankin, who could take photographs of
ordinary women and make them look outstanding (Real Women). Since the photos were
taken by a very talented photographer, the women looked like real women with real
bodies and their photos were not airbrushed, which makes the campaign all the more
intriguing.

The first phase of the campaign began by featuring a woman with two questions
and two check boxes in each advertisement. The questions for one particular
advertisement were “Oversized?” and “Outstanding?” Others that were featured included
Half full?” Viewers were then asked to log onto Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty
website (http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com) to cast their votes (The Campaign).
The average-looking women in each ad were beautiful in their own right, but would not
be considered beautiful according to the ideal image set forth by societal standards.
Phase two of the campaign presents a group of six “real” women, photographed in their underwear, without having the images altered or touched up (The Campaign). According to Olgilvy & Mather representative Inge Selawry, Dove began phase two by using four rules in their advertising: (1) find a number of diverse, real women; (2) ask them to use the product; (3) shoot the results with a great photographer in a classic beauty shoot; and (4) show the results without retouching or manipulating the images. Selawry exclaims, “in an industry that bombarded women with unrealistic images of perfection and preyed on their insecurities, [Dove] had the courage and vision to ‘be real.’”
Lagnado, Senior Vice President of Dove, declared, “by questioning the accepted
definition of beauty, we hope to help women change the way they perceive their bodies
and encourage them to feel beautiful every day” (Real Women). This vision, sustained
throughout the entire campaign, has attracted many consumers to Dove.

The photographs of the women featured in the second phase, which can be seen in
Figure 4.5, may not have been altered, but there is an argument that the average size 14
American woman still does not fit Dove’s portrayal of beauty, as the real women featured
are much smaller than average. Rachel Corbett claims that the women highlighted in
phase two were between size 6 and size 12. According to Katie LeBesco, associate
professor of communication arts at Marymount Manhattan College, “[The six non-
models] are certainly not traditional beauties, but they are not so far from the norm that
they really undermine some of our social conventions” (qtd. in Corbett). Although not
utilizing the size of the average woman, Dove’s campaign is still better because it has
shifted our attention away from the ideal; however, as LeBesco noted, the women are not
so far from the ideal that it caused the campaign to flop. Dove has positioned the viewer
as the subject within the image by using realistic social codes. They do not feature
unattainable images of supermodels. The image basically tells the viewer that she could
be one of Dove’s non-model models because she is a normal person, and so are Dove’s
models.

Phase three began as a video of pre-teen and teenaged girls discussing their
insecurities, which spawned Dove’s Self-Esteem Fund. Dove has committed to
improving girls’ perceptions of themselves despite what the beauty industry has
formulated as the ideal image for women. Now, a number of videos dedicated to displaying the truth about the beauty industry can be found on Dove’s website (http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/dsef07/t5.aspx?id=7315). According to the website, “The Dove Self-Esteem Fund was developed to help free the next generation from self-limiting beauty stereotypes” (The Dove). The entire campaign has come full-circle, from helping adult women to see that they are beautiful to preventing disillusioned, unhealthy views of the self in young girls – to prevent negative body images before they actually happen.

When women realize the amount of economic strength and power over change they have, they will feel incredibly empowered. Since the majority of Dove’s target
audience is not the size of supermodels, they receive a certain amount of pleasure from viewing “average” women in Dove’s ads. Again, advertisers know that consumers want to relate to people depicted in advertisements. Women are more likely to make a purchase when they see an average person because they are better able to relate to them than to a professional model.

Clearly it is very easy for an average woman to place herself inside Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty because Dove has done its homework. Women compare themselves to models and because the women featured in Dove’s campaign represent the so-called average American woman, women feel as though they can relate better and identify more with the non-models (Corbett). Dove wants women to view their ads and instead of thinking, if I use this product I can look like the supermodel in the ad, they would rather women look at the ads and be happy with who they are, but use Dove’s products at the same time. With Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty, Dove is going against 50 years of proven advertising know-how – using an idealized image. According to George and Trimbur, the problem with using thin professional models is that “an image can stand in for and even become reality” (173). Advertisers do think about visuals when they create advertising campaigns. If a woman is able to identify with an ad, she is more likely to consider that product than if she is completely unable to relate to an ad. Advertisers want people to relate to their ads for this specific purpose: if someone can see themselves in relation to an ad, then they can see themselves using the product or service. Dove has thought about this as well, but wants normal to be the new reality for women, and for these same women to use their products.
The dominant meaning intended by Dove for both the campaign as a whole and the individual phases, is that Dove is a good company that is trying to influence societal change on what is considered beautiful. To the average person within Dove’s target market, this may be apparent. This campaign is very powerful because it allows women to have power over which products to purchase and a sense of control over their perceptions of themselves. If they purchase Dove’s products, then they are essentially agreeing with what Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty is trying to accomplish.

According to Philippe Harousseau, the Marketing Director for Dove, the purpose of the global expansion for the Campaign for Real Beauty was to “widen the stereotypical view of beauty, while advertising [Dove’s] firming lotion” (qtd. in Corbett). Although Dove does have their bottom line in mind, they have also created social awareness about body image and how important it is to positively influence each other, especially our youth. When Dove’s campaign is mentioned, almost everyone is aware of it. The campaign has brought quite a bit of press and intrigue within the beauty and advertising industries, and to women worldwide.

Obviously, the representative codes had to come together to support the ideology of embracing what you look like because every woman is beautiful. Dove wants to broaden the Western world’s definition of beauty beyond physical attractiveness. By putting together an ad campaign that promotes a modification of our idea of beauty, and by hiring the best of the best, Dove is able to encode a preferred meaning that most consumers and marketing professionals can comprehend and accept.
There are many people who disagree with, and even dislike, the Campaign for Real Beauty, and unfortunately so; there are those out there who will oppose anyone who attempts to alter stereotypes. Yet, many people have praised Dove, mostly marketing experts and women. In The Beauty Backlash, a documentary about Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty, the campaign was thoroughly explored by correspondent Libby Potter. It was noted that a month after the campaign was originally run in the United Kingdom, Dove’s sales for their firming creams rose over 700 percent. Alessandro Manfredi from Dove claims that the reason for their success was that people were exuberant to find a beauty campaign that did not sell to insecurities, but rather through inspiration (The Beauty Backlash). The film notes that L’Oreal has improved their sales by using an iconic tagline – “Because I’m Worth it” – and for using celebrities such as Eva Longoria, Claudia Schiffer, and Andie MacDowell, and now Scarlett Johansson and Jane Fonda (The Beauty Backlash). According to Saatchi & Saatchi representative Sarah Musgrave, in groups, women claim to love Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty; conversely, as individuals, they comment on how bored they are with looking at ordinary people, that they think it is great and would love to have that level of confidence, but they cannot find the confidence in themselves, while others think it is a nice idea but do not own any Dove products and do not plan to (The Beauty Backlash). Musgrave suggests that perhaps women are not ready for the campaign yet; however, looking at Dove’s profit margin, Unilever would beg to differ.

Dove is in the business of selling beauty products. That is their primary concern when putting together a marketing campaign such as the Campaign for Real Beauty. The
positive press that they receive just adds to this phenomenon. How consumers view an ad will play a part in what the individual thinks about the company; however, Dove created these ads with a specific meaning and purpose. Some believe that consumers bought into this campaign, not because Dove was making a stand against stereotypes, but because it was different. Americans are drawn to individualism and empowerment of the people. Dove, as a major brand of Unilever, did something unheard of and acted in an individualistic manner. According to Rebecca Traister, just because Dove did something different than the rest, the campaign and Dove’s products, are getting a massive amount of attention; however, in the midst of doing something different, Dove was doing something good. Besides standing up against stereotypical standards of beauty, Dove created The Dove Self-Esteem Fund committed to reaching over 5 million young women by 2010.

Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty has really turned around Dove’s basic business. Jack Neff from Advertising Age explores Dove’s campaign versus profitability. In 2004, when the campaign was first kicked off, profits were not fantastic, as they only rose by 2%; however, Dove persisted on with the campaign and in 2005, Unilever saw one of its most noted brands grow over 12.5%, and over 10% in 2006 (Neff). This atypical beauty campaign has been deemed a triumph by Unilever because of the profits that have been gained, but also because of the awareness this project has brought toward building self-esteem in women of all ages.

The Campaign for Real Beauty has proven to be so profitable and successful amongst Dove’s target market in North America, Europe, and Asia, that Dove has
expanded into the Middle East. Dove intends on redefining beauty globally and has made
great strides in that direction; however, the campaign is not faultless. What is absent,
especially in phase two, is the average woman. Where are the mothers and the
grandmothers? Where are the plus-sized women? While phase one identified women who
were older or larger, these women were left out of phase two and were not photographed
in their underwear. Yes, this would be straying away from the socially constructed ideal
image even more so, but Dove claims that is what they want – they want to redefine
beauty. The average woman is not being depicted in the majority of beauty
advertisements. Dove tells women that they should be proud of who they are and that all
women are beautiful and therefore should be photographed.

Dove opened a dialogue with real women by introducing this innovative
campaign and by fostering communication through their website. Although this is a
breakthrough in the world of advertising and marketing, and an excellent example of
socially conscious marketing in the beauty industry, not enough organizations are
advancing in Dove’s direction. Why are organizations not “jumping on board” the
socially conscious bandwagon when it comes to advertising and body image, when Dove
has proven that companies can be profitable while doing social good? Professional
communicators could prove to be key in changing the mentality of the beauty industry.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATORS

Professional communicators have a duty to serve the organizations in which they work. It is also their ethical responsibility to serve the communities that their organization works. For beauty businesses, community exists through the mass media. Although responsible for selling a product or service, professional communicators sell more than that. Professional communicators are responsible for the images they inflict on the world that further the ideology of perfection. America’s obsession with perfection is damaging the well-being of adolescent girls, and here is an opportunity for professionals to maintain a decent profit margin for their organizations, while also doing civic good. Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty is a prime example of an organization that has continuously been recognized for their socially conscious efforts and for still turning a profit. If Dove can do it, so can other businesses in the beauty industry, and professional communicators can make a difference by creating a social movement within their individual organizations.

Summary of Findings

Today the American consumer is being bombarded by images more so than ever before. Because of this push of images, it is important for advertisers and marketers to be aware of the potential consequences that can come from the images they provide to the
public. The consequences may range from body dissatisfaction to deadly disorders that affect one-fifth of all young women.

It is important to remember the power that the media hold as “the media play a role in communicating current sociocultural standards of physical appearance, and at present, standards of female beauty emphasize thinness as a high priority” (Lokken, Lokken Worthy, Trautmann 361-362). The National Organization for Women (NOW) looks at all primetime programs on the main networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, and WB) and expresses their trepidation through their annual Feminist Primetime Report. Diana Zuckerman and Nicole Dubowitz note that NOW has many concerns, but the appearance of women on television and the lack of older women, minority women, and women with realistic bodies are of primary concern (63). In some studies, the mere viewing of thin female models shows that women experience significant negative effects after viewing images from the media that depict ultra-thin female models. Some organizations such as Adbusters Media Foundation, attempt to bring about positive social movements through the development of spoof advertisements, such as the one in the below Figure 5.1.

For decades, researchers such as Judith Rabak-Wagener, JoAnn Eickhoff-Shemek, and Lisa Kelly-Vance have noted that, “fashion advertisements have…been found to have a negative effect on body image attitudes and behaviors among young women;” however, the 1990s is when a ideal of tall, thin women came into our society full-force through both print media and television advertising (29). Although this is
obviously a problem and some solutions have been set forth, body image issues and eating disorders are still on the rise.

The answer to this problem of the media perpetuating the ideal female form is not to point the finger at the media as a whole and/or entire organizations; that serves no good, as it does not solve the problem at hand. Most importantly, it has not worked in the past, and it will not work in the future. I suggest a new solution to this ongoing problem which will require individual professional communicators to take personal and professional responsibility for their work.
Obligations as Professional Communicators

There are two levels of ethics that professional communicators need to be aware of: industry and individual. In the communications/mass media industry and in the world of business as a whole, there are codes that professionals need to uphold and advocate within their industry and in their individual organizations as well. Since adolescent girls are more inclined to have body dysphoria and eating disorders, and the media has been shown to have a significant impact on these issues, it is important now more than ever that organizations and the professional communications industry act ethically in the creation of their advertisements, especially in the beauty business. Conrad C. Fink explains that ethics within media is a difficult issue because of deadlines, social values, and competition:

As a result [of industry pressures], many journalists approach moral reasoning and ethical problem solving without a structured framework. Rather, they often decide quickly, almost instinctively, basing their judgments on narrow personal attitudes that stem principally, perhaps, from religious training or the attitudes of colleagues, family and friends. Unfortunately, that’s like attempting a long journey into unfamiliar territory without a map. (1)

This indicates that professional communicators need to have high personal ethics before entering the media or communications fields.

In his article, “The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust,” Steven B. Katz illustrates that professional communicators treating people
like objects is an unethical thing to do. Although Katz uses a letter written by Just during the Holocaust as an example, it is still relevant to professional communicators in the beauty industry. Just refers to the Jews as “pieces” of a “load” that need to be exterminated, or in his words, “processed” (Katz 255-256). In the beauty business, women are portrayed as objects visually, in the mass media. By feeding into the ideology of perfection, professional communicators are sending a message to all women, especially adolescent women, that the way a woman looks is all that is relevant in our superficial world. In the Western culture, if a woman does not have the ideal body, she is denigrated to the point where she feels like a failure. Professional communicators should act ethically, particularly when creating visual elements for women to view.

Fink notes that much of the ethical dilemma for individuals within media organizations comes from having to decide where to place their allegiance between different stakeholders. Should it be with the public? Advertisers? Yourself? The organization that employs you? Your colleagues? Fink says that “because we all have many – and often conflicting – loyalties, [deciding where to place commitment first] is one of the most difficult aspects of decision making in ethics” (19). Only the individual can decide, with the influence of others, to whom they must remain loyal.

Because professional communicators are responsible for the image of the organization that they work for, in addition to the company’s bottom line, a certain level of loyalty must remain with the company itself; however, marketing professional communicators need to understand why young women tend to have disordered thinking
based on the images provided in the Western media, what the attitudes are toward women that are being visually represented, and what knowledge is needed in the beauty industry.

In Carolyn R. Miller’s article, “What’s Practical About Technical Writing?,” Miller explores three important terms that professional communicators need to be familiar with: techne, praxis, and phronesis. Techne is the use of applying rules from the practical to produce work. Praxis, on the other hand, is the practical influenced by theoretical reasoning, and vice versa. Miller uses phronesis to show the professionalism communicators must have, as well as their desire to do civic good in the realm of praxis. The ultimate goal of Miller’s article, and using these terms, is to illustrate that practice and theory are thought of as two separate entities, but the two cannot truly be separated (20). Practice and theory must influence one another to really work. By using techne, praxis, and phronesis, professional communicators can manage the theoretical and practical elements of their job by using a higher level of professionalism than if praxis or techne was solely selected.

Social responsibility falls upon the media because the public highly values the information they provide. In the 1940s, the Hutchins Commission warned that “the press was becoming extremely powerful and engaging in practices that could lead to societal regulation” (Fink 15). Thomas Peterson, a journalism professor, stated that because the media is essentially placed on a pedestal in our society, a certain level of responsibility must coincide with freedom of speech (15). Many organizations recognize their power and state that serving the public is a major goal of the business; and thus, should be held accountable in this regard.
I contend that individual professional communicators need to serve as moral agents for the public. By being ethical persons, communicators can leave work knowing they not only did their job, but they also did it ethically. As far as personal gains go, professional communicators can receive intrinsic pleasure from being moral, not only in their personal lives, but in their professional lives as well. Fink agrees and believes that a person’s conscience will lead them in the right direction. He also states that “whatever course you decide to follow, be loyal to your sense of self, to your professional conscience, to your personal definition of integrity” (Fink 19). If a communicator makes a professional decision that ultimately makes them uncomfortable personally, then it is probably not the correct choice.

Acting ethically does require action. By not challenging the status quo regarding the content within advertisements and the media, professional communicators can be considered unethical. Even if they are not contributing to the problem by suggesting ultra-thin models and celebrities, they should be held just as accountable for not trying to alter our society’s ideology of perfection.

Changes for the Future

William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally state that “advertising plays a more straightforward role in transmitting an ideology that perpetuates the status quo and its exploitative social relations, through the presentation of a world view that encourages the audience to interpret reality in ways that work to the benefit of those who already possess
economic power” (29). The empowered group, in this case the advertisers, promote an ideology to the marginalized consumers, who internalize that ideology. Passive bystanders of ideologies have far less power since they merely internalize ideologies put forward by the dominant power structure. Based on Herndl and Bizzell’s interpretation, only those from within the dominant group are able to alter the ideologies that marginalized people internalize.

As I would be considered an “outsider” to the dominant culture of the advertising industry, it may be less possible for me to directly affect change with trends in marketing and advertising; however, if I am able to empower the individual professional communicator to want to make positive changes within the dominant culture with regard to socially conscious marketing strategies, hopefully changes will come – and maybe in time, a revolution will ensue. I intend on, as a professional communicator, to go into industry and personally seek opportunities to assist in improving the situation that leads young women into disordered thinking. I will also look into volunteering at non-profit organizations that try to improve the ideology of perfection and the representation of women in the media.

Andrzej Huczynski notes that the use of central route persuasion could lead to a more persuasive argument:

Central route persuasion occurs when interested influences focus on the arguments that you present, mentally construct their own arguments and counter-arguments, before reaching a decision. For these analytical influencees, it is the
arguments that you present that are persuasive, as these encourage your listeners to think. (175)

Professional communicators can take information from this thesis, along with other data, to create a significant argument for altering marketing strategies within individual organizations. If the information is presented properly, it can lead to an organizational decision to be more socially conscious, especially with regard to dismantling the ideology of perfection.

Using proper verbal and non-verbal cues can result in shifting marketing strategies. Good verbal cues professional communicators should use include projecting positive expectations, giving appropriate credit, learning from experiences, remaining responsible for their own feelings, persuading others to work with them, speaking decisively, and telling the truth (Huczynski 47-50). The way a person uses positive verbal cues can indicate power, confidence, and certainty in the material being presented. The more secure a speaker is, the more believable their argument can be.

Some superior non-verbal cues consist of good posture, occupying more space, leaning in when talking to others, maintaining eye contact, keeping facial muscles relaxed, and by maintaining a well-kempt appearance. The visual aspect, as noted in this thesis, is just as important, if not more important than the textual/verbal aspect of an argument. In order to better negotiate a position or an argument, good verbal and non-verbal cues must be present.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to educate professional communicators in academia and in industry about the positive and negative effects surrounding the
marketing choices they make. My hope is that professional communicators acknowledge the impact they have on society and apply this information to not only serve the institutions they work for, but also the public as a whole, as well as recognize that it is their responsibility to act ethically as a professional communicator. An added benefit to social action within the field of professional communications is that professional communicators in the beauty business could ultimately give a perspective to other industries about the representation of women in the media.

In order to be a more critical marketing professional communicator in the beauty industry, a heuristic – or set of questions – should be used to examine visual elements of marketing campaigns. Below are a few sample questions that could be to analyze the effectiveness and potential danger of current and future images of women:

- What percentage of the woman’s body is shown?
- What is the believability of the scene?
- Is the scene natural?
- How is the woman depicted versus the man (if represented)?
- What is disordered in the image?
- What could a ten-year-old read into the image? A twenty-year-old? A thirty-year-old? And so on and so forth.

These questions require professional communicators to take a more active role and interrogate visual elements through an analytical lens. By using these, and other similar questions, professional communicators may be more critical when viewing images that
they helped to develop. Since images are a crucial part of marketing campaigns, a judicious lens is necessary.

Marketing strategies are not easily changed and neither are ideologies. Educating professional communicators about the marketing plans they may or may not apply, or be aware of, to their own products and services may allow for a reexamination of current and future marketing plans for businesses in the beauty industry. Although Lee Clark Johns’ article is about organizational writing, she makes excellent points that can be applied to marketing. As new people come into an organization, they want to produce documents (or strategies) that will be accepted by other organizational members. The newest members of an organization “are looking for…models that have succeeded in the past, models that they can efficiently copy, models that their supervisors will approve” (153). This can be a problem as “old formats and stylistic preferences continue to thrive long after they have outlived their usefulness” and this is precisely my point (153). Much of the advertising and marketing that is used today has outlived its usefulness. Changes need to be made, and the best place to start is with professional communicators themselves.

Professional communicators can make a difference by trying to change an organization’s marketing strategy internally. Based on Dove’s success, a precedent has been set for professional communicators to use as credibility to support the argument for using non-traditional models. By doing so, the possibility of improving women’s body images by starting in adolescence is much greater. I recommend that professional
communicators do the following to increase the awareness of this problem in the beauty industry and hopefully bring about positive changes:

- Realize the impact professional communicators have both individually, and collectively, on the identity formation of adolescent females
- Consider educating youths about images early on in their lives
- Look at successful beauty business organizations that are currently employing socially conscious marketing
- Conduct research on alternative marketing strategies
- Prepare professional presentations to educate colleagues of this issue
- Use personal and professional ethics to lead the discussion of alternative marketing strategies

In order to disseminate this information to professional communicators, I propose three different options. The first involves working with potential publishers to turn this thesis into a text that would be read by professionals in both academia and in industry. The second option is to publish an article in a journal. The purpose of this thesis is to create awareness about marketing strategies that may be dangerous to the health of young women, to professionals in industry and in academia and to create a sense of advocacy within the field. A journal article will be a great way to disperse information to a large group of people; however, two different articles printed in two different journals will be necessary as there are journals that are industry-specific and others that are academic-specific. The third option for disseminating this information would be to publish in non-academic publications. I plan to explore all avenues and turn this thesis into a book, a
journal article for both academia and industry, in addition to an article for a non-academic publication. Some of the journals that I am considering include *Advertising Age*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention*, *Feminism & Psychology*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Journal of Business Communications*, *Marketing & Media Decisions*, *Marketing to Women*, and *Technical Communication Quarterly*. A few options for non-academic publications include airline magazines and more socially conscious women’s magazines. Airline publications would allow my message to reach a large group, many of which are business travelers and parents. Some women’s magazines tend to have a more socially conscious message, such as *M.O.R.E.*, *O*, and *Vanity Fair*. By using a non-academic forum, more people will be aware of this growing issue and want changes to be made by individual professional communicators in the beauty business.
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