

Union College Union | Digital Works

Honors Theses

Student Work

6-2011

Fashion and Cosmetic Advertising in Three Magazines in the 1950s: How Advertising Shaped Societal Expectations of Beauty

Lindsey B. Sloan

Union College - Schenectady, NY

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalworks.union.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Advertising and Promotion Management Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sloan, Lindsey B., "Fashion and Cosmetic Advertising in Three Magazines in the 1950s: How Advertising Shaped Societal Expectations of Beauty" (2011). *Honors Theses*. 1067.
<https://digitalworks.union.edu/theses/1067>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Union | Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Union | Digital Works. For more information, please contact digitalworks@union.edu.

Fashion and Cosmetic Advertising in Three Magazines in the 1950s: How Advertising
Shaped Societal Expectations of Beauty

By
Lindsey Sloan

Senior Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for Graduation

Department of History
Union College
June, 2011

ABSTRACT

SLOAN, LINDSEY Fashion and Cosmetic Advertising in Three Women's
Magazines in the 1950s: How Advertising Shaped Societal
Expectations of Beauty

Since its creation, print advertising has affected how women perceive beauty and has shaped the trend of consumer purchasing, as well as the social status of women. This thesis analyzes three women's magazines—*Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony* and evaluates how the advertising of fashion and cosmetics portrayed ideals of beauty in the 1950s and how the advertisements may have shaped or reflected class differences and racial perceptions in mid 19th century America. In order to accomplish this analysis and to evaluate how fashion and cosmetic advertising may have differed based on targeted demographic, advertisements from the months April and October in the years 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959 and 1962 were studied and compared.

The roles of fashion and cosmetic advertising on societal expectations of beauty is a fairly recent topic of study and consequently, there are few secondary sources in this area. Most authors address either the individual topics of advertising in the 1950s or of fashion and/or cosmetics and few combine these subjects to assess the impact of fashion and cosmetic advertising. Those sources that do address this topic unanimously present the importance on French fashions as inspiration for the US market, the creation of a distinctly "American look," the emphasis on a slender figure, and the differences in types of cosmetics being advertised to white and black women.

This thesis contains two main chapters, the first addresses cosmetic advertising, and the second addresses fashion advertising. In general, the types of cosmetics being advertised and the styles of the ads in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* are quite similar.

Ladies' Home Journal has a higher amount of cosmetic ads, as it is a publication aimed at women, while *Life* was a family magazine. Both magazines contain many soap, lotion, foundation and lipstick ads and overtime begin to present more eye makeup. *Ebony* is very different from these two magazines, as it is specifically targeted at African American families and contains mostly advertisements for skin bleaching creams and hair straightening products and very few makeup ads. By having so many ads for products that make skin lighter and hair straight and long, *Ebony* is portraying the idea that to be beautiful is to be as white as possible.

The second chapter analyzes fashion advertising and shows common trends in the styles of fashions being advertised in all three magazines, such as the popularity of the suit and the cotton, A-line dress, as well as the high quantity of lingerie ads within each publication. *Life* has a fashion section that showcases high fashion and haute couture looks for fashion-forward women, though the advertisements themselves are much more ready-to-wear, everyday clothing like cotton dresses and simple suits. *Ladies' Home Journal* also has a fashion section that features high fashion and new trends, however, unlike *Life* that tends to only cover designer brands or couture looks, this section of *Ladies' Home Journal* also offers options for everyday women. It also has more fashion advertisements than *Life* or *Ebony* including higher amounts of those for accessories. *Ebony* is the only of the three magazines to have multiracial ads, as African American models are not present in *Life* or *Ladies' Home Journal*. The types of advertisements in *Ebony* do not differ much however and the same styles of fashions are present. In all three magazines lingerie and hosiery are the most common advertisements and all emphasize slenderness of figure and small waists. The results of this analysis showed

that all of the ads reflected societal trends and expectations of beauty but also shaped them by perpetuating stereotypes and the idea of upward social mobility and the importance of being white and thin.

Chapter One

Introduction

Since its creation, print advertising has affected how women perceive beauty and has shaped the trend of consumer purchasing, as well as the social status of women. In this senior thesis I analyze and compare three women's magazines—*Ladies Home Journal*, *Life*, and *Ebony* and evaluate how the advertising of fashion and cosmetics portrayed ideals of beauty in the 1950's. This project examines how the different magazines targeted different social classes and how the advertisements differed in the portrayal and expectations of beauty depending on the demographic being targeted. I also address the differences in advertising based on race, specifically how advertising differed for African American women in comparison to different classes of Caucasian women.

The study of magazine advertisements has only recently become a topic of research and analysis and therefore few libraries and databases have primary sources on the subject, namely early editions of magazines. Popular culture has been a relatively recent field of research in general and as a result, popular magazines have not been collected or kept by libraries systematically. Though this field became a topic of research with the release of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, it hasn't been until recently that many historians and sociologists have really delved into the complexities and social consequences of advertising in women's magazines. Recently many secondary sources have emerged as this topic grows in popularity and the field of women's advertising in magazines is expanding as a scholarly subject. Fashion itself has become an academic area of study, and "this growing sense of respectability has run in tandem with the publication of a variety of ground-breaking texts that have aimed, over the past

fifteen years or more, to place the study of fashion alongside other popular phenomena including theatre, journalism, advertising, and film, recognizing its potential as a significant cultural force.”¹ Throughout history individuals and cultures have used fashion as a mode of illustration or representation of societal conditions and it “has been positioned in this [new] literature as an important conduit for the expression of social identity, political ideals, and aesthetic taste, and this model of interpretation has arguably influenced a reevaluation of all creative practices, including art.”²

The “first American magazine edited specifically for women” was released in 1792. *The Ladies Magazine, and Repository of Entertaining Knowledge* published mainly fiction, “containing no columns on household work, which would eventually be the mainstay of most women’s journals.”³ The first women’s fashion magazine was *Godey’s Lady’s Book* which ran from 1837 to 1877, with “its primary readership at least upper middle class.” *Godey’s* “printed elaborate sketches of the latest fashions but seldom offered practical advice on everyday tasks, assuming that its readers—like the characters in much of the fiction it published—had servants to tend to cleaning and cooking.”⁴ Women’s magazines really emerged and took off after the Civil War, as during this time “more reliable distribution techniques, new printing methods, and the desire to reach national markets combined to create the mass circulation magazine industry.”⁵ Magazines like *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Life* were being distributed nationwide and were being read by thousands of American women. This new

¹ Christopher Breward, *Fashion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9

² Breward, 9

³ John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28

⁴ Nancy A Walker, *Shaping our Mothers’ World: American Women’s Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 32

⁵ Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), xii

form of magazine was aimed at middle-class women and was designed to help them “in their jobs as housewives, a change from the ante-bellum publications targeted primarily at the elite.”⁶ After World War II women’s magazines faced competition with television and novels and began to lose advertisers. As a result,

Women’s titles developed segmentation strategies, breaking their purchasers up into definable groups with appeal to advertisers, a tactic the entire magazine industry eventually employed. This set the terms for a different world, the one we see today, with publications targeted to special interest groups, ones attractive to advertisers who remain as important as ever.⁷

There are now so many different magazines published that one would be hard-pressed not to find one of interest.

The 1930’s and 1940’s saw the rise in popularity of the fashion magazine, which gained “in both advertising and circulation.”⁸ The two major fashion publications of this time were *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* and “these rivals developed and expanded fashion journalism in these years, in part because of the keen competition between them.”⁹ This form of journalism “included astute reporting and writing on the fashions of the day, an international focus, and typographic excellence and innovation.”¹⁰ Inspired by the success of these magazines, others emerged during this time such as *Mademoiselle* (1935) and *Seventeen* (1944), marking the increase in, and success of, specialized publications.

The 1950’s marked the beginning of the magazine boom. The revenue in advertising was \$725 million in 1955, “a figure nearly double that of 1946 and seven

⁶ Zuckerman, xiii

⁷ Zuckerman, xiii

⁸ Zuckerman, 115

⁹ Zuckerman, 115

¹⁰ Zuckerman, 115

times higher than the depression years.”¹¹ In the generation before World War II, “only forty magazines had circulated for every one hundred people, but in 1955, magazines examined by the Audit Bureau of Circulation alone were distributing more single-issue copies than there were people in the nation.”¹² This progress can be explained by the marked increase in the American economy after the war. “In booming postwar America, incomes were higher, people were better educated and enjoyed more leisure, and soon 80 percent of them would be living in towns and cities where magazine outlets were easily accessible.”¹³

However, obstacles did lie ahead for the magazine industry and the effects could already been seen in the mid 1950’s. The growth in popularity of the suburbs meant fewer newsstands, and those that did exist were driving distance away, which “had already resulted in a decline of newsstand sales from 47 percent of all magazine purchases in 1947 to 38 percent in 1954.” Similarly, during this time the paperback book industry took off which “limited magazine growth, as did the arrival of full-scale commercial television.”¹⁴

Television proved to be the biggest setback for the magazine industry, as studies have shown that the top magazine readers were the first people to purchase televisions, marking a decrease in magazine revenue. By “the mid-fifties it was clear that television could attract larger audiences than any of the older media, even with the cut-rate subscriptions increasingly offered by magazines.”¹⁵ Although television did hurt magazine sales, “when it came to conveying information of every kind, [magazines]

¹¹Tebbel and Zuckerman, 244

¹²Tebbel and Zuckerman, 244

¹³Tebbel and Zuckerman, 244

¹⁴Tebbel and Zuckerman, 245

¹⁵Zuckerman, 203

could do what the broadcasters, focused primarily on entertainment, could not.”¹⁶ Similarly, these women’s magazines provided women with something they looked for—concrete information that could assist them in their job of overseeing the household,¹⁷ and fashion tips and advice. For this reason, magazines were able to survive the changing tides of American consumer life; they did, however, still face financial hardships especially with the high levels of subscription orders. As it turns out, “the cost of getting them (subscriptions) and of servicing them after they were obtained could be prohibitive.”¹⁸ To meet the challenges of the market, magazines became more specialized, “targeting audiences that were more and more specific.”¹⁹

In order to compensate for challenging times, magazine publishers relied heavily on advertisers. Women’s magazines had always been in the forefront in terms of advertising revenues, and “consistently attracted about a third of all magazine advertising dollars throughout the twenties and thirties, reaching a high of 39 percent in 1932.”²⁰ Because advertising proved to be the best way for a publishing company to turn a profit, editorials were at times compromised. Magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal* tried to keep the editorial/advertising page ratios to 60/40, but in reality usually ended up with something closer to 40/60.²¹ As a result of the dependence on such extensive levels of advertisements, many publications were being overrun by print ads. Marya Mannes wrote in an article in the *Reporter*, “that advertising was coming to look so much like editorial

¹⁶ Tebbel and Zuckerman, 245

¹⁷ Zuckerman, 4

¹⁸ Tebbel and Zuckerman, 245

¹⁹ Tebbel and Zuckerman, 245

²⁰ Zuckerman, 161

²¹ Zuckerman, 161

matter that it could scarcely be separated and that advertising and articles were so often juxtaposed in an incongruous way.”²²

Trends developed over the years after the war that showed the fifties and sixties experienced the difficulties associated with competition and emphasized the home, the seventies presented women entering the workforce, the eighties represented a focus on fashion, and the nineties and beyond showed great success in terms of revenue and popularity for magazines.²³

Fashion has been a part of American life for as long as the country has existed. It has always been a key identifier of wealth, status and position and today “enjoys unprecedented coverage in the western media and defines the tenor of urban life like no other visual medium.”²⁴ Europe, namely France, was the epicenter of fashion during the 18th and 19th centuries and during the mid 19th century magazines like *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and *Harper’s Bazaar* were publishing fashion plates of the newest looks from Paris.²⁵ During the latter half of the 19th century many new women’s magazines emerged such as *Delineator* (1873), *McCall’s* (1876), *Ladies’ Home Journal* (1883) and *Cosmopolitan* (1886), and all included fashion in their publications.²⁶ Even *Ladies’ Home Journal*, which “emphasized the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers,”²⁷ “recognized the American woman’s keen interest in fashion and skewed certain key seasonal editions mostly towards mode du jour, with striking fashion plate

²² Tebbel and Zuckerman, 245

²³ Zuckerman, 201

²⁴ Breward, 9

²⁵ Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2004) 2

²⁶ Hill, 3

²⁷ Hill, 2

covers.”²⁸ Overtime, America began to depend less and less on fashions from Europe and “an Americanization of fashion began long before the dawn of the twentieth-century. Americans in the early Republic often sought to distinguish themselves by revealing their belief in democracy and liberty through their clothing.”²⁹

As the nineteenth century unfolded and mass production and manufacturing emerged, Americans were able to turn the desire for higher quality clothing for everyone into a tangible reality. With the country’s success in mass production, denim and other comfortable, inexpensive materials became available to the general public and “the fashion industry grew with increasing numbers of manufacturers, mail order companies, retail outlets, and print sources for fashion news.”³⁰ Prior to the nineteenth century fashion and clothing existed to make the wearer convey a certain image and was designed for aesthetics rather than practicality. The late 1890s presented “ready-made” clothing and women’s movements “promoted the need for less restrictive, more comfortable and reasonable dress styles which materialized with the so-called ‘Gibson Girls’ of the 1890s, who wore simple skirts and blouses.”³¹ The changes in fashion during the mid-nineteenth-century are the origins from which America developed its reputation of comfortable, well-made, basic styles and “later, designers like Claire McCardell, Norman Norell, and Bonnie Cashin became known for simple, practical clothes that fit the active lifestyle of American women.”³² The success of this “‘American Look’, marked the end of European dominance in haute couture as far as the U.S. market was concerned.”³³ As

²⁸ Hill, 3

²⁹ Linda Welters and Patricia A. Cunningham, eds, *Twentieth-Century American Fashion* (New York: Berg, 2005), 2

³⁰ Welters and Cunningham, 2

³¹ Welters and Cunningham, 2

³² Welters and Cunningham, 2

³³ William H Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1950’s* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 85

the twentieth century progressed, “American fashion became increasingly casual and sporty, in part because of the middle-class suburban lifestyle that first surfaced in the 1950s.”³⁴ For women, the “bobbed hair and knee-length skirts”³⁵ dominated the 1920’s and women at home during the 1950s preferred the “sack dress” while working women “wore tailored wool suits over silk blouses...and a pillbox hat and stiletto heels.” However, Mamie Eisenhower represented the middle-class, mass market with her style that included “simple frocks that epitomized middle-class tastes and values.”³⁶

The 1950s exemplify the idea of faster and easier. That is, this was a decade of convenience when everything needed to be more efficient, faster, better, and newer. These ideas were applied to clothing and fashion and “for clothing manufacturers, this promise meant an array of synthetic fibers that would be adaptable to any kind of apparel; in fact, one could wear outfits that contained few or no natural fibers.”³⁷ These manmade fibers were attractive to many people during the 1950s because it meant faster washing and drying, and new and brighter colors and “the durability and the little care such items required assured them great and enduring popularity.”³⁸

Beauty culture was, and remains to this day, an all-encompassing phenomenon that targets appearance broadly and incorporates both dress and the use of makeup. Cosmetics weren’t formally and publicly introduced into American society until the mid to late nineteenth-century. However, “nineteenth-century American women inherited a tradition of cosmetic preparation, which freely borrowed from a variety of sources and

³⁴ Welters and Cunningham, 6

³⁵ Welters and Cunningham, 6

³⁶ Young and Young, 85

³⁷ Young and Young, 81

³⁸ Young and Young, 81

reached back through the centuries.”³⁹ Women had been making at home recipes for the betterment and treatment of the skin for centuries based on “local knowledge of the scents and healing properties of plants, flowers, and herbs,”⁴⁰ and these techniques were passed on orally and through recipe books. In the 1840s and 1850s, “women’s access to information about cosmetics expanded even more with the publishing boom. Ladies’ guides to beauty and fashion self-consciously addressed bourgeois women---and all those who aspired to that rank.”⁴¹ Though cosmetics were available, “the beauty business began modestly with the sale of products widely deemed an affront to public morality,”⁴² and many women were embarrassed to admit their use of these products. Sources like *Godey’s Lady’s Book* advocated inner beauty and cleanliness for outer beauty, and “etiquette books addressed to African American women, published later in the nineteenth-century, similarly distinguished between cosmetic artifice and the cultivation of real beauty from within..., and the use of visible cosmetics was considered distasteful.”⁴³

During this time, beauty meant light skin and thereby was racially defined. People from non-Anglo heritage did not have ivory white skin and were therefore not considered to be the ideal of beauty. Similarly, beauty was believed to reflect morality and since people with dark skin were not considered beautiful, they must have had something wrong inside—an idea that “justified white supremacy in a period of American

³⁹ Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 12

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1

⁴¹ Peiss, 14

⁴² Jones, 1

⁴³ Peiss, 25

expansion.”⁴⁴ During this time skin bleaches and whiteners were one of the more popular cosmetic products with ads depicting black women turned white, and thereby beautiful in the eye of the public. Also of interest is that during the early 20th century Madame C.J. Walker was developing African American beauty culture as a leader in the black cosmetic industry and a pioneer in the promotion of its advertising.⁴⁵

The twentieth-century witnessed a boom in the cosmetic industry with the mass distribution of women’s magazines and the ads contained within them. 1900 also marked the sale of the first darker powder shades for African American women. The cosmetic industry really took off after the end of World War I, and “between 1909 and 1929 the number of American perfume and cosmetics manufacturers nearly doubled, and the factory value of their products rose tenfold, from \$14.2 million to nearly \$141 million.”⁴⁶ By the 1930s, cosmetic companies had successfully convinced many American women that “natural beauty” came about only through unnatural means, i.e. the use of makeup—a central element to the success of the cosmetic industry.⁴⁷ Numbers continued to soar and grow throughout the twentieth (and even twenty-first) century. The 1950s marked the emergence of “no-smear lipsticks that sold well, and throughout the decade, Max Factor had legions of cosmetic customers; the firm’s pancake foundation emulated Hollywood, giving a woman an unblemished appearance,”⁴⁸ and eye shadows and liners became popular during the 50s as well.

Within the last fifteen or so years scholars have begun to delve into the issue of women’s fashion and cosmetic advertising and how it shaped America’s beauty culture

⁴⁴ Peiss, 31

⁴⁵ Peiss, 137

⁴⁶ Peiss, 97

⁴⁷ Peiss, 151-154

⁴⁸ Young and Young, 88

and societal expectations of women. Many scholars, according to Nancy A. Walker, follow Betty Friedan's "lead in regarding periodicals ranging from *Ladies' Home Journal* to *Seventeen* to *Vogue* as antithetical to women's autonomy and individual development because of the publications' emphasis on domestic responsibilities, physical appearance, and acquisition of consumer goods."⁴⁹ It is undeniable that the advertisements in these magazines during the 1950s emphasized the importance of being attractive to men so that one could be a good wife and mother and could achieve the perfect image of the beautiful, light-skinned, middle-class woman.

Nancy A. Walker, in her book *Shaping Our Mother's World: American Women's Magazines*, agrees with Friedan's mindset but also believes that women's magazines were unique in their contradicting messages even within single issues. That is, these magazines stressed the importance of the domestic and emphasized the role of the woman in the home, but also "provided conflicting images and advice,"⁵⁰ for example, a story of a woman making pies to sell during difficult economic times for her family. Walker's argument is that "women's magazines in the period from 1940 to 1960 conveyed not a unitary but instead multivocal concept of the domestic during a period when that concept was being tested and expanded. The magazines at times celebrated woman's primary role as homemaker and at other times subverted that ideology."⁵¹ The 1950s were a time of change and fluidity for America and editors of women's magazines needed to keep their current readership base while not neglecting the changing tide of society and issues created by war, economic growth, and employment patterns. Walker argues that "at the same time that the magazines—especially the service magazines such as *Good*

⁴⁹ Nancy A. Walker, ix

⁵⁰ Nancy A. Walker, viii

⁵¹ Nancy A. Walker, viii

Housekeeping—honored their traditional role of providing advice on accomplishing specific tasks within the home, their pages included debates on the nature and significance of the homemaker’s role that reveal the cultural fluidity of such concepts as *home* and *domestic* at mid-century.”⁵² To Walker, ignoring the cultural influences of the time period on women’s magazines and on women themselves, is neglecting to address the big picture of these magazines and their effect of women. She states that though advertising was important to the success of these periodicals, arguing that they “have the power to the reader’s desires from personal ambition to the purchase of a stove or a dress, is simultaneously to underestimate the reader’s capacity to resist consumer messages and to overestimate the editors’ desire to constrain women’s aspirations.”⁵³ While Nancy A. Walker agrees with other scholars that women’s magazines during the 1950s advocated domesticity, she also recognizes the importance in the articles that are positioned next to such advertisements that addressed social and political issues which women absorbed along with fashion and cosmetic ads.

Daniel Delis Hill, in his book *As Seen in Vogue*, analyzes how fashion advertising changed, affected or reflected society in *Vogue* magazine. He explains advertising as having a duality in that “on one hand, our archives of advertising materials are documentaries of American history: what we ate, wore, how we worked, played, etc...and on the other hand, advertisements also show how and when marketing successfully changed consumer’s behavior.”⁵⁴ He attributes mass advertising in women’s magazines to the creation of a uniquely American fashion industry that had the ability to change the course of history. “For example, the mass advertising campaigns by cosmetics

⁵² Nancy A. Walker, ix

⁵³ Nancy A. Walker, x

⁵⁴ Hill, x

manufacturers within just a few years following World War I successfully overturned what previously had been a long-standing social stigma: the ‘painted lady’ of ill repute had become the self-reliant ‘New Woman.’”⁵⁵ Hill attributes the combination of the “businesses of fashion journalism, fashion advertising and ready-to-wear manufacturing” to the success of American fashion, and “the influence of this symbiotic tripartite has been enormous in American culture, reflecting, changing and defining the style of each era and its generation.”⁵⁶

The cosmetic industry was much more obviously racialized in the 1950s than the fashion industry. Kathy Peiss addresses issues of race and social implications in the cosmetic and beauty industry and how America’s beauty culture has grown and changed over time in her book *Hope in a Jar*. The affects of the development of women’s magazines and the subsequent beauty ideals led women to use cosmetics more often, as “women reported as early as the 1930s that advertising and social pressures to be attractive lowered their self-esteem. Others, however, boldly applied their lipsticks in public and asserted their right to self-creation through the ‘makeover’ of self-image.”⁵⁷ Peiss states that, “remarkably, women from across the country, from different social classes and racial-ethnic groups, enthusiastically embraced cosmetics—especially makeup—in the early twentieth-century.”⁵⁸ She argues that for most of America’s history, beautiful meant white and ads to both white and black women urged whiter skin and straighter hair. For all of the social and political effects and reflections of the beauty industry, “*beauty culture* should be understood not only as a type of commerce but as a

⁵⁵ Hill, x

⁵⁶ Hill, xi

⁵⁷ Peiss, 6

⁵⁸ Peiss, 6

system of meaning that helped women navigate the changing conditions of modern social experience.”⁵⁹

Black beauty culture and cosmetic use was very race specific and tended to present beautiful characteristics as those most often associated with Caucasian women. *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* by Susannah Walker is a book that deals with issues of beauty that black women have faced throughout the history of the U.S., but mostly during the middle part of twentieth-century. Walker argues that “although black women’s beauty culture mirrored white women’s beauty culture in the period examined here (1920-1975), African American beauty culture was distinctive because it explicitly reflected and articulated twentieth-century racial politics in the United States, especially as it was emerging in the context of black migration and community formation of American cities.”⁶⁰ She also found that white advertisers dominated the pages of African American magazines, especially *Ebony*, “whose large circulation attracted the most advertising revenue of all the new African American magazines” that emerged in the middle of the twentieth century.⁶¹ While Walker acknowledges that beauty culture and expectations have been significant for all races, she argues that it was especially and uniquely so for African American women, “in large part because they confronted popular images of feminine beauty that perpetually used a white ideal. White beauty culture, as Kathy Peiss has observed, certainly associated whiteness with beauty but always did so implicitly, and often unconsciously,

⁵⁹ Peiss, 6

⁶⁰ Susannah Walker, *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), 3

⁶¹ Susannah Walker, 101

as a fact too obvious to require declaration.”⁶² Walker notes that the 1950s were a time when the black beauty industry was stronger and larger than ever, but that black women still had to face white standards of beauty, meaning to be beautiful, they at least had to straighten their hair. However, the prominence of magazines like *Ebony* (1945) allowed for a larger marketing scope for black women’s products, even though the products aimed to make black women “whiter” and advertisements were geared specifically to either white or black women, and were not integrated until later on in United States’ history.⁶³

I am pursuing the issue of advertisements within women’s magazines because it is such a huge factor in the world of media, both today and in the fifties. The effects of advertising shaped, and continue to shape society and consumer behavior. Ads in *Ladies’ Home Journal* throughout the 1950’s depict women in the home who are wearing the latest fashions and using the best facial creams, soaps and makeup as the happiest women. One face lotion ad shows a woman smiling and holding her hand up to show her engagement ring. The text along side the picture reads, “Be as happy and as beautiful as an engaged girl.”⁶⁴ Advertisements like these show what the ideals of the time were and the expectations for women—in this case to get married. Like advertisements for home goods and fashion, “cosmetics ads endlessly reminded women that they were on display, especially conspicuous in a world peopled by spectators and voyeurs: ‘Do you wonder, when you meet a casual friend, whether your nose is shiny? So you anxiously consult store windows and vanity cases at every opportunity?’”⁶⁵

⁶² Susannah Walker, 3

⁶³ Susannah Walker, 96

⁶⁴ *Ladies’ Home Journal*

⁶⁵ Peiss, 142

This thesis looks at fashion and cosmetic advertisements in the months of April and October in the years of 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959 and 1962 in three popular magazines to analyze their portrayals of beauty and to compare representations of class and race in mid-twentieth century America. Moreover, it considers how these advertisements may have shaped or reflected class differences and racial perceptions during this time in America's history. The three magazines, *Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony* were all published with the intended readership of middle class Americans and chosen for this study because of both their similarities and differences. *Life* was a magazine for middle class, white families, *Ladies' Home Journal* for middle class, white women, and *Ebony* for middle class, African American families.

How print media affected women's ideals about beauty and societal expectations is a major theme throughout this thesis. In the 1950's, advertisers and editors presented images of "inequality: a woman's role consisted of making her family happy by serving them, providing them all the best consumer goods, and then taking her pleasure in their happiness."⁶⁶ This image, constantly presented and burned into the minds of Americans, must have had consequences in terms of how women perceived themselves and their roles in society and in their consumer purchases. Though these issues are important to study as throughout America's history women have been repressed and had to fight for equality, this essay focuses on the analysis of the advertisements themselves and the broader meanings behind them. Studying the history of fashion and cosmetic advertising aimed at different classes and races of women during the 1950s can provide insight into

⁶⁶ William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1950's* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 10

current women's issues and ideals of beauty, though this essay focuses on the messages themselves.

When analyzing these publications I looked for signifiers of class distinctions within the fashion and cosmetic ads, such as cost of products, location and background settings of ads, presence of socialites or celebrities, suggestions of workingwomen vs. stay at home wives, and so on. When approaching race I looked for differences and similarities in advertisements between the white and black publications and noted the ideals of beauty for both white and black women. Were they different? Were the ads designed similarly? What products or styles were advertised in the three magazines and did these differ? What races were the models in the ads? Similarly, in all of the advertisements I looked at setting, clothing, makeup, hair, jewelry, marital status of the model, print style and layout, position of the model or models, text, etc to extract societal expectations and attitudes of the time period being examined and to note similarities and differences in advertisements based on class and race. The months April and October were chosen so as to mark change of season and any influence that may have had on the ads. The years of 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959 and 1960 were chosen so as to show the progression of the magazines throughout the "long decade" of the 1950s, as analyzing all of the years would result in a much longer work, something that would be interesting to incorporate if taken further.

This thesis contains two main chapters, the first addresses fashion advertising, and the second addresses cosmetic advertising. The first shows common trends in the styles of fashions being advertised in all three magazines, such as the popularity of the suit and the cotton, A-line dress, as well as the high quantity of lingerie ads within each

publication. *Life* has a fashion section that showcases high fashion and haute couture looks for fashion-forward women, though the advertisements themselves are much more ready-to-wear, everyday clothing like cotton dresses and simple suits. *Ladies' Home Journal* also has a fashion section that features high fashion and new trends, however, unlike *Life* that tends to only cover designer brands or couture looks, this section of *Ladies' Home Journal* also offers options for everyday women. It also has more fashion advertisements than *Life* or *Ebony* including higher amounts of those for accessories. *Ebony* is the only of the three magazines to have multiracial ads, as African American models are not present in *Life* or *Ladies' Home Journal*. The types of advertisements in *Ebony* do not differ much however and the same styles of fashions are present. In all three magazines lingerie and hosiery are the most common advertisements and all emphasize slenderness of figure and small waists.

The second chapter analyzes cosmetic advertising and, in general, the types of cosmetics being advertised and the styles of the ads in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* are quite similar. *Ladies' Home Journal* has a higher amount of cosmetic ads, as it is a publication aimed at women, while *Life* was a family magazine. Both magazines contain many soap, lotion, foundation and lipstick ads and overtime begin to present more eye makeup. *Ebony* is very different from these two magazines, as it is specifically targeted at African American families and contains mostly advertisements for skin bleaching creams and hair straightening products and very few makeup ads. By having so many ads for products that make skin lighter and hair straight and long, *Ebony* is portraying the idea that to be beautiful is to display as many Caucasian characteristics as possible. The results of this analysis showed that all of the ads reflected societal trends and expectations

of beauty but also shaped them by perpetuating stereotypes and the idea of upward social mobility and the importance of being white and feminine.

Chapter 2

Fashion Advertising

For as long as humans have inhabited this earth, they have worn clothing. Whether to keep warm for survival, protect the body from the elements, celebrate sacred events or rituals, maintain a level of “decency” by covering sexual organs, or to take part in fashion, clothing has been a staple and important part of everyday life. How and why people choose to wear clothing and what types they choose to wear differ between groups and cultures. Biblically, clothing first appears with Adam and Eve “covering their genitals in shame, having sinned in the Garden of Eden,”⁶⁷ while Bushmen and Eskimos dress for warmth, and Muslim women veil for tradition and religion. How and why people dress the ways that they do is usually a representation or manifestation of the whole of society or of whatever social group they choose or wish to be a part of. The term fashion usually refers to “a period’s desired appearance, or the latest desired appearance.”⁶⁸ In her book *Dress Codes*, Ruth Rubinstein quotes Georg Simmel’s 1957 article entitled “Fashion,” saying “fashion allows for personal modification, enabling the individual to pursue competing desires for group identity and individual expression. There is no institution, ‘no law, no estate of life which can uniformly satisfy the opposing principals of uniformity and individuality better than fashion.’”⁶⁹ By taking part in fashion an individual is making a statement which both represents their own individuality through conscious decision making and clothing choice, and the innate desire to be a part of the whole by conforming to popular style.

⁶⁷ Ruth R. Rubinstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 17

⁶⁸ Rubinstein, 3

⁶⁹ Rubinstein, 3

American fashion has changed throughout the centuries, originally relying upon European trends and designers during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, by the late 19th century a distinctly American style began to emerge and Americans no longer depended on French and European guidance and manufacturing. During this time Britain was mostly producing practical wear and “concentrated on the production of uniforms and commodity garments that did not change in style.” Opposite of this, “there were the French couture houses that created biennial fashion collections from which handmade copies were tailored for a selected clientele.”⁷⁰ This left Americans in a position to find a medium between these two extremes, resulting in the mass-marketed, mass-produced American sports and casual wear that became the U.S.’s niche in the fashion industry. By the 1950s, American fashion was sporty and casual, marked by the increase of active, middle-class suburban lifestyles. This also meant less expensive, more available, and easier to clean styles and the importance of mass marketing and production to the growing bourgeoisie.

This chapter analyzes the fashion advertisements in three popular magazines between the years 1947 and 1962, *Life*, *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Ebony*. The focus of this analysis is to compare how the ads in the different magazines appealed to specific audiences and if fashion advertisements differed between them. As explained in the introductory chapter of the thesis, *Life* is a family magazine whose audience was white, middle-class families, *Ladies’ Home Journal* is a woman’s magazine produced mainly for white women, and *Ebony* is a magazine for African American men and women. This chapter seeks to find answers to questions like, how do the fashion advertisements in

⁷⁰ Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2004), 4.

these three magazines compare? Are there striking similarities or differences? Are the same products and looks being advertised? If so, are they represented differently or similarly? Are race or class factors in the ads? Were the ideals and expectations of beauty different or similar based on which demographic was being targeted? What are the body types and races of the models? Are the clothes in the ads in the American fashion or do they follow French and European designs? What kinds of fashions are being advertised in these magazines? Are they different or the same across publications, years, seasons? In order to answer these questions and to gain a greater understanding of how women were expected to look and what, in terms of beautifying, was socially acceptable during the mid 20th century, selected fashion advertisements from the months of April and October of the years 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959, and April of 1962 were taken from each of the three magazines for comparison and analysis.

The results of this analysis show common trends in the styles of fashions being advertised in all three magazines, such as the popularity of the suit and the cotton, A-line dress, as well as the high quantity of lingerie ads within each publication. *Life* has a combination of fashion and clothing advertisements for both men and women, as well as for children, as it is the quintessential family magazine of the 1950s. This magazine has a fashion section that showcases high fashion and haute couture looks for fashion-forward women, though the advertisements themselves are much more ready-to-wear, everyday clothing like cotton dresses and simple suits. *Ladies' Home Journal* contains only women's fashion, as it is strictly a woman's magazine. This publication also has a fashion section that features high fashion and new trends, however, unlike *Life* that tends to only cover designer brands or couture looks, this section of *Ladies' Home Journal* also offers

options for everyday women. It also has more fashion advertisements than *Life* or *Ebony*, including higher amounts of those for accessories such as gloves, scarves, and pearl necklaces. *Ebony* is the only of the three magazines to have multiracial ads, as African American models are not present in *Life* or *Ladies' Home Journal*. The types of advertisements in *Ebony* do not differ much from the other two magazines, however, and the same styles of fashions are present, though the companies themselves do not overlap with those seen in the other two publications. In all three magazines lingerie and hosiery are the most common advertisements and all emphasize slenderness of figure and small waists. Similarly, while looks from Paris acted as inspiration for many American fashionistas and “despite a love of French haute couture, the majority of mainstream American women opted for comfortable, casual adaptations of the Paris modes.”⁷¹

Life

Life is a magazine with a targeted demographic of middle-class American families. Its pages are full of advertisements for the family—food, toothpaste, medicine and cars (primarily Ford and Chevrolet). When reading through an average issue of *Life* between 1947 and 1962, there are seemingly equal amounts of ads directed at men and women. Ads for women include cleaning supplies, appliances, clothes, and cosmetics, including but not limited to deodorants, lotions, soaps, shampoos, feminine products and makeup. Advertisements for men consist of cars, cigars and cigarettes, razors, beer and whisky, tools and men’s clothing. Over time some of these areas blur, and more and more women are seen in cigarette, alcohol and car advertisements.

⁷¹ Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2004), 86

Fashion ads for both men and women are present in *Life*, and though the number of apparel ads for men and women are relatively equal (the numbers differ between issue on which sex is represented most, but on average they equal out), *Life* has a fashion section that contains the latest trends, newest releases, popular looks and couture designs in women's fashion only. With this women's only fashion section, the scales are tipped to include more women's looks than men's in the magazine as a whole. Some of the most common apparel ads for women include hats, scarves, suits, coats, heels and dresses, though the most common are hosiery and lingerie. Most of the clothing ads are about practicality and durability, emphasizing quality without breaking the bank, though many lingerie ads play up the idea of fantasy. All of the ads throughout the magazine emphasize a slender figure and a small waist, reflected in the high amounts of girdle advertisements and the popularity of the cinched waist dress.

The fashion section of *Life* presents readers, both male and female, with the newest women's fashions and trends. Often times these pictures and articles showcase European styles or designers and translate them into American fashion and wear-ability. The woman to wear most of these samples would mostly likely have been a posh, fashion forward woman probably from a city with formal balls and galas to attend. The models in these spreads certainly appear to be such chic women, and perhaps this is intended to act as a stimulus to encourage women with less glamorous lives to purchase these looks in hopes of achieving some of their excitement and fabulousness. One such spread is in the April 1947 issue of *Life* and presents the new fad in evening apparel—the “whirling dresses.” This piece is a double-page, black and white spread with a strip of text horizontally dividing the page. Above and below this text are photos of these “whirling

dresses” worn by models. The images on top are snapshots of a model in action, twirling around so as to showcase the width and flow of the gown she is wearing. There are three frames in which the dress is seen from different angles. The gown is dramatic—black, floor length and layered with a tight top, full-bodied skirt, and ruffled detail along the décolletage. The description below these images states, “designed for waltzing, this black taffeta dress stands out stiffly as dancer pirouettes in the three poses shown above.

Yellow Jonquils nestled in taffeta ruffles are welcome departure from the standard sequin and sparkle trimmings.”⁷² Six images on the bottom of the page, slightly smaller in size than those at the top, present two more gowns, all in the same style as the first and all being viewed as freeze-framed shots from an in-action photo shoot. The first dress is on the left and is pink (as stated in description) with a big train and dramatic cape, while the second dress is black and similar to the first but with a simpler neckline—a v-neck with thick straps that reveal the shoulder. The caption above the pink dress says, “With a swish of the skirt, the wearer of this hostess gown surrounds herself with 15 yards of foaming pink jersey.” Above the black dress reads, “A classic black dancing frock has quilted straps and ruffled pockets. Black was most popular for formal gowns.”⁷³

The models in all of the photos are slender, their movements are exaggerated and big to show to versatility, width, and layering of the gowns, and all have their hair pulled back and faces slightly out of focus so as to show off the dresses, which is in contrast to the style of cosmetic ads, as makeup relies upon fashion while fashion does not need makeup. To clarify, cosmetics are the building blocks upon the base of fashion, as clothing is a requirement and makeup is not a necessity. As a result, clothing ads can

⁷² *Life*, April 1947

⁷³ *Life*, April 1947

afford to blur the faces of the models and leave cosmetics completely out of the fashion equation. It is much more difficult for cosmetics to do the same with fashion. The only time this is possible is if the ad is a close-up on a face, but generally cosmetic ads show the body of a woman, and are forced to choose clothing for her to wear and are thereby also making conscious choices of what fashion to include in the ad to have represent their product, furthering the representation of societal norms and expectations of beauty.

The text that accompanies these images describes the look of these “whirling dresses” as graceful and elegant. It explains the vision of the designer, Gilbert Adrian, and how “the billowing dresses shown here could have been worn two decades ago, and if Adrian has his they will still be worn in decades hence.” Adrian is quoted saying that “a good dress has a sense of classical rightness that makes it wearable until it falls apart.”⁷⁴ This idea of timelessness represents the importance of style that surpasses the ages and is inherently classic and will not go out of favor, but may also draw in women who were money conscious and depended on their fashion to be long lasting and durable, which is a common trend seen throughout these magazines. It goes on to explain that Adrian casts away new trends and believes in more timeless looks and creations, while adding his own touch and vision. Adrian “recklessly piled on yards of taffetas and silks and swathed his mannequins in extravagant, swirling gowns which caused one blasé fashion editor to comment, ‘It was as if they were walking into the wind.’”⁷⁵ This designer held strong opinions about the fashions of this time period and was not afraid to express those opinions and try to change fashions that did not reflect his views. In a “showing of his dresses with a firm speech,” Adrian stated that “American women’s

⁷⁴ *Life*, April 1947

⁷⁵ *Life*, April 1947

clothes should be streamlined in the daytime, full of imagination at night. I do *not* like padded hips. To try to make woman pad their hips in this day and age is a little like selling armor to the American man.” He continued on to say that “he categorically rejected round shoulders, exaggerated length in daytime clothes and short length in evening dresses. Judging from reviews the next day, Adrian got away with it.”⁷⁶ The text also describes that there are 50 of these dresses in the collection that run anywhere from “\$145 for a simple daytime dress to \$1,200 for the most elaborate evening gown,”⁷⁷ prices that are astronomical when compared to those in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Ebony*.

Though not exactly a fashion advertisement in the conventional sense, but rather an article in a magazine, this spread defines new fashions and shaped what was considered stylish in the spring of 1947. The dresses shown are extravagant, formal black tie gowns that the everyday mother and suburban wife would surely have found little occasion to wear, especially with the high prices and designer label. However, such couture looks as these defined high fashion for middle class women and gave them something to model their own clothing after or to fantasize about. By running such an article, *Life* was bringing the world of haute couture city life into the homes of middle class, suburban families, as looks like this, as well as Christian Dior’s “New Look” that is discussed in the next paragraph, introduced styles that American ready-to-wear manufactures began producing, such as the sheath dress. Fashion magazines began running both high fashion pieces and everyday clothing ads for these dresses, and ready-to-wear “makers liked the timeless simplicity of the style because it was so easy to

⁷⁶ *Life*, April 1947

⁷⁷ *Life*, April 1947

manufacture.”⁷⁸ As a result, “American women bought tens of thousands of sheaths throughout the 1950s.”⁷⁹

Another example of *Life Magazine* choosing to unveil a new high fashion look is in the October issue of the same year, 1947. This story is more detailed and risqué than the previous, as the fashion being discussed is Christian Dior’s deep V, plunging neckline dress. The image the reader sees as they turn the page to this article is a full-page, black and white photo of a woman from the waist up, wearing a daringly low-cut black dress. Because the cut of the dress is such a deep and wide v-shape, the eyes are instantly drawn to the model’s bust and décolletage, accentuated even more so by the choker necklace around her neck. The dress is long sleeved, with just enough fabric on the shoulders to keep it from falling off. The model’s hands are unseen, but from her stance look as though they are either on her hips or behind her back, either of which makes her body stand erect with her chest pushed forward. Her hair is pulled up under a hat that rests almost completely vertically down the right side of her face, with a feather reaching over to the left side. Her eyes are turned away from the camera at an upward angle and her mouth holds a faint smile, almost a smirk. It is as if the model knows she is being scandalous and controversial and enjoys every minute of it. The caption below the picture says, “Sensational Dior dress imported by New York’s Bergdorf Goodman is not only cut very low but emphasizes bust with thick padding on either side. The extraordinarily heavy skirt weighs the whole dress, holding the upper part in place so nothing can go adrift and reveal more than the wearer intends. Dior calls the gown ‘Cabaret.’”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Hill, 80

⁷⁹ Hill, 80

⁸⁰ *Life*, October 1947

The page adjacent to this photo is the title of the piece, “The Dress: When men first see it, they can hardly believe it,” and seven more pictures of this model wearing the same dress, but this time, instead of being placed in front of a plain backdrop, she is walking throughout various New York City clubs. All of the other people in the photos are well dressed in suits and ties or cocktail dresses and furs. The dresses that these women are wearing, however, are nothing like Dior’s and are very concealing, often times with multiple layers. Alongside of these photos of men staring with looks of lust and attraction at the model and of women staring with hatred or jealousy, is a description of the model’s experience in the dress. The article states that Christian Dior, “the strikingly successful postwar Paris designer,” created a shocking new line of very low neckline dresses that may be too scandalous to become popular with women, though “in more conservative versions, however, they may become generally accepted, and about their popularity with men there appears to be no question.”⁸¹ This is because, “for men the fashion news this fall has been all bad. Each day the female form seems to retreat farther from view, encased in corsets, swathed in padding and concealed in long full skirts.”⁸² The introduction of this dress into the American fashion industry occurred in an experimental form, as the model, Ruth Conklin, debuted it by wearing it to five New York City nightclubs where the men “stabbed themselves with their forks” and women glared in disgust. “The women mostly looked angrily at me but the men were much nicer,” she reported afterward. “They just wanted to know how I kept myself in the dress.” Said a hat-check girl watching her, “I wish she’d drop dead so I could slip into that dress myself.” The neckline of the dress was so unfamiliar and shocking that “all evening no

⁸¹ *Life*, October 1947

⁸² *Life*, October 1947

one seemed to notice that below the waist, her dress followed the new trend of concealment with its long full skirt and padded hips. In fact, they didn't even look."⁸³

This spread in *Life* shows the changing styles occurring during the late 1940s in America. The plunging neckline is now a common trait of evening dresses, but evidently from people's reactions upon first seeing this Dior dress, this was not always the case. Trends have to start somewhere and someone has to be crazy enough to be the first, as Christian Dior was with this look. According to Sara Evans, "in 1947 when Christian Dior introduced the 'New Look,' American women were horrified." The designer had completely changed the loose-fitting style of the era and suddenly "skirts dropped to within inches of the floor; waists were sharply defined and tightly belted beneath well-defined bosoms. Resistance to the new fashion was rather short-lived. Femininity was back—along with foundation garments that could add or subtract where necessary to achieve the prescribed shape."⁸⁴ The new ideal shape for a woman's body was that of the hourglass figure, which made having a thin waist of the utmost importance, something that is seen throughout all of the fashion advertisements between the years 1947 and 1962 in all three of the magazines.

The fact that women at first hated this "new look" and men loved it reveals the racy nature of the gown and how men responded to a woman's figure and sexuality. The women who hated it probably did so out of jealousy, as "at the Waldorf, 20-year-old Miss Conklin was glared at balefully by plump dowagers."⁸⁵ The formality, designer label and assumed high price of this dress, as well as where the model wore it (The Waldorf), suggests that this was a look intended for upper class women. This was not a look that a

⁸³ *Life*, October 1947

⁸⁴ Sara M. Evans. *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press), 243

⁸⁵ *Life*, October 1947.

suburban housewife would have worn at home or even out to dinner, though by including it in *Life*, the magazine is bringing this glamorous lifestyle into the homes of these women and creating a connection to high society that otherwise might not have been there.

While the fashion section of *Life* portrays new, high fashion looks meant almost exclusively for the rich, the fashion advertisements themselves are much more accessible and appropriate for the middle-class woman to wear everyday. Many fashion advertisements are not for ready-made clothing, but for fabrics that can be sewn into a wearable fashion, which is seen especially in the years up to 1956. Such ads suggest that women knew, or were expected to know how to sew and create clothing for themselves and their families. Full-page color ads for wools from companies like Forstmann and Milliken suggested to women that they could make their own dresses and coats so as to stay up to date on the latest fashions while being money-conscious, and Pacific fabrics advertised looks for the whole family from their cotton and rayon materials (that surely mom had to make).⁸⁶ *Life* does not direct women to where they could purchase these fabrics, though *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony* both had house-lines that could be ordered right from the magazine itself, as well as provided information on how to order other brands of patterns.

One thing that all of the advertisements and all of the articles within the fashion section of *Life* have in common is that they all emphasize smallness of waist, usually with cinching or belting. This is no different even in ads for the simplest dresses and fashions for the everyday housewife. Daniel Delis Hill explains how the emergence of Dior's New Look, which encompassed "rounded shoulders, full, feminine busts, and hand-spun

⁸⁶ *Life*, April 1947, April 1956

waists above enormous spreading skirts,” led to “the tiny waist being applied to virtually every mode.”⁸⁷ This paved the way for contorting corsets to again be in favor, “especially the guepière that cinched the waist, emphasized the bust, and rounded the hips,”⁸⁸ and thus creating the hourglass figure that was seen at this time in both high fashion and everyday looks. One brand that reappears throughout *Life* magazine during these years is Sanforized, which boasts durability and longevity. These ads are less about the fashions and styles themselves and are more focused on the quality of the materials, suggesting that women during this time in America’s history relied upon their dollar going far.

In the October 6, 1947 issue of *Life*, there is a full-page black and white ad for Sanforized clothing. The figures on the page are sketched drawings as opposed to photographed models. The main image within this ad is of a young woman bending over to pick something up and her dress ripping down the side seam of her rib cage. She is obviously in the process of moving, as in front of her is a barrel full of newspaper and she is reaching down to pick up glasses and vases to be wrapped up for transport. Two movers in the background are staring at the girl and smiling. Her face is one of mortification and her hand is trying to cover the hole caused by the tear. Next to this image and at the top of the page, are the words “Tut! Tut! Such Language!” letting the reader know that either these men are acting inappropriately and saying profane things in response to the ripping of the young woman’s dress, or that she is herself swearing in response to the poor quality of the fabric of her garment. Below this and to the left of the main picture reads: “The time to get violent was when you bought that dress! You should have raised the roof when the salesgirl who *dared* to show you a cotton that didn’t boast a

⁸⁷ Hill, 75

⁸⁸ Hill, 76

‘Sanforized’ label. That label is the one guarantee a gal has that her dress will fit as smooth and look as slick *after* washing as the day she bought it. So look the “Sanforized” label—seeing is believing.”⁸⁹ Below are images of women demanding to see the Sanforized label and buying the dresses that range from \$2-\$20. The dresses pictured are not anything fancy or over the top, just simple, patterned, crew necked, mid calf length, cotton frocks that are belted at the waist. The emphasis on durability is obviously the main selling feature of these dresses and the fabric from which they are made, as “though you tub it and tub it, the dress holds the perfect fit.”⁹⁰ This suggests a demand for hassle free, long lasting styles rather than avant-garde or chic fashion.

Dan Rivers “wash and wear cottons” is another example of a common advertisement on the pages of *Life*. One from the April 6 issue of 1959 shows a portrait of the “Modern American Family.” This is a double page, color spread that has four photos of a picturesque, ideal American family that demonstrated “togetherness”—a term coined in the 1954 Easter issue of *McCall’s*. This “meant the family worked as a unit, that Mom and Dad and the kids undertook joint activities. It meant families looked inward, that parents and children learned from one another, and the home became the nexus of sharing,”⁹¹ and Dan Rivers used the popularity of this idea as a marketing tool. The first photo is also the largest and takes up the entire left page of the spread and shows an attractive family consisting of a mother, father and two young children—a boy and a girl. The family is posing on a fence and are all wearing bright colors. The mother, positioned with her hand on her hip and right knee turned inward, is wearing a yellow top with a matching skirt that is tied at the waist with a belt. The dress is a crew neck that exposes

⁸⁹ *Life*, October 6, 1947.

⁹⁰ *Life*, October 6, 1947.

⁹¹ William H Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1950’s* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 7-8

the shoulders and arms and ends just below the knee. Next to the mother is the daughter who looks to be about nine years old and is wearing a blue and red plaid jumper. Next is the father who is tall with black-slicked hair and grey slacks with a blue, short-sleeved button up with a bold stripe down the front left. The son, about five or six years old, is sitting atop the fence next to his father and like his sister, wearing a plaid shirt, with khaki shorts. The background of the photo shows trees, grass, flowers and a bit of a white house. With the happy family of four, the house and landscaping, the image represents the American dream and the idea of keeping up with the Jones', which is duplicated in the three images that accompany it.

The three pictures on the right page of the spread show three different American families, all in front of their homes as well. These are smaller in size and take up about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the page. The first picture is of a mother, father and young son and daughter who are all wearing similar clothing to the first family, however the mother is wearing a long jumper cinched at the waist with ribbon. They are positioned in front of a lake with their white house in the background. These first two families appear to live in northeastern or New England towns, based on the scenery. The third family is a mother and father with two boys who are all wearing summer clothing—shorts and sleeveless tops, and are all wearing plaid. They are in front of a pool with a one level house further behind. There are palm trees and based on the style of home, this family lives in California. The final photo is of a family positioned in front of a large tree, with a massive, white plantation style house in the background. This family is the most formally dressed of the group, with the mother wearing a patterned mid-calf dress, cinched at the waist with a matching shawl and long pearls around her neck. Her two young daughters are wearing similar dresses

and the father is wearing a light blue or gray suit with a tie. The details in this photo suggest that this family lives in the south on a sprawling estate.

All of the families, even the most dressed up, are still casual, though always put together and presentable, following the American style that was so prominent of this time. The text that accompanies these photos explains how all types of functional and happy American families turn to Dan River clothing:

American tintypes—circa 1959! Same warm family groups, but how the fashions have changed! Just look at these attractive Wash and Wear Cottons by Dan River! Bright, colorful and relaxed...they reflect today's informal way of life, even in their carefree performance. You just wash them, dry them (even tumble dry them), and *don* them. They dry so smooth, most people don't iron them at all. Because they're Wrinkl-shed with Dri-Don by Dan River! BEST-DRESSED BY DAN RIVER: the fabric of American life.⁹²

This advertisement shows respect and reverence of the past, while complimenting the ease and convenience of the present and the “informal way of life.” By presenting four different American families, all middle to upper middle class with two children and beautiful homes, Dan River clothing was creating, or presenting, an ideal version of the American family that appealed to most people in the US, and equated the brand with “the fabric of American life.” And of course, this perfect family dressed in Dan River.

The most common clothing and fashion advertisements in *Life* are for nylon stockings and lingerie. While the clothing advertisements throughout the magazine represent practicality and the fashion sections represent high fashion, the lingerie and stocking ads tend to play up the idea of fantasy. These ads call on sexiness and sensuality as a marketing tool and create desires and fantasies out of these products that are strictly intended for women only. It is interesting that these are the advertisements that *Life* chose to present most often on its pages in relation to apparel ads, as this was a family magazine

⁹² *Life*, April 6, 1959.

as opposed to a publication directed only at women. Many of the lingerie and stocking ads show women in the clouds, surrounded by lace or haze, dancing gracefully or as the center of attention which seems to call upon fantasies of the woman and let her know these products were for her to wear and feel good in and for her husband to admire.

Maidenform is one company that especially uses the idea of fantasy as a marketing tool for their bra line. In the October 5, 1959 issue of *Life*, there is a full-page color advertisement for Maidenform's bra. The image is a picture of a woman who appears to be part of a tapestry. She is wearing a white bra, long sleeves, a long, flowing, high-waisted skirt and a pointed hat. She is holding a staff with a flag in her right hand and petting a mythical creature that looks to be half goat and half unicorn with her left. The background is red with flowers and plants floating around and other mythical creatures in random positions. The woman is slender, with red hair that is down and wavy, and she is looking at the camera from a slightly off centered angle. The text below this image reads, "I dreamed I was a medieval maiden in my *maidenform bra*. The past was never quite *this* perfect! I'm a legendary figure in STAR FLOWER. Maidenform's *newest work of art!*"⁹³

This advertisement is quite the opposite from the standard clothing ads we have seen in *Life*, as it has nothing to do with convenience or practicality, but rather allows the consumer to be swept away into a land or time vastly different from 1959. This ad does not stress the importance of keeping up with the Jones' or of upward social mobility and lets the customer escape the routine and predictability of everyday life. Because lingerie is a private good, there is more room for emotional freedom and creativity in both advertising and wearing it. Women can feel however they want to when wearing lingerie

⁹³ *Life*, October 5, 1959

underneath their clothing and it is empowering for a woman to know what no one else does—what exactly is under her clothing. These ads are more exotic, sensual and free spirited because it is a good that is for the woman alone, she does not have to worry about her family when purchasing a bra, but can focus on solely on herself. However, the fantastical nature of these ads may also be drawing the attention of the male readers of *Life* in order to encourage them to purchase these products for their wives. This seems clearer when contrasted against the straightforward, no frill or fuss style of lingerie ads in *Ladies' Home Journal*, as women knew what they needed in terms of undergarments and used lingerie for practical reasons. Men did not have this understanding of female undergarments and would have needed something that seemed special or exciting to have been motivated to buy such products.

Life is a magazine that contains advertisements for the whole family and that emphasizes the American way of life. The majority of the fashion advertisements boast convenience and practicality over style, while the fashion section of the magazine focuses on looks and trends, usually from famous designers and expensive brands. Interestingly, lingerie and stocking ads are the most abundant in women's fashion/clothing advertising throughout the magazine, though ads for cottons, wools, hats, shoes, pearls, dresses and suits appear on the pages as well. Over all of the years examined for this thesis, certain fashions or ideals never go out of style. A slim figure and small, accentuated waists are necessities of every look and flats do not appear at all. All of the clothing advertisements represent the relaxed and casual American style, while the fashion sections usually present European or avant garde looks.

Ladies' Home Journal

Ladies' Home Journal is a women's magazine that during the mid 20th century featured fashion and cosmetic updates, cooking and decorating segments, short stories by women authors and some political and/or current issue articles. It tended to be less politically or worldly centered than *Life*, which was directed at both men and women. The content within *Ladies' Home Journal* suggests that women were considered less interested, involved or educated in issues of the world and other serious topics that did not have to do with them, people like them, or their families directly. The pages are full of cosmetic and fashion advertisements and articles updating women on the newest, hottest trends in makeup, clothing, recipes, home décor and romance novels.

Ladies' Home Journal contains many fashion segments and advertisements. There are often multiple fashion segments within each issue that, like *Life*, showcase couture looks from Paris and designer brands, but different from *Life* in that *Ladies' Home Journal* also highlights new trends and options for middle-class women. *Ladies' Home Journal* also makes sure to note what fashions will be in style for upcoming seasons and informs women how to dress according to weather and changes in trends. Also like *Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal* contains many lingerie and stocking advertisements, though they do not stand out as much when compared to the other types of fashions being presented to the reader because of the greater amount of variety, and in the case of *Ladies' Home Journal*, the lingerie ads do not outnumber other types of apparel ads. This magazine also contains many more accessory advertisements and segments than *Life* such as scarves, hats, handbags and jewelry, as well as pieces on how to construct one's own clothes and accessories.

Similar to *Life*, in October of 1947 *Ladies' Home Journal* includes a fashion spread revealing new looks by Christian Dior, titled “Christian Dior. Bright meteor of Paris fashion.” Though not so provocative as the article in *Life*, this article and the accompanying images marked the newest trends from Paris that were sure to act as the catalyst for American designers and styles. This four-page spread mixes photographs and drawings to present to the American woman the new trends in haute couture and high fashion. These 16 pictures depict outfits that range anywhere from full black tie, formal gowns, to dramatic jackets, to day dresses. In the article, the fashion editor of *Ladies Home Journal*, Wilhela Cushman, writes,

There is no doubt that fashion is changing—and Christian Dior, brilliant Paris designer, is in the forefront of that change. These are the clothes, on these pages, selected for you in Paris as the fashions which capture and dramatize that change. They are beautiful clothes, most as yet too extreme for general American wear. But study them well—they show the trends: skirts possibly not so long as these, but growing longer; waists small, if not miniature; many wide, wide skirts; Cossack and princess coats; a romantic picture-book look for evening. As a counter note: long, slim buttoned skirts topped by brief and bulky jackets.⁹⁴

This description of these new looks from Paris show that American women still looked to Europe for fashion guidance during the late 1940s, however, they did have their own American style—casual sportswear, indicated by Cushman’s statement that these looks are too formal and “extreme” for American wear. This article, rather than being used as a tool for selling and marketing Dior’s designs, acts as a guide for American women to follow when purchasing or making their own less extreme and less expensive clothing. It highlights European trends in dress, such as the impossibly small waist, and brings these trends into the homes of American women. Rather than telling American women that in order to be fashionable, one must purchase these highly expensive and formal clothes, it

⁹⁴ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1947.

outlines what trends to follow and what to keep in mind when applying these looks to their own wardrobes. This is a strategy used by the magazine repeatedly throughout the issues between 1947 and 1962, all with the common thread of helping women find their own, less expensive versions of the newest fashions, as one such article reads, “the fashion on these pages are presented to you because they show you the trends of the season and serve as a guide as you shop,”⁹⁵

While *Ladies' Home Journal* includes high fashion editorials like the Christian Dior presentation, it also includes tutorials on how to make dresses and accessories inexpensively. By including both sides of the fashion market, the magazine is offering something to every woman, regardless of her financial situation. Advertisements for materials and prints that a woman would purchase to sew into clothing are constantly present in *Ladies' Home Journal*, much more so than in the other two magazines. This publication even offers original patterns for sale for only 15 cents, which includes sewing and knitting instructions. This is seen in “Journal Originals to Knit and Crochet” in October 1949. The article teaches women to make their own clothing “to add to your growing collection, or make for Christmas gifts. The hats and bags are distinguished accessories...the cardigan sweaters endlessly beloved...the tube dress a perfect basic. Every Journal Original is or will be a well-known fashion.”⁹⁶ Similarly, this issue also includes how-to's for dressmaking and how “two yards + two hours = one dress,”⁹⁷ with different patterns and styles of dress and instructions for a woman to sew at home. By offering these types of instructional do-it-yourself pieces, the magazine is acknowledging that some female readers may not be able to afford store bought items and giving them

⁹⁵ *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1956

⁹⁶ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1949

⁹⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1949

the option of partaking in current fashions by doing their own sewing, which is seen throughout the pages of *Ladies' Home Journal* as far as April of 1959. The fashion advertisements within *Ladies' Home Journal* vary, as some are aimed at women looking for durability and reliability, while others are looking for fashion forward and trendy pieces. The advertisements that are concerned with practicality resemble those in *Life*, like Sanforized clothing, a company whose ads also appear in *Ladies' Home Journal*.⁹⁸ However, there are also many advertisements that emphasize style for the everyday American woman. These types of ads tend to focus more on the fashion side of clothing, though they boast prices affordable for most middle-class women, usually by including within the ad a comment about the inexpensive cost that buys high quality. Because fashion is of the utmost importance in these advertisements, they often revolve around new looks based on upcoming seasons, and therefore vary from spring to fall. The October issues from the years examined offer new styles for fall and advertisements for coats, while the April issues present new trends for summer wardrobes and pieces on how to choose the best spring hat.

For example, the April issue from 1959 contains a double-page spread presenting “Wonderful buys for spring.” There are five photos of women, each wearing a new look. This is both a piece by *Ladies' Home Journal* and an advertisement, as a designer and a price accompany each picture. All of the models pictured are wearing outfits that are cinched or belted at the waist, as well as white gloves and hats. Each model also has a handbag with her. These looks range from 25 to 50 dollars and are all dresses. All of the looks are structured on top with a suit jacket detailing or an overcoat, and all have pleated skirts. The text that appears with these images reads, “A good buy means lots of fashion

⁹⁸ For example, see *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1950

for your money, and at the same time dependable wearability and an assured future. We give you pleats, polka dots, checks, a coat-and dress costume, shown with accessories right for the silhouettes and the season.”⁹⁹ By combining fashion trends with low pricing and editorial comments, *Ladies’ Home Journal* is combining the worlds that *Life* keeps separate. That is, *Ladies’ Home Journal* is not presenting new fashions to readers with the undertone that they will never wear it, but rather the magazine is presenting new fashions and trends in a way that reader can not only visualize themselves in those articles of clothing, but can actually purchase and wear them (though the ideal silhouette had not changed from that of the hourglass figure introduced in 1947 with Dior’s “New Look.”) *Life* does contain advertisements that boast durability and low cost like the ads seen in *Ladies’ Home Journal*, but the fashion section within *Life* is used more as a conduit to bring high fashion, expensive clothing into the homes of suburban America but not necessarily onto the bodies of its women.

The lingerie and stocking advertisements within *Ladies’ Home Journal* are less fantastical than those in *Life*. These ads tend to emphasize a sleek figure so as to best showcase the fashions layered ovetop of these foundation garments. For example, in the April issue of 1947 there is an advertisement for Charis lingerie. This particular ad is for a corset and is quite free of frivolity and frill. It is a half-page, black and white ad that has a small sketch at the top of the page of a thin woman wearing this corset and looking into a mirror, where her reflection is her in a gown, looking trim and flawless. The text that accompanies this image takes up the majority of the page and explains how Charis will send a personal corsetiere to your home to “measure your figure, expertly analyze it, and fit you with the *right* garment, in the style you like...from 77 different Charis garment

⁹⁹ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1959

variations in your size alone! No riding up, no pinching, no buckling when you wear a properly fitted Charis.”¹⁰⁰ This ad is all about functionality and satisfaction. It tells the consumer exactly what they can expect when purchasing one of these corsets and does not leave much up to the imagination. Though a personal corsetiere fits you for your purchase, “Charis costs no more! Prices are moderate, comparable to average retail prices! *Your Charis Corsetiere* offers you the right garment at the right price, PLUS professional corsetiere service in your own home.”¹⁰¹ By boasting of reasonable prices for a high quality product, Charis was catering to the middle class woman who expected her dollar to go far and who was expected to fit into society’s ideal mold of a woman—thin and slender. This type of advertisement fits into the whole of the magazine, as every look presented stresses the importance of a tiny waist.

As mentioned previously, Dior’s New Look brought back the extremely feminine look of ultra defined curves. His designs revolved around femininity with cinched waists and padded busts and “underneath it all were foundation garments that negated almost thirty years of development toward comfort, ease and flexibility. Instead, constricting stays, tight laces, and long lines resurfaced in corsetry, even for young, slender women.”¹⁰² This look is reflected in *Life*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and *Ebony* with the presence of corset and girdle ads, but is also contradicted by the continued popularity of the “American look” and the high numbers of everyday, comfortable wear seen in apparel advertisements. This goes back to the statement made by Hill earlier that said women took guidance from French fashions but made them more comfortable and casual—more American. This is an interesting dichotomy in that this American casual and comfortable

¹⁰⁰ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁰¹ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁰² Hill, 150

look was so popular, yet a tiny waist was regarded as essential and only possible through the use of corsets and girdles. Ironically, these corsets and girdles, which are inherently uncomfortable, would have needed to be worn under the American comfortable wear.

Ebony

Ebony is a magazine targeted at African American men and women. It includes advertisements for both men and women and has stories that relate to the African American community and to American and world issues in general. There are many articles on sports (which appear very little in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*), especially on boxing, as well as articles on cooking, blue-collar jobs like truck driving, and music. Advertisements within *Ebony* include food, cosmetics and toiletries, men's and women's clothing, cars ads for Pontiac, Chevrolet and Studebaker, cigarettes and an unbelievable amount of ads for alcohol. At least every other page has an alcohol advertisement on it and sometimes two pages or more in a row contain ads for drinks like Seagram's, Fleishmann's, Beefeater, Gilbey's Gin, Cutty Sark, Budweiser, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Champale Malt Liquor, Early Times Whiskey, just to name a few. The numbers of alcohol ads are astronomical when compared to those in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, which is an indication of racism and the taking advantage of stereotypes that existed in mid 20th century America. *Life* also contains quite a few alcohol ads, however far less than the numbers in *Ebony*. This suggests that perhaps advertisers found that African Americans purchased more alcohol than Caucasians, or that they *believed* African Americans drank a lot, a stereotype that still exists in some minds today. Similarly, there are articles in *Ebony* about topics like the effectiveness of birth control pills, the naked

body with photographs included, the question of the legalization of dope, and advertisements for bras for full-figured, big busted women, and sex manuals such as Ovid's "The Art of Love," that stresses women want to be dominated and overtaken and that "she may struggle but rest assured she wants to lose this fight,"¹⁰³ and even an ad for a device that one wears on their face in order to thin their noses.¹⁰⁴ Articles and advertisements like these are not present in any of the issues of *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* analyzed for this thesis, nor is anything even close to these topics found in the other two magazines, marking a degree of separation between whites and blacks, at least in the world of magazines.

Ebony is different from both *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* in that its fashion advertisements contain both black and white models, whereas the other two magazines contain white models only. Often the race of a model is unclear in *Ebony*, as the majority of the ads are in black and white. This is in contrast to the other two magazines where most advertisements and spreads are in color and the races of the models are perfectly clear—always white. At times distinguishing between the races of the models within *Ebony* can be difficult, especially because the ads are printed in black and white, and many African Americans practiced "emulation" or "passing" for white if their skin color and features permitted it.¹⁰⁵ Peiss writes that by the 1930s "both men and women were still classified by an elaborate lexicon of skin tones (yellow, smooth-brown, creamy, black, bright, blue-veined) and hair textures (good, bad, halfway bad, nappy, kinky)."¹⁰⁶ Dark skinned women were on average hired less than light skinned women, and "those

¹⁰³ *Ebony*, October 1950, p.58

¹⁰⁴ *Ebony*, April 1950

¹⁰⁵ Peiss, 232

¹⁰⁶ Peiss, 233

with lighter skin tones were viewed as more refined, while darker sisters were considered better manual laborers.”¹⁰⁷ These stereotypes rolled over into the 1950s and explain why the majority of the models in *Ebony* are either light skinned black women or white. Though many black women in the magazine “passed” for white women, that they were trying to look white at all reflects the social expectations of beauty as having Caucasian characteristics. This is seen with the emergence of the “brown-skinned beauty”¹⁰⁸ or the “brown diamond,”¹⁰⁹ that were “light girls with good hair”¹¹⁰ who “exemplified the dominant ideal of African American womanhood”¹¹¹ and a shift from “antiquated images like Aunt Jemima ‘who looks too much like old-time mammy,’”¹¹² that were offensive to many African Americans of this time.

Like both *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Life*, *Ebony* has a section devoted strictly to women’s fashions, and like *Ladies’ Home Journal*, this section presents new looks based on changing seasons and offers styles for women who cannot afford haute couture or designer brands. *Ebony* also has segments on how to make one’s own clothing and accessories. However, unlike both of the other magazines, the fashion advertisements and articles in *Ebony* are often times geared towards working women, whereas this is rarely, if at all, seen in *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*. There are also lingerie ads for large and big-busted women, another feature not seen within the pages of the other publications geared towards white women. Yet, like the other magazines, the fashions presented in *Ebony* also emphasize a small waist and slender figure.

¹⁰⁷ Peiss, 233

¹⁰⁸ Peiss, 235

¹⁰⁹ Laila Haidarali, “Polishing Brown Diamonds: African American Women, Popular Magazines, and the Advent of Modeling in Early Postwar America.” In *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in US Women’s History*, 550

¹¹⁰ Peiss, 234

¹¹¹ Haidarali, 535

¹¹² Peiss, 235

In the April 1948 issue of *Ebony* (1947 issues were not available for viewing), there is a spread in the “fashion fair” section depicting the “five-in-one bolero suit.”¹¹³ This is a two-page, black and white spread that shows five ways to wear this suit. All of the models are light-skinned African American women and are all of slender build—exactly the description of the “brown diamonds” discussed in Laila Haidarali’s article “Polishing Brown Diamonds.” These photos take up the majority of the spread; a small strip of text covers the bottom $\frac{3}{4}$ of the first page and reads as follows: “The little bolero and the peeking petticoat plus full skirt are at the top of the spring fashion communiqués for the penny-wise, well-groomed business girl. From these much-talked-about, sensible, yet novel items, a demure ‘split personality’ ensemble comes as a happy answer to the what-to-wear-for-Easter question...”¹¹⁴ The pictures depict the suit in its different stages and show how it can be made into the appropriate outfit “for church-going, evening lounging, business office, cocktail party, and dancing.”¹¹⁵ Beneath each photo is a caption explaining the details of the outfit and its price, the most expensive being 50 cents (plus cost of accessories) and all of these looks could be ordered directly from *Ebony*. Immediately, a few things are glaringly different from similar spreads in the other two magazines. One is that this look is said to be suitable for the office and “penny-wise, well-groomed business girl.” *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* say nothing of workingwomen, as it is assumed, or at least appears to be assumed, that the majority of the readers were housewives. This *Ebony* article, however, portrays the image that the majority of black women worked, a symbol of the socioeconomic standing of African Americans during the late 1940s in America. Many African American women worked at

¹¹³ *Ebony*, April 1948.

¹¹⁴ *Ebony*, April 1948.

¹¹⁵ *Ebony*, April 1948.

this time and in 1940 as much as 60 percent of black women were employed as domestics. By 1960 this number fell to 36 percent as more black women were entering into clerical work to help support their families.¹¹⁶ By the “mid-1940s, the average per capita income of African Americans was \$779, compared with \$1,140 for whites.”¹¹⁷ The advertisements in *Ebony* and the low costs of clothing reflect these numbers of black women in the workforce and the importance of spending wisely. This leads to the second difference between the three magazines seen in this piece—the cheap prices of the garments. Such low prices are not present or seen in *Life* or *Ladies’ Home Journal*, also implying the lower or working class status of African American women at this time.

Many of these “brown diamonds” or “light skinned beauties” appeared glamorous and “portrayed a fashionable, affluent, middle-class ideal of beautiful black womanhood.”¹¹⁸ However, during this time most African Americans were excluded from suburban, middle-class communities due to housing discrimination and were forced to live in urban areas. While the suburban, middle-class lifestyle was growing for the rest of the country, “African Americans were, by the middle of the twentieth century, more urban and more segregated than they ever had been in American history.”¹¹⁹ This meant that these images of black women in magazines like *Ebony* “were images that few black consumers, even those among the disproportionately middle-class readership of the new black lifestyle magazines, could identify with, since so many black women, regardless of class, had to work outside of the home and hardly led lives of suburban leisure.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Haidarali, 535

¹¹⁷ Susannah Walker, *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), 87

¹¹⁸ Walker, 104

¹¹⁹ Walker, 88

¹²⁰ Susannah Walker, 104

Fashion advertisements within *Ebony* are also quite different from those in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. In general, there are many more fashion articles and spotlights within *Ebony* than there are actual fashion and clothing advertisements. These articles, like many in *Ladies' Home Journal*, offer tutorials on how to sew one's own clothing and provide patterns that can be ordered directly from the magazine whether from *Ebony's* own line or from other retailers,¹²¹ though the same fabrics that are seen in the other two magazines are not present in *Ebony*. The ads that are present often times use white women as the models, or very light skinned black women. This sends the message to Americans, especially to African Americans reading this magazine, that to be beautiful is to have white characteristics and to look as much like a white woman as possible. The advertisements with black models seem to be targeting racial stereotypes and addressing black women only, whereas the ads with white models, or black models "passing" as white, are very similar to the ads seen in the magazines targeted at white women.

The articles within the fashion sections of *Ebony* range from showcasing latest fashions to tutorials on how-to make your own pieces. The magazine offered a balance between high end, luxury fashion, to more inexpensive and practical means of dressing, reflective of African American social standing at this time and the rising middle-class women's readership that still needed to work and did not yet live in Suburban American, as presented by Susannah Walker previously. When created, *Ebony* "provided a racial corrective to its prototype *Life*; its glossy pages displayed prosperity, consumerism, and "Brownskin" beauties, thereby sustaining dominant ideals and furnishing proof of

¹²¹ For example see *Ebony* issue from April 1959

middle-class African America.”¹²² These “Brownskin” women “remained central to the visual discourse that exhibited African Americans as successful, well-dressed, and attractive, but that did not forge a racial identity wholly independent from white America.”¹²³ When first published in 1945, the editors of *Ebony* declared themselves “‘rather jolly folks’ who wished to accent ‘all the swell things...Negroes can do and will accomplish.’ The editorial pledged: ‘*Ebony* will try to mirror the happier side of Negro life—the positive, everyday achievements from Harlem to Hollywood. But when we talk about race as the No. 1 problem in America, we’ll talk turkey.’”¹²⁴ This meant that, at least initially, *Ebony*’s publishers wanted to steer clear of issues of race and preferred to focus on only the positive. This mindset is reflected in the fashion sections of the magazine between 1947 and 1962, as both expensive and low budget options are presented to the reader, though economic situations or reasons for incorporating the inexpensive sections are never mentioned or discussed. By incorporating articles on new fashions for college coeds¹²⁵ and black women wearing millions of dollars of diamonds¹²⁶, alongside articles on how to dress for the workplace¹²⁷ and sew your own clothing from long lasting, cheap material,¹²⁸ *Ebony* was showcasing both aspects of the growing African American middle-class and the financial hardships still experienced based on racial discrimination.

This is seen especially in lingerie advertisements, which often address big-busted or rotund women, features that are not mentioned or discussed directly in *Life* and

¹²² Haidarali, 539

¹²³ Haidarali, 537

¹²⁴ Haidarali, 539

¹²⁵ *Ebony*, October 1953

¹²⁶ *Ebony*, April 1953

¹²⁷ *Ebony*, April 1948

¹²⁸ *Ebony*, April 1959

Ladies' Home Journal. One such ad is in the October 1953 issue of *Ebony* and is for a full-body corset. This is a half-page, black and white ad that features a sketch of a model of an unknown race, as skin tone is medium and her features indistinguishable. The model is slender with large breasts and a small waist and positioned with her hands behind her head to emphasize her figure. She is wearing only this full-body corset and is smiling and looking away slightly off to the side. The majority of the space is taken up by text, and the headline reads, "Miracle RUBBER 'Trimdown' reduces all three of these unsightly lines of your figure! Waistline, Hipline, Stomachline without diet, drugs, or exercise! Look inches slimmer, years younger with this 3-way figure control!"¹²⁹ The description goes on to say:

Your whole figure is transformed by this sensational new, all-in-one rubber foundation! It gives you the slender-looking high fashion silhouette that is all the rage—cute, nipped in waistline!...trim, narrow hipline!...youthful, flat stomach line! Unsightly bulges seem to melt away like magic. Your contours flow in one smooth, unbroken line. No more fleshy roll at the top of your girdle—the extra high-waisted support streamlines your figure, provides perfect control at the three most vital points.¹³⁰

The ad goes on to tell of the mechanics of the girdle and how it is breathable and oh so adept at slenderizing any body shape. Advertisements for lingerie in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* do not use descriptions or characteristics such as these, but rather use more subtle language. For example, an advertisement for a Formfit girdle (a company that did not have advertisements in *Ebony*) in the October 1953 issue of *Life* describes the garment's effects as "featuring a slim, fluid line—bust subtly rounded, midline gently nipped, hips smoothly elongated."¹³¹ Another Formfit ad in the October 1947 issue of *Life* explains that "no other bra and girdle can give you this glamorous figure line, above

¹²⁹ *Ebony*, October 1953

¹³⁰ *Ebony*, October 1953

¹³¹ *Life*, October 1953

the waist and below. Because *only* Life Bra and Girdle are so cleverly tailored to fit and work together, for enticing curve-control with supple comfort.”¹³² Adjectives like subtly, smoothly, gently, glamorous and supple are certainly subtler and more flattering than the descriptions seen in the *Ebony* ad, such as unsightly bulges and fleshy rolls.

Other advertisements for bras and corsets throughout *Ebony* also target big-busted and full figured women.¹³³ It is interesting how ads for heavier women are present throughout the pages and throughout the years of *Ebony*, but do not exist on the pages of the other two publications. This surely must have been a result of stereotypes about African American women’s figures during mid 20th century in America, even though all of the black models throughout the magazine are small and slender. The advertising of these corsets again show the desired look of this time period as having a cinched waist and hourglass figure.

¹³² *Life*, October 1947

¹³³ See *Life*, October 1953 for example

Chapter Three

Cosmetic Advertising

Attitudes toward cosmetics and cosmetic advertising in the mid 20th century were something very different from those that existed previously in American culture. The late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds were a time when cosmetic use was a private, at home affair and “a local, service-oriented beauty culture dominated by women had played the leading role in creating beauty consumers.”¹³⁴ However, with the emergence of mass media and the mass marketing that accompanied it, the cosmetic industry boomed. By 1929, as “sociologist Robert Lynd estimated, Americans were spending \$700 million annually for cosmetics and beauty services. In a very short time, cosmetics had become an affordable indulgence for American women across the socioeconomic spectrum.”¹³⁵ Women entrepreneurs played an important part in this developing beauty industry and helped to remove the stigma attached to cosmetic use. These women recognized the importance of marketing towards different cultures of women and “whether appealing to poor black women or wealthy social matrons, understood how much social origins, income, and prejudice weighed upon women who sought to remake themselves through appearance.”¹³⁶

The key to creating a booming and socially acceptable makeup industry involved a complex array of invention, creativity and marketing on the part of the cosmetic companies who, “through close collaboration with magazine publishers, mass media, advertisers, and retailers, threaded the new mass commerce in cosmetics into women’s

¹³⁴ Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 97

¹³⁵ Peiss, 97

¹³⁶ Peiss, 96

reading, shopping, theatergoing, and housework—the web of women’s daily habits and social rounds.”¹³⁷ By mid-century, advertisers and cosmetic companies had largely succeeded in creating consumer demand for commercial cosmetics. After World War II cosmetics had become a commonplace commodity for women and “by 1948, 80 to 90 percent of adult American women used lipstick, about two thirds used rouge, and one in four wore eye makeup.”¹³⁸ The main leading force in the success of the industry was advertising and from the beginning of cosmetic marketing, industry leaders “practiced market segmentation by dividing its customers into class, mass, and African American markets.”¹³⁹ By purposefully and directly segmenting its customers, the cosmetic companies were recognizing differences between race and class—differences that were reflected in the advertisements of the cosmetics themselves. The marketing of these products reinforced these differences, as ads for skin bleaching creams were present only in African American magazines, implying that black women needed to become whiter to be beautiful—a difference that made white women the group and segmented black women into the role of “the other” or the outsider.

This chapter analyzes the cosmetic advertisements in *Life*, *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Ebony* in the months of April and October between the years 1947-1962, in order to better understand societal norms, expectations and ideals during the 1950s in America and how cosmetic advertisements reflected or affected these standards. Like the analysis of the fashion ads in these magazines seen in the previous chapter, this chapter will compare and contrast the cosmetic advertisements in order to identify societal trends, society’s attitudes towards cosmetic use, differences in class or race, targeted audiences

¹³⁷ Peiss, 133

¹³⁸ Peiss, 245

¹³⁹ Peiss, 246

and clients, techniques used in marketing cosmetics, change in time and similarities or differences across all the three publications. Such questions will be addressed as, how is a specific product being advertised? To whom is the ad directed? What is the setting or background and who are the models in the advertisement? What kinds of products are being advertised in these magazines? Are they different or the same across publications, years, seasons? The advertisements in these magazines all changed during the fifteen years being studied, so it is important to consider how and why they changed over time by marketing bolder, brighter and more obvious makeup. Such questions will be answered by closely analyzing select advertisements from the months of April and October of the years 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959 and 1962 in *Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony*.

The results of such comparisons show marked differences between the cosmetic advertisements in the three magazines and their changes over time. *Life* has few cosmetic ads and of those included in its pages, most were for soap, lotion and shampoo. Over time, more makeup ads did appear in *Life*, though the overall number of cosmetic advertisements within each issue did not noticeably increase over the course of fifteen years. *Ladies' Home Journal* contained many more cosmetic advertisements than *Life*, including makeup ads, the quantity of which remain constant throughout the years, but the content of which changes in a way that portrays women as stronger and more independent. In all of the issues of *Ladies' Home Journal* between 1947 and 1962, the cosmetic ads vary drastically, from conservative and traditional, to edgy and avant garde; however, like *Life*, they are mostly for lipstick, concealer, and soaps and lotions. *Ebony* is very different from the two previous magazines, in that there were many cosmetic

advertisements, however the vast majority were for hair products and skin bleaching creams. This remained constant throughout the fifteen-year period being examined, however, in the later years, makeup ads began to emerge on the pages of *Ebony*. Similarly, over the time period being examined, neither *Life* nor *Ladies' Home Journal* have any pictures or advertisements that include African Americans, while *Ebony's* pages contained ads and articles that included both white and black people throughout this entire 15 year period, even though it was a magazine targeted at African Americans.

Life

In general, between the years 1947 and 1962, *Life* does not contain a large number of cosmetic advertisements for women. Soap, shampoo and lotion advertisements are the most common and overall there were more ads in earlier volumes than in later ones. By 1956 it became exceedingly more difficult to find examples of cosmetic ads and those that were present were mostly for soap or shampoo, however, some makeup advertisements are present.

In the April 14th 1947 issue of *Life*, there is a full page, color ad for “Pan-Cake Makeup.” This advertisement uses a series of combinations of pictures and text to promote the purchase and use of this type of concealer produced by Max Factor Hollywood. Compared to today’s standards and types of cosmetic advertising, it is very busy and crowded, taking the reader a few minutes to read over and retain the entirety of the ad and to understand its message. The writing at the top of the page and that is the most prominent says, “Be Glamorous TODAY...lovelier tomorrow.”¹⁴⁰ Below this text is where the rest of the ad is placed, including seven different images and at least eight

¹⁴⁰ *Life*, April 1947

separate bodies of text. This Max Factor advertisement also incorporates other mediums into the picture, such as fashion and radio advertisements that go alongside of the makeup. More specifically, the main image in the ad is a large colored picture of a woman in her twenties or thirties who is fair skinned, blonde haired and blue eyed with the caption “Loretta Young in ‘The Farmer’s Daughter’ An RKO-Radio Production” beside her.¹⁴¹ This woman, Loretta, is well put together and classy looking. She has wavy, pin-curved hair, wears a sequined top or dress that is draped with a fur shawl, and sports *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947 big, chandelier earrings (possibly diamond). Notably, she also wears makeup—most noticeably, red lipstick, mascara, and thin, penciled-in eyebrows. Loretta Young was a popular and well-received actress who won an Academy Award for her role in “The Farmer’s Daughter,” and by including her in this ad in *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947 in which she is wearing makeup, engrains into the reader’s mind that makeup is associated with fame and notoriety, and is therefore socially acceptable.

Next to the picture of Loretta Young in *Life*, April 1947 is a slightly smaller though more colorful image of a sketched woman wearing a green tunic dress that is cinched at the waist with embroidering going down the skirt. The dress comes to her mid calf and she is wearing matching green shoes that tie up the ankle, matching fur gloves, and a fur headdress. The woman’s age is unknown, as it is a drawing and her face is unclear, but she is extremely slender with a waist that creates a dimension that is physically impossible for a woman to achieve. The text next to this figure states, “FASHION FORECAST for the future. Street wear costume conceived by Renie of

¹⁴¹ *Life*, April 1947

RKO-Radio. BEAUTY FORECAST for 'Pancake' users: A lovelier tomorrow."¹⁴²

The existence of these two figures, one a recognizable actress and the other a sketch to feature a designer's fashion, in a makeup advertisement shows the intermixing of fashion and cosmetics and how they are presented together as representing the overall beauty industry and culture of beauty in America during the mid 20th century. Notably, the radio company with which both the actress and the fashion designer were associated features prominently in the text and provides an added layer of persuasion.

Towards the bottom of the advertisement there are three individual pictures, each framed separately, with different depictions of people and text that go with them. These are all drawings with captions explaining the benefits of "Pancake Makeup." The first is a sketch of a young, beautiful blonde girl wearing a deep v-necked robe and bright red lipstick, with her hair up and in curls. She is holding a mirror in front of her and admiring herself. The caption below reads, "'Pancake' creates a lovely new complexion; it gives the skin a softer, smoother, younger look."¹⁴³ The picture directly to the right of this is of a man and a woman who appear to be bird watching or hunting. They are dressed in sporty attire, with the man wearing a fedora, tweed jacket and binoculars and the woman wearing a red hat, pinstriped jacket, a red top over a mock turtleneck and a gold necklace. Both the man and the woman are young, in their twenties or thirties and the text below reads, "'Pancake' helps hide tiny complexion faults; the exclusive formula guards against drying."¹⁴⁴ The final of these three pictures is to the far right and is of a young blond woman and a man who appears to be older than her. They are both dressed in black tie, and are both attractive. She is wearing a strapless ball gown, holding a cigarette, hair

¹⁴² *Life*, April 1947

¹⁴³ *Life*, April 1947

¹⁴⁴ *Life*, April 1947

pulled back into curly up-do, red lipstick and earrings, while the man is in a black tuxedo with his black hair slicked back with a red rose in his lapel. The caption below this drawing states, “A ‘Pan-Cake’ make-up takes just a few seconds; and it stays on for hours without retouching.”¹⁴⁵ These pictures all show attractive people enjoying themselves, something that the ad implies would not be possible without looking good, and that one cannot look good without Max Factor makeup. In all of these images youth is emphasized, especially for the women and the first picture and its caption makes the connection between the product and youth explicit, obviously another indicator of beauty and is a look to be desired.

Finally, at the bottom of the page is a picture of the concealer itself, as well as a separate drawing of some of the other products produced by Max Factor including rouge, lipstick and powder. The text here states:

Look to your own loveliness in the future, too. Protect your beauty with ‘Pan-Cake’ against the sun and wind of today which often bring the drying, aging signs of tomorrow. And add a new thrilling glamour and charm to your looks...right now...in just a few seconds...with ‘Pan-Cake’, the original creation of *Max Factor Hollywood*. Be glamorous today...lovelier tomorrow...with ‘Pan-Cake.’¹⁴⁶

This text implies that “Pan-Cake Makeup” has healing effects and ingredients to prevent future damage. However, this ad does not say how this concealer achieves this, but simply states that it does. Youth is again used as a marketing tool and many advertisers “urged women to maintain youthful beauty, to express their personality, to enjoy the social whirl of dances and beach parties, but most of all to seek love and marriage.”¹⁴⁷

This marketing strategy played on societal ideals of marriage but by using them within

¹⁴⁵ *Life*, April 1947

¹⁴⁶ *Life* April 14, 1947 p 12

¹⁴⁷ Peiss, 184

their ads, the companies were also perpetuating these ideals. All of the people portrayed in this advertisement are white, young, thin and displaying signs of wealth like diamonds, fur, and expensive clothing, overall, the idea of glamour. This implied that a person of the middle-class could achieve higher status by purchasing “Pan-Cake Makeup.” Members of the middle-class, like those who would have been buying *Life* at this time, would have related to this picture as something to which they were close to achieving, but were yet still aspiring to become. By making the people and scenes in this ad upper class and expensive looking, the company was saying to the reader that if you buy our makeup, you will look like these people. Max Factor was creating a demand for their product through the use of envy.

In general, between the years 1947-1962, *Life* does not contain large numbers of makeup ads, but rather many more for lotions and soaps, most of which either convey the image of youth or high social standing. The primary types of makeup advertisements are foundations and lipsticks, though in the late 50’s and early 60’s, eye makeup such as eyeliner becomes more prevalent. Another example of a concealer advertisement is Pond’s Angel Face, which can be seen in the October issue of 1947. This ad is much more traditional than the Max Factor ad seen in the April issue of the same year, in the sense that there is much less going on in the picture, with only one main focal point—the face of a woman in the middle of the page. This is a full page, color ad and the woman is wearing what appears to be a wedding dress. She is young, light skinned and has dark, pulled back hair. She has dark eyebrows and is wearing red lipstick and a pearl necklace, and her picture is set in front of a pink backdrop. Above her head reads, “New! Angel

Face, by Ponds.”¹⁴⁸ The name of this ad calls upon the image of an angel, something that is usually youthful and fair skinned, immediately telling the targeted demographic of this product—white young to middle aged women.

Words are just as telling as pictures, as everything is included in an advertisement purposefully. Text bubbles around the picture of the woman explain why “Angel Face” is the right choice and best option for the concealer-seeking woman, but most striking are the quotes used at the bottom of the page. The caption, “What Society Beauties say:” is followed by three quotes from well-known socialites of the time period. The first is a quote by Mrs. John A. Roosevelt that says, “Angel Face is the ideal make-up I’ve been waiting for—it gives a flattering color and finish to my skin, doesn’t need water, isn’t drying, and stays on! And besides all these virtues, Angel Face is made to order for handbag use—I carry mine constantly!” The other quotes are very similar to Mrs. Roosevelt’s, but are signed Mrs. Perry Tiffany and Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel III. By using these names that connote high society and wealth, Ponds is instilling into the consumer the idea that their product is the choice of the rich and the married, obvious by the fact that the women take their husbands’ full names rather than their own, and that through the purchase of this product one can achieve such valued characteristics. They do this in a way that is different from Max Factor because there is more emphasis on old money and social standing, then on the nouveau riche type of fame and fortune associated with acting. The Ponds advertisement may appeal to an older demographic of women, while the Max Factor ad seems more alluring to young women.¹⁴⁹ When companies like Ponds first started using famous society women in their advertisements, they used women in the

¹⁴⁸ *Life*, April 1947

¹⁴⁹ *Life*, October 14, 1947 p. 121

social circles of politics like Alice Roosevelt Longworth, daughter of Theodore Roosevelt and over time “increasingly the ad agency turned to European aristocrats and American socialites whose celebrity derived simply from their wealth and standing.”¹⁵⁰ However, “more and more the agency turned to young, beautiful women,” as “market research found that consumers preferred Princess Marie de Bourbon among the endorsers because she is young and pretty and the photographs were romantic and sentimental.”¹⁵¹

Foundation and concealer advertisements throughout the fifties remain very similar to these two ads from 1947. They all show a beautiful woman (or women) who uses the product and have text to describe why it is the “best.” Advertisements for other types of makeup, however, differ from those for concealer, and do not appear until late in the 1950s. Since concealer is arguably the most discrete form of makeup, it is easy for the advertisements to be subtle and to play up said discretion as a marketing tool. Makeup like lipstick and eyeliner, however, is more obvious and for this reason the advertisements can afford, or arguably need to be, more direct and bold. There is no hiding the fact that a woman is wearing bright red lipstick or blue eye shadow, and a woman who is wearing this makeup is doing so knowing very well that it is not discrete or unnoticeable. It is not until the late 1950s that eye makeup, especially bright eye shadows and visible eyeliner, is embraced in *Life*. In the April 13th issue from 1959, *Life* included a piece on the new fashion trend entitled, “Make-up in Whiteface.” This is not an advertisement, but rather is a blurb about how “amid the rainbow of bright colors produced by the cosmetic industry, the newest sensation is chalk white—white lipstick

¹⁵⁰Peiss, 137

¹⁵¹ Peiss, 140

and white eye shadow.”¹⁵² The piece glorifies not only the use of makeup, but also the use of visible and non-discrete makeup and the no shame attitude of wearing it. This is not an advertisement by makeup companies, where one would expect to hear rave reviews and promotions, but is an editorial piece by the fashion department of *Life Magazine*. This “new” look is described by the writer as “an Italian idea [that] has been growing in popularity with American high-fashion women for a year or two... White eye shadow makes eyes look large, and the lipstick makes the wearer look at all times as though she had just licked her lips.”¹⁵³ This is a highly sexualized image and one that calls on exotic looks and eroticism, perhaps the writer was using the idea that is popular today—that sex sells.

The cosmetic ads in *Life* in 1959 are much more varied than those of earlier years and include, alongside advertisements for lotion, soap and concealer, makeup that is bold and intensified. One Revlon ad in the October 12th issue of 1959 shows women wearing bright eye makeup and lipstick and says “Behold! Fashion lifts ‘THE LOOK’ up...up...up from lips to eyes!” This advertisement uses words like “spellbindery, temptation, and enchantment” to attract women to purchase the eyeliners and shadows advertised and says, “Nothing but delightful decisions, as eye make-up comes of age!”¹⁵⁴ This advertisement represents how in late 1959 eye makeup was on the rise and that daring and temerarious adjectives like “temptation” sold products to middle-class women reading family magazines—a change from the more conservative makeup advertisements from earlier in the decade.

¹⁵² *Life*, April 13, 1959

¹⁵³ *Life*, April 13, 1959

¹⁵⁴ *Life* October 12, 1959

By 1962 the promotion of eye makeup was in full force and the desire for the “natural” look was no longer paramount. Advertisements in *Life* were no longer selling the idea of barely-there makeup, but rather promoted obvious and bold uses of eyeliners, lipsticks and rouges. A clear and obvious example of this is in the double-page Revlon ad in the April 1962 issue of *Life*. A woman dressed like Cleopatra is lying across the entire width of the two pages with clearly defined black eyeliner and red lipstick. She is in a white tunic with a huge beaded necklace, and thick black hair. She is holding a black cat between her arms and is looking at the camera sultrily. Next to her are the words, “if looks can kill...this one will!”¹⁵⁵ This look is referred to by Revlon as the “Cleopatra,” and is described as “the sultry, sweet-lipped, sloe-eyed look that shook the pyramids.” This ad is specifically for “Sphinx Pink” nail polish and lipstick, a color that is “a vividly light, bright-at-night *power-mad* pink! More sharp than sweet, more sly than shy...chic-est shade in 2000 Springs!” The other product in the ad is for “Sphinx Eyes” eyeliner, which is “madly mysterious! Egypt-inspired!” The eyeliner is described as the “new idea in makeup” that makes “eyes newly shaped...elongated...darkly outlined for depth...the effect? Unforgettable! (And almost *unforgivable!*)”¹⁵⁶ The adjectives used to convey the intended effect are much more bold and avant-garde than cosmetic ads in the fifties, such as sultry, sweet-lipped, sharp, sly, mysterious and unforgivable. This advertisement uses sex, danger, wildness, and strength as a promotional tool to make the makeup more appealing to the consumer.

That this ad uses such sales techniques is reflective of the beginning of a time in American history and culture when women no longer needed to be docile, humble,

¹⁵⁵ *Life*, April 1962

¹⁵⁶ *Life*, April 1962

modest and subservient but could be bolder and use makeup freely. It is the beginning of the time when things like sex and danger appealed to larger markets of women and boosted sales for companies who employed these traits in their advertisements. That ads such as this are included in family magazines like *Life* shows that it was considered common practice, or at least feasible, for all women to wear bolder makeup, rather than just groups of high fashion or alternative women. The differences between advertisements like Revlon's Cleopatra eyeliner and lipstick and earlier advertisements for lotions, soaps and concealers in *Life* represent the change over time in trends and makeup practices and society's view on what was considered acceptable.

Ladies' Home Journal

Ladies' Home Journal differs from *Life* and *Ebony* because it includes many cosmetic ads that differ dramatically from one another. Each issue is full of cosmetic ads for women, mostly for soaps, lotions, lipstick and foundation, many of which use different styles and techniques in the format, imagery and layout of the advertisements. These different styles indicate that perhaps a more diversified group of women were reading *Ladies' Home Journal* than were reading *Life* or *Ebony*, because these advertisements appeal to women of different demographic groups. Traditional ads portray women in a more conservative light, often times with an emphasis on wealth and marriage, while more "modern" ads portray women as independent and sexy, marking a difference in age, class and personal interest among the readers of the magazine. This magazine is similar to the others however, in that there are not many advertisements for eye makeup, the majority being soaps, lotions and foundations. The style and content of

advertisements in *Ladies' Home Journal* stays roughly the same throughout the years, though the images become more colorful and vibrant and women become portrayed as more independent as the years progress.

Both *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* have Pond's advertisements, but *Ladies' Home Journal* has multiple Ponds advertisements in one issue, alongside many other cosmetic brands, whereas *Life* has only a few cosmetics advertisements total in each issue. For example, in the April 1947 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, there are at least three different Pond's advertisements. Each of these ads is stylistically different, though they all have the overarching themes of wealth, marriage and upper class status. The first Pond's ad in this issue is for "Pond's make-up pat and dreamflower powder" and "Pond's Lips."¹⁵⁷ This is a full page, color ad with a balanced picture/text ratio, and with the focal point and biggest image being a photo in the center of the Countess of Carnarvon. The Countess is wearing a black top and a pearl necklace, with bright red lipstick, red nails, a large diamond ring on her engagement finger, with her dark hair down and bangs curled in. She is set in front of a blue and purple backdrop and below her picture is one of the products—Pond's face powder and lipstick. Below the Countess' name is a description of her as "Famous in both European and American society for her electric beauty...for her superb artistry as a ballerina." Below her picture, the word "Exotic" is written in big, bright pink lettering. Next to this, the text reads, "The Countess of Carnarvon heightens the rare, exotic beauty of her own coloring with exquisite new make-up colors styled by Pond's."¹⁵⁸ This advertisement appeals to young middle or upper class women who would have respected and admired a woman like the Countess of Camarvon for her social

¹⁵⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁵⁸ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1947

standing and beauty. The ad is made appealing to these women also because of the vibrant colors used in the ad and the use of the adjective exotic. It is exciting and bright, while also playing on social expectations of wealth and status.

The second Pond's advertisement in the April 1947 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* is for Pond's cold cream. This is a full page, black and white ad with the heading, "New! Blush-cleanse your face—for that *Engaged-lovely* look."¹⁵⁹ This ad has few pictures and a great deal of text. There are three images in this ad, the largest of which is a big photograph of a young woman, probably in her mid twenties, wearing a satin dress that exposes her shoulders and dark hair that is cut just below her chin. It is difficult to tell from the black and white photo if she is wearing makeup, though her skin does look flawless. In the photo she is sitting on an embroidered, silk couch. Beneath her picture is the text, "Charming Katharine Kurr says... 'My face feels gorgeously clean and glowy after a blush-cleanse with Pond's Cold Cream.' Keep your face blush-cleansed, with Pond's, too!" Next to her picture is a photo of her engagement ring that is "set with precious family stones—a diamond flashing between two white pearls." The text below this reads,

She's Engaged! She's Lovely! She uses Pond's! Katherine Anne Kurr, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick L. Kurr of Rye, N.Y., is engaged to Lawrence Esterbrook Wattles of Wynnewood, Pa., who served with the Marines in the South Pacific. They plan to be married in a perfect country setting at beautiful Belgrade Lakes, Maine, where both families have their summer homes. Katharine is startlingly like her charming mother—the same fine-cast features, the same dark blue eyes with enormous black pupils, and a complexion so rose-petal fresh, you must see it to believe it."¹⁶⁰

The advertisement goes on to say how much Katherine loves Pond's and how much it has helped her complexion. At the bottom of the page is a list of some of "the beautiful

¹⁵⁹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁶⁰ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1947

women of Society who use Pond's" including Mrs. Victor Du Pont, III, the Lady Daphne Straight, Miss Anne Morgan, and the Countess de Petiteville, a tactic used in Ponds' ads in *Life* as well. At the top of the page are instructions on how to use the cream that include swirling "it on your receptively moist, warm skin in little creamy 'engagement ring' circles up over your face and throat."¹⁶¹

This advertisement screams that engagement is the ultimate goal for women, a common message for this era, and that in order to get engaged, one must be beautiful, and that to be beautiful, one must use Pond's cold cream. Because this ad is targeting single women, the demographic must be young, middle-class ladies who long to find a husband and achieve such high social status as women like Katherine Kurr and the Countess de Petiteville. The other possible demographic could be high society young women who find themselves on equal levels as these women and are looking for a product that their peers find beneficial, even if married since the list of elite women include a mixture of both single and married. Whomever the targeted consumer, this Pond's advertisement creates (or embodies) the social expectation for young women to marry and achieve high class status.

The third Pond's advertisement in this issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* is for "Angel Face" foundation. This ad is stylistically nearly identical to the "Angel Face" ad in *Life*, discussed earlier. It is a simple design, with the focal point being the picture of a woman's face in the middle. The ad is simple, just the woman's face in front of a yellow background. This woman looks to be in her thirties and is wearing lipstick and mascara, along with an elaborate black headpiece that wraps around her chin and neck. Around the image of the woman are text bubbles explaining the benefits of "Angel Face," including

¹⁶¹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1947

that it “stays on longer than powder, can’t spill in your purse, and is waterless.”¹⁶² The only other image is a picture of the foundation with the caption, “choose from 5 angel-sweet shadows! With luxurious puffet. At better beauty counters---89¢ plus tax.” It is interesting that the price of the product is included in this ad because this is not typical of cosmetic advertisements in *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Text below the woman’s face says what “society beauties say” and includes rave reviews of “Angel Face” by such women as Mrs. Ernest L. Biddle and Miss Theodora Roosevelt. This advertisement, like the others we have seen for Pond’s, and which is similar to those seen through 1962 in *Life*, plays up the ideals and expectations of the time period and the idea of “keeping up with the Jones’,” the Jones’ in this case being the wealthy, old money elite.¹⁶³

Alongside these traditional advertisements that perpetuate the long-established societal expectations of marriage and upward mobility and that continue throughout this long decade being examined, *Ladies’ Home Journal* also offers alternative styles of cosmetic advertising that is more modern for the time period and challenges the traditional idea of the perfect woman as a composed, elegant socialite. For example, in the April 1956 issue there is a Revlon advertisement for “Love-Pat” compact makeup. This is a full page, color spread that has a large picture of a woman holding the foundation and stroking a crystal ball. Above this picture is the headline of the ad that reads, “Night and day...this is the one!”¹⁶⁴ The picture of the woman in this ad is very different than ads like the Pond’s discussed above. The colors are deep, rich blues, greens and reds. The woman has short, curly red hair with bright red lipstick. The camera was positioned from below when the photo was taken, showcasing the power and strength of

¹⁶² *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁶³ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1947

¹⁶⁴ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1956

the model. She is looking down at the reader with one eyebrow raised higher than the other, and sultry bedroom eyes, portraying command, dominance and sexuality. She is not visibly wearing any clothes, as the picture cuts off just above the bust and her shoulders and chest are bare. All that the reader knows she is wearing are teal, full-length gloves. In one hand she is holding the red case of the foundation, while the other is resting on a crystal ball, implying she has the ability to foresee the future. This picture exudes sexuality and rebellion, as being a psychic would certainly not have been seen as an appropriate occupation for a woman at this time. Even the name of the foundation, “Love-Pat,” connotes sexuality.¹⁶⁵

Another example of a more risqué advertisement that challenges traditional expectations of women is in the October 1959 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. This is an ad for Coty's “French Fling lipstick and nail polish.” This full-page colored ad features a large picture of a redheaded woman in a pink dress with big, dramatic lapels that drapes over her shoulders. Behind her is a masked man holding a bouquet of roses; the woman is holding one of them and leaning backwards and laughing. There is a crowd in the background, behind the man, though it is unfocused and all that is distinguishable is a man playing a trombone. The image portrays the woman as the dominant character, with the man in pursuit of her, while she whimsically twirls about in front of the crowd. The text below this image says, “A reckless rose on a midnight spree and oh—what a color it turns out to be!”¹⁶⁶ Below this, in smaller text, is a descriptive narrative that “sells” the product to the consumer by using catchy, lyrical rhetoric that lures the reader in through the hint of scandal. It reads,

¹⁶⁵ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1956

¹⁶⁶ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1959

Coty dares to bring the color back to your lips—the color that could not have been created until *you* were ready for it! FRENCH FLING! Coty’s new, lively, lovely, rosy beauty—a *Ravishing* rose, a *reckless* rose, the richest blush a rose can reach to your lips in a rose-colored daze. No one but Coty has this wonderfully rare, this handle-with-care rose. It does such dangerously beautiful things to you! So don’t wait, don’t hesitate! Away with the humdrum! Away with the usual thing! Have a FRENCH FLING.

This text is full of sexual connotations and undertones. At first glance, it seems this is simply a colorful description of a new kind of lipstick, but when read further into, it begins to feel deeper and more sexually oriented. By saying “this color could not have been created until *you* were ready for it! FRENCH FLING!” may suggest two things. The first is that this color was previously too bold for a conservative and traditional society and that because that society was changing, such colors and styles were becoming more acceptable. And the second, more sexual possibility is that this is an allusion to being ready for a different kind of French fling...one that could not be completed until “*you*” were ready for it. Evidence supporting the latter of these two possibilities is seen throughout this short piece of text through the use of words like “ravishing” and “reckless” and with the idea that it does “such dangerously beautiful things to you!” Note the choice of the company to use “to you” rather “for you,” and how this affects the tone of the text. “Away with the usual thing! Have a FRENCH FLING,” says to the reader to throw out old ideas and conventions, either in terms of makeup or with sexuality and social expectations, which is especially magnified when paired with the picture that just so happens to be directly over top of this text. Coty uses sexual undertones and the idea of the wild and forbidden as a sales technique, a type of advertisement that is not seen in the typical white, middle-class family magazine but might capture the imagination, and

the money, of a *Ladies' Home Journal* reader who responds to the romance and change from daily life that the ad promises.

Less common on the pages of *Ladies' Home Journal* than foundations, lipsticks and creams, which appear quite often, are eye makeup advertisements. The first (and only) that I was able to find in the years chosen for this analysis is in the April 1962 issue. This is a double-page, color spread with an octagonal picture in the middle with the same face repeated with different colored makeup, and rotated 360 degrees. That is, the picture is divided into eight sections, each of which is a picture of a face, with two of the faces right side up, four sideways and two upside down. Each image has slightly different makeup, from different shades of blue and green eye shadows to different color lipsticks. The picture is set on a completely black background with only the text "New! Eyes by Cutex," written to break the solidity of the dark backdrop.¹⁶⁷ Underneath the picture is a thin strip of white with blue text written on it. It says, "Nature gave you two eyes...now Cutex gives you dozens.....the ultimate in eye fashion," and underneath, "'Nowadays you change your eyes as you change your wardrobe,' says Oleg Cassini, America's leading fashion designer. 'With these new eye fashion shades by Cutex, I believe a woman's beauty is enhanced to the ultimate.'" ¹⁶⁸ Similar to the eye makeup ad analyzed in *Life*, this advertisement is telling the reader what the fashion in cosmetics is and how the use of bright and bold makeup enhances the beauty of a woman in a way that is inherently unnatural. This ad also links fashion and cosmetics in a direct way as a fashion designer is commenting on cosmetics, something that is seen in *Life* magazine as well. Such advertisements changed fashion and cosmetic trends as well as societal beliefs, and

¹⁶⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1962

¹⁶⁸ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1962

helped to transform the idea that natural beauty was the only kind of beauty, to the idea that beauty could only be achieved with makeup and even only with obvious makeup.

Ebony

Like *Ladies' Home Journal* there are many women's cosmetic advertisements in *Ebony*, however the content of these ads differ tremendously from those in both *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, as the majority of the ads are for skin-bleaching creams and hair straightening and lengthening products. Even as far into the sixties as April of 1963 (April of 1962 was missing from the New York State Library's collection, so April of 1963 was examined instead) skin-bleaching cream—an extreme, painful and dangerous product – is as prevalent in *Ebony* as it was in 1947 which is interesting considering that Black Power becomes a new standard for some African Americans a few years after 1963 and with it the idea that black is beautiful. These ads appear all over the pages of *Ebony* and represent numerous brands' products. All of them stress the importance of light skin and associate beauty with whiteness. “Black and White Bleaching Cream” is one of the common brands advertised on the pages of *Ebony* and promises that “At last you can have shades lighter, smoother, softer skin...it's true, fairer loveliness can be yours.” It boasts the use of a “special ingredient” to penetrate directly “into the layer in your skin where skin color is regulated.”¹⁶⁹ Most of the ads in *Ebony* are black and white and this one is no exception. The picture in the advertisement is of a light skinned black woman with straight hair and Caucasian features, which again perpetuates the idea that to many at this time, beauty meant being as close to white as possible.¹⁷⁰ Another common brand

¹⁶⁹ *Ebony*, March 1950

¹⁷⁰ *Ebony*, March 1950

of skin-bleaching cream is Nadinola, which also appears frequently throughout *Ebony* and tells readers “you can be lovelier—and that’s a promise!” With just one jar of Nadinola, consumers can have lighter skin “that makes you look your best.”¹⁷¹ This language suggests that dark skin may be lovely, but light skin is certainly lovelier, and that you cannot look your best if you have dark skin, sending the message that black is fine but white is better. All of the women in skin-bleaching ads between the years 1947 and 1962 have white physical characteristics, and some of the women pictured in the ads are in fact white women, again engraining into the minds of African American women that to be beautiful means to be white.

The other main types of cosmetics being advertised in *Ebony* between 1947 and 1962 are hair products. This includes shampoos but more so straightening, lengthening, moisturizing, and styling treatments and products, as well as synthetic hairpieces. The women portrayed in these ads are usually white women with long, straight, shiny hair, or black women with styled updo’s, extensions, or straightened hair. There are countless hair product ads throughout *Ebony* and all promote long, styled and shiny hair. For example, Snow White hair products has an ad in the April 1948 issue of *Ebony* (the issues from 1947 were not available) that promises “Satin-Smooth lustrous hair” that is sure to “Delight your man tonight” by softening, cleaning and brightening your hair.¹⁷² Similar to *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*, hair ads in *Ebony* stress the importance of finding a man and looking good for him, and the same can be said for skin-bleaching ads. Interestingly, in the corner of this Snow White advertisement for hair products is another ad for Snow White bleaching cream to give the customer an “adorable new complexion.”

¹⁷¹ *Ebony*, April 1953

¹⁷² *Ebony*, April 1948

The name of this brand, along with the promised results of the products that describe the Caucasian characteristics, perpetuate social ideals of beauty and racist behaviors and attitudes. The presence of an advertisement for a company named Snow White is an odd juxtaposition in an African American magazine and though is representative of a fairy tale, is also a story about a beautiful woman as white as snow who ends up living happily ever after. Also, these ads are targeted specifically for African American women and the uniqueness of their hair, showcasing again that *Ebony* was targeted for an African American demographic.

In her book *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women 1920-1975*, Susannah Walker uses a Snow White advertisement from a 1947 issue of *Ebony* to show showcase the differences between ads by white-owned companies compared to those produced by African American companies. She found that “the advertising of these new white players in the black beauty culture industry did dominate the pages of black magazines, particularly *Ebony*.”¹⁷³ This meant that white owners were taking control of, or starting up companies that created beauty products for black women and that were aimed specifically at African Americans. Snow White was one such white owned company and a “maker of hair dressings, pressing oils, and other cosmetic products.”¹⁷⁴ The ad that Walker found from 1947, “featured a photo of ‘Glamorous Una Mae Carlisle, famous entertainer,’ wearing her hair in a typical 1940s upswept style,” and this “white-owned company “featured the advice of African American beauty consultant Sandra Powell in each advertisement and offered women Powell’s ‘Guide to Correct Make-Up’

¹⁷³ Susannah Walker, 101

¹⁷⁴ Susannah Walker, 101

free by mail and at cosmetics counters.”¹⁷⁵ This use of famous women as spokespeople for cosmetics is a tactic used in *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* as well. In her comparison of white and black-owned companies, Walker found that “African American companies’ advertisements differed little from those of white companies” in the 1950s. “The images of ideal beauty they presented also favored straight hair, light skin, and middle-class lifestyles.”¹⁷⁶

Makeup ads do emerge in later issues of *Ebony* and include mostly mascara, lipstick, nail polish and foundation, although these numbers pale in comparison to the steady presence of skin-bleach and hair products. The two main advertisers of makeup in *Ebony* are Maybelline and Lucky Heart cosmetics. These ads do not appear in the magazine until the late 1950s and Lucky Heart, while advertising individual products, focuses more on the recruitment of saleswomen. Ads looking for saleswomen to go door-to-door selling cosmetics do not exist in *Life* or *Ladies’ Home Journal*, perhaps representing a mix of the classes targeted in *Ebony*. By offering jobs to women, alongside other standard advertisements, *Ebony* may be addressing the lower classes of women or those who need to work to help support their family or themselves. As mentioned in the *Ebony* section in chapter one, many African American women worked as domestics and in 1940 as much as 60 percent of black women were employed in this field. By 1960 this number fell to 36 percent as more black women were entering into clerical work to help support their families.¹⁷⁷ Magazines reflected this change with advertisements and articles that “imparted an image of clean, respectable, middle-class femininity.”¹⁷⁸ After

¹⁷⁵ Susannah Walker, 101

¹⁷⁶ Susannah Walker, 101

¹⁷⁷ Haidarali, 535

¹⁷⁸ Haidarali, 535

WWII “‘rough diamonds’ or ‘ordinary’ African American women witnessed a series of images and ideas that lauded respectable femininity, consumptive lifestyle, and heterosexual fulfillment as the measure of African American womanhood,”¹⁷⁹ however were also bombarded with advertisements for skin bleaching creams and other products to make them look more like white women.

The only other makeup advertisements present in the years chosen for analysis are for Maybelline mascara, eyeliner, eyebrow pencil and eye shadow. These ads appear in the later years examined and correspond to the increased attention to eye makeup that occurs in *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These ads in *Ebony* tend to be small—one quarter of a page—and always in black and white. They are simple in design, with only a picture of a black woman’s face with writing beneath that says, “Be wise accent your eyes with Maybelline.”¹⁸⁰ The only other images within the ad are a brief description of the product and its price (i.e. “Waterproof MAGIC MASCARA with spiral brush \$1”) and a sketch of the product next to the description. Because the picture of the model is a close-up, all the reader can see is that she has smooth, light skin, ear length dark, wavy hair, big jeweled earrings, and groomed eyebrows.¹⁸¹ These ads are quite different from the big, bold, bright makeup ads seen in *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* that showcase the makeup and express the new trends. These *Ebony* makeup ads are much more subtle and simple.

Overall, there are similarities and differences between all three of the magazines analyzed. *Life* is a magazine primarily intended for white, middle-class families, *Ladies’ Home Journal* for white women of the middle and possibly upper classes, and *Ebony* for

¹⁷⁹ Haidarali, 536

¹⁸⁰ *Ebony*, April, 1962

¹⁸¹ *Ebony*, April 1962 p. 118

all classes of African American men and women. *Life* has few cosmetic advertisements and those that are present represent mostly foundations, soaps and lotions, though eye makeup is introduced later on. *Ladies' Home Journal* contains a lot of cosmetic ads, as it is directed solely at women, but like *Life* contains mostly foundation, soaps and creams. *Ebony*, like *Life*, is directed at both men and women; however, like *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Ebony* has many cosmetic advertisements for women. The main difference of *Ebony* from the other two magazines is the content of the cosmetics advertisements. They are almost entirely for skin-bleaching creams, which are never seen in *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, and hair products, the majority of which, such as extensions, are also not seen in the other two publications. Advertisements in all three magazines use the desire for upward mobility and social expectations of beauty—wealth, marriage, and light skin—to market products to the targeted consumer based on race and class.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

As seen throughout this thesis, women's cosmetic and fashion advertising in the 1950s in *Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony* is a complicated and expansive topic that deserves further research and investigation. This analysis sought to compare the fashion and cosmetic ads between these three magazines to determine differences between race and class based on targeted demographics, as well as how each magazine portrayed beauty and how these portrayals shaped or perpetuated societal expectations of beauty. The results of this analysis show that all three magazines both reflected societal expectations as well as molded ideals of beauty, and that though advertising differed based on race, class and target demographic, beauty ideals were the same for women, regardless of race or class, during the middle of 20th century in America.

Fashion advertising was different from that of cosmetics, because though styles changed with the changing seasons and emergence of new designers, the same basic looks and styles remained popular and essential to fashion throughout all of the years studied. The main ideal that remained constant was the necessity of a womanly figure accentuated by a tiny waist, and the one type of clothing that was continuously advertised was the corset/girdle, which emphasized the female figure. *Life* and *Ebony* tended to have less fashion advertisements than *Ladies' Home Journal*, mostly because these were family magazines that also included men's clothing ads. *Life* differed from the other two

magazines in that its fashion section presented haute couture looks from Paris that were high fashion and seemingly unobtainable and ill suited for the everyday American woman, while these sections in both *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Ebony* mixed high fashion with street wear and made trends and styles accessible. *Life* and *Ebony* were similar in their clothing advertisements because the majority of them emphasized convenience and durability—the ability to make the dollar go a long way—while *Ladies' Home Journal* clothing ads tended to focus on the fashion rather than the practicality, though did include many pattern advertisements.

These conclusions confirm other scholars' analyses of the role of the magazine on fashion in that *Life* and *Ebony* were family magazines that represented the needs of the whole family unit and were racial counterparts to each other. These magazines were not just for fun and fantasy, but also acted as gateways into the news of happenings of the world. The needs of the whole were put in front of the individual in these magazines, whereas *Ladies' Home Journal* was strictly a women's magazine and could afford to be more fantastical. It did not include as many news stories and tended to focus on things relating to women at this time in American history like cooking, cleaning, sewing, and shopping. Because of this, the magazine was able to include higher end fashion advertisements. Perhaps this is also because the women's husbands were not seeing these ads and could maybe have better gotten away with purchasing them.

Ebony, differed from the other magazines because it catered to an African American demographic but was selling the idea of white beauty. In order to fit into these impossible standards of beauty to become something they are not, African American women needed to find ways to manipulate their bodies to fit into society's norms and

parameters and were treated as inferior to white women. As Susannah Walker argues in *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975*, “although black women’s beauty culture mirrored white women’s beauty culture in the period examined here (1920-1975), African American beauty culture was distinctive because it explicitly reflected and articulated twentieth-century racial politics in the United States, especially as it was emerging in the context of black migration and community formation of American cities.”¹⁸² While Walker acknowledges that beauty culture and expectations have been significant for all races, she argues that it was especially and uniquely so for African American women, “in large part because they confronted popular images of feminine beauty that perpetually used a white ideal. White beauty culture, as Kathy Peiss has observed, certainly associated whiteness with beauty but always did so implicitly, and often unconsciously, as a fact too obvious to require declaration.”¹⁸³ For this reason, race is not addressed within the pages of *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*, but certainly is in *Ebony*.

Cosmetic advertising proved to be very progressive over time in both *Life* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*, in that the types of products being advertised grew to be more and more bold. Overtime, as cosmetic use shifted from foundation and concealer being the only accepted types of makeup, to lipstick, mascara, eyeliner and eye shadow becoming popular, the advertisements themselves became bolder. Once the shift occurred (sometime in the late 1950s) from the preference of the natural look to the use of obvious makeup, the advertisements could begin to be more daring and bold. There is no hiding

¹⁸² Susannah Walker, *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁸³ Walker, 3

the use of bright red lipstick and blue eye shadow and the preference of looking like no makeup was worn faded from view, resulting in advertisements losing the need to be secretive of women's use of makeup. Before the popularity of bold makeup arose, the use of cosmetics seemed to be women's best-kept secret, but eye shadow and lipstick lifted off this veil and let the out the secret. This was reflected in the advertisements of makeup by images of faces covered with shadows, liners, rouge, lipstick, etc and showed women as more daring as a result.

Originally, the use of make up was considered taboo and was practiced in the privacy of one's own home through the use of flower and herbal home made recipes. Later in American culture, especially after WWI, the use of unnoticeable, "natural" cosmetics became more widely acceptable, such as lotions and foundations. As both the magazine and the makeup industries grew in the early 1900s "natural beauty" came to mean subtly enhanced beauty through the use of these products. Further into the 1950s and certainly by the start of the 1960s, the use of foundation, rouge, lipstick, eye shadow, eye liner and mascara had become common place and acceptable. This is an example of when the magazine and advertising world shaped society's expectations of beauty, because as magazines grew in popularity and distribution, cosmetic companies were able to increase advertising, and as magazines began to develop as women's gateway into the world of fashion they became more and more trusting of the trends and styles within the pages. Makeup and cosmetic ads were a part of these developing trends and over time became destigmatized and even desirable. *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal* tended to be quite similar in the types and styles of cosmetics advertised, as both publications catered to middle class, white women. *Ebony* is different, however, because the majority of the

cosmetics being advertised consisted of skin bleaches and hair straightening treatments—products that were absent from the pages of the other two magazines.

The results of this comparison and analysis of the fashion and cosmetic advertisements in three popular magazines in the long decade of the 1950s in American culture revealed that marketing did vary depending on targeted demographic and based on class and race. As such, fashion and cosmetic advertising both shaped and reflected societal ideals and expectations of beauty by taking cues from popular culture and trends as well as creating and molding them. This examination revealed that the desire for upward mobility is a consistent technique used by advertisers in their marketing strategies, as middle-class white women aspired to reach the social standing of wealthy and elite socialites and actresses, while African American women aspired to be part of middle-class, suburban America without segregation and discrimination. The results also showed the importance and consistency of the expectation to appear white and feminine, especially through maintaining a tiny waist and the hourglass figure.

If I had time to expand this thesis, I would have liked to include all of the years between 1947 and 1962 and all of the months within these years, so as to get a more conclusive and comprehensive picture of the change that occurs throughout this long decade. I also would have liked to continue this analysis into the 1960s and 1970s, as I end just at the brink of the Civil Rights and Women's Movements. The shift from the expectation of black women to have white characteristics to the ideas involved in the Black Power Movement of such as "black is beautiful," would have been fascinating to examine in relation to advertising of fashion and cosmetics. Similarly, the shift from maintaining the image of the "perfect" American woman—a stay at home wife and

mother with an hourglass figure that is always dressed perfectly—to the hippie movement and rejection of these constraints on women and of the corset and bra would have been an interesting addition to this analysis. It is obvious that fashions, trends, and social expectations are ever changing in American culture, but in the years of 1947-1962, societal expectations of beauty were the same for all women and did not change.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ladies' Home Journal. January 1947-December 1959

Life Magazine. January 1947-December 1959

Ebony Magazine. January 1947-December 1959

Secondary Sources

Blaszczyk, Regina Lee. *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV*. Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc. 2009

Breward, Christopher. *Fashion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Evans, Sara M. *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*. New York: The Free Press, 1989.

Ewing, Elizabeth. *History of 20th Century Fashion*. New York: Costume and Fashion Press, 2001.

Haidarali, Laila. "Polishing Brown Diamonds: African American Women, Popular Magazines, and the Advent of Modeling in Early Postwar America." In *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in US Women's History*, 535-550.

Heiman, Jim, Alison A. Nieder. *20th Century Fashion: 100 Years of Apparel Ads*. Taschen.

Hill, Daniel Delis. *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2004.

Jones, Geoffrey. *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010

McAndrew, Malia. "Selling Black Beauty: African American Modeling Agencies and Charm Schools in Postwar America." *OAH Magazine of History*, January 2010, 29-32.

Peiss, Kathy. *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

- Rubinstein, Ruth R. *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.
- Tebbel, John, Mary Ellen Zuckerman. *The Magazine in America 1741-1990*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Walker, Nancy A. *Shaping our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.
- Walker, Susannah. *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007.
- Welters, Linda and Patricia A. Cunningham, eds. *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*. New York: Berg, 2005.
- Young, William H, and Nancy K. Young. *The 1950's*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Zuckerman, Mary Ellen. *Sources on the History of Women's Magazines: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Zuckerman, Mary Ellen. *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998.