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**Seeking Representations of Afrocentric Beauty:
A Comparative Content Analysis of Advertisements in *Essence* Magazine**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Honors Studies in
Journalism

By

Roy Phillips Jr.

Spring 2018

Journalism

J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

The University of Arkansas

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks to the University of Arkansas' School of Journalism and Strategic Media for their help and support. To my thesis committee, you all have been beacons of hope for me for the past two years. You all have led and guided me to get to this point and I am forever grateful. I would also like to thank my parents and God for their everlasting love and support through this journey.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Duality of identity

African American women, as a subordinated group, navigate between measuring themselves through the eyes of a European dominant society and their own complex sense of an African American identity, to establish a perceptible presence in the American cultural tapestry. In 1903, W.E.B. Dubois coined the term *double-consciousness*. In the *Souls of Black Folks*, he defined double-consciousness as “this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Dubois, 1903, p.3). This notion of looking at oneself through the eyes of others is reflected in “social, political, economic and historical forces that have shaped black racial-development in this country” (Orey et. al, 2012, p.61). There is a duality of identity that is demonstrated in African American culture and particularly in how Black women physically present themselves to the world. It is common practice for some to transfer from a Eurocentric to an Afrocentric fashion statement, depending on the occasion, while others adopt a constant Eurocentric fashion style, but doggedly adhere to Afrocentric cuisine. It is therefore not surprising for African American women to shift from sporting Afrocentric corn rows or Nubian knots to a jazz festival on the weekend to donning on a long raven black bone-straight hair weave for a week-day job-interview at a Caucasian dominant enterprise. One of the concerns of this content analysis is to investigate evidence of this duality of culture and how it is reflected in magazines targeted to African American women.

African American women have occupied a structural position subordinate to White women and because of this, Black women have had less access to deference, power, and

authority (Lewis, 1977). According to the DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli (2017), Black women are now assertively pursuing opportunities for economic advancement despite “facing structural inequalities that leave them disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and, in some cases, limit their access”. The Economic Policy Institute reported that obtaining a higher education has failed to close the gap between Black women and White women. Black women with a “bachelor's degree or more and 11 to 20 years of work experience were paid 10.6 percent less than White women” (Vega, 2016).

1.2 Persistent stereotypes

This struggle for deference, power and authority have also been observed in mainstream advertising along with stereotypical images. Often stereotypes and beauty depictions of Black women are inauthentic and limited in the media that we observe daily (Woodard & Mastin, 2005). African American women have therefore sought to locate media that address their desire to be represented positively and in a way that appeals to their culture. *Essence* magazine, for example, first published in 1968, has become “a cultural institution for the African American community” (*Essence*, 2018).

In the United States, ideology is one means by which dominant groups, such as Whites and men, sustain and legitimate power over other people, example people of color and women (Bristor, Lee & Hunt, 1995). One way that a dominant group’s ideology is reproduced and transmitted is through the mass media. Media can communicate racial prejudice in several ways including “omission (i.e. ignoring the existence of African-Americans), stereotyping and showing African Americans in a disproportionate number of “bad” or low status roles” (Duckitt, 1992). As a result, people who are not White or male tend to be often portrayed in a stereotypical and unfavorable light (Hazell & Clarke, 2008). In 2017, Dove released a campaign with the

tagline of “Ready for a Dove Shower?”. The ad showed a moving image of a Black woman removing her shirt to then show a White woman. The advertisement came under fire because the perception was that it was communicating to Black women that the body wash would cause them to become lighter. This advertisement generated unintended messages and ignored the existence of Black women’s perceptions. Dove’s infamous ad appears to buy into a racist history of soap advertising of depicting White skin as clean and Black skin as something to be cleansed.

Even with positive change within society regarding diversity of representation in the media, there is still evidence of frequent stereotyping in advertising. According to Patton (2006), “African American women have either been the subject of erasure in the various forms or their beauty has been wrought with racist stereotypes” (Patton, 2006, p. 26). In 2017, *Wonder Woman* aired in movie theatres across the country. *Wonder Woman* was a milestone for representing women on screen because it was the first female-led superhero film in more than a decade and the first to be directed by a woman. *Wonder Woman* is also “the first female superhero to get her own movie in either of the two shared universes from rivals DC and Marvel” (Spiegel, 2017). This film received high praise from White female viewers because they saw themselves being depicted by Diana Prince as a physically fit woman who was optimistic when facing adversity. On the other hand, the film was bittersweet for Black women. The first Black woman character in the movie was that of a caretaker of Diana Prince. This immediately hints toward the mammy stereotype. A stereotype is defined as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a person or thing. According to Glover (2017), it was sad to see the first image of Black womanhood “within a stereotype that Black women have been fighting against for decades”. This intractable practice of portraying Black women in a role is in keeping with cultivation

theory that suggests that people perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages of the world (Morgan and Shanahan, 2010; Potter 2014).

1.3 Economic dominance and its impact on standards of beauty

Within history and even present day, Black women have consistently grappled with European beauty standards. Davis et al., (2010) described the concept of attractiveness and beauty in African American women as the idea of “looking good”, which can mean a multitude of things including clothes fitting the right way, wearing hair styles, and having hips and curves. Since 1619, Black women’s beauty has been compared to White European beauty standards. During slavery, Black women who had lighter skin tones with more European-like features and were of mixed races were often selected as house slaves and those who had darker skin with more African features including kinky or tightly coiled hair were designated to working in the field to do more harrowing work like their male counterparts. This addressed the notion of colorism which is defined as a process that privileges light-skinned people of color over dark skinned people (Hunter, 2007).

It is therefore not surprising that Black hair is a staple feature when discussing Black history as Black people’s hair is a distinguishing physical feature. According to Jahangir (2015), hairstyles could indicate a person's background, tribe, and even social status in early African civilizations. In 1865, slavery was abolished in the United States and Black women “felt pressured to fit in with mainstream White society and adjusted their hair accordingly” (Jahangir, 2015). The demand of fitting in with society grew so much that Garrett A. Morgan established G.A. Morgan Hair Refining Company in 1913 and create the first chemical relaxers for hair (Booker, 2014).

This demand to be more European is in compliance with the practice during slavery to strip the Africans of their language, names, religion and other cultural traditions to denigrate their cultural heritage and sow disunity to avoid revolts. Today, this demand to impose Eurocentric values is reflected in advertisements by the models selected and the products advertised to African Americans. According to Erika Kendall (2016), women of color don't see "leading ladies" with their naturally curly hair in magazine advertisements and even more so, no leading ladies with their own hair.

1.4 Aims and significance of this study

This study will explore the extent to which *Essence* magazine advertisements targeted to African American women celebrate their diversity and distinctiveness. *Essence* Communications has been in existence since 1968 with the first magazine publication occurring in May of 1970. The initial monthly circulation was 50,000 copies per month. Presently, the magazine has a readership of about 8.5 million, a monthly circulation of 1,050,000 and has become "a cultural institution for the African American community" (*Essence*, 2018). According to David Carr (2005), in 2000, Time Incorporated purchased 49 percent of *Essence* Communications and then in 2005, the company purchased the remaining 51 percent, which put *Essence* Communications under complete corporate ownership. This business decision was made for the benefit of *Essence's* survival because of the financial challenges of changing technology and a punishing recession (Prince, 2013). The founder and chief editor, Edward Lewis, in 2005 said he believed the joining of *Essence* and Time would help *Essence* reach more readership. According to *Essence* (2018), every month African American women rely on *Essence* for editorial content designed to help them move their lives forward personally, professionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

Scholars have had a long tradition of investigating textual and pictorial representations in media. Previous studies have compared magazines targeted to men and White women (Baker 2005; Conley & Ramsey 2011; Vokey, Tefft, and Tysiaczny, 2013). Black women have been studied (Lewis 1977; Poran 2002; Woodard and Mastin 2005 and Walley-Jean 2009) as well as people of color (Colfax and Sternberg 1972; Bailey 2006; and Hazell and Clark 2008), which will be discussed in the review of literature. This research builds on Hazell and Clarke's (2008) study that examined the portrayal of Black men and women in images and text of advertisements in Black-oriented magazines. Hazell and Clarke (2008) concluded that blacks are still being presented in a stereotypical manor and that White ideals are still being imposed on them. Similarly, to Hazell and Clarke, observations will be made in this study of skin tone of models, hair texture, hair styles and product advertised.

This content analysis study contributes the construct of *Afrocentrism* which is of prime importance because of its relevance to the uniqueness of Black women's aesthetics. Afrocentrism is defined as cultural and political movement in which African Americans regard themselves and all other blacks as "syncretic Africans and believe that their worldview should positively reflect traditional African values" (Early, 2015). The expectation and significance are that results will help to provide a framework for advertisers to consider when advertising to African Americans. In addition, it should offer a descriptive analysis of how products are messaging to African American women and to glean from the findings whether advertisers are providing the plurality of representation which is desired from segments of the African American community.

1.5 Statement of purpose

This comparative content analysis will investigate how African American women are depicted in *Essence* magazine advertisements and seeks to answer the research question: Are the characteristics of advertisements in *Essence* magazines significantly different when under complete corporate ownership compared to being under primarily African American ownership? The specific goal is to examine the extent to which Afrocentric or Eurocentric depictions are being reinforced, if at all, and to observe if depictions of African American women are shifting or are immobile. To do this, the study will compare advertisements in *Essence* magazines in 2001, when the magazine was 51 percent Black-owned, with advertisements in 2016, when the magazine was under the full ownership of Time Incorporated.

Following is a review of the representation of people of color literature. It examines relevant theories such as cultivation theory and research conducted on advancing knowledge about stereotypes in mass media, representation of African American women, and beauty and sexuality depictions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Cultivation theory

George Gerbner introduced the cultivation theory as a macro-level system of explanation about mass media (Potter 2014). Gerbner argued that the mass production and rapid distribution of messages creates new symbolic environments that reflect the structure and functions of the institutions that transmit them. According to Potter (2014), Gerbner concluded that mass-produced messages form “a common culture through which communities cultivate shared and public notions about facts, values, and contingencies of human existence” (Potter 2014, p.1016). One basic tenet of the cultivation analysis is called the cultivation hypothesis (Morgan and Shanahan 2010). This hypothesis posits that those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common recurrent messages of the world of fictional television (Morgan and Shanahan, 2010). This hypothesis can be compared to young African American girls and women. If most of the time, young Black girls and women are watching television or consuming any type of media, including social media or reading magazines, they are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages. Simply put if African American women and girls see only images of groups other than themselves in mass media they may consider themselves irrelevant and aspire to the groups reflected in the media.

2.2 African American women: Media representation

Content analyses from the past 30 years have “consistently found that mass media offers little diversity in their portrayals of women’s physical characteristics and roles in society” (Gordon, 2008, p. 246). In the United States, ideology is one means by which dominant groups,

such as Whites or men, sustain and legitimate power over other people, such as African Americans, Hispanics and women, (Bristor, Lee & Hunt, 1995). One way that a dominant group's ideology is reproduced and transmitted, is through the mass media including advertisements. Media can communicate racial prejudice in several ways including "omission, for example, ignoring the existence of African-Americans, stereotyping and showing African Americans in a disproportionate number of "bad" or low status roles" (Duckitt, 1992). As a result, people who are not White or male tend to be portrayed in a stereotypical and unfavorable light (Hazell & Clarke, 2008).

The literature shows that omission of blacks in magazine was the norm in the sixties and seventies, with few exceptions. Cox and Sternberg reported that the proportion of Blacks in magazines rose slowly. Of twenty-one thousand people appearing in the ads over this 1965-69-time period, only 673, or slightly over 3 percent, were Black. In 1969, roughly 10 percent of all ads contained African Americans which was a huge increase from 1965. However, when Cox and Sternberg (1972) analyzed advertisements in four mass circulation magazines. Of the 7,523 ads examined, only 308 or 4 percent contained blacks.

Advertisements associated with music entertainment is one of the more favorable areas where Black were more visible in the sixties. Cox (1969) observed an increase in the depictions of African Americans in higher status occupations from how they were typically depicted. He found that although 71 percent of African Americans were portrayed above skilled laborers. That majority of the advertisements in the entertainment category were "phonographic record ads".

It appears that one of the reasons why blacks were underrepresented, was the fear that products which were too closely associated with blacks may not do well among the majority White population. Cox and Sternberg (1972) mentioned that advertisers could incorporate Blacks

into advertisements without having them “become too closely identified with a particular product is to assimilate him into a large, predominantly white group” (Cox & Sternberg, 1972, p. 13). They analyzed non-record album ads and found that 78 of the 173 presented blacks in groups in which the ratio of Whites to Blacks ranged from five-to-one to over a thousand-to-one.

Since many Whites have little or consistent face to face contact with Blacks, the mass media’s depiction of Blacks is likely to influence White’s attitudes heavily (Humphrey & Schuman, 1984). Humphrey and Schuman (1984) coded the frequencies and social characteristics of blacks in issues of *Time* and *Ladies Home Journal*. According to their study, 11.4 percent of *Time*’s 1980 ads contained at least one Black and only 5.7 percent of the total number of people shown in ads were Black, even though during the 1980s, the national Black population was approximately 12 percent. This was a huge underrepresentation because “only one-fifth of the ads containing Blacks in both *Time* and *Ladies Home Journal* were represented solely by blacks” (Humphrey & Schuman, 1984). Humphrey and Schuman (1984) mentioned how the economy and even the election of Ronald Reagan influenced the increased frequency of Black advertisements. This could mean that advertisers are very sensitive to shifting political and economic issues when planning the racial content of ads (Humphrey & Schuman, 1984).

In the 2000s there was an increase in Black in mass media, but what became noticeable is that when Blacks, particularly women, were found in magazines, they tended to have more European features. Along with these European features, Black women are seen in dominant and submissive roles. Hazell and Clarke (2008) described dominance as a person with higher authority, height and size, and overall physical position. Hazell and Clarke (2008) suggested that Black models in magazines were presented in a dominant role because of “leftover stereotypes of

Black women as dominant”. This is their way of appealing to the Black female audience who strive to be self-confident.

According to Hazell and Clarke (2008), ads in Black magazines are increasingly being geared towards other races and the number of White models is increasing even though these magazines are supposed to be geared toward Black audiences. Hazell and Clarke (2008) analyzed both *Essence* and *Jet* magazines and found that from the ads, the majority were for hair care products promoting images of White, European standards. This is a contradiction to the magazines because although the magazine is targeted to Black audiences, the models and majority of the ads are still adhering to White European standards of beauty. Many of the companies used White models in their ads in *Essence* and *Jet*. White standards of beauty prevailed in most ads with Black female models featuring long, straight hair, medium-sized nose and lips and a thin body type (Hazell & Clarke, 2008). According to Hazell and Clarke, it’s not enough to increase the number of positive portrayals of Black people, but advertisers must decrease and eventually eliminate negative portrayals such as having a limited number of health care ads in Black magazines and having blacks portrayed in stereotypical jobs.

2.3 Stereotypes in mass media

When there is a high level of unfamiliarity with a group, it is not unusual to perceive the unfamiliar group in a stereotypical manner based on depictions found in the media. Negative images of African American women have a long history connected to their roles and status in society (Walley-Jean, 2009). Patricia Hill Collins (2009) discussed the controlling role of created images on African American women. She said that the images have been controlled by three main stereotypes: the mammy, the jezebel and the sapphire.

The mammy, the oldest of these stereotypes, is described as the faithful, obedient, domestic servant (Collins, 1990). This image was created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and served to represent the ideal relationship between the African American female and the majority culture (Walley-Jean, 2009). The mammy stereotype is represented in the Aunt Jemima character. In the late 19th century, the Aunt Jemima character was very prominent in minstrel shows and was soon embraced by commercial interests.

The sapphire image, which depicts a Black woman as a controlling figure who consumes men and usurps their role, was fueled by African American women's economic and social status, which forced them to work alongside their male counterparts and subsequently prevented them from fitting the standard of femininity applied to upper-class White women (Walley-Jean, 2009). This image is also related to the image of the matriarch, also labeled the failed mammy, which was created to denote the role and responsibility of the African American woman in the social and economic failure of African American families (Collins, 1990). In today's mass media, we observe the sapphire image being represented due to the social and economic inequalities such as the unemployment or underemployment of Black men, which according to West contributes to "poverty, single parenthood, and the production of criminally inclined, academically low-achieving black children" (West, 2008, p.296).

The image of the jezebel "branded African American women as sexually promiscuous and immoral, as a method of justifying the horrific and sickening sexual terrorism that African American women suffered from slaveholders, their sons, male relatives and overseers" (Walley-Jean, 2009, p.70). This image is one of the most seen in the African American community perhaps due to the ubiquity of popular culture and sexual messages and cues in the media and

pop culture. The jezebel stereotype is reinforced in movies such as *Monster's Ball* with Halle Berry and even *What's Love Got to Do with It* starring Angela Bassett.

A review of the literature shows that some of these stereotypes are vanishing. Woodard & Mastin (2005) performed a comparative content analysis on *Essence* magazine, in which they analyzed the magazine and its treatment of stereotypical images of Black women. Woodard and Mastin studied 24 magazine issues published in the 1970s and 24 issues published in the 1990s. According to the authors (2005), *Essence* thrives to liberate Black women from the strictures imposed on them by the world because *Essence* is “the only longstanding women’s magazine that targets Black women and addresses specifically their cultural emotional needs as African Americans and women.” (Woodard & Mastin, 2005, p. 264). Woodard and Mastin (2005) found that the mammy stereotype was covered least, at 4.6 percent in the 1970s and 12.7 percent in the 1990s. Their reasoning behind this is that fewer African American women are forced to either spend more time cleaning others’ homes or tending to others’ children more than attending to their own purpose of surviving economically. Woodard and Mastin (2005) also mentioned how *Essence’s* target audience conflicts with this stereotype. *Essence*, during the time of this study target readership was upscale Black women who are less likely to identify with the mammy stereotype.

As described in the previous study, the mammy stereotype was covered less in women’s magazines. Black middle-class women today are in more leadership roles and have more career opportunities, which requires them to be out into the world of work, so as found by Woodard and Mastin (2005), the mammy stereotype was seen significantly less.

2.4 Consumption advertisements targeting African American Women

African Americans have often expressed a concern that their community are specifically targeted by certain brands, many of which are unhealthy and perilous to their community. That said, African American have unique preferences with regards to certain products and brands (Pratt and Pratt,1996). Pratt and Pratt (1996) analyzed nutrition advertisements in consumer magazines targeted towards African Americans women. They found that of 1,020 ads coded in Ebony magazine that only 1.1 percent were for milk and dairy products, 7.5 percent for breads and cereals, while 62.1 percent contained alcoholic beverages. Pratt and Pratt (1996) found that 1.3 percent of advertisements were of milk and dairy, 14.5 percent of breads and cereals, and 46.5 percent containing alcoholic beverages.

The literature suggests that women magazines target to a wider population has a lower level of ads containing alcoholic beverages. Pratt and Pratt (1996) also coded 1,602 Ladies' Home Journal ads and found that 11.9 percent were of milk and dairy products, 17.3 percent of breads and cereals, and 1.6 percent of alcoholic beverages. Pratt and Pratt (1996) explained the difference in alcoholic advertisements in *Essence* and Ebony magazines versus The Ladies' Home Journal. They believed that the alcoholic beverages category was much higher because African Americans accounted for 20 to 25 percent of domestic beer sales during this period.

Godbold and Prividera (2007) explored consumption advertisements in *Essence* and Cosmopolitan magazines with issues from January 2004 to December 2004 and divergent findings emerged. An objective of the study was to review the differences in products advertised to Black readership versus a general population readership. Godbold and Prividera (2007) found that the three most advertised products in *Essence* were individual food items, such as candy and chips, at 40.4 percent, non-alcoholic beverages at 27 percent, and fast foods at 12.8 percent. In

Cosmopolitan, the three most advertised products were alcoholic beverages at 28.4 percent, individual food items at 27.4 percent, and weight-loss supplements at 26.5 percent.

Godbold and Prividera (2007) also reported that African American women were a minority group that are vulnerable to negative health outcomes related to being overweight. They reported that the prevalence of fast food advertising to African American women was significantly higher compared to *Cosmopolitan*. *Essence* had 13 percent of its ads coded as fast food advertisements while only one percent of the ads in *Cosmopolitan* fit this category. Godbold and Prividera also mentioned that the African American women were being targeted with products that were unhealthy and likely to be causing obesity and other health issues in the African American community.

On the contrary, in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, the issues of weight management awareness were prevalent. *Cosmopolitan* had 57 advertisements for weight loss products, while none appeared in *Essence*. The ads in *Cosmopolitan* used weight loss claims 41 percent of the time and *Essence* only used claims 12 percent of the time. Godbold and Prividera concluded that weight loss messages may be beneficial to African American women, given that weight loss advertisements were rarely found in the *Essence* magazines reviewed. They also suggested that the findings may reflect the reduced focus on weight loss in the African American community.

Personal care items are also frequently advertised in magazines targeted to Blacks. Hazell and Clarke (2008) examined the portrayals of Black men and women in the images and text of advertisements featured in *Essence* and *Jet* magazines from 2003 and 2004. The researchers found that of the 37 ads coded in *Essence* in 2003, that products advertised were for hair care, skin care, drugs and organizations. The 2003 issues of *Jet* had 30 ads coded and found products advertised were for hair, skin ads and feminine hygiene products. Hazell and Clarke's study had

a small sample size, but it is common knowledge that African American women spend significantly more on hair care products.

In the review of the literature, to understand what products are advertised in magazines targeted to African American, the findings were somewhat mixed. However, it is apparent that fast food, alcoholic beverages, haircare and other personal care brands are frequently advertised in them. African American women are exposed to a high volume of haircare and other beauty products.

2.5 Socialized beauty structures sexualized depictions

European beauty standard such as straight hair, slim body types and the preference of having a lighter skin tone have had a huge influence on African American women. Robinson-Moore (2008) described how racial beauty standards affect the lives of Black women on three different levels. First, skin tone and hair texture affect overall attractiveness and socialization. It was reported that Black women with lighter skin tended to feel better about themselves compared to those without it. The second level is overall income. According to Robinson-Moore (2008), Black women who don't meet pre-established beauty standards are more likely to be unemployed. This was found in a study done by Ashenbrenner (1975) in which he reported that women in Black families that had dark skin were more likely to be poor. The third and last level is that these beauty standards affect Black women's spouses. Hughes and Hertel (1990) reported that many racial characteristics affect Black mate selection. By this occurring, light-skinned women are held to a higher standard than those with darker skin, therefore suggesting that Black men prefer light-skinned women (Robinson-Moore, 2008).

Patton (2006) examined the effects of the White standards of beauty upon African American women. What and who is considered beautiful varies among cultures and the many

definitions of beauty affect everyone. Patton suggests that African American women and their beauty have been juxtaposed against White beauty standards. Patton reported that until we dissolve the stereotypical images of beauty that all women will never break the barrier of sexism, racism, and misunderstandings. According to Poran (2002), the environment in which women learn about the “politics of the body is saturated with media presentations of what a woman’s body should be and that women in the media are portrayed by their bodies more than men” (Poran, 2002, p.66)

In the messages implied from textual analysis, Hazell and Clarke (2008) found that “an average of 12 ads per year featured in *Essence* and *Jet* magazines had underlying racist messages” (Hazell & Clark, 2008, p. 17). These messages were a result of the White beauty standards pushed on blacks by White advertisers. The ads within *Essence* and *Jet*, for example, contained a disproportionately higher number of ads for fading dark spots, which supported the ideal of lighter skin being more attractive than darker skin.

Boepple and Johnson (2016) analyzed a total of 3,440 women in magazines and found that White women made up 72.91 percent of total images of women in magazines. Black women made up 22.28 percent and Latina women made up 2.40 percent. This supported their hypothesis that Latina and Asian will be underrepresented in magazines. Black women were more represented than their size in the population, but ninety-six percent of Black women had light or medium toned skin and only four percent with dark skin, which supported their hypothesis that most women of color will have lighter skin tones in magazines.

Gordon (2008) argues that the most dehumanizing role of women in mass media is the sex object role, where value is based solely or primarily on sexual appeal of the woman’s physical appearance. These impressions and messages are found in almost every medium and is

seemed to be the staple in material geared toward younger audiences. Support from former analyses claims that Black women are oversexualized in the media. The sexual objectification of Black women in music videos and mass media “demonstrates that Black media images are not necessarily less limiting than those in mainstream media” (Gordon, 2008, p. 247).

Baker (2005) argued that the portrayal of Black woman as being sexually promiscuous is present within images of the day. Women were still shown in submissive positions and as sex symbols. Baker (2005) contends that women are often used in advertisements to imply a sexual relationship between the man who uses the product and the woman in the advertisement (Baker, 2005, p. 17). Sexuality of Black women has been shown as overly-aggressive and divergent from the submissive image of White women’s sexuality.

Baker (2005) found that 67.42 percent of women in ads in Black women’s magazines were Black, compared to only 5.59 percent in White women’s magazines. In Black magazines, Black women were frequently portrayed as the product user (63.64 percent), and sex object (21.97 percent). Majority of the women in mainstream magazines were White, comprising of 88 percent of the images. Ninety-four percent of images of women in men’s magazines were White (Baker, 2005).

Johnson (2005) reported that out of the 278 magazine covers reviewed, 18.7 percent contained women of color. Ninety percent of the covers containing women of color had hypersexual images. Hypersexualizing is defined as being overly depicted or treated as sexual objects. Johnson also found that the percentage of magazine covers with women of color with ethnic traits being masked by whiteness was also 90 percent, all while the percentage of Black women on the cover of magazines was 4.7 percent. This concept of women of color being

“masked by whiteness” is seen to be an issue because Black women’s ethnic and cultural heritage is being hidden behind that of White women’s.

To extend this stream of research, this study will code two new categories, Afrocentrism and hair texture. Afrocentrism and hair texture are two characteristics that Black women embrace because of the desire to celebrate their African heritage and natural beauty thus breaking away from White European ideals. According to Patton (2006), Black women have challenged White definitions of beauty throughout history and present day.

Afrocentrism is defined as a set of ideas celebrating the African origins, history and character of Black people (Bay, 2000). Bay argued that Afrocentrism is a modern phenomenon that should be distinguished from earlier variants of Black cultural nationalism. Hair texture has been a factor in the unspoken cultural divide amongst African American women (Ellington, 2014). The United States’ White beauty ideology has intensified the desire for chemically straight hair and bleaching of skin, among other behaviors, but some African American women rejected this standard (Ellington, 2014).

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Sampling

This content analysis examined a sample of 502 magazine advertisements from *Essence* magazine. The magazine was chosen for this study because, since 1968 it has become “a cultural institution for the African American community” (*Essence*, 2018). It is the premiere lifestyle, fashion, and beauty magazine targeted to African-American women with a monthly circulation of 1,050,000 and a readership of 8.5 million. African American women rely on its editorial content designed to help them personally, professionally, intellectually and spiritually (*Essence*, 2018).

The unit of analysis for this study are magazine advertisements of all sizes with at least one Black model. To permit a comparative study, eight magazines from the years 2001 and eight magazines from 2016 were selected which created a 15-year gap. In 2001 *Essence* was 51 percent Black-owned with the remaining 49 percent owned by Time Incorporated and in 2016 was completely under the ownership of Time Incorporated. Sample selection was dictated by the scope of *Essence*'s archive, which had limitations, as no copies were available earlier than the year 2000. Eleven magazines were purchased from *Essence* and five were purchased from Amazon.com. All ads with at least one Black woman model in the following issues were utilized in the content analysis (May to December 2001 and May to December 2016).

3.2 Procedure and inter-coder reliability

To determine whether there was a difference in the characteristics of the advertisements published when the magazine company was under African American control from when it was under Time Incorporated control, 333 ads were coded from 2001 and 169 ads from 2016.

To analyze the manifest content of magazine advertisements and determine changes in portrayals of Black women over time, a quantitative content analysis was deemed the most appropriate methodology for this study (Slater, 2013). On completion and testing the codebook, a coder was trained by the researcher and subsequently, they both coded five percent of the sample independently to check reliability. A 97.76 percent inter-coder reliability was achieved, using Cohen's Kappa (Li, 2015). To account for the possibility of this high inter-coder reliability occurring by chance, the Scott's Pi (Warrens, 2008) method of inter-coder reliability was also calculated and achieved 94.74 percent agreement.

Cohen's Kappa Formula:
$$k = \frac{p_o - p_e}{1 - p_e}$$

Scott's Pi Formula:
$$\frac{PA_0 - PA_E}{1 - PA_E}$$

3.3 Hypotheses

Overall, the goal of this content analysis is to determine if the characteristics of *Essence* magazine advertisements are significantly different, when under complete Time Incorporated ownership, compared to when under a primarily Africa-American ownership. To compare how Black women are depicted in *Essence* magazines, advertisements in 2001 versus 2016, this content analysis tested five hypotheses. They are as follows:

H1: Black women are more likely to be portrayed as dominant in advertisements created in media primarily controlled by African Americans.

H2: Advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will portray more Afrocentric Beauty.

H3: The physical appearance of Black models will be more Eurocentric when ownership of media are controlled by primarily White-led corporations.

H4: Magazine advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will contain fewer fast food, sodas and alcoholic products.

H5: Irrespective of media ownership there will be no difference with the amount of hair and beauty products ads found in Black women's magazine.

3.4 Coding scheme

A coding scheme was developed to observe the differences in (i) dominance; (ii) Afrocentrism; (iii) physical appearance of models; (iv) products advertised, and (v) layout and design. The following section outlines the main coding categories.

Dominance: According to Hazell and Clarke (2008), dominance is described as a person with higher authority, height and size, and overall physical position. As per hypothesis one, this study expects that Black women are more likely to be portrayed as dominant in advertisements created in 2001. The Black main models in the ads are expected to have more professional-oriented than domestic-oriented occupations and there will be more interaction between the main Black model and other characters in the ad. This study will probe the occupation of the main Black model and interactions with secondary and tertiary characters. Hazell and Clarke (2008) found that most of the models in advertisements of the 2003 and 2004 issues of *Essence* and *Jet* were “portrayed as both dominant (higher relative authority, size/height, physical positions) and submissive (lower relative authority, size/height, physical condition, and the characterizations of soft or delicate” (Hazell & Clarke, 2008, p. 17)

It was decided that the way that Hazel & Clarke (2008) operationalized dominance was not conducive to a quantitative content analysis. For this study, if the main Black character was alone in an advertisement or shown full body, then she is considered dominant while the more people in the advertisements diminishes dominance.

To determine if there was any difference in the dominance of the models, the occupation, interactions and the composition of the Black model were analyzed.

- Occupation was coded as “doctor”, “lawyer”, “athlete”, “model”, “not identifiable”, or “other occupation”.

- The interaction of the Black model with other characters was coded as “playing”, “hugging”, “kissing”, “dancing”, “other”, and “not applicable”.
- The composition of the Black model was coded as “portrait (shoulder up/headshot)”, “portrait (waist up)”, “full body”, and “other”.

Afrocentric Beauty: Beauty has varied definitions and “certainly one’s sense of personal beauty is greatly impacted by one’s own definition of beauty” (Sekayi, 2003, p.467). According to Sekayi (2003), the media is now depicting more women of African descent as beautiful. When Black women are being presented in the media, they “typically meet Eurocentric ideals in terms of body type, skin color, and hair texture” (Sekayi, 2003, p.469). Hazell and Clarke (2008) found that the bodies of Black female models in *Essence* tended not to be shown. Hazell and Clarke also reported that female models in the magazine advertisements tended to have hair that was long and Black as opposed to their natural curls. Those findings demonstrated that Black models were often adhering to Eurocentric standards of beauty in terms of their hair.

The concept of Afrocentrism defined as a cultural ideology or worldview that focuses on the history and physical *Essence* of Black Africans. Afrocentrism may be seen in clothing (e.g., African inspired designs and fabrics); hairstyles (e.g., braids, cornrows, Nubian knots, dreadlocks, afros, etc.); environment (African home décor, art, etc.) among others. This research will examine *Essence* magazine ads to observe the extent to which advertisers show Black women embracing their African culture and beauty.

- Afrocentrism was coded as type of “clothing”, “hair types”, environment”, “other”, or “not applicable”.
- Hair texture was coded as “straight”, “curly”, “tight curls”, “afro”, “other”, or “not identifiable”
- Skin tone of main African American character was coded as “light/fair”, “medium”, “dark”, and “other”.

Products: Products were coded to determine what brands choose to advertise in *Essence* magazine. According to Hazell and Clarke (2008), when 37 advertisements were coded in *Essence* magazines, they consisted of hair care, skin care, drugs, and organizational ads. In the 2004 issues of *Essence* the number of ads coded increased due to the number of food and general health care ads. Based on these results, Hazell and Clarke (2008) concluded that the health issues that are of importance to Black women are hair and skin care. As per hypotheses four and five, this study expects that magazine advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will contain fewer fast food, sodas and alcoholic products. In addition, irrespective of media ownership there will be no difference with the amount of hair and beauty products ads found in Black women's magazine. Coding categories were:

- Types of hair products advertised was coded as “shampoo/conditioner”, “relaxer/hair straightener”, “natural hair products”, “moisturizer/lotion”, “other”, or “not applicable”.
- Types of other products advertised (not hair or makeup) was coded as “car”, “food”, “medicine”, “clothing”, “other”, or “not applicable”.
- Types of makeup advertised was coded as “eyeliner”, “liquid makeup”, “eye shadow”, “lipstick”, “other”, or “not applicable”.
- Brand of Product was coded as “Pepsi”, “Coca-Cola”, “L’Oréal”, “Maybelline”, “other”, or “N/A”.

Layout/Design: Print magazine readership is generally on the decline and some magazine have seen a decline in advertisements. *Essence* magazine in contrast has enjoyed a circulation increase, since owned by Time Incorporated. The layout and design are of import to this study because it will show if the aesthetics, size or placement of ads in Black women's magazines changed when ownership changed. Previous research on *Essence* magazine has not addressed this. Below are the categories collected.

- Size of the ad was coded as “half page or less”, “full page”, “double page”, or “other”.
- Color of ad was coded as “full four color”, “spot color three or less”, or “black & white”.
- Type of ad was coded as “sales promotion”, “sweepstakes”, “competition”, “other”, “call to action”, or “N/A”.
- Location of the ad was coded as “inside front cover”, “back cover”, “inside back cover”, “first half of magazine”, or “back half of magazine”.

To adequately designate the sample of ads in this study several descriptive data were collected, number of ads in each magazine, amount of people in each ad, gender of characters in ads, amount of Blacks in the ads. Racial features were also accounted for to determine what races are being portrayed in advertisements.

3.5 Data analysis

The data coded were analyzed quantitatively with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide an in-depth description and analysis of the images found in advertisements with Black women featured in the 18 magazines. Cross-tabulations were run to evaluate relationships between critical constructs related to comparing dominance, Afrocentrism, physical appearance of models, design aesthetics and products advertised. Chi square analysis were performed to determine statistical significance between the 2001 and 2016 advertisements. In advertising communication research, it is the convention that if this p value is less than .05, then the statistic is considered to be significant, meaning that the researcher can be 95% confident that the relationship between the two variables is not due to chance, (Garczynski, 2018).

Next is a presentation of the key findings of this analysis, subsequently followed by a detailed discussion of the findings and the conclusion.

Chapter Four

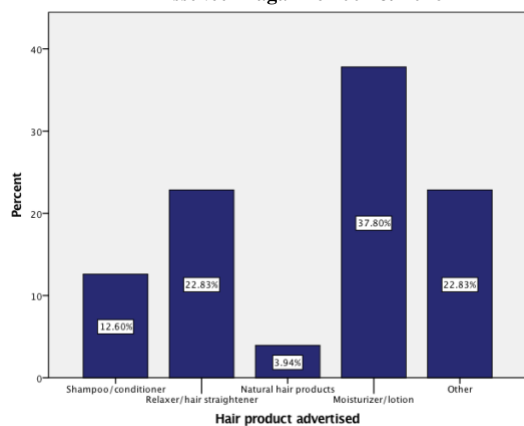
Results

4.1 Description of the sample

From the sample of 502 magazine ads, which had at least one Black woman, 422 advertised a product, while the other 80 advertised TV shows and services, such as, legal, insurance and appliance maintenance. Two-thirds (66.3 percent) of the ads were from the 2001 issues and one-third (33.7 percent) were from the 2016 issues. Regarding the size of the ads, most (81.3 percent) were full page, while 12.7 percent were double-spreads and 6 percent were half page or less.

The expectation was for the sample to have a substantial amount of hair products and indeed the results found that 30.1 percent of all product ads were for hair. For the non-hair product ads, over one-third (35.6 percent) were for clothing, 10.5 percent were for food or beverages, 8.5 percent were medicine such as Tylenol, birth control, and children’s medicine and 4.1 percent were for cars.

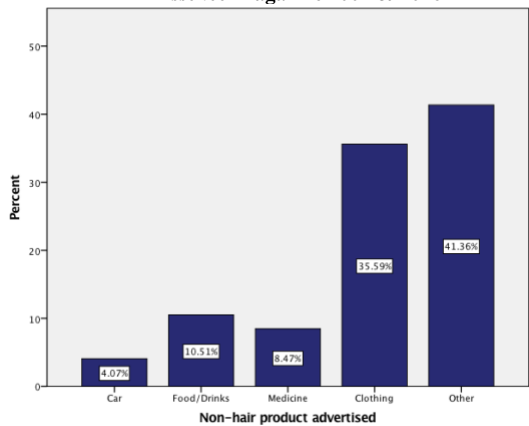
Figure 1
Hair Products Advertised
in Essence Magazine 2001 & 2016



N=502

n=127

Figure 2
Other Non- Hair Products Advertised
in Essence Magazine 2001 & 2016



N=502

n=295

Hair moisturizer or lotion constituted 37.8 percent of all the hair products advertised, followed by relaxer or hair straightener (22.8 percent), then shampoo or conditioner (12.6 percent), and natural hair products (3.9 percent). “Other” hair products (22.8 percent) were oil sheen, hair brushes and combs, and hair spritz. The following brands advertised in the ads coded in the sample in order of frequency: Maybelline, L’Oréal, Soft Sheen, and Carol’s Daughter. It is clear that Essence is supported by numerous small business companies that manufacture products targeted to African American women, such as Pink, Cantu, and Dark and Lovely.

Since this study did not investigate editorial content, occupation was not always observable. Over three-quarters (79.3 percent) of the ads contained black woman being portrayed as models or users of the specific products, followed by other occupations such as entrepreneurs, beauticians, and salespersons.

One out of every five ads (20.1 percent) in the sample contained an element of Afrocentrism. Over two-thirds (69.7 percent) of the ads had only one woman and about half (50.9 percent) were headshots. Following is an analysis of the six hypotheses ascertained for this study.

4.2 Hypothesis 1

Black women are more likely to be portrayed as dominant in advertisements created in media primarily controlled by African Americans.

If the full-body of the Black main character was shown in the ad, she was considered most dominant. Her dominance however diminished as less of her body was shown. For example, portrait (waist up) was less dominant and portrait (headshot) was least dominant. If she was alone in the ad, again, she would also be considered most dominant. Her dominance

diminished the more people were shown in the ad with her. These two concepts were taken into consideration when evaluating portrayal of dominance.

Based on number of people in the ad, most Black

women in *Essence* magazine were portrayed as dominant. Over two-thirds (69.7%) of all ads in the sample had only one Black woman. In 2016, there was a statistically significant difference (X^2 $p = .01$) in the number of ads (79.3 percent) that had one woman, compared to 2001 (64.9 percent).

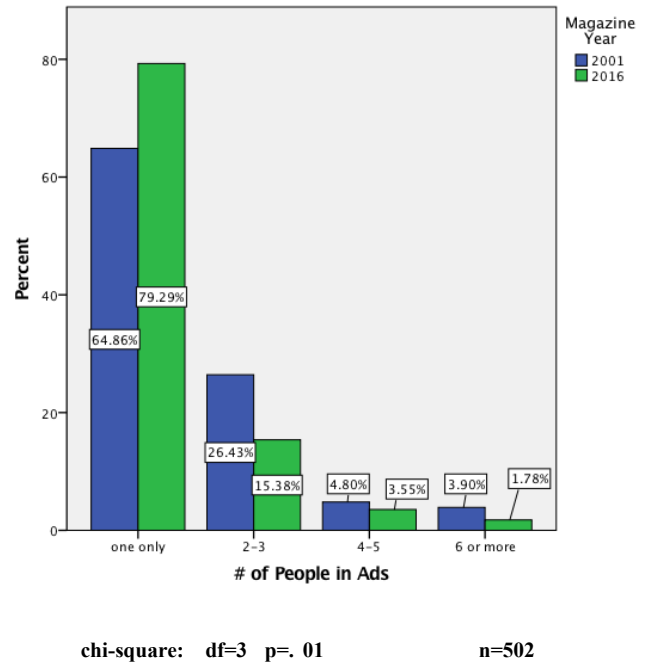
Regarding composition, there was less dominance in that fewer ads showed the full body of the Black woman. Only 23.3 percent showed the full body, while 18.5 percent were waist up portraits and majority, 55.2 percent, were headshots. “Other” images (3%) found in the sample had compositions such as Black characters shown from the waist down or with their heads cropped off. The study found no significant difference between the magazine year and the composition of the Black main character ($p=.197$).

4.3 Hypothesis 2

Advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will portray more Afrocentrism.

The expectation was to see more African-inspired clothing, hairstyles, home decor and art in the 2001 issues. Results indicated that only 20 percent (101) of the total sample contained evidence of Afrocentrism with 52.4 percent from 2001 and 47.5 percent from 2016. When

Figure 3
Relationship Between Number of People in Ads and Magazine Year
N=502



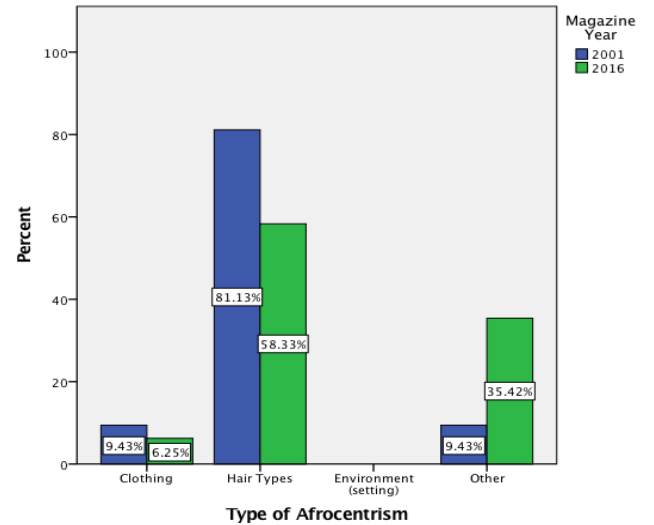
Afrocentrism was cross-tabulated with year, the study found that there is a significant difference between the magazine year and Afrocentrism, ($X^2 p= .007$).

African-inspired hair types constituted 70 percent of all ads coded for Afrocentrism. These hair types, mainly dreadlocks, afros, corn-rows or braids dominated the visual observation of Afrocentrism, with 60.6 percent in 2001 and 39.4 percent in 2016. Caution must be taken in this analysis as cell numbers, especially for clothing, were unstable. Another category of Afrocentrism was clothing which were only found in 7.9 percent of the ads. Other ads (21.8 percent) that showed depiction of afrocentrism, were those with African-oriented beauty products and images with traditional Pan-African colors (red, green black).

Skin Tone

Of the total sample of print ads, 36.9 percent of the models' skin tone was light/fair, 39.7 percent were medium, and 23.3 percent were dark. A chi-square test was performed and found a statistically significant difference between the skin tone of the models in the 2001 and 2016 issues ($p < .001$).

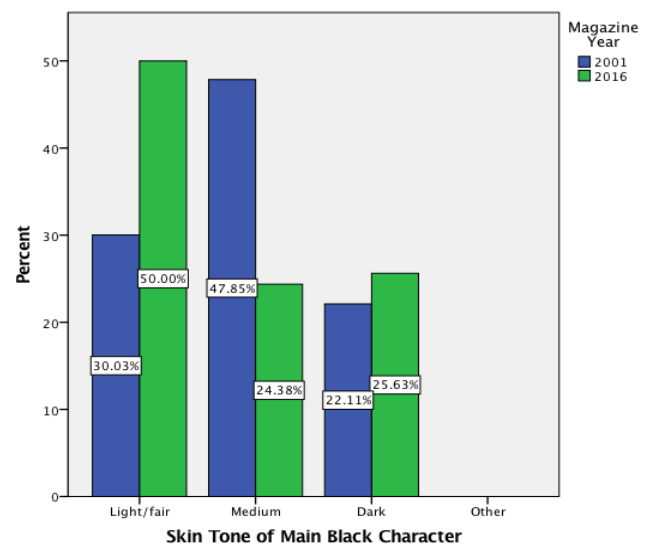
Figure 4
Association of Afrocentrism with Magazine Year
N=502



chi-square $df=3$ $p=.007$

n=101

Figure 5
Relationship Between Skin Tone and Magazine Year
N=502



chi-square: $df=2$ $p < .001$

n=463

In 2001, 30.03 percent of the ads used light/fair-skinned models and 50.00 percent used models with the same skin tone in 2016. However, in 2001, the majority of the ads (47.85 percent) used models with medium skin tone, while (24.38 percent) came from 2016 issues. Of all the dark-skinned models, 22.11 percent were detected in 2001 and 25.63 percent in 2016. Therefore in 2001, when *Essence* was under Black-led ownership most models selected for ads were medium skin tone. In contrast, in 2016 mostly light or fair skinned models were selected.

4.4: Hypothesis 3

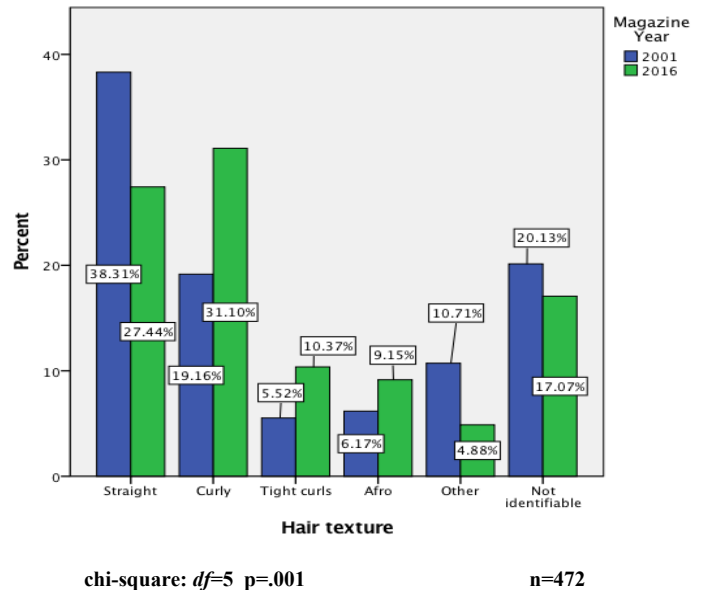
The physical appearance of Black models will be more Eurocentric when ownership of media is controlled by a primarily White-led corporation.

Eurocentric appearances were depicted in not just skin tone of models, but also in hair texture. Straight hair is typically found more on European women, while most Black women have tightly coiled hair, often referred to as “kinky.” The study found 34.5 percent had straight hair, 23.3 percent had curly hair, 7.2 percent had tight or “kinky” curls, 7.2 percent had afros and 8.7 percent were coded as other. Nineteen percent was not identifiable because the images were blurred, or their hair was covered or not shown in the picture.

In 2001, 38.31 percent of models had straight hair while 27.44 percent had the same hair type in 2016.

Of all the models with curly hair 19.16 percent were in the 2001 issues and 31.1 percent

Figure 6
Hair Texture Association with Magazine Year
N=502



in 2016. Five and a half percent of the models in the 2001 issues had tight curly hair and about twice as many (10.37 percent) were in the 2016 issues. The results also showed that in 2001, fewer models (6.17 percent), had afros than in the 2016 issues (9.15 percent). The percentage of models with straight hair, considered a more Eurocentric style, was higher in 2001 than in 2016. The afro hair texture, considered the most Afrocentric hairstyle, was higher in 2016 than in 2001.

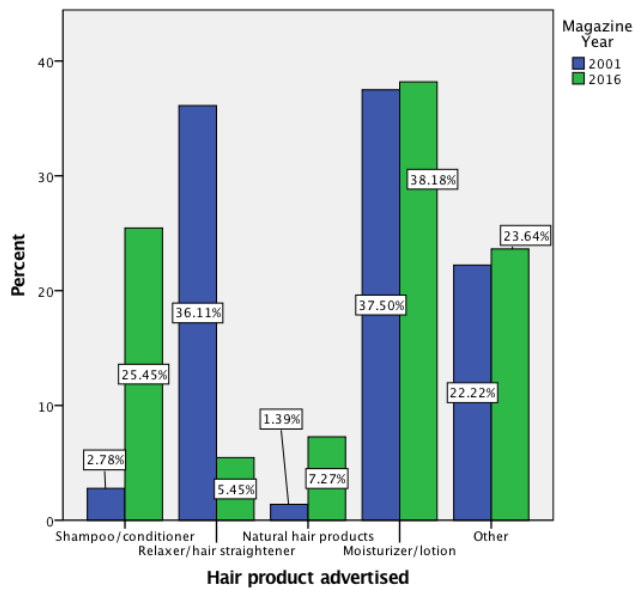
4.5: Hypothesis 4

Irrespective of media ownership there will be no difference with the amount of beauty products ads and hair product ads found in Black women's magazine

Most women use make-up and hair products to enhance their beauty. Of all the hair products advertised 56.7% were advertised in 2001 and 43.3% were advertised in 2016. When hair products advertised was cross tabulated with year, the study found a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$). In 2001, 36.11 percent of hair products ads advertised a relaxer or hair straightener and only 5.45 percent in 2016. Of all the ads showing shampoo or conditioner, 2.78 percent were in 2001 and 25.45 percent in 2016. Moisturizer or hair lotion was seen 37.5 percent in 2001 and 38.1 percent in 2016 (see figure 7).

With make-up products, 39.2 percent were advertised in 2001 and 60.8 percent in 2016. Caution must be taken in this analysis as cell numbers, especially for eye shadow, were unstable. In 2001, 37.93 percent of make-up/beauty ads advertised lipstick/lip gloss and 22.22 percent in 2016. Of all the ads showing eye liner, 3.45 percent were from 2001 and 17.78 percent in the 2016 issues. Hypothesis 5 was not supported because there is a significant difference between the amount of beauty/make up product ads in one year versus the other ($X^2 p = .019$, see figure 8). The percentage of make-up advertised was significantly higher in 2016 than in 2001.

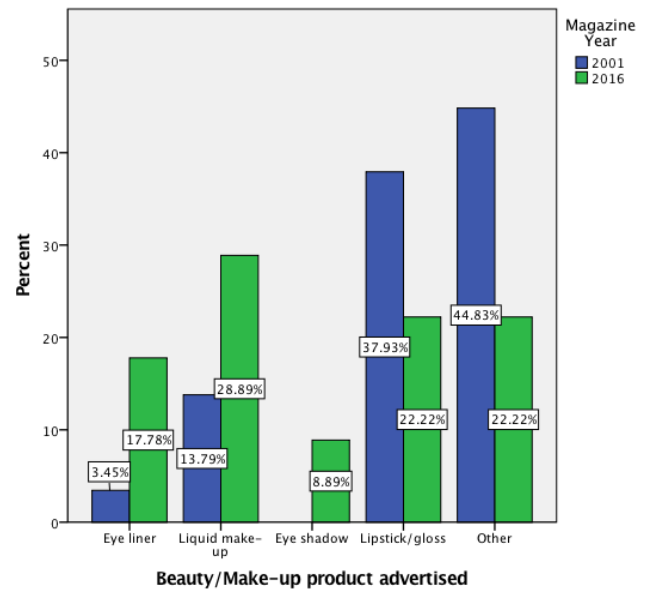
Figure 7
Relationship Between Hair Product Advertised and Magazine Year
N=502



chi-square: $df=4$ $p=.019$

n=74

Figure 8
Relationship Between Beauty Product Advertised and Magazine Year
N=502



chi-square: $df=4$ $p<.001$

n=127

4.6: Hypothesis 5

Magazine advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will contain fewer fast food, sodas and alcoholic products.

There were no fast foods advertisements coded in this study. There was a total of three (1 percent) ads coded for alcohol, in the non-beauty products, and all three were for Hennessy and were in the 2001 issues. Pepsi was only advertised once in the entire study in 2001. Coca-Cola had five ads were in 2001 (1 percent) and 6 in 2016 (1.2 percent). This finding does not support hypothesis 4. When a chi-square analysis was performed, no relationship was found between year and ads for fast food, sodas and alcoholic beverages. The number of alcoholic beverages, albeit very few, was higher when the magazines were under black-ownership than being owned by Time Inc. The number of soft drinks advertised was the same in both years and no fast food ads were coded. The results, implications and limitations of the study are next discussed.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Cultivation theory posits that media “creates new symbolic environments that reflect the structure and functions of the institutions that transmit them.” (Potter, 2014 p.1016). One would envisage that *Essence*, as a magazine targeting African American women, would reflect their culture through both articles and advertisements. The contents of the magazine would also reflect the ideology and culture of the individuals and organizations that have managerial and financial control of the magazine. The expectation therefore is that *Essence* magazine would be different under the complete ownership of Time Incorporated than when it was owned by an independent African American owner.

With an overall purpose to investigate whether the characteristics of advertisements with Black women in *Essence* magazines are significantly different when primarily under corporate ownership compared to being under African-American ownership; this author approached the question, in part, by examining the association between the *magazine year* and constructs such as *dominance, Afrocentrism, range of skin tone and hair texture and products advertised*. Through an analysis of pictorial content, the study attempted to learn if there were any changes of how women were characterized under different ownership.

5.1 Dominance

According to the premise of Hypothesis 1, Black women are more likely to be portrayed as dominant in advertisements created in media vehicles primarily controlled by African Americans. With regard to dominance, the prescribed coding scheme dictated that models would be judged based on their composition in the advertisement, as well as, the number of people in the ad. So, if the full body of the model was depicted, that was considered the most dominant,

followed by a portrait from the waist up, and then a headshot portrait, being the least dominant. In addition, if the composition had the main model alone in the ad, she would be considered most dominant. The more people were in the ad with her, the less dominance she would have.

This hypothesis was only partially supported. There was a statistically significant difference ($X^2 p = .01$) in the number of ads that had one woman in 2001 versus 2016. The later year (2016) had more ads with the full bodies of the black woman (79.3 percent), compared to the former, 2001 (64.9 percent). However, when examining composition, there was less dominance, in that, fewer ads showed the full body of the Black woman. Only 23.3 percent of the sample showed the full body, 18.5 percent were from waist up and the majority, **but** 55.2 percent, were headshots. Most importantly, the study found no significant difference between the magazine year and the composition of the Black main character in the ad ($X^2 p = .197$).

After further consideration of the findings, it was decided that a model being shown in a portrait headshot essentially had a better visual perception of dominance than a smaller full body picture as per Hazell and Clarke (2008) study, because a headshot has more visual impact and shows more close-up facial features of the model. This is specifically impactful and appropriate for make-up and hair ads because the purpose of those ads was to highlight the product so that the magazine readers can visualize themselves using the product. In 2016, more Black models were seen alone in ads and this perhaps could have been a purely creative decision. It could also be a creative and or financial decision why most ads only had one model. The way dominance was operationalized by Hazell and Clarke (2008) may not be as parsimonious as it should be.

5.2 Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism

The construct of Afrocentrism, as mentioned previously, is defined as a cultural ideology or worldview that focuses on the history and physical essence of Black Africans. The expectation

is that Afrocentric ads in a women's magazine like *Essence* would incorporate a variety of Black women including dark-skinned Black models, an assortment of African-inspired including natural hair types, Afro-centric settings, such as paintings, carvings, Andinkra symbols and ads displaying traditional Pan-African colors, red, green, and black in the design. With regard to the Black women, the expectation was that in 2001, the women would wear more aesthetically pleasing, African-inspired clothing and hairstyles and there would be more dark-skinned women with more African facial features than in 2016.

Hypothesis two expected that advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will portray more Afrocentrism. This study supported hypothesis two in that advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans portrayed more Afrocentric beauty. When Afrocentrism was cross-tabulated with year, the study found that there is a significant difference between the magazine year and Afrocentrism (chi-square: $p = .007$). That said, Afrocentrism was only seen once in every five ads of the entire sample. African-inspired hair types such as afros, corn-rows, braids and dreadlocks constituted 70 percent of all ads coded for Afrocentrism, with 60.6 percent in 2001 and 39.4 percent in 2016. Hypothesis 3, which theorizes that the physical appearance of Black models will be more Eurocentric when ownership of media was controlled primarily by White-led corporations.

Regarding skin tone, the study found that overall medium and light-skinned black model were most popular with less than a quarter (23.3 percent) used dark-skinned models. A chi-square test was performed and found a statistically significant difference between the skin tone of the models in the 2001 and 2016 issues ($p < .001$). In 2016, half of the models selected were fair or light-skinned. However, in 2001, the majority of the ads (47.85 percent) used models with

medium skin tone. Therefore in 2001, when *Essence* was under Black-led ownership most models selected for ads were medium skin tone. In contrast, in 2016 mostly light or fair skinned models were selected. Dark-skinned models were not a favorite in none of the two time-periods.

Due to the intermingling Blacks and Whites historically, African Americans come in all skin tones from white to black. Like skin tone, hair texture tends to vary among Blacks. Usually they vary from loose to tight curls to what is often referred to as “kinky,” “nappy” or natural hair. Hair is one of the most distinguishing features of a Black person, because people with African heritage rarely have straight hair without physically or chemically modifying it. For this study, straight hair was considered Eurocentric. Findings from this study showed that straight hair was seen more frequently when *Essence* magazine was under Black ownership. This study does not completely support hypothesis 3 which states that the physical appearance of Black models will be more Eurocentric when ownership of media is controlled by primarily White-led corporations.

Coders did not observe any Afrocentrism in the settings where ads were photographed. There were however a few ads that showed African-oriented beauty products and images and used Pan-African colors of red, green and black, popularly used in décor in the African American community.

Hazell and Clarke (2008) found that issues that are of importance to Black women are related to hair and skin care, so the expectation was that advertisements of hair and other beauty products would be consistent across the two years. The results of this study failed to support hypothesis 5, (which states that irrespective of media ownership there will be no difference with the amount of hair and beauty product ads found in Black women’s magazine), because there was a difference found with the amount of hair and beauty product observed in the two sets of

issues. While make-up ads only accounted for 17.5 percent of product ads, the majority were found in 2016.

5.3 Fast food, sodas and alcoholic products

Whether it is a strategic decision of the magazine or not, it appears that *Essence* magazine is not a media vehicle that attracts fast food and alcoholic beverages advertisers, although African Americans are often targeted for these products. Within both years of analysis, there were no fast food advertisements with African American women in them. It was predicted that magazine advertisements created when media are primarily controlled by African Americans will contain fewer fast foods, sodas, and alcoholic beverages. Less than one percent (.59 percent) of the ads were for alcoholic beverages ads in the entire study in 2001 when the magazine was under Black ownership. There were no alcoholic beverages advertised when the magazine was under White-led ownership. The number of soft drinks advertised was similar in the issues from the two time-periods.

5.4 Limitations

This study only observed the visual component of the advertisements, perhaps more insights about Afrocentrism could have been unearthed if there were also analyses of the textual information in the ads.

Dominance was operationalized similarly to Hazell and Clarke (2008) to mean composition of main character in the ad (full body, partial body or headshot). The level of explanation and reasoning is somewhat insufficient. Future research should operationalize dominance differently.

According to Black Enterprise, as of January 6, 2018, *Essence* magazine is back under complete Black-led ownership after 17 years. Future research in this African American

representation stream, should consider analyzing changes within *Essence* magazine from when *Essence* made the switch from being owned by a White-led corporation to a Black-led company. Given the popularity of social media, future studies could also examine the representation of African Americans on Instagram. This study could triangulate methods and include qualitative and quantitative methods such as focus groups, surveys and interviews.

5.5 Implications

Representation of African Americans in the media is still a vexing problem within the African American community, whether urban youth, upper and middle-class Blacks or poor small town-rural folks. This study is significant because it investigates the extent to which the premier Black women's magazine, *Essence*, celebrate Black women's diversity and distinctiveness in its advertisements. Results show that the diversity and distinctiveness that is casually discerned across the nation in the African American communities is not fully reflected in the sample of advertisements analyzed in this study.

Rooted in cultivation theory, this study is important because the media, including lifestyle magazines like *Essence*, cultivate a world that impacts people's perception of what is acceptable, beautiful and considered the norm. Young dark-skinned Black women and girls with their natural woolly hair who do not see themselves in *Essence*, a cultural institution for the African American community, can easily assume they are not valued or something is wrong with them. Advertisers should not dismiss a group's diversity and uniqueness because it can have negative long-term effects. In contrast, authentic representations that incorporates a wide range of Black women could be financially beneficial for brands and perhaps generate positive brand relationships and loyalty.

In the early 1900s, Madam CJ Walker, deemed the first self-made female millionaire, built an empire, not surprisingly, by manufacturing haircare products to Black women. Along with most Black women, who process their hair chemically today, Walker experienced severe dandruff and other skin ailments like baldness because of the use of harsh products like lye (Gates, 2014). Walker's main reason for creating hair products for Black women was to help them conform to the historical social pressures to mirror what was considered aesthetically pleasing for women's hair (e.g., smooth, straight hair) (Watson, 2016; Gates, 2014). Her business was tremendously successful because it catered to a niche that had not been filled yet and Black women did not have any mass-produced products for their natural hair. Black women needed not just hair straightening combs and chemicals, but also products to correct the damage caused by these harsh straightening products. As gathered from the study, we see Madam CJ Walker's impact in product brands such as Cantu and Pink, that were found in this study.

The habitual conformity to Eurocentric standards of beauty is still observed in society. Johnson and Bankhead (2012) found that the health issues many Black women develop related to hair and skin care are created by the chemicals used to either straighten the texture of their hair or lighten their skin tone. Hair relaxers and other harsh chemicals expose Black women to "various chemicals through scalp lesions and burns which cause minor to severe hair loss including balding, burns, and color change" (Johnson and Bankhead, 2012, p.93). While there has been an increase in the number of Black women choosing to wear their natural hair, there is still a large push and pull for chemical led relaxer products that produce straight hair which depicts Eurocentric beauty.

5.6 Conclusion

The results of this systematic content analysis suggest that when the magazine was under Black ownership in 2001, *Essence* magazine showed Black women embracing Afrocentric hair more frequently than in 2016 when *Essence* was under complete White-led ownership. However, Afrocentrism was rarely observed in ads, which indicates that there was a missed opportunity to celebrate Afrocentrism in style, beauty, fashion, home décor, and art among other areas. There remains plenty of room for progress to be made. According to Hazell and Clarke (2008), although there has been a significant amount of positive changes in the portrayal of Black women in the media, it doesn't mean that it is no longer a "source of concern". This is still true today, even in magazines targeted to Black women that are authored and administered by African Americans.

Reviewing the construct of *double-consciousness*, Johnson and Bankhead (2012) reported that of an internet survey of Black women that 25 percent of respondents indicated that they experienced some or very much discrimination as a result of wearing their hair naturally. Society has placed norms on what is considered acceptable and Black women, willingly are still having to look at themselves through the lens of others.

In conclusion, this content analysis adds an evoking interest to previous advertising research in the portrayal of African American women in magazine ads. Results indicate the since *Essence* magazine has been under white-led ownership that depictions of Black women have been mixed. The construct of Afrocentric hair was higher when the magazine was under Black ownership which shows that when *Essence* was completely sold in 2015 that European beauty standards, such as straight hair and light/fair skin, were still being thrust upon Black women, no doubt because there is also a cyclical demand. Since advertisers are always seeking to be

innovative, it is a lost opportunity for them not seek out the many ways that Afrocentrism is celebrated in many urban African American communities. After-all, Blacks are known in pop-culture to be trend setters. Music genres such as jazz, the blues, gospel, bebop, R&B, soul, funk hip-hop and rap were adopted by mainstream America from the African American community.

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Appendix 1

Codebook

VARIABLE #	CATEGORY NAMES AND CODES	DESCRIPTION
V1	AD LOGISTICS Ad ID #	
V2	Magazine year 1. 2001 2. 2016	
V3	Month of issue 1. May 2. June 3. July 4. August 5. September 6. October 7. November 8. December	
V4	Total number of all ads in magazine..... 1. 1-20 2. 21-30 3. 31-40 4. 41-50 5. 51-60 6. 61 +	Write number of ads on the dotted line and check the appropriate number
V5	Total number of people in ads _____ 1. one only 2. 2-3 3. 4-5 4. 6 or more	Write in the number, but also select one category. If the total number of people exceeds 3, skip questions V6-V16.
V6	Total number of African Americans in ad _____ 1. one only 2. 2-3 3. 4-5 4. 6 or more	Write in the number, but also select one category.

V7	<p>GENDER</p> <p>Gender of main character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. N/A 	Main character- one who is the focus of the ad. Ex. Center of the page
V8	<p>Gender of secondary character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. N/A 	Secondary character- one who is the second focus of the ad. E.g. Center of the page
V9	<p>Gender of tertiary character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. N/A 	Tertiary character- one who is the third focus of the ad. Ex. Center of the page If more than 3 characters, describe here
V10	<p>RACIAL FEATURES</p> <p>Race of main dominant character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. African American/Black 2. White 3. Mixed Race (i.e. black/white, Asian/black) 4. Asian 5. Other (specify) 6. N/A 	Main character- one who is the focus of the ad. Ex. Center of the page, bigger proportion compared to others in ad
V11	<p>Race of secondary character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. African American/Black 2. White 3. Mixed Race (i.e. black/white, Asian/black) 4. Asian 5. Other (specify) 6. N/A 	
V12	<p>Race of tertiary character or other secondary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. African American/Black 2. White 3. Mixed Race (i.e. black/white, Asian/black, etc.) 4. Asian 5. Other (specify) _____ 6. N/A 	IF more than 3 characters, write the number here!

V13	<p>Skin tone of main African American woman character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Light/fair 2. Medium 3. Dark 4. Other (specify) _____ 5. N/A 	
V14	<p>DOMINANCE Occupation of African American woman character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doctor 2. Lawyer 3. Athlete (specify sport) _____ 4. Model 5. Not identifiable 6. Other occupation (specify) _____ 7. N/A 	
V15	<p>Interaction of main character with others</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Playing 2. Hugging 3. Kissing 4. Dancing 5. Other (specify) _____ 6. N/A 	
V16	<p>Composition of main model/character</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portrait (shoulder up/headshot) 2. Portrait (waist up) 3. Full body 4. Other (specify) _____ 5. N/A 	<p>Ask yourself: Is the picture a headshot, waist up or full body?</p>
V17	<p>BEAUTY Afrocentrism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clothing 2. Hair types 3. Environment (setting) 4. Other (specify) _____ 5. N/A 	<p>Afrocentrism (also Afrocentricity) is a cultural ideology or worldview that focuses on the history of black Africans. Clothing –African themed print Hair-cornrows, dreadlocks, twists, braids, natural hair</p>

V18	<p>Type of hair product advertised</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shampoo/conditioner 2. Relaxer/Hair straightener 3. Natural hair products 4. Moisturizer/lotion 5. Other (specify)_____ 6. N/A 	
V19	<p>Hair texture of African American woman</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Straight 2. Curly 3. Tight curls 4. Afro 5. Other (describe)_____ 6. N/A 7. Not identifiable 	
V20	<p>Make-up</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eye liner 2. Liquid make-up 3. Eye shadow 4. Lipstick/gloss 5. Other (specify)_____ 6. N/A 	
V21	<p>PRODUCTS</p> <p>Brand of product</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pepsi 2. Coke 3. L'Oréal 4. Maybelline 5. Other (specify)_____ 6. N/A 	
V22	<p>Type of other products</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Car 2. Food/Drinks 3. Medicine 4. Clothing 5. Other (specify)_____ 6. N/A 	

V23	<p>LAYOUT/DESIGN</p> <p>Size of ad</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Half page or less 2. Full page 3. Double page 4. Other (specify) _____ 	
V24	<p>Color of ad</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full four color 2. Spot color three or less 3. Black/white 	
V25	<p>Type of ad</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sales promotion 2. Sweepstakes 3. Competition 4. Other (describe) _____ 5. Call to action 6. N/A 	
V26	<p>Location of ad</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inside front cover 2. Back cover 3. Inside back cover 4. First half of magazine 5. Back half of magazine 	