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Running Head: MEN IN *VOGUE*: A Visual Analysis of the Male Gender on American *Vogue* Covers

Rochester Institute of Technology

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Men in *Vogue*: A Visual Analysis of the Male Gender on American *Vogue* Covers

by

Connor Lamb

*A Thesis* submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree in

Communication & Media Technologies

The following members of the thesis committee approve the thesis of Connor Lamb on

May 16, 2016

MEN IN VOGUE: A VISUAL ANALYSIS

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## MEN IN VOGUE: A VISUAL ANALYSIS

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## MEN IN VOGUE: A VISUAL ANALYSIS

### MEN IN VOGUE: A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE MALE GENDER ON AMERICAN *VOGUE* COVERS

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School of Communication

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Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

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#### **Abstract**

For a better understanding of how gender is portrayed in media, it is important to include a specific investigation on how men are portrayed. This visual analysis study focused on the six unique American *Vogue* covers that included men to examine gender representation. All the cover images were analyzed for characteristics in the male and female cover persons' pose, gaze, and race. Amidst current gender debates, American *Vogue* has portrayed both men and women together on the cover only six separate times over American *Vogue*'s entire history. The investigation of these six covers contributes a better understanding of how American *Vogue* has represented males, females, and gender relationships. Insights include why and how these men were included on a magazine cover designed for women. Through visual analysis and awareness of agenda setting theory, the six different cover images were interpreted and discussed. The six American *Vogue* covers studied were published as late as 1992 and as recently as February 2016.

*Keywords:* Magazines, Advertisements, Popular Culture, Visual Rhetoric, and Marketing.

## MEN IN VOGUE: A VISUAL ANALYSIS

### Men in *Vogue*: A Visual Analysis of the Male Gender on American *Vogue* Covers

Landing on the cover of American *Vogue*: a moment every model dreams of, and one not often granted to men. Categorized to most as a women's magazine, American *Vogue* usually features women on the cover. Since the first issue in 1892, American *Vogue* has only had six men on the cover, beginning in 1992 with actor Richard Gere, and the most recent being in February 2016. In 1992, Gere posed with then wife Cindy Crawford. Gere and Crawford were one of two real life couples to appear on the cover. Before their highly publicized wedding, Kanye West and Kim Kardashian became the second American *Vogue* real life cover couple. Due to Kardashian's fame, their cover was also one of American *Vogue*'s most controversial covers. Another celebrated cover was LeBron James' April 2008 cover with model Gisele Bündchen. Suggesting pernicious racial themes, critics compared the cover image to well-known images of King Kong, grabbing a woman in a dress with a similar figure. American *Vogue* toned it down the next time another man was featured on the cover. Ryan Lochte joined fellow Olympians Hope Solo and Serena Williams for an Olympic themed cover for the June 2012 issue. American *Vogue*'s most recent cover with a male star featured actor Ben Stiller, promoting *Zoolander 2*, alongside co-star Penélope Cruz.

The portrayal of gender has been a major topic of discussion lately and in recent decades. The portrayal of men and masculinity in media has become an afterthought, and needs to be looked at. As society changes, the portrayal of men needs to be examined and considered equally to better comprehend how society views gender issues.

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Other interesting takeaways from American *Vogue*'s covers featuring men is that all the male cover models have been photographed with at least one women, supermodel Gisele Bundchen has shot two covers with men, two African-American men have had the opportunity to be on the cover, George Clooney's cover paid homage to Richard Gere's and finally, three actors, one musician, and two athletes have covered American *Vogue*.

Magazines like American *Vogue* are a widely circulated resource that not only provide readers with information but also perpetuate societal beliefs concerning race and gender. Cover photos in particular, although seemingly harmless, have great power in distributing societal messages concerning race, and gender to the population and therefore could shape reader's perceptions and understandings of people of particular races and genders. The present study sought to examine how men are portrayed on the covers of American *Vogue*, a magazine geared toward women. Mixed visual messages were interpreted on American *Vogue* covers that portrayed men.

Mass media, including magazines, have far reaching effects on many different members of society and affect how people understand and interpret various topics (Clarke, 1992). Consumers are bombarded every day with messages of how to act, think, and choose. Many visual messages seen within magazines are designed for advertising particular products. Gadsden (2000) stated: "the media enable those with power to potentially control the choices of others." (p.2). Americans often enjoy the visual communications they see and find media images informative and useful when making their own decision making (Shavitt, Lowery, and Haefner 1998). Visual communications are strengthened, for the use of decision making, and utilized as socializing tools and thus should be examined to understand clearly the cultural conditioning produced.

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The aim of this thesis is to examine the depictions of gender and, more specifically, how masculinity is represented in the cover images of American *Vogue* where images of men were present. In order to conduct a strong sampling, all the covers that featured men and women were analyzed for visual messages which produced observations about how American *Vogue* visually represents the male gender, what relationships between men and women look like, and how masculinity is presented. American *Vogue* visually represents messages of historic, economic, and cultural forces. Interdisciplinary readings have been sourced for understanding magazine covers as a visual message. It is important to investigate this rare phenomenon where images of men have been included on the covers of a women's magazine and how masculinity is presented on these six covers. These covers represent specific moments in time that American *Vogue* editors felt were worthy enough to visually document and discuss as well as to use as a tool of promotion and agenda setting. The representation of both genders six different times were a calculated decision that had motivations and impacts. It is important to investigate this rare phenomenon to discover any possible impressions the images could have had on viewers and to further realize the powerful influences that magazines possess. American *Vogue*'s editor-in-chief, Anna Wintour, shapes and directs fashion trends rather than just objectively showcase them. The act of including men on the cover of American *Vogue* has coincided with important events like Olympic Games and movie releases and weddings of celebrities. It can also be deduced that including these specific men on the cover increased sales to a degree, so discovering an approximate idea of what those sales impacts were can help determine if the practice will continue to happen and to what degree of frequency. The general influences of the mass media have been thoroughly observed and media images have been credited with defining masculinity in American society. In addition to the fact that American *Vogue* is a women's



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fashion magazine, the unique covers that include men suggest that being with women is necessary for a man to be on *American Vogue* and may suggest that being with women is also part of masculinity and male attractiveness. Any man who is featured on the cover is always with at least one woman. Exposure to these images may determine audiences' definitions and beliefs regarding masculinity and male gender identity. Conversely, men's magazines have placed women on their covers with no male chaperone. Gender specific symbolic images are socially constructed, therefore, reflect the values of society (Kelvin, 1990). Fracher and Kimmell (1995) noted that "The notion of masculinity, the cultural definition of manhood, serves as the primary building block of sexuality. It is through our understanding of masculinity that we construct a sexuality, and it is through our sexualities that we confirm the successful construction of our gender identity. Gender informs sexuality: sexuality confirms gender" (p. 367).

For more than thirty years, researchers have scrutinized gender role portrayals in magazines and content analysts have given particular attention to the depiction of women in magazines. Generally, when male roles are evaluated in studies of men and women, men are more often used as points of comparison with the female roles rather than considered for their own unique attributes (Fejes, 1984). Consequently, these studies provided a limited perspective on male images in magazines. Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) evaluated the level of sexism in male roles by applying a five-level consciousness scale to male images. All of the analyses make valuable contributions, but the limited number of evaluations of male images in magazines suggests a need for further study of those presentations. In addition to the scarcity of studies addressing images of men, a distinct lack of detail and depth exists within the content analyses of male images in women's magazines. Looking closer at the six *American Vogue* covers that

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include men will contribute to the research that already exists and inspire future studies.

Ewen and Ewen (1992) wrote, “The image, the commercial, reaches out to sell more than a service or product; it sells a way of understanding the world” (p. 24). American *Vogue* has been described as the world's most influential fashion magazine. The investigation regarding the visual messages found on the covers of American *Vogue* is important in order to discover how these influential images visually communicate as persuasion regarding gender roles and, specifically, how men are being portrayed in women’s magazines. This topic is meaningful as fashion magazines may play a role in determining and communicating evolving trends regarding both culture and gender roles. American *Vogue* itself has an influence on reader tastes, preferences, and purchases and as a result, the consumer market. Visual communication is also a means of social communication. From the perspective of social learning and socialization, people begin learning gender prescriptions at a very young age. These prescriptions are said to be resistant to change later on in life and that people create gender role expectations based on images they see (Bromley, 1993). Thompson (2000) stated magazine images depict both approaches and thoughts in order to persuade a viewer and wrote:

“Advertisements showcase attitudes and ideas; the corresponding power to influence is formidable because advertising can also change values, such as those surrounding the display and meaning of the body. Nowhere is the potency of advertising more evident than in the arena of selling clothing and appearance related commodities” (p. 178).

Images found in magazines reflect America’s past, current, and possibly future culture and also suggest how some individuals choose to be represented (Barnard, 2002). Society takes cues and forms culture from a variety of sources, and individuals strive to conform to the norms set by the

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culture. Media images may even help shape our fashions and sexual desires because what we see in the media often becomes what we consider normal (Berger, 1991; Watson, 1998).

Magazines can be found in almost every convenience, pharmacy, book and grocery store, and may not always be filled with good choices. Some magazines may provide a false sense of self-worth and unrealistic visual communications as magazine advertisements seem to dictate unrealistic gender stereotypes. Magazines portray men and women in unrealistic ways and send messages to men and women about how they should look, what they should buy, and how they should behave. Portrayals of men in women's magazines cultivate beliefs and expectations about physical appearance, sexual expression, relationships, or gender roles.

This study analyzed the cultural construction of masculinity by looking closer at a women's fashion magazine that included men on the cover to understand how the imagery of men functions as a visual communication. The literature related to similar studies is first reviewed, followed by an exploration of literature related to gender portrayal, magazines, and magazine advertising. A content analysis will be used to examine the six selected American *Vogue* covers to determine how contemporary magazines visually portray masculinity and gender relationships. The subcategories of age, body type and race are also reviewed. The results of the study are presented followed by concluding thoughts, which include the study's limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Interestingly, little research has been published on magazines' potential to adapt to changing media markets with creative solutions in public relations and technology. The need to adapt to the modern digital age is happening now. Little to no realistic solutions for survival in contemporary times have been offered. American *Vogue* helps create the culture it reports on. The collaborative process of has now moved beyond the world of fashion. American *Vogue's*

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has started expanding its relationship with the film industry. American *Vogue*'s inspiration and involvement with the films *Devil Wears Prada* and *September Issue* resulted in two movies about or inspired by American *Vogue*. A more current movie, *First Monday in May*, showcases American *Vogue*'s involvement with the Metropolitan Ball in New York City. This movie serves as promotive material for the event and for the magazine itself. It also helps create and perpetuate material and inspiration for American *Vogue* to report on. Whether intentional or not, Anna Wintour has become a media mogul and celebrity in her own right. She can be seen using this celebrity to promote the magazine, since it can be argued she is the personified version of the magazine itself. She has skill to forge forward thru difficult times and by surrounding herself with the best in the business she motivates the Condé Nast staff with her reputation and her legacy of editorial work. The continued success of American *Vogue* thru the leadership of Anna Wintour is a quintessential example of the power a media editor has. She not only directs and edits the magazine, but the subject the magazine reports on as well. Wintour has taken on the responsibility of refreshing, refurbishing and refining what American Fashion can be.

This study provides information on agenda setting and gatekeeping theories, and illustrates how these theories can be applied to the phenomenon of which American *Vogue* is a part. Something interesting happens when a publication like American *Vogue* reports on, and is part of the same industry and actually becomes an influence in the industry. American *Vogue* communicates on designers, trends, and fashions but also and in doing so establishes the trends the public follows. There is a symbiotic connection Wintour makes between the fashion world and the fashion journalism American *Vogue* represents. Using visual analysis six rare covers that had been created with both genders were reviewed as an approach to further understand how a male image was able to transcend previous limitations of female dominated covers of the past.

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### Literature Review

The major topics discussed in this section will be structured with the following headings: Agenda Setting and Gatekeeping Theory, Fashion Journalism, Gender Roles, Stereotypes, Covers and Advertisements, Historical Changes, Sexuality in Media, Male Roles, Women and men portrayed together, and American *Vogue*. This structure was created for better organization, to aid the reader with informational searches, and to create effective research questions listed in the next section. Magazine covers, content, articles, and advertisements do not exist independently of commercial interests (Stevens, Maclaran, and Brown 2003). The construction of markets calls for the individual to consume and to engage with the advertisements in a state of make-believe, treating the depicted world as though it were real life (Goffman 1979). The content of the magazine cover is designed to sell the magazine, but the main source of income depends on the advertising. C. Wright Mills said, “Mass media has become the lens of mankind through which [people] see; the medium by which they interpret and report what they see. It is the semi-organized source of their identities” (Horowitz, 1963, p.406). People develop a role identity, a view of how they perceive themselves to be and how they act in a given social position (Vigorito & Curry, 1998). In some cases, this behavior is accomplished by comparisons to gender-specific ideals communicated through mass media, including magazines (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). “Advertising and mass media contribute to the visual landscape that constructs reality” (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 161). Potter (2001) offered his own definition of media effects: “A mass media effect is a change in an outcome within a person or social entity that is due to mass media influence following exposure to a mass media message or series of messages” (p. 903). Potter’s definition is helpful for the present study in that it verifies that media may influence not just individuals, but also a “social entity,” a

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term he uses when referring to “both an informal collection as well as a formal organization of individuals” (p.903).

### **Agenda Setting and Gatekeeping Theories**

One particular theory that describes a subtle yet powerful media effect is *Agenda-setting theory*. Originally formulated by McCombs and Shaw (1972), this theory argues that those items or issues featured most frequently and prominently in the media become the ones to which audience members give the highest priority. The theory’s broader implications about the power of the media to set agendas for audiences will be of importance to the analysis of these six unique covers that craft impactful messages.

Another area of media scholarship offering fruitful applications to the analysis of these six American *Vogue* covers is that of gatekeeping theory, which describes the content selection processes undertaken by media gatekeepers such as reporters, editors, and producers (Bass, 1969). Gatekeeping is the process by which information is filtered to the public by the media. As American *Vogue*’s editors decide what articles and images to include in the publication, they are also crafting a message that reaches people. Just as Kurt Lewin found that food movement goes through various decision-making processes, so too does fashion.

Another media-theory category of relevance to the current project is that of normative theories of the media, which “explain how a media system should operate in order to conform to or realize a set of social values” (Baran & Davis, 2012, p.14). American *Vogue*’s editors seem to prefer facilitative and collaborative roles. The notion of journalistic autonomy from outside interests is another core ideal of professional journalism. Waisbord (2013) notes, “only a journalism that keeps external actors at a distance can report evenhandedly and fairly” (p.44). American *Vogue*’s close involvement with external actors sidesteps this normative call for

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autonomy. There is very little mention in the literature of mass communication theory in regards to how fashion media is supposed to operate in order to meet ideals and standards. This may not be surprising, due to the low status given to fashion journalism and the scholarly study of fashion. However, the processes, distribution, and effects of fashion journalism figure prominently in the growing field of fashion studies, or “fashion-ology,” as Kawamura (2005) attempts to rename the field.

### **Fashion Journalism**

Inspiring many recent fashion studies, scholarship on fashion journalism investigates the notion of “the fashion system,” an idea originated by Roland Barthes (1967/1983). Barthes was interested with clothing and it's wearing as a language through which cultural meanings are created and communicated, the phrase “fashion system” has now come to mean the “network of designers, manufacturers, wholesalers, public relations officers, journalists, and advertising agencies” involved with any of the creative, economic, or communication components of fashion (Kawamura, 2005, p. 45).

Welters (2001) observed that “magazines are a vital part of the fashion industry” (p. 395). Moeran (2006) shows how fashion magazines’ editorial calendars, which mirror that of designers’ semi-annual collections, illustrate their “inseparability... from the fashion industry” (p. 728). Kawamura (2005) goes further still, saying “institutions that help create and spread fashion, such as fashion magazines and newspaper periodicals, are participants in the system” (p. 88). She explains, “Designers alone cannot produce fashion, nor can they sustain the fashion system that leads to the making of fashion culture... The link between the production and distribution of clothing and the dissemination of the idea of fashion is interdependent” (p.73).

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Kawamura (2005) “This reciprocal dependency does not encourage unbiased fashion reporting” (p.81). McRobbie (2008) notes that the fashion media provide not just “a display window for fashion design” but rather “a pillar of support” for the fashion industry. Fashion writers, photographers, and editors, McRobbie (2008) observes, are “more closely linked with the fashion industry than would be the case in other journalistic fields”; indeed, she argues, they “share the same ‘fashion world’” as designers and fashion executives (pp.151, 152). Because this fashion world is “relatively closed, [it is] difficult to untangle the relationship between fashion design and fashion media. We are not able to simply place the designers in one corner and the editors and journalists in the other” (p. 161). McRobbie (2008) argues fashion journalism is not only different from other forms of journalism but it also “occupies a much lower status” (p. 167). McRobbie (2008) suggests that this lower status is not only a reflection of fashion journalism’s closely linked relationship to the fashion industry; it also is a result of the construction of its content. Fashion journalism, for McRobbie (2008), “is informative or celebratory, it is never critical, only mildly ironical... The images might be designed to shock, but the text remains culturally reassuring” (pp. 153, 173).

### **Gender Roles**

According to Shields (1994), "gender is defined as the term that describes the cultural and social basis of roles assumed daily by men and women. Gender is the effect of and is constructed in culture" (p. 1). Rakow (1986) defines gender as:

Both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cultural meanings. The social practices - the 'doing' of gender - and the cultural meanings - 'thinking the world' using categories and experiences of gender - constitute us as women and men, organized into a particular configuration of social relations (p. 21).



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Galician (2004) explained that many men's and women's magazines "promote an ideal of beauty that is unattainable by most normal people" (p.155). All six covers offer an opinion on gender appearance and gender identity. They might suggest to some viewers that happiness can be achieved if you look like the people on the cover. The individuals have had their bodies showcased as their best assets, not their minds or their sense of humor or their compassion, three crucial components to a successful, realistic, and loving relationship, etc. As Galician (2004) stated:

Even though they might not realize it, many [people] subconsciously use actresses, models, and centerfolds as a standard for their own real-life partners, who cannot help disappointing them (unless they too have the surgical and photographic enhancements the pop culture icons get). (p.160).

Women's fashion magazines like *American Vogue* have been accused of objectifying women, sending mixed messages to their readers with an emphasis on cleavage and sex-dominating cover lines. Previous research claims the existence of perfect images of women have a detrimental effect on female viewers and create a desire to become a make-believe, air-brushed idol.

Women are not the only ones susceptible to unrealistic gender images. More men are being used to promote beauty products made for men. There is also a correlation between an increase in ideal male images in print media and the increase of male beauty product sales, as well as an increase of men getting plastic surgery, manicures, facials, and other services traditionally marketed to and purchased by women. Therefore, it is important to address these trends to have a better idea of which direction our society might be going in.

### **Stereotypes**

A stereotype can be defined as an often false overgeneralization of characteristics of a

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group of people without regard to differences among members of that group (Williams and Best, 1982). Stereotypes are often used in print advertising to convey images with which potential buyers may identify so as to increase advertising effectiveness. A review of research on gender portrayals in advertising between 1970 and 2002 suggests that stereotyping has in fact decreased since 1970, but not disappeared entirely (Wolin, 2003). Bresnahan et al., (2001) stated, “Only 29.5% of all role depiction were non-stereotypical... [and] that 28% of American females were depicted in masculine roles” (124). These authors do not discuss the portrayal of men in feminine roles. This is an example of the many studies that focus on the depiction of women, and ignore the needed examination of the depiction of men. By examining American *Vogue*'s portrayal of men, this often ignored gender can be better understood.

Bristor and Fischer (1993) stated how gender identity “is a pervasive filter through which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered” (p. 519). Advertising shapes identity, particularly gender identity (Domzal and Kernan, 1993). Most advertisement images call upon gender identity, drawing their imagery from the stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity. Gender is a system that describes, defines, and categorizes individuals (Kervin, 1990). Gender is embedded throughout most aspects of today's society including advertisements and magazines. As Coates (2004) pointed out, “Researchers now analyze spoken and written data with the aim of understanding how gender is constructed in everyday life and of assessing the role of [communication] in creation and maintenance of contemporary masculinities and femininities” (2004, p. 221). Media images have been credited with defining gender roles in American society. Media exposure affects how men and women determine definitions and beliefs regarding masculinity and male identity. Both subtle and bold visual messages communicated by print media contribute to definitions and

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understandings of what is considered appropriate behavior for the genders (Klassen, Jasper, and Schwartz 1993). Masculine and feminine are used to define how one outwardly expresses their gender identity through clothing, mannerisms, and behaviors. Just like those roles, gender identity is a fluid concept, changing as American society changes. The parameters should not be approached as something static and unchanging. In an ever-changing social structure, the social definition of masculinity and femininity is constantly being redefined (MacKinnon, 2003). Media and the images portrayed contribute to part of the experiences people go through in determining how they should act. Fejes (1984) stated that the images shown in the media cultivate and encourage certain opinions about the society in which we live. Gender roles in media and advertising are outlined by the characterization of the person, how they are interacting with their environment, and their relationship to the product and other characters (Leigh et al., 1987). According to Klages (1997): “Gender is an act, a performance, a set of manipulated codes, costume, rather than a core aspect of essential identity” (para. 13). Gornick (1979) stated “Advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave. This depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women are, or want to be, or should be, not only in relation to themselves but in relation to each other” (p.7).

Wolhete and Lammers (1980) examined the working and non-working nature of roles presented in magazines in an approach similar to Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) who argued that while advertising may carry and reflect the values and belief systems of a society, it rarely seeks to change those systems. However, their own analysis of the roles in which women were portrayed in magazines in 1958, 1970, and 1972 indicated that advertising has not kept up with changes in female roles in society. According to social learning theorists, people pick up cues on

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how to act by observing the world around them. How people view themselves, others, and behaviors is determined by social interactions. Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea on how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Bandura, 1977).

### **Covers and Advertisements**

There are many things magazine cover images can convey to viewers, beyond information about the stories inside. Multiple studies have shown that viewers are strongly drawn to covers that are visually appealing, intriguing and eye-catching. The cover can significantly affect sales and readership, wherever the magazine is located. (Hinze et al., 2002). The cover of a magazine can be considered the advertisement of the magazine itself. A magazine cover has to catch the eye of shoppers or encourage a weekly or monthly subscriber to renew their subscription. Kamphuis' (1991) looked at two separate aspects of cover design: the attractiveness of the cover image and the representativeness of the cover image. This study revealed attractiveness had the greatest influence on purchasing decision and representativeness had little to no impact. Drew and Sternberger (2005) argue the cover image is supposed to represent the content. Drew and Sternberger (2005) go on to talk about covers and claim "it becomes a physical manifestation not just of the ideas of the author, but of the cultural ideals and aesthetics of a distinct historical moment" (p.8). In accordance with this idea, this study looks to examine and understand the six American *Vogue* covers that have men included within the context of visual culture, recognizing them as products of our culture and the society which are inherently influenced by the methods through which they are produced and the intentions of their producers and understanding them as objects of meaning in our daily lives.

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The modern magazine cover is like an advertisement for what the magazine reader will experience reading the magazine. Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) stated “Advertising acts as a powerful means of constructing, influencing, and illustrating the consumer vision of the good life [...] Advertising images are a central part of the experienced visual world ” (p.161).

“Advertising draws on cultural, social and visual conventions to create positive associations for products” (p.191). In the globalization era, improvement in technology, science, society, economy, and education provide people with a better standard of living and product options. Advertisements are one way people learn about these improvements. Americans are exposed to 1,500 - 3,000 advertisements daily (Semenik, 2002). Goffman (1979) described the role of advertisers and society as the same: “Both must transform otherwise opaque goings-on into readable form” (p.27). The mass media plays an enormous role in communicating what is attractive, glamorous, and sexy (Huysman 1986). Viewers are exposed to media images of men and women that exemplify the contemporary American vision of the ideal body (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001; Pope, Olivardia, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2001). Moeran (2006) showed how fashion magazines’ publication timelines mirror that of designers’ semi-annual collections and argue that fashion magazines are inseparable from the fashion industry. The practice of touching up or manipulating magazine photographs has a history as long as that of photography itself (Wheeler, 2002). Photography can achieve naturalistic or texturized realistic details of its subjects, however the photographs found in fashion magazines use Photoshop or other image-manipulation software to improve the photos. Imperfections like stray hairs and skin blemishes are removed from faces, lumps and bumps are zapped away, extra shine added to images of commodities, and color saturations accentuated. Baudrillard (1985, 1988) argued that meaning has been disconnected from history or ethics and replaced by the image. In the digital age,

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Photoshopping is a pre-publication norm. Touch-ups recreate an altered state of reality and create what might be termed a hyperreal modality.

While Magazine covers are visually consumed by paying subscribers at home as well as millions of non-paying consumers via public displays (Fung, 2002). Magazine covers are considered prestigious sites for the appearance and promotion of images of people and products. Magazine covers have cultural power as highly visible media spaces and are commonly displayed, sold, looked at and purchased at newsstands, but are also synonymous with airports, bookstores, and waiting rooms. In their analysis of bodily appearance, Malkin et al., (1999) stated that “visual images on both men and women’s magazine covers tend to portray what women should look like and what men should look for” (p 652). Thompson (2000) argued:

Advertisements showcase attitudes and ideas; the corresponding power to influence is formidable because advertising can also change values, such as those surrounding the display and meaning of the body. Nowhere is the potency of advertising more evident than in the arena of selling clothing and appearance-related commodities. (p. 178)

Men and women have the potential to idealize what they see in fashion magazines and on the movie screen and hope they too can have perfect skin and an ideal body, and henceforth, a wonderful life (Nair et al., 2007). Advertising can influence how gender stereotypes continue to be formed and reinforced. Jhally (1989) writes “gender identity is constructed in part through social representations of which the most pervasive and powerful form in the consumer society are those associated with advertising” (p. 4). Jhally called these representations “hyper ritualistic images,” which offer extremely concentrated messages about gender (p.7). Since the media play a dominant role in how society constructs a view of the world, investigating the messages the media communicate about gender and beauty is important.

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Advertisements promote goods to be extensions of ourselves; we socially construct those goods to define what is considered masculine and feminine (Craig, 1992). As Rohlinger (2002) pointed out, “Products are in juxtaposition with images of power, which suggest that the product is an extension of the owner” (p. 61), and through those products according to Williamson (1978): “People are made to identify themselves with what they consume” (p.13). Fashions can be considered a part of what we consume to create ourselves. Fashion magazines and their imagery have the ability to construct social norms including how society views class, gender, sex, and sexuality. Barnard (2002) noted the important role fashion plays in creating cultural meaning: “Fashion, clothing, and dress are signifying practices, they are ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions of relative power” (p.38). Similarly, Shields (1994) observed: “Advertising feeds off our desire for coherence and for meaning, by at once alienating our identity and constituting us as one among many objects. We then make the exchange for an image that gives us back our own value” (p. 54). Zhou (1997) supports both researchers and pointed out that images in mass media can influence how individuals think about social norms:

Golombok and Fivush (1994) stated “If people often ‘observe’ a particular group of people engaging in a particular behavior in mass media, they are likely to believe that the abilities and personality attributes required to carry out that activity are typical for that group of people” (p. 489).

These six covers are serving as an advertisement for the specific month's issue. Since men are rarely seen on American *Vogue*, these covers are atypical, edgy, different, controversial, and everything a memorable advertisement should be. These six covers were a response to a need to increase sales and keep American *Vogue* on the forefront of the magazine world.

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### Historical Changes

Men in magazines are being objectified (Rohlinger, 2002). In a postindustrial era, advertisers seek to find new markets and, as such, erotic images of men are designed to appeal to liberated women, homosexual and bisexual men, as well as the new male consumer sometimes referred to as metrosexual. The feminization of the workforce that resulted from the shift from manufacturing to service has placed more dollars in the hands of female consumers. In response to this economic shift, advertisers adapted commercial imagery to appeal to a generation of liberated women, who made and spent their own earnings. In addition, magazine advertisers have increasingly tried to transform men into consumers through the legitimization of male freedom and beauty. The presence of sexualized images of men have emerged in magazines. In these images, the erotic male represents a physical and sexual ideal, whereby an attractive, muscular man is placed on display. Rohlinger (2002) suggested such imagery is undoubtedly in part a response to the economic trends over the years, but it is also a product of cultural changes in American society (67-68).

One way to interpret these American *Vogue* cover images is as a performance, scripted by the stereotypes about the way males and females interact. With both men and women being represented on these covers, gender can be seen as one of the main themes. Goffman's research pointed out the scripted nature of gender performance by showing how the visual representations of pose, postures, and placement reinforce stereotyped gender relationships. His categories provide researchers a framework to look critically at images with illuminating concepts. Magazine covers are not just pictures, they are cultural texts informed by the social, political, artistic and technological worlds that produce them. Insights from art history and art



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criticism helps to create a multi-disciplinary content analysis of these six covers. Danna (1994) suggests that the changing status of women was simultaneous with an increase in the portrayal of men as sex objects:

“As the 1980s progressed, men’s ad image changed. Ad theme no longer depicted men as ruler of the household and men were no longer consulted regarding child welfare and were almost always shown in negative circumstances. They were portrayed as being less competent when appearing with women; they were rarely shown singularly as very competent; the men were the ones with bad breath, bad odor, bad health, and bad eating habit... [whereas] women’s image has steadily improved in advertising while men have had a relatively turbulent period of ups and downs – mostly downs during the 1980s...the changes occurring toward the end of the 1980s had one major effect: men were portrayed more than ever as sex objects. Men began to shed clothing and to display more flesh sometimes gratuitously.” (75-84).

### **Sexuality in Media**

Sex has been used in magazine advertisements to get the audience attracted to the product being sold. In the 1950s, researchers attempted to bring together psychology and marketing to try to explain why consumers buy certain products and they focused on the effects of unconscious motives (Sivulka, 2012). According to researchers, sex in advertising refers to messages containing sexual information with the persuasive purpose of selling branded goods. Rechert and Carpenter (2004) suggest that there has been an overall increase in intimate contact between men and women from 1983 to 2003 in magazine advertisements. Intimate contact was defined as contact between a male and a female in an advertisement that was suggestive of sex or sexual acts. Advertising products with sexy looking models did not always evoke positive

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reactions from audiences. Conversely, some people become accustomed to sexualized advertisements and report that they have become numb to the tactic and therefore less attracted to the product being sold. Rohlinger (2002) stated that such portrayals of men can backfire, even if such portrayals appear to be progressive. The main concern for advertisers is whether or not the image shown sells products. If an image doesn't fit a target market's ideal, then the product won't sell. For example, if half-naked men with a distant gaze were most often depicted in a self-caress, the possibility that heterosexual male and female viewers may no longer be attracted to the image and/or product being sold occurs.

Fischhoff (2001) stated: "People have [become] accustomed to wanting to see women nude. They don't think a nude woman looks vulnerable anymore. When a man is uncovered, however, the reaction is that he is extremely vulnerable" (p. 1). The portrayal of vulnerable men is negative in print advertising, which tends to be more traditional. Andrews (1992) claimed that nude men are seen as vulnerable, and a vulnerable man is not seen as masculine or attractive. Provocative advertisements featuring progressive men showed men and women as equal partners, however, Manca and Manca (1994) pointed out:

The more traditional advertisements portraying the other male types tended to keep men and women in separate and unequal spheres or show them interacting as equals in completely frivolous ways... by the 1980s, the image of the playboy was in decline and even [actors] fit that image only partially. [Print advertising] remained one of the last sanctuaries for Joe Camel and other playboy characters" (p.125-128).

Manca and Manca (1994) also claimed that advertisements represent certain aspects of male subculture and are not made up solely for the purpose of selling products. They also said if there were absolutely no truth in advertising, the products would not sell. Images are not so much

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about what is true in society but what is true for the individual (or what the individual wants to be true), and/or what the individual can relate to. In many ways, men are becoming more sexualized and objectified in order to sell products.

In a study of the portrayal of women in television commercials in 1993, Lin (1999) found the 66% of women's images "were still likely to be presented in a nonfunctional, decorative role in relation to the product they endorsed in an ad" (p. 262). She also stated that 42% of females were portrayed in "alluring contexts" (p. 263) and concluded that "sex appeals are still considered an important method in the advertiser's sales approach for a large number of product categories." (p. 264). Bresnahan et al., (2001) examined television commercials and concluded that 28% of American females were depicted in masculine roles and 29.5% of the role depictions were non-stereotypical and suggested "product endorsement has remained stereotyped for gender" (p. 123). According to Fowles (1996), "[in] print advertisements from 1959 to 1989, women were featured decreasingly as homemakers, increasingly without a male present" (p. 211). The findings of Reichert and Carpenter (2004) showed "sexual explicitness increased in women's magazine's overall, but that most of the increase occurred from 1983 to 1993" (p. 828). Previous research by Reichert (2003) shows that most of the advertisements that focused on sexuality appeared in men's or women's magazines and were not frequent in general interest magazines. They also found that the models in the advertisements were portrayed in a more sexually explicit manner in both men's and women's magazine's than they were in general interest magazines.

While the majority of women's images still portray women in stereotypical roles, images of men appear to have their own messages. Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) observed in their review of advertisements in women's, men's, and general interest magazines that "men are

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increasingly portrayed in decorative roles and less frequently appear in situations involving their manly activities. Only in more recent roles, however, do we see men in nontraditional roles or in which men and women are treated as equals” (p. 54).

Although images of women as sex objects and homemakers may be less prominent in advertising within fashion magazines geared towards women, Temmerman and Voorde (2015) found the presence of a loving man in women’s lives is still a central theme. While formerly being portrayed as the husband and father, men are now being portrayed more as sex objects, especially in fashion advertisements.

### **Male Roles**

Some consumers may be used to men being portrayed as inept, mentally and emotionally weak in lieu of being in touch with their feminine side. According to Hope (2003) these trends will have very little effect on society in the long run. She wrote:

In a press report on an advertising trend away from the use of male models in favor of using professional sportsmen, executives, and other real men in male fashion layouts, gender differentiation in advertising is bluntly described by Simon Doonan, the creative director of the fashion store, Barneys New York: ‘Male models don’t communicate to the customer at all. People think they are funny and goofy. The basic premise is absurd. Men are supposed to embody power and decision-making, and what could embody passivity more than modeling?’ (Hope, 2003).

Other studies have found that women tend to be stereotyped more often than men (Leppard, Ogletree, and Wallen 1993). Men are stereotyped in different ways and unique ways that can have can have similar effects on the way individuals view themselves. Barthel (1994) states that the masculine gender role emphasizes power; and due to this gender role, male cover models are

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more typically shown in conjunction with images of power. Men have traditionally not been depicted as sex objects in advertisements, but because gender role prohibitions have relaxed and women's consumption power has increased, many advertisers feature a crossover behavior in their advertisements (Rohlinger 2002). Rohlinger also states that men are being sexualized and objectified to support multiple audiences. A new male image within print magazines is emerging that focuses on physical appearance as their most important characteristic. Many researchers have suggested that some recent advertising images are reflecting transformations in ideals of masculinity. Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo (1992) posited that the male market was becoming more elusive, making it harder for magazines advertisers and editors to reach their target audience. Gender portrayal in decorative roles is no longer restricted to female models. As of 1978, over half of the roles portrayed by men were decorative, a percentage comparable to that reported for female models by Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976). According to Rohlinger (2002):

“Men are increasingly able to operate in both modes: the feminine mode of indulging oneself and being indulged and the masculine mode of exigency and competition. With the right look and the right stuff, he can feel confident and manly in the boardroom or suburban backyard. In other words, because gender role prohibitions have relaxed, many advertisers feature crossover behavior in their advertisements. The legitimacy of this practice is buttressed by the fact that the consumers with the most desirable demographics to advertisers (young, single, professional, employed, high-income, well educated, and urban) are also the least likely to adhere to and purchase products that depict traditional gender roles. In short, masculinity is not a matter of the mind, but of the body. As such masculinity is expressed physically through muscles and the consumption and adornment of mass-produced goods that are regarded masculine.”

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(pp. 64-66).

Gender norms can be portrayed very differently depending on what type of audience to whom magazine publishers are trying to communicate. Attracting certain target audiences with the use of sexual and gender display will always be prevalent and a major component of fashion media. One study examining advertisements in leading US women's magazines *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* observed that images of undressed men increased from 3% in the 1950s to 35% in the 1990s, suggesting that male physiques have become more important to women over time (Pope et al., 2001). Shields (1994) stated:

Traditionally, it is the female body that has served as the object of sexual stimulation in advertising as well as well as most other mass-mediated forms. Although the male body is now also represented in this capacity, there is little confusion over which gender has traditionally occupied this dubious position in representation" (p. 49).

Kilbourne (1999) agreed, stating that although women have traditionally been objectified for advertising, we are now beginning to see more male images that are dehumanized for the purpose of selling products. According to Goffman "femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression – something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual" (p.7). Although this study did show some evidence about the existence of sexual portrayal of men in magazines, Goffman's ideas did not appear to be represented clearly in the present day analysis. While trends in sexualization were not explicitly evident in this study, continuous trends of ritualistic masculine gender display were noticed. It has been discussed that men have been historically represented in dominant roles.

Less research has been done on the portrayal of men in the media. Previous research has

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not revealed trends toward more sexual objectification of men using Goffman's (1979) theories and methods. Those studies suggested that different categories needed to be developed to ascertain if men are more sexualized now than they have been in the past. Previous studies pointed out how claims about cultural differences in gender theory and the objectification of men cannot be revealed using women's objectification standards.

Consumers are exposed to media images of men that exemplify the contemporary American vision of the ideal male and the ideal male body. Research has found that modern society praises an increasingly muscular male body ideal (Pope et al., 2000). Media and magazine representations of the ideal male body as muscular may influence the body shapes men and women desire and men strive to achieve. Studies have assessed men's body type preferences by presenting participants with a spectrum of male bodies that vary in percentage of muscularity and asked men to indicate their current and ideal body. In these studies, men chose an ideal body that was more muscular than their current body (Buchanan, Frederick, & Friedman, 2005); Frederick & Haselton, 2003; Lynch & Zellner, 1999; Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004; Pope et al., 2000).

A study completed by Leit, Gray, & Pope (2001) found that exposure to muscular male figures in advertisements produced body dissatisfaction in males. These findings suggest that media images, even in a brief presentation, can affect men's views of their bodies. One survey of young adults found that males with higher self-objectification scores were more likely to endorse muscularity as the ideal body shape, whereas females with higher self-objectification scores idealized less muscularity in potential male partners (Oehlhof et al., 2009). Women find male bodies that are more muscular than average most attractive, and men recognize that other people prefer these body builds (Frederick & Haselton, 2003; Olivardia et al., 2004; Pope et al.,

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2000). Research indicated that men overestimate the level of male muscularity. This research has shown that men desire a level of muscularity that is greater than the level found attractive by women (Frederick & Haselton, 2003; Olivardia et al., 2004). Some men often overestimate the level of muscularity women find ideal (Olivardia et al., 2004) and the level women desire in a short-term sexual partner (Frederick & Haselton, 2003).

### **Women and Men Portrayed Together**

“How a relationship is portrayed through ritual can provide an unbalanced or even distorted view of the relationship itself” (Goffman 1979, p.3). Print advertisements depict men and women differently in working occupations, in nonworking roles, and in the nature of buying (Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976). These discrepancies are greater when men and women are depicted together. Goffman’s findings in *Gender Advertisements* examined the ways men and women are portrayed in advertising. He found the advertisements he investigated to represent people in strange and unrealistic ways. According to Kilbourne (1999, p. 26-27), “Women’s bodies and men’s bodies, too, these days are dismembered, packaged, and used to sell everything from chainsaws to chewing gum.” Goffman found “illustrations of ritual-like bits of behavior which portray an ideal conception of the two sexes and their structural relationship to each other, accomplished this in part by indicating, again ideally, the alignment of the actor in the social situation” (p. 84).

With increased male images within these advertisements, it is suggested that male physiques are being incorporated into advertisements that are marketing products geared towards women. In a study of male representation, Richard Dyer (1982) extended Goffman’s gender analysis to the male pin up genre. This genre includes celebrities, actors, athletes, and other icons. Dyer’s analysis of pose, posture, and gaze to point out important features of contemporary



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masculine representation, within an expanding visual repertoire of the male image. The products that are targeted at women push a message that women should try to look their best, acquire the products being advertised, and wait for a prince-charming-like male to come and sweep them off their feet. The advertisements suggest that the women in the photographs don't possess the ability to go out into the world independently without a male figure present (Brasted, 2010). Dyer (1982) suggests that these prince-charming-like images of men that are specifically designed to be looked at, admired, idolized as seen in celebrity portraits and male pin-ups, unsettle patterns of the gendered gaze, producing "a certain instability" (1982). He found that representations of men as sex objects and celebrities show men looking off to the side or up, and not facing the camera. That's unrealistic because sex, or passion, is only one of the three key elements of the Triangular Theory of Love (Sternberg, as cited in Galician, 2004, pp. 6-7, 148). Also necessary for a successful, happy, and long-term relationship are intimacy or connected bonded feelings and commitment (Galician, 2004, p. 7). Overwhelmingly, the cover images promoted easy and wonderful lives without real effort. Their emphasis on the physical attractiveness of the people shown on the covers, American *Vogue* also set up standards of beauty that were unrealistic. As Galician (2004) stated:

What's distressing about the appeals used by these publications is that despite their pretense at offering healthy concepts for physical and emotional improvement, they ultimately reduce male-female relationships to appearance and sexuality. And they rob individuals of their personhood when they dispense advice with the implication that it will work on everyone. (p. 156).

Galician (2004) also addressed how magazines were promoting an unrealistic standard of attractiveness and how someone needs centerfold looks to attract the opposite sex (p. 155).

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Some of those components are reflected on these six covers of American *Vogue*.

### **American *Vogue***

“Fashion’s bible” (Kinsey, 2009; Pogrebin, 1997), *Vogue* is universally recognized as the fashion world’s most influential magazine. American *Vogue* is one of the longest running international women’s publications. Hitting the newsstands December 17<sup>th</sup> 1892, *Vogue* is one of the oldest monthly magazines in America. From the outset, the magazine targeted the New York elite, establishing social norms in a country that did not value class and ceremony as much as Europe. Over the years much has been written about *Vogue*, the title and brand, in part because *Vogue* is so much more than a magazine to many. For only \$5.99 an issue, a reader can see the role fashion has played in the wider world and the many ways in which those facets reflect what is happening economically, socially, culturally, and artistically. Fashion can create a dream. Fashion can create a fantasy, it’s a kind of theatre. American *Vogue* is the stage. It’s the runway for the world of fashion it represents. If fashion can be considered art, then American *Vogue* is a mixture of art and commerce. The name *Vogue* means style in French and the publication has been described as the world’s most influential fashion magazine. The publication reaches 11 million readers in the US and an additional 12.5 million internationally (Cutler, 2009). With a 2011 revenue at nearly \$390 million, according to the Publishers Information Bureau, American *Vogue* sits at the top of the fashion-glossy heap. The September 2012 issue, which celebrates the brand’s 120th anniversary, is its biggest book ever, with 658 advertisement pages, a 14 percent increase from the previous year. In the first half of 2013, American *Vogue* sold on average 269,740 copies a month at newsstands, according to the Alliance of Audited Media, and had another 930,446 paid subscriptions. It also gave away an average of 46,579 free issues, described as verified copies, by Alliance of Audited Media, for a

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total print circulation of 1,246,765.

American *Vogue*'s editor-in-chief, Anna Wintour, is a celebrity in her own way, and has been described as one of the most powerful figures in fashion. In 2014, she was named the thirty-ninth most powerful woman in the world by *Forbes* magazine, and inspired the best-selling novel *The Devil Wears Prada* (Weisberger, 2003), and hit movie (Finerman & Frankel, 2006). R. J. Cutler followed Wintour for eight months while shooting *The September Issue* (Cutler, 2009), the acclaimed documentary about the production of American *Vogue*'s September 2007 issue which was 840 pages that year. These movies illustrated both the truth and mythology of Wintour: her perfectionism as a boss, her preference for dresses over pants, heels over comfort, and fur over political correctness. Jenna Goudreau had the opportunity to interview Wintour and asked about Wintour's level of intimidation. Wintour replied: "I assure you all the people that work with me on a day-to-day basis don't think that. That's just something that's been fabricated by the media." (Goudreau, 2011). Wintour became American *Vogue*'s Editor-in-Chief in 1988 and oversaw the publication during the time all of the six covers to be investigated were created. Under her editorship, the magazine renewed its focus on fashion and returned to the prominence it had held under previous editors. Her job of fashion editing American *Vogue* allows her to capture what's happening in culture at the moment. Wintour is most visible during the seasons of fashion shows, where her appearance always turns heads. In 2009 Wintour launched Fashion's Night Out, a shopping event to jump-start New York's declined \$10 billion fashion industry. *The First Monday in May* is a documentary of how Wintour raises millions of dollars for the Metropolitan Museum of the Art's Costume Institute by helming its annual Met Ball. With its high-profile guest list from the worlds of fashion, film, music, sports, and politics. Wintour has been the driving force behind the gala's transformation

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from a popular dinner for museum donors and patrons into one of the biggest fundraising events staged by any of the city's cultural institutions, as well as an unprecedented global advertisement for her vision of the fashion industry. The single evening generated almost \$12 million, was a trending topic on Twitter and attracted over 25 million page views on *vogue.com* the following day. If the gala has been good for the Met, it has also been very good for American *Vogue*, cementing Wintour's position as the most powerful person in fashion. The evening represents an enormous investment of time and manpower as well as money on the part of American *Vogue*'s publishing company, Condé Nast. It positions them as the classiest publishing company in the world. The same may be true for the guests who have paid thousands of dollars to attend, for whom the evening has become not just a ticket, or a tax write-off, but an investment in personal advertisement. The who's who of the media elite and what they wore make headline news. The spectacle creates increasing name recognition for celebrities and material for American *Vogue* to report on. The effect lasts far beyond one evening. A dress gets associated with a celebrity and designer, and then all three become known as the designer dress a certain celebrity wore to the ball and all become part of popular culture history. By being so involved with the creation and perpetuation of the Met ball, Wintour creates and increases an environment and atmosphere that warrants and validates publications like American *Vogue*. She is saving and growing an environment that is needed for a magazine like American *Vogue* to survive in and report on. There can't be fashion journalism without fashion.

Anna's gift is the ability to cross-fertilize. Wintour has welcomed big brands like J.Crew, and the Gap into the American *Vogue* pages and those relationships have led to collaborations with designers who benefit from the publicity. Wintour is an important figure in the fashion world, praised for her eye for fashion trends, and for her use of the magazine to shape

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the fashion industry has been the subject of debate. Despite her good doings, critics have charged her with using the magazine to promote elitist views of femininity and beauty.

Gatekeeping theory and agenda setting theory are some principles that come into play. Wintour has been described as an ice queen, icon, and the devil in Prada. *American Vogue* is her vision and her opinion on where society is headed and is her magazine. All her actions are creating the best sort of environment for the continuation of *American Vogue*.

In *American Vogue*'s history, Wintour has been the second-longest-serving editor, surpassed only by Edna Woolman Chase, who from 1914 to 1951 ushered the publication through the Great Depression and two world wars. If Wintour is concerned about being the longest serving editor she will have to stay on until at least 2025. If she stays that long or not, Wintour has made herself a household name and transformed *American Vogue* into a place where pretty meets powerful. Wintour is not only the most influential person in fashion, but also plays an unusual role in the industry in which she is actually in, media. In her position as editor-in-chief, Wintour casts light on a category of media effects usually overlooked: the influence that media and their executives wield over the domains that are the objects of their coverage. A lot of actresses aspire to the cover of *American Vogue*. It's the gold standard. And Anna absolutely controls that.

In 1993, there were three celebrity *American Vogue* covers; by 1998, there were seven, and in 2002, there were 10. Now, it seems to be the norm every month. Celebrities are considered the most iconic contemporary symbols of privilege. Research examining the phenomenon of celebrity provides two broad patterns of media representation. The first refers to divinity and distance, and the second to proximity and mortality. Giles (2000) makes a distinction between the special status of celebrities and the basicness of everyday people. Rojeck

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(2001) discussed what he terms ceremonies of ascent and descent, which are essentially the mediated processes through which celebrity status is achieved, and then challenged, lost, and possibly regained. Hermes (1995) discussed the ways women's magazines like *Vogue* include both friendly and malicious gossip about celebrities where some months celebrities reputations are built up, then the next month breaking them down. Marshall (1997) argued that film stars evoke a sense of distance and inaccessibility while television stars encourage a closer identification and sense of proximity to viewers. The cover images of Gere and Clooney clearly fit the first set of connotations. Their privileged celebrity status is evidenced by their unblemished and notably white skin, which is further accentuated through lighting that invokes a sense of radiance and divinity.

American *Vogue* was selected in for this study part because of its wide circulation and recognition amongst its competitors. Colson and Rhajon (2005) found that American *Vogue* appears to promote gender-related written messages about women more so than the men's magazines they studied. They suggested that an examination of the images that are found on the magazine's cover would be beneficial to determine more of the entire message magazines, like American *Vogue*, are sending to their readers. In light of these studies, the present research examined the images of the six American *Vogue* covers where that included men.

The intent and focus of the literature review was to provide a benchmark of information regarding gender, advertising and visual communication in magazines. The unique topic of men on women's magazines covers was scarce amongst scholarly material, so elements relating to the topic were configured and brought together to construct a valid depth of knowledge. By researching the topics of advertisements, gender roles in the media, and the history of American *Vogue* there was a better understanding of what to take into consideration when reviewing these

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six magazines covers. By using the Goffman 1979 study as a historical reference and incorporating more contemporary research, this study took a new distinctive look at these covers. The literature revealed what questions should be asked in the current study.

### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How are men on the cover of American *Vogue* depicted in relation to the women?
2. How are the men on the cover of American *Vogue* depicted in relation to the viewer?
3. To what extent have men been portrayed in an idealized manner on the cover of American *Vogue*?

Talking about race and gender may still make people uncomfortable, but many have observed the beginning of real change. Every representation of men and women has the potential to construct the way society interprets and performs gender. Are American *Vogue*'s coed multi-racial covers proof that fashion is finally shedding its monochromaticity? According to Goffman (1979), people “depicted in commercially posed scenes have straighter teeth, are slimmer, younger, taller, blonder, and ‘better’ looking than those found in most real scenes” (21). Those who create visual communications must be encouraged to think critically about their role in creating a world of aspirational images. Seeing representations of false realities is part of the lived experience; these constructed hyperreality-images are a normal part of modern existence (Bordo, 1997). Analysis of visual communication is another way of developing insight into media imagery's prominence within modern culture. Although photography is the most abundant form of communication, most have had little training in the historical background of photography, the processes of photographic production and image manipulation, or the functions of visual communication. Magazine cover images seem to present a world that just is, despite

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common knowledge that these images are staged, cropped, and highly edited for consumption. Linking magazine cover images to the world of art history enables researchers to understand print media as a global visual communication system and to show the historical force of representative traditions. Research on magazine cover imagery is warranted because magazine cover images are a large part of the mediascape that shape people's perception of themselves and others (Pollay, 1986). Cultivation theorists claim that the images we see in the media encourage certain audience viewpoints about society. According to Littlejohn (2002):

Cultivation analysis is concerned with the totality of the pattern communicated cumulatively by [media] over a long period of exposure rather than by any particular content or special effect. In other words, this is not a theory of individual media effects but instead makes a statement about the culture as a whole (p. 317).

The purpose of this study was to use an interdisciplinary method to examine the magazine cover images on the unique six American *Vogue* covers that had visual representations of the female and male gender. The framework developed assumed that magazine covers are a powerful representational system that produce knowledge about gender through psychological, art historical, and patriarchal processes. References from art history provided a historical and visual background to contextualize the insights derived from social psychology.

In today's society, there are many pressures from numerous types of media. There are pressures to be rich, white, black, famous, skinny, tall, beautiful, smart, popular, and funny. Impossible ideals can end up consuming people, encouraging them to strive for a false sense of self. All types of media offer models of ways of life and images of realities. These unattainable airbrushed realities create discourse amongst subscribers. The idea that the media may influence someone's self-image and self-perception is a very poignant subject. The media promote and



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produce our culture's standards for what we should want to look like and what we should want to think about. The media seem to emphasize that if the reader looks like the cover model, they too can have happiness, love and success. This idea of continuous body image affects both genders. There are several ways unrealistic body ideals can affect mental health. "People's physical characteristics and body image affect personality development, self-esteem, interpersonal attractiveness, career opportunities, sexual adjustment, and the prevalence of disordered eating behaviors" (Lee, 1996).

Dimensions of social identity, such as: age, body type, race, sex, physical ability, and sexual orientation, form the categories of privilege and marginalization in society known as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). Through the awareness of intersectionality, the American *Vogue* cover images can be interpreted in a measureable way. An intersectional method of analyzing these six unique covers for race and gender was used. Attention to visual cues, as suggested by Goffman and Archer's research, enabled appreciation of the representations of race and gender in the cover images. Intersectionality in which race and gender interact was observed as well. These covers represent how American *Vogue* chose to represent men. On six separate occasions American *Vogue* depicted various frequencies of masculinity and showcased men different ways. This content analysis observed how the six different men are shown. This content analysis reports on how the men are shown interacting with the viewer and their interaction with the women cover models.

### **Method**

To test the research questions, a content analysis was conducted. The purpose was to better understand possible cultural connections these images made to interpret what the images communicate visually and to examine how gender was portrayed. These six cover images were

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looked at in a way an art historian would analyze these images if they were in a museum or national gallery. With art history techniques, each cover image was analyzed through interpretation, description, compared, and contrasted to describe the visual communications the images convey. By giving a detailed description of the images, and describing the subject matter and people, a conversation about what's happening in these images and what they communicate can be discussed.

Content analysis was chosen because the method is useful in studying communications as it allows in-depth description and analysis (Babbie 2005). Schutt (2006) also maintains that we can learn a great deal about popular culture and many other issues through studying the characteristics of messages delivered through the mass media. Condit (1989) noted, "Critical analysis should be rhetorical; it should be tied to the particularity of occasions: specific audiences, with specific codes or knowledges, addressed by specific programs and episodes" (p. 115). Theorist Theo van Leeuwen (2000) asked "what options, what choices does the 'language of images' give us to depict people?" (p. 341). He identified two basic questions regarding the conventions of visual representation. The first was: How are people depicted in relation to each other or their surroundings? The second was: How are people interacting with the viewer? These questions will help form the root of the research questions specific to this study. The creators of these six images had choices when making decisions. This study investigated and interpreted the outcomes pictorial representations. Lambiase and Reichert's (2003) argument that sexual rhetoric in print and print advertising offers examples for analyzing, resulting in a better understanding of how sexual content in print and print advertising works rhetorically. Several articles call for intersectional research on consumer culture. The authors Crockett et al., (2011) challenge researchers to avoid single dimensions of investigation and instead call for further

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analysis of consumer experiences across intersections of multiple dimensions. Despite the many potential benefits and calls for intersectional research on consumer culture, empirical research is scarce. Numerous studies examine a single dimension of diversity in media imagery, but studies that consider intersections of multiple dimensions are rare. The unidimensional approach examines categories of diversity one at a time. The weaknesses of unidimensional research can be overcome with a few extra steps during data collection and data analysis. In contrast, the intersectional approach considers categories across multiple dimensions at one time. Gopaldas & DeRoy argued how intersectional research provides relatively complex conclusions that are more inclusive, precise and radical (2015). Crenshaw (1991) is credited with coining the term “intersectionality” to describe “the various ways in which race and gender interact” (p. 1244). Researchers can begin to recognize intersectionality in any context. According to fashion-trends site the Fashion Spot, which reviews hundreds of global magazines each year, white models are nearly five times more likely to appear on magazine covers than people of color. In 1974, Beverly Johnson became the first African-American female to appear on *American Vogue*'s cover. More recently, other African-American celebrities like Halle Berry and Naomi Campbell have appeared on the cover as well. In the past, minority cover stars were viewed as hurting the magazines bottom line. There was a perception that showcasing minorities on the cover wouldn't sell, but recent occurrences reverse that theory as exemplified when Michelle Obama's April 2013 *Vogue* cover that sold approximately 300,000 copies, well beyond the title's monthly average of 270,000. Entertainers and celebrities have attained the type of cultural importance and popularity that now transcends race. It's no longer about black or white; the only color that matters is green.

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The goal of this thesis is to examine gender differences in six specific cover images of American *Vogue*. In order to conduct a strategic intersectional sampling, all the covers that were collected featured men and women and were analyzed for different poses, gaze, and races which enabled conclusions about men and women in general. This study also investigated the six unique co-ed covers of American *Vogue* to examine gender representation differences and to conduct a strategic intersectional sampling. These cover images are a representative sample of the only men to be represented on the cover of American *Vogue*. A content analysis was conducted to observe and understand how the imagery of these six men functions rhetorically as part of a visual message, to determine if these six men are portrayed differently than women, and to identify common themes in portrayals of men's poses, gaze, and races. Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) stated the gaze signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is dominant to the object of the gaze. Strategic visual communication, like these magazine covers, present various gazes, spaces and places, inviting us to gaze at the individuals as if they were objects of desire. American *Vogue* was selected because of its wide circulation and due to the rare phenomenon that men appeared on the cover of this magazine targeted towards women. This interpretive analysis focused on a limited range of materials in order to make broader points about limited representation and identity in visual communications.

The cover images included in this study are:

- Richard Gere with Cindy Crawford in November 1992
- George Clooney with Gisele Bundchen in June 2000
- LeBron James with Gisele Bundchen in April 2008
- Ryan Lochte with Hope Solo and Serena Williams in June 2012
- Kanye West with Kim Kardashian in April 2014

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- Ben Stiller with Penélope Cruz in February 2016

Sumner (2002) explains why few scholars are attracted to studying magazine covers:

I think the reason for the dearth of research is that designing magazine covers that work is an art and not a science. Because covers are primary art and not text, they can't be studied by content analysis as easily as text for "positive," negative," or "neutral" directional content (n.p.)

The research method of content analysis was subjective in this study. The researcher tried to be objective, but personal values occasionally interfered with this kind of research. The lack of another coder to provide inter-coder reliability was another limitation. The small sample was focused and unique, but challenging to determine if this could be a future direction of magazine covers. Nevertheless, most researchers have concluded that the cover must set the tone and personality of the magazine. They agree with former *People* managing editor and former *Time* editor James Gaines, who said, "Your cover defines you in popular perception" (Johnson & Prijatel, 2000, p. 314). In terms of popular culture then, "the most dominant cover factor is the image. Most people remember the image and who was on the cover the last time," according to John Peter, a New York magazine consultant (Johnson & Christ, 1995, p.216).

If the majority of the men and women on the covers of these magazines still fit the traditional American ideal of beauty as being a thin Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes, it will show that the publishers of American *Vogue* have taken fewer steps towards becoming more diverse in an effort to help viewer's self-esteem. Although there have been other previous academic studies on American *Vogue*, no study has previously been done on the men of the covers of American *Vogue* magazine. The cover models of American *Vogue* represent what the

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publishers of American *Vogue* consider the ideal woman and man and is the type of person that they are representing to the public as the ideal.

The American ideal of beauty can be traced back to the creation of the Miss America pageant in 1920 and the boom of blonde Hollywood starlets in the 1950s as well as the creation of the Barbie doll craze in the 1950s. These women were primarily thin Caucasian women with blonde hair and blue eyes. The American ideal of beauty can also be tied to the boom of the cosmetic industry in the 1920s as well as the creation of three magazines in the 1920s, which included *Vogue*, *The Queen*, and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Being one of the top selling women's magazines, and typically having a female super model or Hollywood actresses on the cover each month, American *Vogue* magazine female cover models can be considered a representation of what the ideal woman should look like. It is also reasonable to conclude that the women on the covers of American *Vogue* magazine are representations of what the editors of the magazine believe to be the ideal woman. More recently, men have been included on the covers with women six different times. How does the incorporation of these male cover models on six separate occasions alter the scenario?

Research has shown that audiences tend to compare themselves to the idealized versions of their specific gender and race representations in the media. Audiences that are underrepresented often find themselves feeling negatively towards their self-image due to most cover models all being Caucasian, thin, and glamorized. American *Vogue* is one of the five top selling women's magazines in the United States and consequently many women in the United States see the covers of the magazine each month. Even though the cover models don't always necessarily fit the norm, enough people see the magazine that these cover models could be considered a standard for beauty and fashion. Because this magazine has such a high circulation and could

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actually create its own standards, viewers and subscribers may see this magazine and believe it to be normal to be this sexualized and glamorous. If viewers don't fit this particular mold, the audience that reads this magazine may feel that they should conform and are not reaching ideals.

This study used content analysis of the rare six co-ed covers of American *Vogue* from when the first male was represented in 1992 to the most current issue that occurred in 2016 to determine if American *Vogue*'s representation of gender ideals has changed over the past 24 years and what type of men and women they portray as the ideal. Souiden and Diagne (2009) stated fashion magazines develop purchasing power and market trends. American *Vogue* was chosen for this study because it is one of the most recognizable, longest running and most influential magazines in the market. American *Vogue* was also chosen for this study because it is rare to see men on the cover on this magazine and it has only happened six times since 1892. Magazines like American *Vogue* help communicate ideas and information. A closer look at the visual information communicated regarding these six men and their interaction with women on these six rare covers has a higher potency than magazine covers from magazines that feature men more often.

### **Analysis**

#### **Richard Gere with Cindy Crawford in November 1992**

The model and the movie star. In the 90's, Richard Gere and Cindy Crawford were one of Hollywood's most interesting couples. Cindy Crawford has been pictured on *Vogue* covers 18 times. The supermodel of the 90's, Cindy Crawford, was getting married and the marriage was big news at the time so it must have seemed necessary to showcase the power couple: Cindy and her husband to be, Richard Gere. In 1992, there was no Facebook, Twitter or social media outlets and consequently, magazines were one of the primary sources for the promotion of

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cultural icons. The photo of Crawford and Gere showcased popular culture history, and this image communicates models were considered celebrities worthy of being romantically involved with movie stars. The visual documentation of Crawford and Gere's relationship was portrayed in this image and this type of fashion journalism captured potential reader's attention and also was a tactic to improve the sale of the magazine. The cover image features Richard Gere and Cindy Crawford on a beach in a loving embrace with Gere on the right of the page and Crawford on the left. Gere looks stylish and classy as he cozies up to his new wife. The text relating to the image reads: "Exclusive: Cindy Crawford and Richard Gere on marriage, meditation, and MTV". This photo offers viewers a glimpse into the new married life of one of the most recognizable female models at that time, one of the more popular movie stars at that time, and subsequently the most recognizable couples of the 90's. Cindy found love, and this was the beginning of something new for her and her fans. The notion that only women could be on *American Vogue* had changed; a man was on *American Vogue* for the first time and this cover is an artifact of that. The occurrence of Richard Gere on the cover of *American Vogue* set a precedent because at the time, he was considered as photogenic as she was. *American Vogue* had been women's territory, now it seemed men could be included on special occasions. This cover was a celebration of *American Vogue*'s number one cover model getting married, and it seemed as though both Crawford and *American Vogue* wanted to showcase Crawford and Gere's love story in an iconic image. Life was changing for Cindy and Richard, and as a result, things changed for *American Vogue*. Crawford was *American Vogue*'s cover girl and she was sharing a deeper facet of her life with *American Vogue* readers by sharing her domain with the man she loved. Crawford offers Gere to the viewer as she poses and tilts her head to the side while Gere gently touches her upper arm and their close embrace is a pose often seen between couples.



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Setting the bar as the first male and female couple represented on the cover of *American Vogue*, Richard Gere with Cindy Crawford were also a real-life couple at the time of publication. Their Caucasian smiling faces and warm embrace are photographed on a beach by the late Herb Ritts. They're both gazing at the camera and seen as if they were just about to kiss, but the camera interrupted them. Crawford seems submissive and not embracing him in return while other covers showed more of a mutual embrace. Everyone wanted to be them, but sadly Crawford and Gere split up three years later. This layout was emulated eight years later for the next coed *American Vogue* cover that included George Clooney and Gisele Bundchen in June 2000.

### **George Clooney with Gisele Bundchen in June 2000**

Surprisingly, it took eight years for a second man to surface on the cover of *American Vogue*. George Clooney is seen on the right-hand side on the page in a playful embrace with known Brazilian fashion model, Gisele Bundchen on the left. The resemblance to Gere's and Crawford's cover is uncanny. Clooney and Bundchen are all smiles as they hug each other on a beach. Caucasians by the ocean, the two pose flirty and carefree. The cover's text reads: 'George Clooney, The Perfect Catch'. The cover image was a deliberate way to promoting connection to the recent release of the movie *Perfect Storm*, which was based on the book by Sebastian Junger, which tells the true story of six fishermen who died a brutal Atlantic Ocean storm. Clooney plays a fisherman dedicated to his work who has difficulty in maintaining a lasting, loving relationship. This image seems to communicate Clooney is back from the ocean and ready for a relationship with Bundchen. Clooney and Bundchen were not a real life couple. They only were photographed together and then the article included each of their interpretations of each other and what Clooney was up to professionally. The article was called 'Catch Him If You Can'. This coincidence is ironic because Bundchen was dating Leonardo DiCaprio at the

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time, and DiCaprio was in a hit movie *Catch Me if You Can* in December 2002. Another interesting takeaway was that Bundchen was credited with being able to handle a football and seen frolicking on the beach with one. Perhaps this was good practice for her present day husband, the football champion and celebrity, Tom Brady.

It had been eight years since the last man was seen on the *American Vogue* cover, so photographer Herb Ritts once again was commissioned and paid homage to the Richard Gere and Cindy Crawford cover. Both covers were shot on a beach, with the cover models in similar poses. The tilt of Bundchen's head on this cover makes her seem playful and loving. Both Clooney and Bundchen hug each other in a playful way as if either one of them had just run across the beach into each other's arms, both looking at the camera smiling as if she had perhaps saved him from the perils of the ocean. Her sequined dress is reminiscent of a mermaid's tale tail. Her dress shines in the sunlight and reflects the blue-green water where they perhaps recently exited. It should be noted unlike the previous cover containing a male eight years prior, the models on the June 2000 cover in real life were not romantically involved and are simply models.

### **LeBron James with Gisele Bundchen in April 2008**

LeBron James was the first black man to be pictured on *American Vogue* and at the time he was 23 years old, making him the youngest man pictured. James wears a tank top, shorts and sneakers from his Nike clothing line and is shown dribbling a basketball, screaming while looking towards the camera as if in game mode and has one arm around supermodel Gisele Bundchen. The cover in 2008 might have seemed like something to celebrate, but the cover image sparked major controversy. Critics argued James appeared on the magazine cover striking a pose reminiscent of King Kong. Annie Leibovitz photographed the basketball superstar

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holding on to the Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen who landed the cover of *American Vogue* with a man for the second time and is the common thread that connects this cover to the previous coed cover. The image itself was controversial with critics saying the photo perpetuates racial stereotypes. James strikes what some compare to an ape-like pose, showing his teeth in a growl, with one hand dribbling a basketball and the other around Bündchen who wears a night gown-like dress, clothing that is reminiscent of what the femme fatale, Fay Wray, wore in the movie *King Kong*. Jessica Lange and Naomi Watts also embodied the stereotypical femme fatale roles in *King Kong* remake films. For some, it conjures up an idea of a dangerous black man. Leibovitz photographed the muscular 6 foot 9 inch NBA star and the slender 5 foot 11 inch model. Both gaze directly at the camera and viewer. He is aggressive, almost growling, hunched over and snarling. She is demure, and her body language, despite a seemingly forced smile, suggests she might be trying to escape. Representatives of *American Vogue* said the cover image was meant to be a juxtaposition to represent the various sizes and shapes of fashion. James and Bündchen made headlines with the photo, and the image itself was talked about for months. The dramatic juxtaposition of body size and shape grabs attention. It is unknown if Leibovitz deliberately decided to reconstruct the stereotypes of an old movie poster. Some see the image as deliberately provocative and agree that there are obvious *King Kong* visual references. Considering *American Vogue*'s important history, the magazine's cover each month must not be something the publishers take lightly. So when a cover image reminds many of *King Kong* and brings stereotypes to light, it makes a memorable cover that warrants further investigation. White athletes are portrayed smiling or laughing while black sports figures are given a beastly sort of vibe. For example, former NBA star Charles Barkley was depicted breaking free of neck and wrist shackles on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Dennis Rodman

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graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* with horns poking out of his forehead and his red tongue hanging out. Images of black male athletes as aggressive reinforce the criminalization of black men. Others might say the photo shows James' game face — nothing more, and Bundchen hardly looks frightened. Opposing opinions say that anyone who watches enough basketball knows what James look like playing the sport, and can tell the difference. Bundchen again represents the exotic woman and fashion itself to avoid alienating its fashion-conscious core audience. American *Vogue* creators probably included Gisele Bundchen in an attempt to meld the concepts of athleticism and high fashion. James is a huge, black masculine statue and Gisele is a Caucasian feminine, lean model. The intention of this juxtaposition could have been to show differences of the human shape. Some might not see any racist overtone to it, and blame a hypersensitivity to race lingering in America. Either way, the controversy increased sales and made a memorable image. The cover text reads “Shape Issue, Secrets of the Best Bodies, Gisele and Lebron Plus the World's Top Models and Star Athletes.” This wording insinuates Lebron and Gisele have the best bodies. This text creates interest to see who the other stars and athletes are. This text creates a hook to lure readers to flip thru the pages and discover who else is pictured inside. The hook may encourage the reader to purchase the magazine, and if that occurs, the cover has done its job. Condé Nast announced it was one of the worst-selling April issues since 2001, moving just 350,000 copies off newsstands.

### **Ryan Lochte with Hope Solo and Serena Williams in June 2012**

Olympic Swimmer champion, Ryan Lochte, serves as the fourth man to grace the cover of American *Vogue* and seen front and center on this cover. He’s shirtless smiling on a beach and light-heartedly jogging towards the camera. His arms are intertwined with his two co-cover models-white female soccer player Hope Solo and African-American female tennis champion

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Serena Williams. This photograph was taken once again by famed photographer Annie Leibovitz. The photo marks the first time and only time a man appears on the cover with two women and without a professional female model. In another picturesque beach scene, Olympic athletes Solo and Williams are shown running towards the camera on either side of their fellow Olympian, Lochte. Some commended the magazine for picturing women with body types that differ from the usual stick-thin model while American *Vogue*-purists were disappointed with the lack of glamor in the athletic-themed issue. The issue's theme was the 2012 Summer Olympics, which took place in London, England from July 27th to August 12th. The two women on either side of Lochte are both wearing gold toned one piece swimsuits as they hold on to his arms. The only athlete on the cover dressed in gear representative of their sport is Lochte, a swimmer, and six-time Olympic gold medalist. Solo and Williams, who play soccer and tennis respectively, complement the male athlete on either side on him in their fashionable designer swimwear. The cover has been compared to a scene from the popular TV show, *Baywatch*, a comparison that speaks to the cover's possible sexualization of its cover models. Both women are going for gold as indicated by their metallic swimwear while Lochte could be considered objectified as he wears only skin tight black compression swimming shorts called jammers. Many magazines dropped their expected cover image routine around this time to be more patriotic and have a theme that represented America and its Olympic athletes. Having this photo as the final cover image might have been a last minute decision as the faces and bodies of the cover models seem disconnected, as though they were combined from two separate photographs and badly photoshopped together. It seems as if the faces of all three cover models were taken from a better photo and hastily placed on another photo where the bodies were better posed. This was a time in media when photoshopping was becoming more noticeable and heavily used to a point

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where many covers were criticized for misrepresenting the person photographed. The errors in lighting and dysmorphic blending of skin tone are evident in this image and make a good example of a badly photoshopped cover. The entire issue makes various sports and their representational athletes into artistic fashion fantasies. To that effect, this cover image should raise topics of conversation. These three people are most likely comfortable being put in the spotlight as they prepared to go off to represent the America in their various sports.

Somehow, even to a mainly female audience, the women athletes on this cover of *American Vogue* aren't given the chance to pose as the powerful athletes they are but are toned down to conform to harmless stereotypes. Going along with the comparisons made to *Baywatch*, Solo and Williams are rendered as the female lifeguards as Loche is the object of their affection is some strange, surreal bonus *Baywatch* episode.

### **Kanye West with Kim Kardashian in April 2014**

Early estimates said the Kim and Kanye controversy was going to push sales to between the 400,000-to-500,000 level, easily outselling the 355,000 copies that Beyoncé sold on newsstands for the March 2013 cover, and also outselling the year earlier April cover of Michelle Obama of approximately 300,000 copies. Annie Leibovitz was commissioned again to be the photographer for the *American Vogue* April 2014 shape issue cover image. For a third time, Leibovitz's provocative coed imagery caused controversy. Controversy sells issues and gets attention.

When Leibovitz photographed the juxtaposed body types of LeBron James and Gisele Bündchen in 2008, their cover pose caused controversy regarding race portrayal and gender roles. This time, viewers wondered why a polarizing reality star and her Black rapper future husband had a reason to be on the cover of *American Vogue* at all. *American Vogue* defended the choice by saying putting Kanye and Kim on the cover was an accurate representation of where our culture

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was at that moment. This situation was a win-win for Kim. She got the visibility that she so desperately craves, and she's more associated with a respected prestige brand to a certain extent.

This puts Kim's name and brand near Anna Wintour's. Some might say there's a disconnect between these two brands; that they're not synchronistic. American *Vogue* is chic, prestigious, high end and sophisticated, while Kim and Kanye are mass, reality TV, and often described as tacky and tasteless. While putting Kimye, as the media has dubbed the telegenic pair, on the cover might not have been coherent with American *Vogue's* brand, it was a clever move.

Wintour's decision to put Kim and Kanye on the magazine was 100% business. Clearly Wintour is a very shrewd business person and her goal is to sell magazines and dominate market share.

Between the two of them, Kim and Kanye have more than 30 million Twitter followers. *Vogue* has only 3.6 million. Now this cover represents another moment in history for both American *Vogue* and Kimye. The significant controversy helped the magazine move more copies than usual which is what American *Vogue* wanted, and needed in an age when the internet is cannibalizing the print magazine business. There are many similarities and differences between the 2008 and 2014 cover images. One notable difference was in the mood for these two separate photos. The West and Kardashian photo is more subdued and the couple is in a slightly wooden loving embrace, but controversy ensued.

Kanye West and Kim Kardashian have become a popular cultural phenomenon. With the couple's effect on pop culture, Kim and Kanye made their way onto the American *Vogue* cover, with a cover blurb that read: #worldsmosttalkaboutcouple. It was the first time a hashtag was used on the American *Vogue* cover and refers to Kim's huge social media presence - she has more than 20 million Twitter followers.

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American *Vogue*'s editor Anna Wintour said if American *Vogue* just put tasteful people on the cover, it would be a rather boring magazine. The first celebrity that Anna Wintour put on the cover of American *Vogue* was Madonna, which was considered controversial at the time and now Madonna is regarded as part of the establishment. Anna Wintour feels that if American *Vogue* didn't reflect modern culture, including the provocative public figures within it, nobody would talk about American *Vogue*, and it is critical for Wintour that people do talk about American *Vogue*. By remaining relevant in a print industry with an evolving and uncertain future, American *Vogue* continues to be one of the most purchased fashion magazines.

The positioning of Kardashian's hand showcases her large 15 karat diamond engagement ring, and Kanye position is draped around her. He's not looking at the camera but rather looking behind her, so she's the center of attention. He's submissive to her. He's positioned behind her.

### **Ben Stiller with Penélope Cruz February 2016**

The sixth man to be seen on the cover of American *Vogue*, actor Ben Stiller graces the front of the magazine's February 2016 issue in character as Derek Zoolander. Ben Stiller looks at the viewer with his recognizable 'Blue Steel' gaze. Overall, it's another unusual and unpredictable choice for an American *Vogue* cover, but as the cover text says, Zoolander is just "So hot right now!" Promoting the release of *Zoolander 2*, Caucasian Stiller is joined by his Latino co-star Penélope Cruz. Some would wonder if this is the real American *Vogue* or just some promotional poster mockup for the movie. The film interestingly featured American *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour and other celebrities synonymous with the fashion world. Fashion can be entertainingly funny and American *Vogue* shows that it has a sense of humor with this cover. The cover is ironic and brings this study's topic full circle. This memorable American *Vogue* cover includes a



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male celebrity, who is posing and gazing as a fictional character. This cover is promoting a comedic movie that portrays the industry this magazine also represents.

Ben Stiller poses as the stereotypical male model character Derek Zoolander. His exaggerated pose is reminiscent of Stiller's comedic portrayal of a world famous male model. Stiller seems to have almost slid into Cruz's photo. She is standing taller than Stiller in an undulating pose. Her right arm reaches around his back as her right hand rests on his right shoulder. Her relaxed gaze is faced towards the camera as she leans into him. Stiller's overly styled hair synonymous with the Zoolander character is very close to light brushing her right cheek. The intimate gaze and lack of smiles from both individuals in this photo suggest an exciting partnership as if taking a break from a passionate dance. Perhaps a comedic and overly dramatic version of the tango. The pair is wearing similarly colored outfits. The royal blue tones in Stiller's tailored Dolce & Gabbana suit is embellished with a bird print. Cruz wore a simple blue dress that has cut outs and pleating. Once again Annie Leibovitz was the photographer and created an eye-catching image.

Neither Zoolander films were a commercial blockbuster success, but despite being underwhelming at the box office, the Zoolander franchise takes a comedic look at the world of fashion, and *American Vogue* is in on the joke. The fashion world exaggerations that the original 2001 *Zoolander* movie poked fun at has in some ways become reality. Camera phones in every pocket plus the proliferation of social media turned blue steel selfies into ordinary, everyday behavior. Ironically, this cover acts as an advertisement for a movie that is a satire of the fashion world. Narcissism isn't an epithet in fashion; it's celebrated and encouraged. Writing about the fashion world is a lot like using Hollywood and its actors as source material. They're both showy professions that exist in front of cameras. Hollywood stars have become walking

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billboards for designers when answering the age old question: “who are you wearing?”

Ironically, this cover represents American *Vogue*'s relationship with popular culture and an emerging media symbiosis, a strategy that other publications might need to implement to gain and maintain readers.

### Results

This study revealed that when men were featured on the cover of American *Vogue*, a woman was also present. There has never been a man without a female on the cover of American *Vogue*. This is interesting and relevant because plenty of women are featured in men's magazines by themselves without men. This phenomenon was the rationale behind choosing them as a representational sample. Unlike the Schroeder and Zwick (2004) study of interesting representations of male bodies, this study was able to investigate a representational sample that consisted of six specific images on one brand of magazine. These American *Vogue* covers showcase men within interesting confines. All the pictures of men were communicated on a channel usually subscribed to by women. When these men were included on the cover of American *Vogue*, it created a rare representational set of gender visual communications that are worth investigating. The LeBron James and Gisele Bündchen cover was an example of the Barthel (1994) that stated that the masculine gender role emphasizes power; and due to this gender role, male cover models overshadow the female model.

Interestingly, when men were pictured, a woman accompanied the man. Unlike stereotypical images of gender roles where the man is dominant, the male character in these images could be considered an equal supportive partner, or subordinate. One interesting fact was the lack of skin shown on the covers. Although perhaps sexualized in other areas, men don't seem to be portrayed as scantily clad sex objects, supporting Andrews' (1992) and Fischhoff's

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(2011) claim that nude men are seen as vulnerable, and a vulnerable man is not seen as masculine or attractive. The male characters could be interpreted as an interchangeable accessory to the woman. The majority of cover images were showcasing clothing, clothing accessories, and an aspirational lifestyle, so perhaps this isn't a question of whether men aren't supposed to be seen as vulnerable, but rather the male cover model is simply there as an attempt to showcase the female.

Most of the cover people on American *Vogue* are represented as flawlessly young, slender, white, stereotypically beautiful and famous. Images of 13 individual people were analyzed. Of those 13, 6 are men, 7 are women, 2 are black men, 4 are white men, 1 is a black woman, and 1 Latino woman and 5 are white women. One white woman is repeatedly shown on two separate covers. Previous research has found that thin Caucasians with blonde hair and blue eyes have been the ideal for beauty in America since the 1950s. There have been examples since the 1950s that indicate this ideal may be changing, and some of these six covers are examples of how representations of perfection are changing. There are no stereotypical blonde bombshell women or blonde men on these covers. All 13 individuals were some facet or brunette or darker. Some of these six covers contradict the idea that a man should never be shorter, younger, weaker, or lesser than a woman. In many of the images, the women appear equal or dominant to the men. Two of these covers could support the Leit, Gray, & Pope (2001) findings that exposure to muscular male figures increases body dissatisfaction in men. LeBron James and Ryan Lochte are the two male world class athletes depicted on American *Vogue* and use their more muscular bodies as part of their daily employment. Viewing these two distinct images may influence viewer's definitions and beliefs regarding masculinity and male gender identity.

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Audiences might conclude that men need to have Olympic style bodies to be attractive enough to be photographed with women like Gisele Bundchen, Serena Williams, or Hope Solo.

According to Goffman (1979), people “depicted in commercially posed scenes have straighter teeth and are slimmer, younger, taller, blonder, and ‘better’ looking than those found in most real scenes” (21). This idea was supported by the current research and it was found that men on these American *Vogue* covers were relatively attractive and better looking than the average male. However, the men look better in different ways than the quintessential better-looking woman. Some examples are the athleticism and fame of these six men. All the men depicted were famous for being either an athlete, movie star or famous musician. This draws the possible conclusion that American *Vogue* creators prioritize personality and talent in male roles rather than looks. Overall, the results indicate that men must be with at least one woman to be on the cover of American *Vogue*.

The first research question posed was: How are men on the covers of American *Vogue* depicted in relation to the women? Throughout all these images, most men are shown engaging in healthy, normal, non-violent interactions with the ladies. The LeBron James & Gisele Bundchen cover is the exception. The majority of the male images in the sample were not shown as sexual creatures, in the same way women are often portrayed. The men were clothed, not posed in what Goffman would consider a sexual position. Goffman (1979) also states “evidence of an individual’s involvement will come from the direction and mobility of his gaze, as well as the alignment of his eyes, head, and trunk, these ordinarily orientated in the same direction” (18). The male images analyzed appeared to be involved with their situations by appearing recently involved with what’s in front of him, a woman or women. The men on these cover are usually next to or behind the woman or women in the image. The second research question guiding this

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study asked: how are the men on the covers of American *Vogue* depicted in relation to the viewer? Most of the men are gazing back at the viewer in an interactive way as if the viewer had just interrupted the action of the scene. If the man in the image wasn't looking at the audience, he was looking directly at the woman on the cover. The third question was asking about to what extent the men on the covers are portrayed in an ideal manner. In some ways these men are the American *Vogue* standard of the ideal man. Most of the men are as Goffman (1979) described and "have straighter teeth and are slimmer, younger, taller, blonder, and 'better' looking". The exception being no blonde men were seen. The other exception would be the cover including LeBron James and Gisele Bündchen due to its atypical and controversial mood. All the men are either famous fit actors or professional celebrity athletes who are interacting with the women in a positive way for the most part. Despite the controversy of LeBron's cover, it still met the need of increasing sales for that particular month and is a memorable image.

It was assumed that the six covers in this study would suggest that women are the main characters in adventurous and luxurious lifestyle associated with what it means to be an American *Vogue* reader. Some of the men could be viewed as accouterments or accessories, little different than the advertised products inside the magazine. This narrative suggests that men are objectified and interchangeable with products, which function as key accessories to the fantasy portrayed. In reality, the men were less objectified than predicted. Additionally, most of the men on the covers, while depicted in decorative positions, remain masculine but are visually subordinate or equal to the women. With closer consideration of the situations depicted in these cover images, a viewer can interpret six different depictions of normal, healthy relationships between men and women. Thus, the visual rhetoric of these covers invite the viewer to have a closer look and investigate the interior photos and contents of the magazine.

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Reading right to left is fundamentally a Western practice. So naturally American *Vogue*'s viewers saw men on the right-hand side on the covers up until 2000 and then saw men on the left-hand side beginning in 2008. Some feel the right-hand side is the dominate side. No matter which side is more dominant there was a noticeable change with men being seen on the left-hand side or middle since 2008. The typeface of the American *Vogue* title is recognizable. The chosen font is part of the American *Vogue* brand. Even the letters V O G U E have been stylized and edited in a way that is synonymous with American *Vogue*'s iconography. A closer look at the layout of American *Vogue* covers revealed that the title's typography is usually a bright red and developed specifically for the brand. The font named Bauer Bodoni in a thin weight typeface is a close match. Another close match is a font called Didot. The curvature at the bottom of the leg in the capital "G" is reminiscent. So even the text on the cover of American *Vogue* is recognizable as thin, curvaceous, and regal; reminiscent of the women the magazine caters to. The type looks established, cut in stone, and looks like it could be found etched in concrete or bulletproof glass on the side of the building like where American *Vogue*'s parent company, Condé Nast, finds its new home: The Freedom Tower in downtown New York City.

Many criticize fashion magazines like American *Vogue* for lack of diversity with the same Caucasian celebrities airbrushed to unattainable perfection. This study looked closer at the rare occurrences of men on American *Vogue* and surprisingly found there were two black men, one black woman, and one Latino woman seen throughout the six separate covers of American *Vogue*. These are examples of the Crenshaw (1991) credited coined the term "intersectionality". The findings of intersectionality on these covers coincide with the previously stated arguments of Gopaldas & DeRoy (2015) who stated how intersectional research provides relatively complex conclusions that are more inclusive, precise and radical.

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Effective magazine covers have two primary characteristics. They should accurately communicate the contained articles, and they should draw attention so that the magazine gets purchased. Including male celebrities on the cover of a woman's fashion magazine is one way to add shock value to increase sales and gain notoriety. One of the biggest factors that determine which celebrities land on magazine covers is their current project. They may have a forthcoming movie, a TV show returning in the fall or a new book of selfies to launch. Very rarely does a celebrity get on a cover without motivation, although there are exceptions.

Since many covers are pegged to Hollywood projects, it would be valid to expect to see more people that represent diversity appear on future magazine covers. African-American and Latino casts are leading some of the most popular current television shows, but then there are also the usual white models at a time when diversity in pop culture has never been more prominent. Consequently, that is reflected in how almost all the covers investigated included a least one white woman. Since the *American Vogue* reader is predominantly white and female, seeing a white woman on the cover is to be expected. Seeing a black man or a white man is more of a surprise. When asked, editors of magazines reported that diversity on any magazine cover isn't a conscious decision to feature a more diverse group of people, but rather a natural reaction to who is making headlines at that moment. As a natural result, specific images of certain people will sell more magazines for different time frames. The popularity of the individual at that moment determines who gets booked so it makes the most sense that each individual is on the cover when they are most relevant in popular culture. These six covers help to showcase that practice in many ways.

In reality, magazine sales are steadily dropping no matter who goes on the cover. Issue single copy sales, both print and digital, have been declining everywhere over the past five years.

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The sales decline is reflected across the board with *Allure*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Glamour*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Instyle*, *Marie Claire*, and *American Vogue*. Few magazines are reaching the same sales numbers that they hit five years ago, no matter who's on the cover. A possible solution could involve a change where magazines stop looking to what Hollywood projects stars have booked and start creating and developing covers that will grab the most attention in any space, online and on newsstands. The female model of the latest movie, album, television show, may not work as effectively as a cover model as it has in the past. With the internet and social media competitors like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, people are constantly bombarded with images of these celebrities. What magazines need and have started using again is not necessarily contextual relevance for the timing of a show or product or movie or music album, instead, what they need is a 'wow' factor.

There have been marketing solutions like casting the creative director of *Marie Claire*, Nina Garcia, on *Project Runway*. Many of the challenges on the reality television show were focused around the being in the magazine as a prize. Showcasing someone like Ben Stiller in character as the comedic role *Zoolander* could be considered another creative solution to increase sales and create successful situations. Whatever the solution is, it needs to produce results quickly because sales don't seem to be looking up.

This study delved into analyzing *American Vogue* cover images that represented men. As it turned out, all six covers that represented men also represented women at the same time. The representational relationships portrayed were also observed. Since there has been very few *American Vogue* covers with men on them, these selected covers are important to consider and are fascinating artifacts that give insight on how *American Vogue* has represented men and represented relationships between men and women.



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Female photographers, like Annie Leibovitz, are considered one of America's best photographers. She has a trademark for the use of bold colors and poses and shot four of the six covers analyzed. Leibovitz is a synonymous name with American *Vogue* and well known for producing iconic and provocative photos. Having Leibovitz shoot the majority of the coed covers made another interesting connection between the covers and to the narrative of how American *Vogue* represents women.

The majority of men and women on the covers analyzed of American *Vogue* were Caucasian, an ideal that has not significantly changed over the last 50 years. The idea that looking youthful is beautiful has not changed, has consistently been represented in these covers — not one person seemed to be over the age of 50, and over the decades the people on the cover look more and more youthful.

It was found that there is a significant correlation between feminine positioning traits in regards to pose and gaze. According to Goffman (1979), men are more likely to exhibit no touch as to imply detachment. So in this case, men are conforming to feminine traits with the loving embraces depicted. There were also conclusions in regards to the men's gazes. It is typical for males to look out at an unknown audience, and when the gaze was directed at the audience it was as if his gaze had just been pulled away from looking directly at the women. The seven women's gaze was also predominantly directed toward the viewer which resulted in the models being eye-catching and more welcoming the audience. This study establishes a foundation for future research on the portrayal of men in print media. Future studies could investigate the correlating interior photographs with the particular cover image.

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### Discussion

The intention of this study was to investigate the inclusion of men on six unique American *Vogue* covers; a magazine that is geared toward women as their primary audience. Although comparative studies have been done for men's and women's magazines, few have looked specifically how men are portrayed on women's magazine covers and even fewer studies have focused on how men are portrayed on the covers of the women's fashion magazine American *Vogue*. Several strands of scholarship were brought together to produce an interdisciplinary method of reading cover images of American *Vogue*. Audiences have their opinion on how men should look, act and represented in the media. American *Vogue* has portrayed only six men on its cover in its entire history. As stated earlier, images found in magazines reflect society's past, current, and possibly future culture and also suggest how some individuals choose to be represented (Barnard, 2002). These six photos are idealized portraits of men and women. The gender and power roles have shifted. This refers to Barnard's (2002) statement on how the important role fashion plays in creating cultural meaning: "Fashion, clothing, and dress are signifying practices, they are ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions of relative power" (p.38). The women are strong and beautiful. So too are the men, but they take a secondary role for the majority of the cover images. All the men on the covers were with one woman, with the exception on Ryan Lochte being photographed with two females. This draws the conclusion that being with ladies is necessary for a man to be in American *Vogue* and may suggest that being with women is also part of male attractiveness.

The creators of American *Vogue* want the cover images to be attractive and noteworthy so that sales increase by more viewers feeling the need to purchase individual issues and to

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invest in a monthly subscription. Kamphuis' (1991) study looked at the attractiveness of the cover image and the representativeness of the cover image and revealed attractiveness had the greatest influence on purchasing decision and representativeness had little to no impact. Drew and Sternberger (2005) argue the cover image is supposed to represent the content. It is clear that these six American *Vogue* covers have the primary focus of being attractive but also includes cover text to describe the content to let the viewer know what the articles inside are about. Drew and Sternberger (2005) go on to talk about covers in general and claim "it becomes a physical manifestation not just of the ideas of the author, but of the cultural ideals and aesthetics of a distinct historical moment" (p.8). It is clear that most of these six American *Vogue* covers represent various historical moments including weddings of celebrities, releases of movies, and the Olympics.

Looking back at the history of the magazine and everyone who's been photographed, there's an enduring quality that's captured that stands the test of time. Being photographed and having an appearance on the cover of such an iconic magazine has resonance.

Wood and Taylor (1991) suggested that when people see popular images, they become motivated to replicate what they see. They compare their looks to those on the covers and inside the magazines and try to eliminate the distance between their real image and the idealized one. The visual message presented by the photographs on all the six covers was: that in order to attract and keep a relationship, the viewer should look like a model, celebrity, or Olympic athlete. This interpretation supported Galician's (2004) myth about centerfold looks. There are numerous ways in which both men and women are depicted that define gender roles, but a certain few are more common than others. Symbolic interactionism can influence an individual's magazine choice, in that he or she may select a magazine that matches the person's

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perceived sense of self. Similarly, symbolic interactionism could impact magazine editors and publishers as they consider a potential reader's self-image. To be economically viable, publishers may present palatable cover images. This, in turn, may drive advertising content to reflect the imagery noted in the editorial content and cover content.

In this particular framework, when assessing the males on the six American *Vogue* covers, men are most often portrayed as nurturing heroes, well dressed, well groomed, or energetic athletes. The audience of this selection of covers thus has a perception of men that is juxtaposed. This finding reinforces the results from Vigorito and Curry (1998) study, which similarly found that men were most often portrayed in nurturing roles in women's magazines with the exception of the cover photo that included Lebron James.

In the real world, audiences are exposed to far more representations of men and women than in the magazines we read. Male portrayals can be observed everywhere, from movies, to magazines, to presidential candidates. However, the bank of these six American *Vogue* covers and the potential they have to help develop some social constructs should not be ignored.

Unlike Vigorito and Curry (1998), this research looked at one specific magazine brand. One of the theories of muscular ideal states that the media is a responsible party for defining the masculine ideal; however, as the research shows, the masculine ideal changes over time and has various juxtaposed definitions. This juxtaposed display of masculinity has the potential to cause conflict among men and women and their understanding of what the other gender should look like and how to behave. If more men were portrayed on American *Vogue*, then these images would have less effect on defining masculinity. But since there are only six covers that include men throughout American *Vogue* more than 100-year history, these images carry more weight and potency in what it means to be a man according to American *Vogue*.

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The magazine choice was initially selected for American Vogue's clear audience demographic, and popularity. One significant finding of the study was the overall equality between men and women within the sample. The Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) study found that from 1959 to 1979, across all magazine genres, there was an increase in male decorative roles and a decrease in stereotypical masculine roles. This demonstrates the male's evolution and changing role in print representation. The male was objectified in 1979, and this trend continued until at least 1997 when the erotic male was found to be the most prominent image in the Rohlinger (2002) study. However, in more recent years the perception has changed. In the Reichert and Carpenter (2004) study, we saw that as of 2003 men were portrayed as primarily demure, and the current study has shown a vast decrease in erotic male characters. Whether men have been represented as nurturing partners or athletic outdoorsmen, at least they have been playing a more realistic and attainable role, and not merely objectified statues of bare muscle. This is a positive trend for publishers and advertisers. It can be interpreted that instead of responding to the objectification of women with the objectification of men, publishers are showing respect to both genders by showing men that are known for more than just a handsome face and muscled bound body. By examining the covers in this study, it is possible to conclude that American *Vogue* realizes that its target audience is too smart to be coerced into buying a magazine from only an erotic male figure. Research needs to be conducted to find if this same trend is happening in men's magazines, but it is safe to say that certain men's magazines will never change, but some have at least made an attempt to start portraying real people.

The current status of American *Vogue* could be an indication of how it's editor, Anna Wintour, views herself as a serious periodical editor rather than just the person who makes final decisions at a women's fashion magazine. By making American *Vogue* more than just a

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women's fashion magazine and more of an American standard of social commentary and opinion, Wintour has been able to keep American *Vogue* relevant in the struggling print media industry. Her power and influence in the fashion world and notoriety in popular culture has kept her and her magazine in the minds of the public.

The men on American *Vogue* have been interpreted as celebrity icons. These surreal images convey a sense of fantasy to the viewer. These fantasies provide the audience a chance to escape their life for a moment and imagine themselves as or close to movie stars, models, and celebrity athletes. These covers use the fantasy of being a celebrity and being close to a celebrity to attract the attention of potential buyers. Viewers of these covers could potentially picture themselves interchangeable with the female or male characters in the cover images. These 13 cover people reside on these specific past covers. Their poses and gazes offer the viewer to take a look at the pages of American *Vogue* and consequently view advertisement for products that make the publisher's profit.

Despite the substantial data this study has provided, some of its limitations could inspire future research projects. Firstly, only covers from American *Vogue* were considered. The selection of six covers was not random, and they were purposefully chosen for their uniqueness and specificity. By having such a particular sample set generalized conclusions about the entire American *Vogue* brand could not be made. This study only used magazines as a media outlet. Other media, including social media, and television may present a very different presentation of masculinity. Because this study is a content analysis, it's hard to have a strong theoretical base, and few analytical tests can be run. It lacks the ability to make claims about the content's effects on its target audience. Therefore, any allusion to possible effects on target audiences is purely

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speculative. If surveys could be incorporated to include consumer response to masculine portrayals, a more comprehensive set of data with a theoretical base could be obtained.

The selection of magazine covers for this study was based on the unique phenomenon of men being present in the cover photographs of a known women's magazine that showcases fashion and beauty. Perhaps a future study surveying audiences with the same psychographics instead of merely demographics would be beneficial to the current body of knowledge. In regards to future research, an in-depth look into those responsible for imagery in magazine covers, such as art directors and editors, could address how their personal feelings with masculine and feminine roles affect their content decisions. Despite numerous studies on women's portrayals, another recommendation is to reverse the studies variables and look at females on covers of men's fashion magazines like *GQ* or *Details*.

Based on the findings, the editors of American *Vogue* have a specific ideal of beauty. The publishers did conform to societal expectations by having primarily thin Caucasian men and women on the covers, but they did not always have the majority of men and women have blonde hair and blue eyes. Although the elements of beauty in the males and females on the covers do not exactly fit into the blonde hair blue eye mold, there are consistent themes over decades. All the men are famous and easily recognizable. Most of the women are famous and recognizable. All the cover people are physically fit with clear, smooth skin free of scars and blemishes and wrinkles. These observations may indicate that the editors of American *Vogue* have a particular look they are attempting to promote and find more marketable.

The men and women on the covers did still follow some of the American norms of being ideal, the few that showed their bodies were all thin or athletic. Cultural norms in the United States put emphasis on the importance of being attractive and especially being thin. Thinness

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and athleticism in the media is heavily studied and has shown to cause audiences to feel negatively towards themselves. The Martin and Gentry (1997) study showed that self-esteem drops more drastically with self-perceptions of physical attractiveness contributing to the drop. There are numerous studies that suggest that advertising and mass media may be related to creating and reinforcing an obsession with attractiveness and the thin-body ideal. This is an interesting factor considering this magazine claims to communicate what style, fashion, and culture are at the moment. Cover models being glamorized with computer software and having no visible imperfections has also been shown in research to cause audiences to have lowered self-esteem. The majority of these cover models were in poses that showed their face, so it put an emphasis on their facial beauty, but also emphasized their thin and athletic body types.

The focus of the analysis centered on the cover images of American *Vogue* where both men and women are photographed together. With attention to physical cues, cultural conventions, and art historical influences as suggested by work in social psychology, gender portrayal, and art history the six unique American *Vogue* covers were interpreted as cultural artifacts situated within print media as a representational system. This study looked at how these images worked to produce persuasion and used a content analysis of the imagery of the six *Vogue* covers to measure how the male gender was represented. In analyzing these covers from a critical interdisciplinary perspective, research was added by considering magazine covers as communication tools with the power to persuade. This small but unique sample of cover images can be regarded as a measure of the evolution of what is popular in culture. Other conclusions include:

- Young cover persons are represented as happy, successful, and satisfied while mature cover persons are not represented at all.



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- Lean cover individuals are represented as happy and successful, while non-lean cover persons are not represented at all.
- White, Black, and Brown cover individuals are represented as athletic and successful, while Asian cover persons are not represented at all.
- Male cover individuals are depicted as handsome, famous, athletic, and successful
- Female cover characters are mostly white, sexy skin-baring athletic models.

The arguments discussed here point to some additional questions that require attention.

In what other forms of consumer media, besides magazine covers, do gender stereotypes appear as a central communicative resource? Are these gender stereotypes limited to the domain of consumption and commodification or are gender stereotypes also seen in other fields such as political communication? How do gender stereotypes interact with ideological structures of communication? What role to gender stereotypes play in media representations of presidential candidates? What could an analysis of gender roles in the aesthetics of advertisements, films, music videos and television programming contribute to existing bodies of scholarship in those areas? These and other areas require further investigation and analysis as the study of gender roles in visual communication evolve. Further research is needed that locates and identifies particular art historical themes in magazine cover images and advertising. An understanding of the concepts of gaze, representation, objectification, and gender roles contributed to this study's ability to uncover meaning within the magazine cover images. Scholars are invited to apply training in the visual arts including: sculpture, painting, and photography to study of visual communication and its relationship to consumption.

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Although rare, men have been seen on the American *Vogue* cover on six separate occasions. This project builds on previous work to investigate possible reasons behind the motivation to put men on the cover of a woman's fashion magazine. By interpreting the images themselves, insight can be gained as to why American *Vogue* might have chosen these particular men to be on the cover. Popular culture circumstances, celebrity, showcasing society to increase sales and to remain on the cutting edge of what's going on in the world. What's important for the American *Vogue* reader to know? What does the American *Vogue* reader care about? Six different times American *Vogue* creators made the decision to show men on the cover. Is this trespassing or a violation of gender codes? The six covers of American *Vogue* where identifiable men are shown have been discussed and analyzed with knowledge of what was happening at the time in popular culture. Future research could delve deeper into the correlating interior imagery within each particular magazine issue. Time constraints limited this from the current study.

Interestingly, the six American *Vogue* covers were more alike than expected. The covers had several connections to one another that were interesting and ironic. There were some objectifying images, suggesting that men are objectified by some women's magazines just as Rohlinger (2002) suggested. This analysis is different from previous gendered comparisons of magazines, such as the one conducted by Malkin et al., (1999) that found no appearance based messages in men's magazines they sampled. Most of the American *Vogue* covers did not follow Goffman's (1979) theory. The female and male subjects seemed equally strong, confident, and happy most likely due to the fact that the makers of American *Vogue* want readers to see themselves this way.

This study examined how traditional gender stereotyping is used to communicate with particular audiences. This study established a framework for future studies that can be done on

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other magazines. Further analysis of the men represented on the cover and their correlating interior images within the pages of the six American *Vogue* could be further investigated. This would provide a larger measurement of the visual messages contained in each magazine. Future research could include how Caitlin Jenner's image on the cover of *Vanity Fair* influences how transgender women think about how they should look.

As society becomes more diverse, stereotypes of gender will need to adapt in order to send a clear message of what modern gender expectations are. Innovations in media will also have an effect on how publishers reach audiences and how audiences consume magazine content. While this study indicated that the objectification of men is still very different to the objectification of women, scholars still need to look out for inevitable trend changes. As gender is considered to be one of the most important social and self-identifiers, changes in gender expectations and photographic displays can give meaningful insights into how society may be changing. As new generations develop, updated research will be needed to confirm whether this advertised new modern man is here to stay, and how he too may evolve. Overall, the data in the present study helps fill a gap in the analysis of gender role portrayals by providing updated standards on which to examine the roles of men and women in magazines. The data indicates that male roles and male and female relationships depicted on the cover of *American Vogue* has changed over time, perhaps not as fast as other cultural changes, but in pace with the female role portrayal shifts reported by Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976).

Being aware of the messages and images presented by magazines such as *American Vogue* helps men and women avoid unhealthy myths and stereotypes. With the information from this study, readers can move forward in clarifying their values and become better media consumers and mass media creators. This study created a framework for future studies. Future

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studies which could investigate the images within the American *Vogue* issue and the article associated with the cover. American *Vogue* is not just a magazine. To many it is a style guide and beacon of hope. The print media is an evolving business that has a need to shift focus to increasing sales driven by money, by many of the best people who are involved in it. Similarly today's fashion designers love those moments of inspiration that can't be dreamed up in a focus group or a boardroom. Sometimes the public's taste can surprise. In short, the masculine depiction is a delicate balancing act, one that is in need of constant attention and monitoring.

Some calculated predictions can be made from considering these covers. Looking at how the timeframes between the covers that included men are getting closer and closer together, it can be predicted that the next man will appear sometime in 2017. There's a possibility President Obama may be featured as he leaves the White House sometime that year. The next man featured on American *Vogue* will need to either have some important event or collaboration like a movie release, celebrity wedding, or worldwide newsworthy event. It's rare for a particular woman to be on the cover more than once, so for a man to be on the cover more than once will most likely not happen. That rules out the men already featured, even though showcasing George Clooney for a second time now that the perpetual bachelor is married would be an interesting choice. Now that the unpredictable choice of having Ben Stiller on the cover happened, it is uncertain which male celebrity will be next. Perhaps American *Vogue*'s editor will continue the light-hearted comedic theme and include a comedian like Jimmy Fallon on the cover. Maybe a major male fashion designer like Karl Lagerfeld, Ralph Lauren or Valentino if any of them pass away. But when Oscar De La Renta passed he was not, so that rules out posthumous male covers. Perhaps American *Vogue* is in store for a great editorial on the designing 'Men of Fashion' that would feature big name male designers. A well-known female

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model like Gigi Hadid would be front and center to represent women, fashion, and the next muse of American *Vogue*. Gigi would be shown being fussed over and fitted by the male designers for her next major runway walk by the male designers. Anna Wintour seems to want to remain unpredictable and noticeable, so the next man to grace the cover may be out of left field for shock value and to create media buzz. If the new editor-in-chief happens to be a man, once Wintour eventually retires, maybe the cover will finally feature Wintour symbolically passing the baton to American *Vogue*'s new leader and editor and chief. Wintour doesn't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon, so a male pop star featured along with a young white female model is the most likely occurrence. Whichever lucky guy gets featured on the next coed American *Vogue* will probably need some famous woman chaperone to escort him to the cover probably in the form of a costar, wife, fiancé or teammate. This lover or friend will probably be a model or famous actress, or maybe the First Lady if President Obama makes the cover.

### **Conclusion**

The portrayal of gender has been a major topic lately and in recent decades. The portrayal of men and masculinity in media has become an afterthought, and needs to be looked at closer. As society changes, the portrayal of men needs to be examined and considered equally to better comprehend how society views gender issues. This study provides insight on how men were shown on six covers of a women's magazine. This study offered ideas on why and how these men were included in an arena designed for women. Based on the findings of this study, it is probable the next man to appear on American *Vogue* will be with at least one woman. When the next man appears on American *Vogue* it will be in conjunction with a movie release, celebrity wedding, an Olympic Games, or cultural event like presidential inauguration. Based on the past history of men appearing on American *Vogue*, the next man will most likely appear sometime in

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2017 or sooner. With the digital environment changing media landscapes, media seekers can find pictures of beautiful people for free on social media and any number of websites. There is ample inspiration outside the pages of *American Vogue*, plenty of project advice on *Pinterest*, and more than enough information and opinions on coverage of important events on any given social media newsfeed. What magazines still bring to the table is their ability to put pictures in the minds of viewers and provide a metaphoric plinth or pillar for iconic images. Without places like the *American Vogue* cover, there are few platforms to put pictures of culture changing events, high profile celebrity weddings, movie premiers, or celebratory photographs of American athletes. This academic work attempted to investigate the cultural impact these six images might have had and what cultural impact they were showcasing. These six images are great representations of particular moments in popular culture history. *American Vogue's* ability to produce and distribute iconic images will continue and will most likely include men on the cover in the future. These men will be included for the cultural value as well as to catch the eye of a passerby. Including men on the cover photo of a women's fashion magazine is a practice worth investigating and future research could delve into the correlating photographs within the magazine that correspond to the six particular cover images.

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APPENDIX A

**Images of Covers**

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Image A: Richard Gere with Cindy Crawford in November 1992

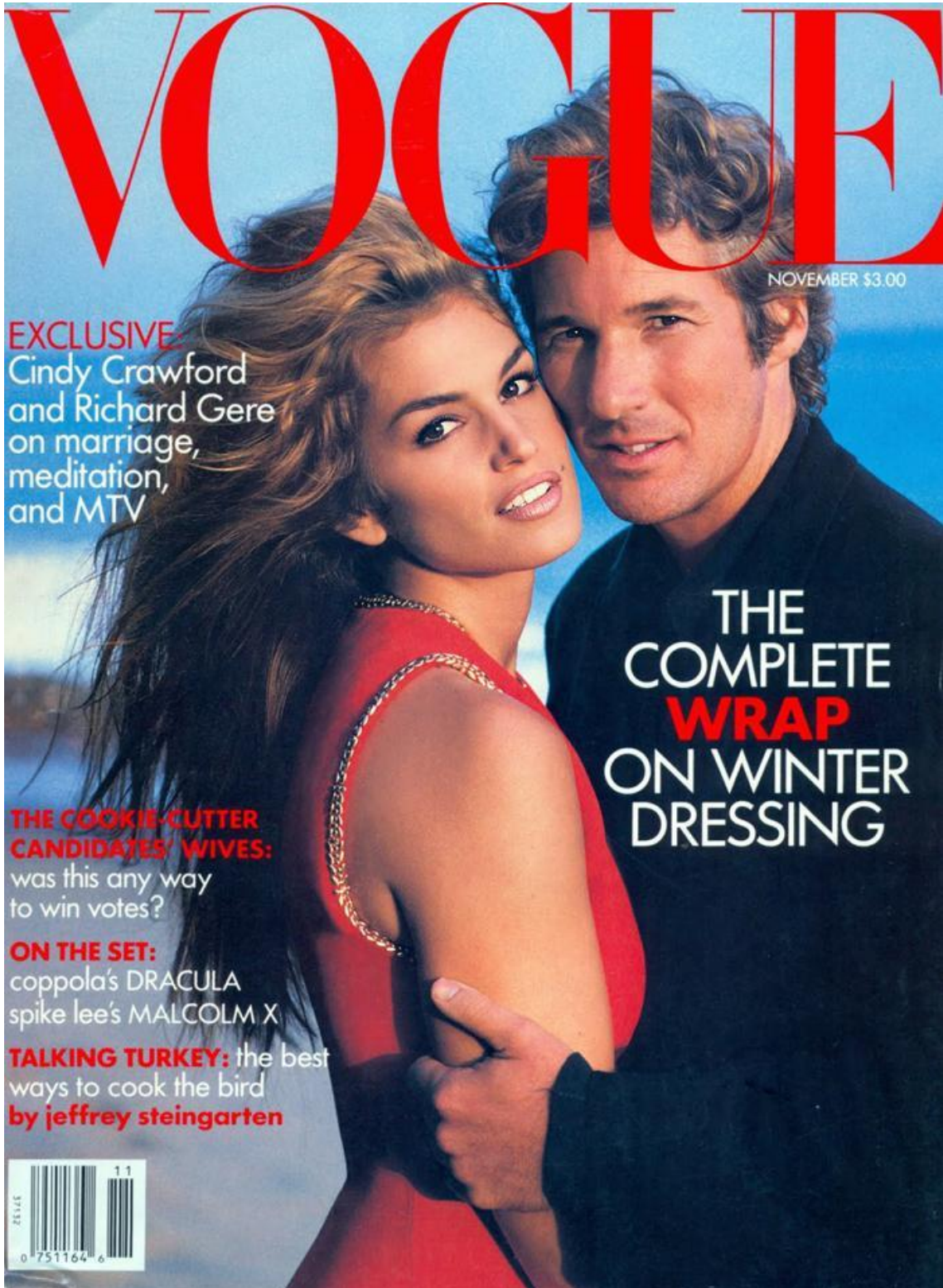


Image B: George Clooney with Gisele Bundchen in June 2000



Image C: LeBron James with Gisele Bundchen in April 2008



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Image D: Ryan Lochte with Hope Solo and Serena Williams in June 2012



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Image E: Kanye West with Kim Kardashian in April 2014



Image F: Ben Stiller with Penélope Cruz in February 2016

