

After you have read this chapter, you will understand:

- How fashion images can create anxiety for viewers
- How magazines retouch photographs to create idealized images
- How media images impact body image
- How media includes ads of violence toward women as a selling tool

Fashion is at our fingertips. With easy access, we can click on an icon and journey into our favorite fashion magazine, television show, blog, or website. These venues treat us to our favorite designer's latest runway show, a critique of red carpet dresses, an article about how to lose 10 pounds, and how to dress appropriately for a job interview. This information and its accompanying images are often infused with views of flawless human bodies and faces or what we refer to as **Western idealized images** or **Euro-American idealized images**. We refer to idealized images rather than perfect or flawless images since most images are retouched (i.e. **retouched digital images** can be airbrushed or photoshopped) to the extent that it no longer resembles the actual model. Therefore the image is idealized beyond what the live model actually looks like. Fashion media can be helpful in the information it dispenses, but the information can also create anxiety. This chapter discusses the multifaceted aspect of dress and media: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Fashion media, including magazines, television, websites, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, gives us the latest fashion information. For example, **influencers** (or bloggers) are a relatively new type of social media that did not exist until the ubiquitous cell phone was part of everyone's wardrobe. Now, Instagram and Facebook are common avenues for influencers to tell you what is hot and what is not.

Social media sites expand viewership beyond Lincoln Center and the Paris runways. A student can sit in a dorm

and watch live streams of Marc Jacobs's runway show. Some designers utilize the live streaming option as a selling tool, giving shoppers 24 hours to preorder items straight from the runway. Some retailers have taken social media to a new level by listening to what customers are saying about products they want. In one example, American retailer The Loft posted photos of a new pair of pants on a skinny model. Customers responded with negative comments like "Sure, they look great, if you're 5'10" and a stick like the model in the photo." The retailer quickly reacted with new photos, this time of employees from sizes 2 to 12 wearing the same pair of pants. After this change, The Loft received positive comments about the pants and the realistic models. This is an example of how the fashion industry is utilizing technology changes in the media.

The tall, thin models that walk the runway, adorn fashion magazine pages, and decorate retailers' websites are not what most women look like (see Figure 10.1). **Western cultural ideals** of beauty and appearance are constant throughout media and have been for as long as practices of adornment have been recorded. Fashion publications have been around since the 18th century when Paris and London printed journals to disseminate the latest fashions in men's and women's clothing, accessories, and hairstyles. These early publications included drawings and color illustrations of dresses, hats, carriages, and much more. The use of illustrations continued into the 20th century when magazines' drawings and illustrations documented the newest styles and promoted the ideal figure for the time. For example, the **Gibson Girl** personified the ideal woman of the early 20th century with her large bust, tiny waist, and rounded hips, supposedly perfected by the "S" corset (Figure 10.2). The **Flapper** epitomized the flat-chested, straight figure of the 1924 to 1928 period, while bust, waist, and hips in a slender form prevailed in the 1930s. The ideal figure of

the 1940s included broad shoulders with the noticeable curves of the breasts, waist, and hips; these curves were further accentuated in the 1950s with a noticeably smaller waist. This ideal was replaced in the late 1960s by a thin, androgynous figure made famous by Twiggy. Non-European models appeared for the first time in the 1960s, including the first African American model in a major fashion publication. All these changes in cultural ideals were reflections of changes in society as a whole during each period. A 2009 exhibition called "The Model as Muse" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York showcased these ideals and more through fashion's famous faces from the 1950s to the present, supporting the notion that the models from each period represented the ideals of beauty for that particular time. Today fashion magazines continue to promote idealized images. Currently, thinness continues to fill pages and websites, indicating that it is valued. Yet, actresses such as Christina Hendricks, Sophia Vergara, and Jennifer Lopez provide an alternative to thinness as a beauty image (Figure 10.3). Some retailers are responding. For example, Talbot's uses curvy models in its catalogs and in 2011 hired Ashley Falcon as style advisor for Talbot's Woman and Woman Petite fashions. Ashley Falcon is known for her curvy, full figure and for the style advice she gives plus-size girls and women through her *Marie Claire* columns. This is a move in the right direction for designers and retailers.

It will be interesting to see if other retailers, magazines, and advertisers take notice and refocus to include the vast majority of women and their needs.

MAKING THEM PERFECT

Images of actresses, singers, and other entertainers, whether male or female, appear flawless and blemish-free in magazines. The results of using a model's photo to then create an **airbrushed image** or a **photoshopped image** leads to images that bear only a resemblance to the model who was photographed. Research has found that media images impact how girls, boys, men, and women feel about their own bodies, particularly if they don't match the idealized standard: muscular build; thin body; small hips and breasts; long blonde, straight hair; and pore-free skin. Along with the ideal body, celebrities and models are depicted with perfect, blemish-free faces. In reality, these images are retouched digitally. In a reading at the end of the chapter, the famous 1960s fashion model Twiggy, now in her late 50s, appears in an airbrushed skin-care advertisement in which she looks 30 years younger. The article also includes an untouched photograph of how she really looked at age 59. Richard Simpson states in "The Two Faces of Twiggy at 59: How Airbrushing in Olay Ad Hides Truth of the Skin She's In" that the real Twiggy looks good for her age but does have the typical signs of

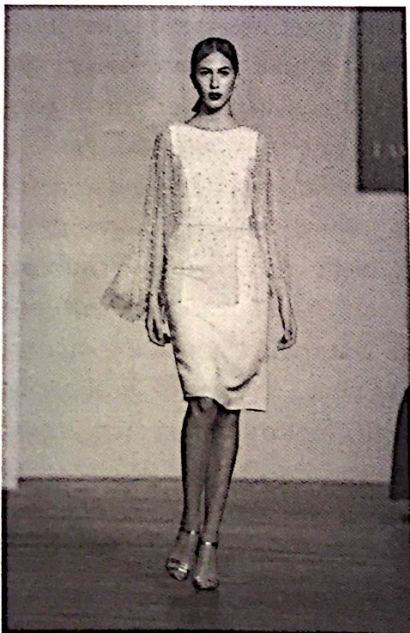


Figure 10.1 Models show us the latest runway styles that represent the contemporary image of beauty.



Figure 10.2 Early 20th-century fashions presented a curvy figure: large bust, tiny waist, and curving hips.

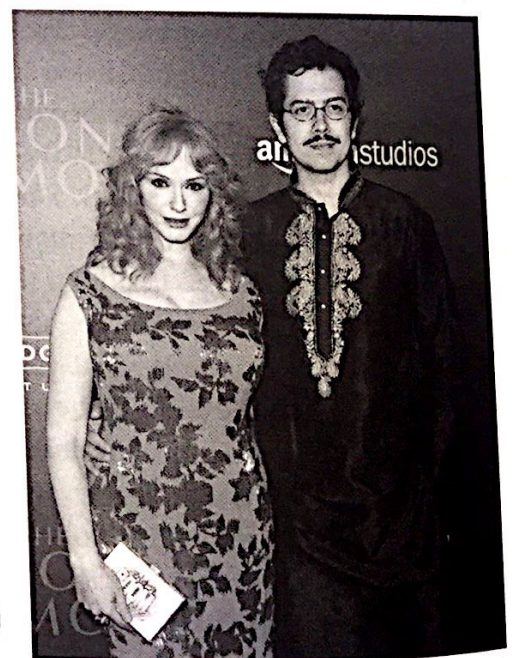


Figure 10.3 Actresses like Christina Hendricks provide an alternative to thinness as a beauty image.

aging (e.g., wrinkles). Do these idealized cultural images of men and women in the 21st century matter?

All people are adversely affected by fake images (Bordo, 2004), and young girls are especially vulnerable. To show that models and actresses are perfect and flawless is deceptive and encourages women and girls to believe that something is wrong with them because they have wrinkles, blemishes, and cellulite.

Outside of the United States, the public in some instances is beginning to protest the retouching of images and even believe that it is the media's **social responsibility** to notify its readers of the retouched photos. A protest organization in the United Kingdom started a campaign called "Real Women" with the goal of encouraging companies to include realistic images of women in advertisements. The group is working toward a warning system or symbol that notifies the reader (and/or viewer) about whether an image has been digitally modified and to what degree. A consumer group in Australia want to see voluntary programs that, among other things, encourage companies not to use retouched images or, if they do, to notify readers (and/or viewers) that an image has been retouched. These are small steps in the movement away from the falseness of retouched bodies and faces.

Research: Objectification and Impact

Objectification refers to a phenomenon of regarding people as "things" or "objects" by focusing on one part of the body rather than considering the whole individual. One long-standing cliché in the advertising industry is "sex sells." This belief is a matter of concern in regard to how men and women are represented in magazines. Research has indicated that since the 1960s fashion advertising has become more sexually overt in that women are shown nude or partially nude to help sell products. Dress scholar Mary Thompson (2000) studied the sexual portrayal of both male and female models in advertising from 1964 to 1994 in two magazines: *Vogue* and *GQ*. Not surprisingly, she found that there was an increase in sexually overt images of women between 1964 and 1994. However, the first sexually explicit imagery involving men's bodies appeared in 1984. The overall number of images was higher in the women's category than for the men's, yet men were also objectified after 1984.

Jung and Lee (2009) conducted **cross-cultural research** of women's fashion and beauty magazines in

the United States and Korea. One component of their research included an examination of women as sex objects in advertisements. The researchers wanted to find out if there were differences or similarities between how female models were portrayed in advertisements in the United States and Korea. The authors of the study indicated that:

When objectification occurs, the female body is seen as a decorative object that is used as part of the scene for the advertised products/services. Sexual objectification often occurs when the focus is on isolated body parts, such as a bare stomach, cleavage, or buttocks, and it is not unusual that isolated body parts are being used in ads as part of or in comparison to product features such as shape, weight, and texture (2009, p. 277).

Jung and Lee also found that female models were mostly represented as sexual objects in both the U.S. and Korean magazines, with more in the Korean than in the U.S. fashion and beauty publications. In addition, they found that more models were shown in partial or full nudity in advertisements in the U.S. magazines, and more faces were hidden, indicating greater frequency of female objectification in the U.S. magazines. They also found that the traditional Korean concept of female attractiveness that concentrates on the face rather than on the body was maintained. In addition, Jung and Lee found a standardized ideal of beauty based on the Western concept of thinness and noted that the Korean traditional concept of female beauty that included mild plumpness with a round face was replaced by models who followed the U.S. standard of thin bodies and prominent facial features. Another finding in this study was the fact that magazines from both countries were primarily using Caucasian models, thus moving toward a Western standard of beauty rather than a focus on the unique and differing features of women's bodies and faces.

Taking the view of body-as-object to its ultimate conclusion are ads and editorials that include violence to female models or, in some instances, death. Some advertisers and shop window designers developed images to literally fit the "to die for" adage. That beginning gave birth to other instances of mixing fashion with violence and death (see the reading "Why Do Ads and Editorials Depicting Violence Keep Happening?" at the end of this chapter). The most remembered images from designers Dolce & Gabbana's "gang rape" ad along with other images of lifeless women in the trunks of cars are disturbing.

These ads portray women as helpless victims while simultaneously selling this demented view of “fashion” to women. The author suggests that it would help if there was a critical discussion about such ads but that never seems to happen. The “disturbing media” tends to get a lot of attention initially but then gets pulled by the advertiser without any context or critical analysis. However, violent ads continue to pop up randomly again and again without warning.

Over the years researchers have studied the effects of media on **self-esteem**, **body image**, and **body dissatisfaction**. This research focused on the impact that advertisements and photographs of thin models in magazines and on television have on young women (Ju & Johnson, 2010; Jung, 2006; Jung & Lee, 2009; Kim & Lennon, 2007). The **social comparison theory** often serves as a theoretical framework for analysis of the impact of media. This theory, developed by social psychologist Leon Festinger, indicates that humans compare themselves with others, particularly in regard to appearance “for purposes of self-evaluation” (Kaiser, 1997, p. 171). Comparing ourselves to celebrities, models, and others in the media is typical; it is how this comparison affects us that makes it a controversial topic. Kim and Lennon (2007) found that there is a connection between looking at ideal images in fashion or beauty magazines and dissatisfaction with one’s appearance, as well as with a propensity to develop eating disorders. Jung (2006) studied the impact of media on mood and body image. She found that advertisements in fashion magazines may negatively affect the mood of research participants rather than their perception of body image. Jung found that exposure to media images in magazines decreased “a positive mood and elevated depression and anxiety” (p. 341). These findings confirm the alienation that people can feel if their bodies and other aspects of their appearance (hair color and texture) do not match cultural standards.

Adolescents are also surrounded by media images of thin and perfect bodies and tend to be more susceptible to believing that those impossible norms are attainable. Recent research found that greater involvement with visual media such as TV and fashion magazines correlates with greater body dissatisfaction and desire to achieve thinness norms.

Lisa Duke (2002) studied African American and European-American girls’ assessments of their favorite teen magazines. She found that the African American girls were often critical of the lack of representation of real girls like themselves in the magazines (see Figure 10.4).



Figure 10.4 Fashion publications often provide us with homogenous images of beauty rather than the real diversity of beautiful faces.

Even though they often liked the articles in mainstream teen magazines, they wanted to see more representation of girls who weren’t so thin, so perfectly and unrealistically made up, and so white. The white girls in the study did not tend to notice the limited representation of diversity and were less critical consumers of the magazines.

Men and boys are likewise not immune to cultural ideals. If boys are too thin or overweight, they are often teased, a problem that starts as early as elementary school. Due to the influence of the media, men are paying more attention to their appearance (Rohlinger, 2002) (Figure 10.5). Today, doctors and medical media warn about the dangers of steroids, bodybuilding, and weight loss, a combination that many boys and men use to change their appearance and better fit the idealized body image. Jones (2001) found that boys, like girls, make social comparisons of themselves to media celebrities and models. A study on body image among adolescents found that there has been an increase in male body image concerns due to changes in media portrayal of men. In addition, children are not immune to ideal images of thinness as attractive. Researchers are finding that girls as young as *four years old* express concern about their weight and mimic dieting behaviors and restrict their food intake (Smolek & Levine, 1994). Many girls in middle childhood talk about their

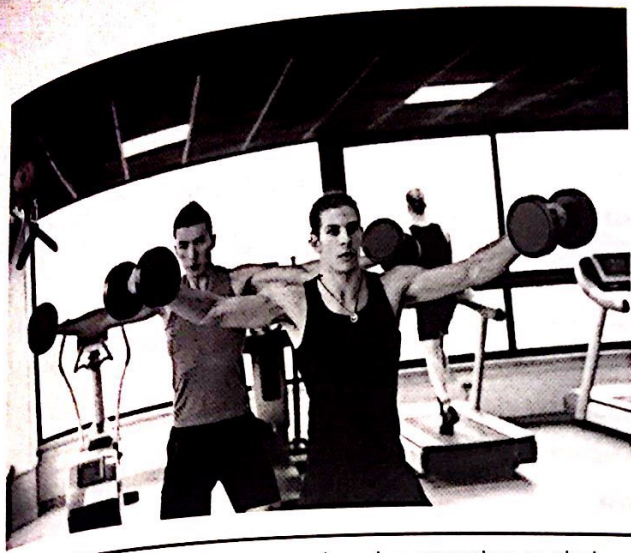


Figure 10.5 Many young men also give attention to their body image by working out and exercising daily.

need to diet, indicating that socialization to weight control is learned at an early age. The reading “Do Thin Models Warp Girls’ Body Image?” (at the end of this chapter) discusses the current standard of even thinner models on the runway, how this perception is affecting girls, links to eating disorders, and what some fashion professionals are doing to move away from extreme thinness.

GLOBAL VIEWS

The discussion of idealized images also reveals the fact that most models and celebrities do not represent Western society as a whole. By 2025, one-fifth of the U.S. population will be age 65 and older. It is well known that

Summary

This chapter explores the topic of dress and the media, particularly the negative impacts that idealized images in the media can create in the minds of consumers. Articles relate industry methods to disguise flaws and create idealized images of celebrities and models in advertisements, fashion layouts, and articles, as well as

Key Terms

Airbrushed image
Body dissatisfaction
Body image
Cross-cultural research
Cultural ideals

Euro-American idealized images
Flapper
Gibson Girl
Idealized images

Influencers
Objectification
Photoshopped image
Retouched digital image
Self-esteem

Social comparison theory
Social responsibility
Twiggy
Western cultural ideal
Western idealized images

baby boomers spend more money on consumer goods than Generation X or Y, so this demographic fact indicates that the fashion industry and fashion publications should already be preparing for these changes (Underhill, 2009).

There is a relationship between an advertising image and a consumer’s attraction to the image (Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992; Hornick, 1980). Research findings in a cross-cultural study by Bjerke and Polegato revealed that women in five different European cities had differing images of what they considered healthy and beautiful. They showed women in five European cities (London, Hamburg, Paris, Madrid, and Milan) a black-and-white photograph of two different women’s faces: a woman with (A) light hair and eye color, and (B) dark hair and eye color. The researchers asked, “If you want to look more healthy (or beautiful), which of these women would you prefer to look like?” Respondents could answer A, B, or neither. They were also asked to respond to eye and hair color. The findings revealed that there were differences in preference for one over the other, indicating that images of health and beauty are not the same across the five cultures. Woman B, however, was most preferred across the five cultures; therefore, Woman B can be “considered more cross-culturally acceptable” as an ideal image of beauty and health (Bjerke & Polegato, 2006, p. 874). This finding has implications for advertisers and others in the fashion industry to value multicultural and multi-ethnic features instead of cookie-cutter, blemish-free, tall, thin, and young models.

discuss the results of fashion’s fascination with thinness. Although some magazines, advertisers, and retailers use models that represent different ethnicities, ages, and body sizes to model clothing and other products, this is not a major trend in the fashion industry.

10.1

The Two Faces of Twiggy at 59: How Airbrushing in Olay Ad Hides Truth of the Skin She's In

Richard Simpson

It recently emerged that Twiggy was again to be the face of anti-ageing cream Olay, 25 years after she first won the job to become the fresh new face of one of the biggest beauty brands. Yet pictured in a natural state a few weeks shy of her 60th birthday, Twiggy, who is often referred to as the original supermodel, showed she does in fact age just like the rest of us.

Out on a grocery shop to her local London Marks and Spencers, a brand she also promotes, she appeared to be the age of, well, a woman of 59. Twiggy in her Olay ad looks a far cry from her more natural appearance on a trip to the supermarket. With slight jowls and only hairline wrinkles around her eyes and mouth, Twiggy does indeed look good for her age. However she bares very little resemblance to pictures, apparently of her, recently distributed to advertise Olay, whose catchphrase is 'Love the skin you're in.'

Airbrushing expert Michelle Facey of Facey Media said the amount of work done to wizard away the signs of aging in the advert picture was "a sham" and "totally misleading to the customer." (Figure 10.6) She said: "I think they

have really gone overboard. It's a sham. I did not realize she looked so different in real life. She always seems so youthful. What I can see from the picture is that she has plenty of age spots all over face, neck and décolletage. I would say she has had lip filler too. I am shocked by how much airbrushing has been done. She looks like a woman in her late 20s or 30s. This has to be the worst airbrushing I have ever seen in terms of making someone look younger it's completely unnatural and untrue. In my opinion, it's totally misleading to the customer."

Almost a quarter of a century after she first became the face of Olay, Twiggy has been chosen to star in its latest advertising campaign. She has signed up for a 12-month stint as the face of Olay Definity the brand's anti-ageing range. Twiggy first promoted the Olay range back in 1985, when it was known as Oil of Ulay.

She became one of the most recognized faces of the Sixties after modeling boss Nigel Davies spotted her as a 16-year-old schoolgirl called Lesley Hornby. Her waif look, which gave her a new name, was an immediate hit with the British public and within weeks she became the

Originally published in the Daily Mail. Reprinted by permission of Solo Syndication.



Figure 10.6 Two photos show Twiggy without retouching (a) and Twiggy with retouching (b). Which photo looks best to you?

“Face of 1966.” A year later pictures of Twiggy, complete with gamine haircut, long eyelashes and Mary Quant clothes, were adorning billboards in New York. Her enduring appeal has seen her take a central role in the highly successful Marks & Spencer advertising campaign.

Sarah Clark, spokesman for Olay Definity, would not say how much the new deal was worth, but said: “We were thrilled to welcome Twiggy back to the brand. She is a true beauty icon who continues to be an inspiration to millions of women across the UK.”

The stunning new pictures of Twiggy were taken by Karan Kapoor, the 1980s Bollywood actor turned

photographer. In the past Twiggy has spoken of her desire to maintain a natural look as she gets older. “I’m grateful for my lines of wisdom,” she said. “Of course, there are days when I think: ‘Oh my gawd, I look a bit tired.’ But I can pull it together if I have to.”

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it’s OK for magazines to retouch wrinkles, sags, and other signs of aging? Why or why not? Why do magazines find this necessary?
2. What aspects of American society make this approach to picturing women (or men) acceptable?

10.2 Why Do Ads and Editorials Depicting Violence Keep Happening?

The Fashion Law, Julie Zerbo

Interview magazine’s November 2014 issue included an interesting editorial. Entitled “Pretty Wasted,” the spread – which starred with models Anja Rubik, Andreea Diaconu, Lily Donaldson, Daria Strokous, and Edita Vilkeviciute looking less-than-alive – was nothing if not a thought-provoking one, both when it came out in 2014 and now,

when mass shooting happen in the U.S. on an alarmingly regular basis.

While it may not have *explicitly* promoted violence, it does depict women as helpless victims, and given its inclusion in a mainstream(ish) magazine, we can assume that it sells magazines and/or clothes. Moreover, if taken

Julie Zerbo/The Fashion Law (www.thefashionlaw.com)

out of context, as images are often portrayed and shared online – and especially on social media – the alcohol-infused editorial takes a markedly darker turn.

Interview's spread and other ones just like it are confusing if we consider who, exactly, fashion caters to – most immediately – and who it is largely dependent on. **Fashion is an industry that thrives on and thus, caters to, women - and yet, it continues to victimize them.** A few figures: As of 2016, the womenswear industry was worth a total of \$621 billion dollars, compared to the men's fashion industry's revenue of \$402 billion. As for the individuals within its ranks: Male models make about 1/10 of what females do. And save for many of the top positions, including chief executive and creative director roles, fashion is an overwhelmingly female-run industry.

Even with these stats in mind, fashion appears to be skewed against women quite a bit, and finds it to be rather “edgy” – or artistic even? – to depict women as the victims of violence.

More Than Just One Editorial

We cannot merely rely on a single editorial. Let us consider a few recent ad campaigns (Note: There are far too many editorials – such as Bulgaria-based *12 Magazine's* “Victims of Beauty” spread and *Pop magazine's* editorial featuring then-16-year-old model Hailey Clauson being choked by a man – to take into account).

On the advertising front: There was Dolce & Gabbana's controversial campaign, which has since been coined the “gang rape” ad. There was the similarly rape-themed ad that Calvin Klein ran for its jeans collection in 2010. There was also The Standard's 2013 ad, which featured a women strewn on the floor and according to commentators, served to trivialize violence against women.

There is more, though. Do you recall Jimmy Choo's Fall/Winter 2006 ad starring a dead Molly Simms in the trunk of a shovel-wielding Quincy Jones' car? What about Marc Jacobs' Spring/Summer 2014 campaign with Miley Cyrus, who was posed amongst what appeared to be a number of dead women?

Ah, and do forget the short film released in coincidence with Louis Vuitton's Fall/Winter 2013 collection, which sparked controversy for allegedly promoting prostitution. Still yet, there was the uber-controversial windows that Barneys New York debuted in 2009. With red paint splattered all over the windows and mannequins posed as

though they were (unsuccessfully) fending off attackers, the display – entitled, “Dressed To Kill” – was met with fury before it was nixed entirely.

Speaking at the time, Barneys' creative director, Simon Doonan, said, “We encourage our display people to be creative. We give them a lot of latitude, but this clearly crossed the line. It's as if someone saw a bad Hitchcock movie.”

Fashion or Art?

One thing these campaigns (and in Barneys' case, windows) all have in common is that they portray women in unfavorable positions – whether they are dead, beaten up, about to be raped, or some variation thereof. What these campaigns also share is the fact that such treatment is being passed off as “Fashion,” which is unfortunately nothing new.

Photographers, such as Helmut Newton (who was behind the 1997 ad for Redial handbags, which featured a model holding a handbag in front of her face to shield it from a gun, for instance) and Guy Bourdin, just to name a couple, have long used violence as a theme.

Nowadays, the violent depictions appear to be occurring with marked frequency as a catalyst for selling pricey garments and accessories.

There is an array of popularly-cited explanations for why the fashion industry has an enduring fascination with violence. Put simply, some of these campaigns are opting for shock-value as PR. They are ads designed to shock and create controversy in order to gain traction and get you to remember them. Oftentimes, this is achieved by using violence or sex.

Others seem to simply confuse – or perhaps overlook – the distinction between art and advertising. Yes, there is a distinction, and it stems from the fact that the latter is a far more commercial medium. In relying on the fashion-as-art argument, the so-called guilty party (the fashion figure) is essentially saying he/she expects to be held to the same standards as art, where political correctness is not expected, let alone demanded.

This is the excuse The Standard looked to when it was called out for its violence-centric ad campaign. The trendy hotel chain said its campaign was simply making use of the photographs of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm. But unlike art, fashion is – first and foremost – a consumer-facing industry, and the quantities of its products that are sold are markedly greater than those of even your most esteemed or in-demand artist.

With such facts in mind, it is not difficult to see why arguments are made to the effect that fashion should be held to slightly different standards than art.

A Reflection of the World?

More interestingly, however, is that others' uses of violence in fashion are likely a reflection of what is going on in the world right now, as fashion – whether it be in the form of an advertisement, editorial and/or garment – is known to do.

Jeremy Scott, for instance, looked to current events as inspiration for Spring/Summer 2013. Entitled, "Arab Spring," the collection – which included "riffs on Middle Eastern themes," per Vogue – came on the heels of the series of the deadly protests and demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa that commenced in 2010.

Raf Simons is also famous for tapping into the cultural zeitgeist ahead of America's war on terror, which closely followed the 9/11 attacks. In a couple collections around that time, Simons made use of militant and rebel themes, including camouflage bombers and models whose faces were wrapped in balaclavas and/or covered in hoodies. As noted by Vice, Simons' "Woe onto Those Who Spit on the Fear Generation . . . The Wind Will Blow It Back" collection, "conceived before the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent war on terror, and pre-dating the murder of Carlo Giuliani at the G8 Summit, was apt for a time of international unrest and angst."

Similarly, violence against women is an unfortunate but undeniable reality. So, there is, of course, a chance that some of the aforementioned ads have served to portray an observation of the time in which we live.

If that is the case, it leads us to yet another inquiry: Does that make it alright?

The Guardian touched on the topic of the "fashion-forward" depiction of female corpses on the heels of the release of Marc Jacobs' Spring/Summer 2014 campaign. The publication's analysis of the matter, read, in part: "This obsession with death isn't so surprising, when you consider it as the obvious and ultimate end point of a spectrum in which women's passivity and silence is sexualized, stylized and highly saleable."

The Guardian's Kira Cochrane went on to make another point: "There's a reason these images proliferate. If the sexualised stereotype of a woman in our culture is passive and vulnerable, the advertising industry has worked out

that, taken to its logical conclusion, there is nothing more alluring than a dead girl."

Death Sells

Following from this are some dark implications about our norms and motivations as a society but what may be worse is that brands are pushing off these images as fashion, as "edgy" fantasy scenarios, *in order to sell stuff*.

The backlash that followed Louis Vuitton's Fall 2013 "prostitution-promoting" video sheds some additional light on this industry practice. Inna Shevchenko, the leader of women's rights group, Femen, spoke out about the video, suggesting that it was a mix of PR stunt and sex-sells advertising. Femen told the Huffington Post: "Once again, naked women are used to create a buzz or sell clothes."

A piece in France's *Libération*, on the other hand, said Vuitton's video essentially relied on the ignorant glamorization of something that is not glamorous at all. "What indecency, ignorance and indifference to play with the fantasy of porn chic: the social condition of the vast majority of prostitutes has nothing enviable, nothing fancy, nothing happy about it."

Coupled with this is the underlying nature of the fashion creator vs. fashion observer dynamic. Most designers prefer that their clothes speak for themselves and in this same vein, editorials speak for themselves, as well, save for the accompanying text – which almost never explicitly takes on social causes. It is largely up to the audience to decide what to make of what they have seen.

But what about when the messages (inherent or completely obvious) are harmful? Does this change the "We Show, You Interpret" relationship between fashion's creators and fashion's observers? While it feels as though it potentially should, it probably does not, and so, in this way, these ad campaigns and editorials may aim to open the door for discussion amongst their viewers.

On the other hand, they may just be glamorizing violence against women as a way to sell more bags.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how the fashion industry can target women, who are the industry's target market, while simultaneously degrading those same women as helpless victims.
2. What is sexy or alluring about violence? Why have some brands taken this approach to sell to their target market?

10.3

Do Thin Models Warp Girls' Body Image?

Nanci Hellmich

When Frederique van der Wal, a former Victoria's Secret model, attended designers' shows during New York's Fashion Week this month, she was "shocked" by the waiflike models who paraded down the catwalk. They seemed even skinnier than in previous years.

"This unnatural thinness is a terrible message to send out. The people watching the fashion shows are young, impressionable women," says van der Wal, host of *Cover Shot* on TLC.

Psychologists and eating-disorder experts are worried about the same thing. They say the fashion industry has gone too far in pushing a dangerously thin image that women, and even very young girls, may try to emulate (Figure 10.7).

"We know seeing super-thin models can play a role in causing anorexia," says Nada Stotland, professor of psychiatry at Rush Medical College in Chicago and vice president of the American Psychiatric Association. Because many models and actresses are so thin, it makes anorexics think their emaciated bodies are normal, she says. "But these people look scary. They don't look normal."

The widespread concern that model thinness has progressed from willowy to wasted has reached a threshold as evidenced by the recent actions of fashion show organizers.

The Madrid fashion show, which ended Saturday, banned overly thin models, saying it wanted to project beauty and health. Organizers said models had to be within a healthy weight range.

From USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co., Inc. Reprinted with Permission.

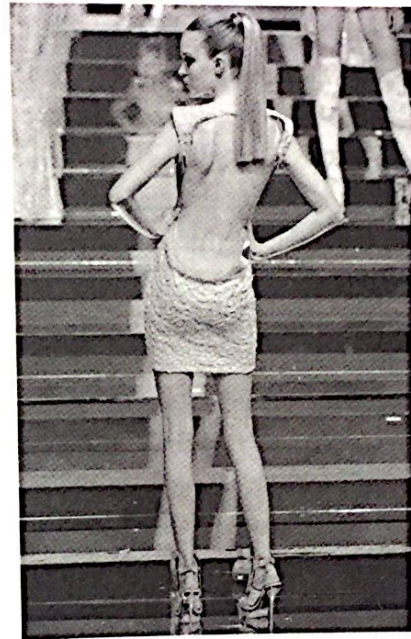


Figure 10.7 Many experts feel that excessively thin models promote an unrealistic image of the female body.

That means a 5-foot-9 woman would need to weigh at least 125 pounds.

Officials in India, Britain and Milan also have expressed concerns, but some experts say consumers in the USA will have to demand models with fuller figures for it to happen here.

"The promotion of the thin, sexy ideal in our culture has created a situation where the majority of girls and women don't like their bodies," says body-image researcher Sarah Murnen, professor of psychology at Kenyon College in

Gambier, Ohio. "And body dissatisfaction can lead girls to participate in very unhealthy behaviors to try to control weight."

Experts call these behaviors disordered eating, a broad term used to describe a range of eating problems, from frequent dieting to anorexia nervosa (which is self-starvation, low weight and fear of being fat) to bulimia nervosa (the binge-and-purge disorder).

Girls today, even very young ones, are being bombarded with the message that they need to be super-skinny to be sexy, says psychologist Sharon Lamb, co-author of *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes*.

It used to be that women would only occasionally see rail-thin models, such as Twiggy, the '60s fashion icon. "But now they see them every day. It's the norm," Lamb says, from ads, catalogs and magazines to popular TV shows such as *America's Next Top Model* and *Project Runway*. "They are seeing skinny models over and over again."

On top of that, gaunt images of celebrities such as Nicole Richie and Kate Bosworth are plastered on magazine covers, she says.

What worries Lamb most is that these images are filtering down to girls as young as 9 and 10. Some really sexy clothes are available in children's size 6X, says Lamb, a psychology professor at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vt. "Girls are being taught very young that thin and sexy is the way they want to be when they grow up, so they'd better start working on that now," she says.

Lamb believes it's fine for girls to want to feel sexy and pretty when they are teenagers, but that shouldn't be their primary focus. "If they are spending all their time choosing the right wardrobe, trying to dance like an MTV backup girl and applying lip gloss, it robs them of other options."

Some girls don't want to participate in sports because they're afraid they'll bulk up. Some won't try to play an instrument such as a trombone because it doesn't fit their image of what a "girly girl" should do, she says.

It Begins in Youth

There's no question younger girls are getting this message, says Murnen, who has studied this for 15 years. "We have done studies of grade-school girls, and even in grade 1, girls think the culture is telling them that they should model themselves after celebrities who are svelte, beautiful and sexy."

Some girls can reject that image, but it's a small percentage: 18% in Murnen's research. Those girls were shown to have the highest body esteem. Murnen and her colleagues reviewed 21 studies that looked at the media's effect on more than 6,000 girls, ages 10 and older, and found those who were exposed to the most fashion magazines were more likely to suffer from poor body images.

Societies throughout the ages have had different ideals for female beauty, says Katie Ford, chief executive officer of Ford Models, whose megastar models include Christie Brinkley and Rachel Hunter. "You can look as far back as Greek statues and paintings and see that. It's part of women's fantasy nature," Ford says. "The question is: When does that become destructive?"

She doesn't buy into the idea that fashion models are creating a cult of thinness in the USA. "The biggest problem in America is obesity. Both obesity and anorexia stem from numerous issues, and it would be impossible to attribute either to entertainment, be it film, TV or magazines."

Anatomy of a Runway Model

This year's fashion shows in New York featured a mix of figure types, some of them a little more womanly and some thin, says Ford, whose agency had about 20 models in shows of top designers, including Ralph Lauren, Bill Blass, Marc Jacobs and Donna Karan. "Our models who did very well this season were not super-skinny. However, there were some on the runway who were very thin."

Cindi Leive, editor in chief of *Glamour* magazine, says some models were teens who hadn't developed their curves yet, which is one reason they appeared so thin. "You do see the occasional model on the runway looking like she should go from the fashion show to the hospital. You hear stories of girls who come to model and are collapsing because they haven't eaten in days. Any responsible model booker will tell you they turn away girls who get too thin."

Runway models have to have a certain look, says Kelly Cutrone, owner of People's Revolution, a company that produces fashion shows around the world. Her company produced 16 fashion shows in New York, including one for designer Marc Bouwer.

The runway models this year were no thinner than years before, she says. "I didn't see any difference in the girls at all. When they bend over, are you going to see the rib cage? Yes, they are thin naturally."

Women shouldn't be comparing themselves with these girls, she says. "These girls are anomalies of nature. They are freaks of nature. They are not average. They are naturally thin and have incredibly long legs compared to the rest of their body. Their eyes are wide set apart. Their cheekbones are high."

Most runway models are 14 to 19, with an average age of 16 or 17, she says. Some are older. Many are 5-foot-10 or 5-foot-11. They average 120 to 124 pounds. They wear a size 2 or 4. "If we get a girl who is bigger than a 4, she is not going to fit the clothes," Cutrone says. "Clothes look better on thin people. The fabric hangs better."

Stephanie Schur, designer of her own line, Michon Schur, had her first official runway show in New York a few weeks ago. When she was casting models, she looked for women who had "a nice glow, a healthy look."

She encountered a few models who looked unhealthy. "They tend to be extremely pale, have thin hair and don't have that glow."

But many of today's runway models look pretty much alike, Schur says. "They are all pretty girls, but no one really stands out. For runway it's about highlighting the clothes. It's finding the girls that make your clothes look best."

Schur says she doesn't believe many young girls today are going to try to imitate what they see on the fashion runways. She says they are more likely to look to actresses for their ideal body image.

It's not surprising that women want to be slender and beautiful, because as a society "we know more about women who look good than we know about women who do good," says Audrey Brashich, a former teen model and author of *All Made Up: A Girl's Guide to Seeing Through Celebrity Hype and Celebrating Real Beauty*.

For several years, Brashich worked for *Sassy* and *YM* magazines and read thousands of letters from girls and teens who wanted to become a famous model, actress or singer.

And no wonder, she says. "As a culture, we are on a first-name basis with women like Paris Hilton or Nicole Richie," she says. "The most celebrated, recognizable

women today are famous primarily for being thin and pretty, while women who are actually changing the world remain comparatively invisible. Most of us have a harder time naming women of other accomplishments." The idolizing of models, stars and other celebrities is not going to change "until pop culture changes the women it celebrates and focuses on."

Women Come in All Sizes

Glamour's Leive believes the media have a powerful influence on women's body images and a responsibility to represent women of all sizes. "We do not run photos of anybody in the magazine who we believe to be at an unhealthy weight. We frequently feature women of all different sizes. We all know that you can look fabulous in clothes without being a size 2."

Ford believes the trend next year will be to move toward more womanly figures. Model van der Wal agrees and says she's trying to include women of varying figure types in *Cover Shot*. "Women come in lots of different sizes and shapes, and we should encourage and celebrate that."

Cutrone says models will become heavier if that's what consumers demand. "If people decide thin is out, the fashion industry won't have thin models anymore. Have you spent time with fashion people? They are ruthless. They want money."

"And the one thing they know is people want clothes to cover their bodies," Cutrone says. "Unfortunately, most people aren't comfortable with their bodies."

Discussion Questions

1. Why is thinness regarded as beautiful? The author states, "The widespread concern that model thinness has progressed from willowy to wasted has reached a threshold as evidenced by the recent actions of fashion show organizers." Will thinness continue into the future? If not, what do you think the next ideal image will be?
2. What could fashion magazines or designers do to counterbalance the thinness craze?