This research examines women’s magazine editors’ perspectives of the relationship between editorial and advertising content in women’s magazines. It specifically investigates how this relationship affects both general editorial content and more specifically, social topic stories. Mainstream women’s beauty/fashion magazine editors—including editors-in-chief—were queried as to the nature of these relationships. Interviews with twelve editors were conducted. Ten were conducted in person in the editors’ New York City offices and two were conducted by email.

Six categories, four of which were supported by sub-categories, emerged from the editors’ responses: 1) Women’s Magazine Readers, 2) Women’s Magazines as Cultural and Industry Barometers, 3) Editors’ Belief Systems, 4) The Blurring of Talent and Style between Advertising and Editorial, 5) Increased Requests/Demands of Advertisers and 6) Social Topic Stories. The results show that, according to the editors, the relationship between advertising and editorial content is complex. The multi-layered relationship has the potential to influence editorial content.
The discussion interprets the relationship between advertising and editorial through major conclusions that emerged from the various intersections of the six themes: 1) issues relating to the reader, 2) the increase in blurring, 3) social topic stories, and 4) editorial integrity. Two implications—women's magazines as cultural and industry barometers and women doing gender—that emerged from the data also are discussed.

The study concludes that the separation between advertising and editorial is unclear and needs further distinction in order to serve women's magazine readers' best interests. Suggestions for change within industry guidelines are made. Further media research through a political economy approach is recommended.
Uncovering Women’s Magazines: Editors’ Perspectives on the Relationship between Editorial and Advertising Content in Women’s Fashion/Beauty Magazines

by

C. Leigh Felesky

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This thesis is dedicated to my supportive parents, partner, and Aunt Treena. Thanks for your patience, help, and understanding.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis grew out of a project I completed as an undergraduate in journalism school at Ryerson Polytechnic University. In my final year, students created a mock magazine for a magazine fundamentals course. The goal was to develop a magazine proposal that would fill a void in the current market. For guidance, instructors and guest magazine editors suggested that students think of the magazine as having a whole personality like a close, personal friend. Once we determined the magazine persona, we designed editorial and advertising content to appeal to that person. The goal was to create both a cohesive magazine and a reader for advertisers to target.

Four other classmates and I created a women’s magazine called Lilith’s. The tag line was “Because Innocence Is Not a Virtue” and the mission statement was “Lilith’s will reach the untapped market of women who find dream books vapid and insulting. Ms. too coldly cerebral and Toronto Life (a Canadian upper-class lifestyle magazine) not worth living” (Lilith’s). The sassy new magazine proposed to publish feature stories such as “Dominatrix: Know Which Laws to Obey!,” “Cool Businesses for Girlz,” and—in the “One-Eighty Counter to Received Wisdom” section—“Hemmingway, a Feminist.”

1At the time we created this magazine we were unaware of the Jewish women’s magazine already named Lilith’s.

2The expression “dream books” is referring to glossy, mainstream beauty and fashion women’s magazines.
In order to make a case for the viability of our new magazine, we considered the current women’s magazine market. As avid magazine readers, we felt that unlike the Lilith’s woman, who is modeled after the forgotten biblical predecessor of Eve who demanded equality with Adam, the mainstream magazine woman—the Cosmopolitan woman, for example—appears to lead a tedious and expensive life. Her existence appears to be based on two main things: men and buying products to look good for men. For example, the cover lines from the November 1998 Cosmopolitan include “3 First-Date Words That Will Make Him Want You Bad,” “Why Guys in Love Say Scary Things,” and “65 Mini Fashion Finds.” The Lilith’s group considered these Cosmopolitan topics to be indicative of those found in mainstream beauty and fashion women’s magazines. In support of that assumption, a content analysis of Glamour and Cosmopolitan cover lines finds the three most frequent themes on the covers of these magazines from June 1998 to June 1999 are “sex,” “getting a man,” and “how to look good through beauty, fashion, and diet” (Felesky 7). Not surprisingly then, after surveying the mainstream women’s magazine market, we concluded there was a void that Lilith’s, a magazine meant to be women-centered and thought provoking, could fill.

However, Lilith’s was still in its creation stage and was not an operating magazine. We had big plans; had we put those plans into practice, they may not have succeeded. For example, would cosmetics and fashion advertisers (large sources of revenue for women’s magazines) have been interested in Lilith’s? Based on the current number of cosmetics and fashion ads in mainstream women’s magazines, advertisers appear to be comfortable with the traditional beauty and

---

3 Lilith is commonly recognized in Jewish religion. In certain versions of the Jewish creation story, Lilith is the first woman on earth. Her disobedience means she is sent to hell. God replaces her with Eve.
By format I am referring to the “editorial” content of the magazine. In the magazine industry the editorial content is considered to be all the written copy and accompanying photographs that are funded by, created by, and placed in the magazine by the editorial department. Editorial excludes special advertising sections or regular advertisements created by and/or paid for by an advertiser.

Therefore, it is possible that Lilith’s, which proposed to have a non-traditional format, might not have secured any large advertising accounts. Of course, these reflections are all speculation.

The point of the Lilith’s anecdote is to introduce how visions for a new magazine, or even for a single issue of a magazine, have to go through critical industry filters, including advertising prospects, that can dictate whether or not the creation and the success of the magazine is feasible. Usually the editor-in-chief manages these filters in order to make strategic decisions necessary to create a successful, economically viable end product. Specifically, advertising is an important industry filter for consideration because women’s magazines prosper as vehicles for advertising messages (Goldman 88). Mainstream women’s magazines succeed by delivering certain “demographically identified women’s market segments” to advertisers (Goldman 89). Therefore, in order to be financially successful, the magazine format and the identified market segment must be attractive to advertisers. Since advertising is important for financial success, women’s magazine editors “have two audiences: the women who buy the magazine and the advertisers who place their ads in the magazine” (Storey 147). One can speculate that the practical considerations of satisfying both audiences—the women and the advertisers—may influence decision-making in regard to the content of the magazine.

Based on potential influence of advertisers, my study will examine women’s magazine editors’ perspectives of the relationship between editorial and advertising content in women’s magazines and how, if at all, this relationship affects both general editorial content and more specifically, social topic stories. In addition, I was interested in the editors’ perspectives of their autonomy to make

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4 By format I am referring to the “editorial” content of the magazine. In the magazine industry the editorial content is considered to be all the written copy and accompanying photographs that are funded by, created by, and placed in the magazine by the editorial department. Editorial excludes special advertising sections or regular advertisements created by and/or paid for by an advertiser.
magazine content decisions within their environment. To that end, I queried editors, including editors-in-chief, as to the nature of these relationships. This literature review explores the context for that query by drawing on both industry documentation and feminist cultural studies literature. The review will first, under “Women’s Magazines: Shaping Ideology,” explore why women’s magazines are an important area of inquiry. Second, “Women’s Magazines: A Place of Resistance and Coercion,” examines the nature of women’s magazine content including social topic stories. Third, “ASME and Editorial Integrity,” discusses the relationship between editorial and advertising content through magazine industry perspectives. Fourth, “Social Postmodernism,” explains the relationship between editorial and advertising using theoretical perspectives. Last, through a review of “Feminist Cultural Studies Literature and the Political Economy,” I will explore why editors are a suitable unit of analysis when studying women’s magazines.
Women’s Magazines: Shaping Ideology

Women’s magazines, a genre traditionally not considered as either significant or influential, are important for analysis because some researchers such as Waller and Vaughan-Rees find magazine content has the potential to influence audiences’ perceptions and therefore, popularize and/or non-popularize ideas. Since millions of women read women’s magazines, the publications’ potential to influence perception and even to create social change makes them important for study. To explore the importance of women’s magazine content, I will discuss first, how media in general have the potential ability to influence perceptions. Second, I will discuss how women’s magazines specifically have the potential ability to create social trends by popularizing and/or non-popularizing ideas.

One area of research where the relationship between media and perception is explored is in studies that link media to consumer socialization and media consumption. Although not specifically discussing women’s magazines, the findings presented a valuable framework that examined the relationship between media and perception. That framework can be linked to women’s magazines. O’Guinn and Shrum conducted two studies. The first study, conducted through mail surveys, found that estimates of products and activities associated with an affluent lifestyle were positively related to the amount of television the correspondents watched (O’Guinn and Shrum 285). The second study found that heavy soap opera viewers have higher estimates of perceptions of affluence than light soap opera viewers do (O’Guinn and Shrum 288). Also, the heavy viewers

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5 For example Glamour has a circulation of 2 million, Mademoiselle 1.2 million, Vogue 1.2 million, Essence 1 million, Elle 875,000, and Harper’s BAZAAR 730,000,000.
constructed their estimates of affluence significantly faster than the light viewers, which may mean the information about affluence is more accessible for heavy soap opera viewers (O'Guinn and Shrum 289). The researchers' findings, then, illustrate a potential relationship between media and perception.

Another study uses a past MTV popular dance video show, The Grind, to explore the relationship between viewing the body images on the show (the bodies of the people on this show are thin and considered beautiful in similar ways they are presented in women's magazines) and how viewing unattainable body images effects students' perceptions of their own bodies. Female students were found to be more conscious of their bodies after viewing the show (Layport 54). Females felt "less attractive, less self assured, and less in shape" after watching The Grind. No males desired to lose weight before or after watching the show (Layport 55-56). Based on these findings, Layport concluded that there is a change in the female students' perceptions through some media. Such influence is relevant and important to the women's magazine medium because the magazines are mass distributed reaching millions of women whose perceptions are potentially, based on Layport's study, affected by the portrayal of unattainable body images.

Since O'Guinn and Shrum and Layport find a relationship between media and perception, it could be considered possible that by influencing perception, media may have the ability to create social trends. Specifically, media could potentially popularize and non-popularize ideas. Below are explanations of two major events this century—World War II and the second wave of the women's movement—where women's magazines demonstrated the ability to popularize and/or non-popularize certain political ideas.

During World War II, women's magazine editors in Britain "saw it their duty to advise women on the role that they could best play" (Waller and Vaughan-Rees 12). Editorials in the magazines discussed how to prepare meals for visiting American soldiers, how to be brave and beautiful for women's new found duties in the workforce, how to deal with the dilemmas of romantic relationships with soldiers, and how to carry out tips for happy rationing (Waller and Vaughan-Rees
The underlying theme was to stay happy and be productive which served the country's war plans. In this case, then, the magazines played a political role by popularizing political ideologies.

Second, Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist and feminist media critic Susan Faludi in her book, Backlash, shows how the press created the backlash against the second wave of the women's movement. Trend journalism was used to create this backlash. Trend journalism starts when one editor thinks she has an important trend story and puts it on the cover of her newspaper or magazine. Another editor then picks up the story and tries to dig deeper, tries to find more to report than her competitor. This process happens many times which results in the media creating their own social trend (Faludi 384). Women's magazines and, therefore, women's magazine editors, play important roles in trend journalism. For example, part of the backlash to the women's movement was making women fear being single (Faludi 388-393). Cosmopolitan's February 1989 issue offered "an eleven-page guide to oiling the husband trap under the business-like title 'How to Close the Deal'" (Faludi 393). The title of the story appears to suggest "independent business woman" but the content of the story explains women's necessary search for dependence through marriage. This story and others, according to Faludi, "whipped single women into high marital panic" (Faludi 393) and served as part of the backlash against the second wave of the women's movement. Faludi illustrated how the backlash non-popularized the notion of feminism and its accomplishments for women.

Terkildsen and Schnell also illustrated how print media can influence ideas through the relationship between media coverage of the women's movement (from the 1950s to the 1990s) and corresponding voters' political attitudes. The study found that the media's discussion of economic rights and of anti-feminism had a strong, negative impact on voters' attitudes towards gender equality, support for women's rights, and support for non-traditional gender roles (Terkildsen and Schnell 890). The media coverage also increased the frequency with which participants mentioned "women's issues" as being among the most important issues
facing the U.S. (Terkildsen and Schnell 879). In addition, topics such as political rights had a positive influence on gender attitudes.

As shown through these examples, media, including women’s magazines, have the potential ability to influence perception and can potentially create social trends by popularizing and non-popularizing ideas. Such social influence means that women’s magazines have the potential to affect women’s lives. As a result, women’s magazines are important cultural artifacts and their editors, as key editorial decision-makers, are important units of analysis. Specifically, the editors’ perception of the relationship between advertising and editorial content and how that relationship affects editorial content is a valuable approach to understanding the magazines’ potentially influential messages. In the next section, I will establish the kinds of messages found in women’s magazines by looking at the magazines’ resistance and coercion of dominant ideologies.

**Women’s Magazines: A Place of Resistance and Coercion**

As influential cultural artifacts, women’s magazines’ formats and messages are important for exploration. Feminist scholars have found that mainstream media, including mainstream beauty/fashion women’s magazines, range in content from that which reinforces women’s subordination to that which discusses important women’s issues and shows resistance to hegemonic views (Carpenter 5). Mainstream beauty and fashion magazine content is particularly important for study because the messages are read by millions of women. Glamour, Vogue, Harper’s BAZAAR, and Cosmopolitan, for example, circulate to over six million American women plus millions of women internationally. Identifiable traits of these mainstream beauty/fashion women’s publications include receiving the majority of revenue from advertisers, being printed on glossy paper, and being displayed near the front of almost every newsstand. I will explore beauty/fashion mainstream women’s magazines as a place of both resistance and coercion of
dominant ideologies. The focus will create an understanding of the social topic stories as queried in this study as well as the beauty and fashion stories found in women’s magazines. Since the editorial content in women’s magazines could potentially influence perception and create social trends the format is important to understand. Because the magazine editors are the key decision-makers in the creation of the magazine (Ferguson 126-127), I will first explore the magazine messages through the editors’ perceptions and then through feminist scholars’ work.

Women’s magazine editors, who are the key editorial decision-makers, have been known to produce award-winning journalism in what the editors call their “feminist” magazines. For example, Ruth Whitney, former Glamour editor of 31 years who passed away in the summer of 1999, called her magazine, “a mainstream feminist magazine” (Hanigsberg 73). In Whitney’s editorial good-bye message (published in the last issue she edited), she says, “We were the first magazine to prove that groundbreaking journalism could exist happily alongside beauty and fashion advice, the first to show it was possible to be intelligent, feminine and feminist” (Whitney 21). In 1992 Glamour won the National Magazine Award for two public interest articles on teenage pregnancy and abortion (Hanigsberg 24). In 1991 Glamour beat out Time magazine to win a general excellence award for a magazine with a circulation of over one million (Hanigsberg 24). Glamour isn’t the only women’s magazine that makes feminist claims. Grace Mirabella, the founder and former editor of Mirabella, also claims her readers to be feminist (Kaminer 51). Not surprisingly then, Mirabella publishes stories ranging from sexual harassment in the workplace to reviews of longtime feminist Germaine Greer’s new book. Such “feminist” topics create lively discussion on the letters to the editor page, titled “Loud and Clear.” One letter to the editor from Averill Baker, a 29-year-old lawyer, challenged the editor-in-chief of Mirabella on the magazine placement of feminist Germaine Greer (note: Greer is not considered “beautiful” by traditional standards):
I was very happy to purchase a copy of your June/July issue, in which you featured an article on an extremely important and deeply insightful woman, Germaine Greer ["The Last Angry Woman," by Lynn Darling]. However, since your editor-in-chief wrote in the same issue, "I'm always reluctant to talk about a woman's looks before her other qualities," let's ask her to put her money where her mouth is and place Germaine Greer on the cover. Don't be a chicken—remember, you have an audience of discerning women out there (26).

Obviously then, some readers are not just reading women's magazines for the lipstick reviews but for resistance or "feminist" content.

In order to address this content, for the purpose of this study, editorial content that discusses some kind of social issue in regard to women will be defined as social topic stories. These social topic stories, which generally focus on women—as opposed to women looking good for men—can make women's magazines seem more insightful about the status of women in U.S. society than generally perceived. Further examples of social topic stories in women's magazines include a report on the status of women in China written by Hillary Rodham Clinton published in the October 1998 issue of Harper's BAZAAR (258-263). In the November 1998 issue of Glamour a story on why magazines use skinny models explains the problems the Glamour staff has trying to get larger sample sizes from fashion designers for larger models (Marcia 244-246). A perusal through mainstream women's magazines will show that at least one social topic story can be found in each issue of the magazines.

Hanigsberg explores resistance in women's magazines through a textual analysis of eight beauty/fashion magazines including Self, Harper’s BAZAAR.

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6 By status I am referring to the fact that we live in a patriarchal society where men and masculinity are valued over women and femininity. Patriarchy is expressed in many U.S. social institutions. Examples include work where women earn 75 cents on a man's dollar (U.S. Census 1998); politics where women have not been allowed to until this century; and family where women are often expected to do a double shift working outside the home and fulfilling the majority of domestic responsibilities.
Mademoiselle, Mirabella, Elle, Essence, Glamour, and Vogue. She concludes that using the social topic story format, women’s magazines have covered most feminist issues in recent years:

All have emphasized that women who are battered are never at fault, that the glass ceiling should be fought, that women should earn equal pay for equal work, that “no means no,” that women have the right to fight unwanted sexual advances, that men should be equal participants in housework and childcare responsibilities, and that the criminal and judicial system are prejudiced against rape victims (74-75).

Since women’s magazines have the power to popularize and/or non-popularize ideas, discussion of these issues could potentially effect the status of women in society and, therefore, any influences on this content, such as advertising, is important for exploration.

With the presence of what may be resistance to dominant ideologies through social topic stories also comes the negative stereotypes commonly associated with women’s magazines. Mainstream women’s magazines often appear to be a place of coercion to dominant ideologies. For example, a perusal through the December 1998 issue of Glamour shows that approximately three quarters of the magazine’s editorial content featured beauty and fashion discussion. The discussion ranged from hair and makeup advice to beauty gifts and overnight beauty success, along with many “do’s” and “don’ts” regarding new fashion styles. A few pages after the main beauty section is an article titled, “Your Most Intimate Info: 5 Secrets to Spill to Bring Him Closer” which emphasizes the how-to-get-a-man theme. Furthermore, close to half of the magazine consists of advertising, which often depicts women in stereotyped roles and suggests buying products as the best way to solve what are characterized as women’s beauty/fashion problems. Hanisberg explains the contradiction between some progressive social topic stories and the dominant ideology/coercion stories:
For each article decrying the omnipresence of eating disorders is an advertisement or editorial layout featuring an underweight model; for each article that calls attention to the dangers of plastic surgery is a picture of a figure beyond most women's dreams; for each article challenging African-American women to love their beauty, there is a model with light skin and eyes, straight hair, and Anglo-Saxon features (Hanigsberg 73).

In order to understand such contradiction in editorial messages, we must consider that past experience shows women's magazines editors, some of who have called themselves feminist in the past, have apparently had restrictions on what they can publish in their magazines. In other words, their editorial autonomy has been threatened. Past studies have shown that advertisers have often challenged social topic stories and images found in women's magazines. For example, Essence, a magazine for African American women, tries to promote diverse images of Black women. However, Essence's advertisers are known to insist on images of straight-haired, light-eyed, and light-skinned models (Bordo 263-265). Advertisers' expectations are difficult for Essence as Bordo explains:

This invitation to cognitive dissonance reveals what Essence must grapple with, in every issue, as it tries to keep its message of African American self-acceptance clear and dominant, while submitting to economic necessities [advertisers] on which its survival depends (265).

Essence is not the only example where social topic editorial has apparently been jeopardized by advertisers. Gloria Steinem's article, published in July-August 1990, the first ad-free issue of Ms. Magazine, presents a case study of Ms. Magazine's experiences with advertisers (18-28). At the outset of Ms., Steinem expected difficulties with advertising's sexist imagery and advertising copy. Her main concern was half-naked blondes draped over cars and Silva Thin's cigarette theme "How to Get a Woman's Attention: Ignore Her" (19). What she was not prepared for was the manipulation by advertisers over the actual content of the magazine. For example, in 1980 Ms. published two Russian women on the cover of the magazine who were wearing hardly any makeup. To Steinem's surprise, the
image of the Russian women was enough to make an advertising contract with Revlon an impossibility (24).

Another example is the president of Estee Lauder who refused to advertise in Ms. because he says, according to Steinem, that “Ms. readers are not our women. They’re not interested in things like fragrance and blush-on. If they were, Ms. would write articles about them” (24). The advertisers did not consider the fact that surveys show Ms. readers are actually more likely to buy these products (fragrance and blush) than some other women’s magazine readers because “they’re out in the world enough to need several sets of everything: home, work, purse, travel, gym and so on” (Steinem 24). Steinem identifies the blurring of editorial and advertising as being most obvious in women’s magazines:

If Time and Newsweek had to lavish praise on cars in general and credit General Motors in particular to get GM ads, there would be a scandal—maybe a criminal investigation. When women’s magazines from Seventeen to Lear’s praise beauty products in general and credit Revlon in particular to get ads, it’s just business as usual (19).

Naomi Wolf’s The Beauty Myth explains the relationship between advertising and editorial further:

Advertisers are the West’s courteous censors. They blur the line between editorial freedom and the demands of the marketplace [. . .]. Because of who the advertisers are, a tacit screening takes place. It isn’t conscious policy, it doesn’t circulate in memos, it doesn’t need to be thought about or spoken. It is understood that some kinds of thinking about “beauty” would alienate advertisers, while others promote their products. With the implicit need to maintain advertising revenue in order to keep publishing, editors are not yet able to assign features and test products as if the myth [Wolf’s beauty myth] did not pay the bills (Wolf 77).

The editors, according to Wolf, must follow the beauty formula that works. A glance through almost any mainstream beauty magazine, shows the formula consists of an unattainable beauty standard that depicts predominantly extremely thin white women. According to Wolf, editors can’t risk having more “real” images
of women in their magazines for two reasons. First, editors would lose their advertisers since the advertisers believe that to convince readers to buy beauty products (i.e. diet products) they have to first convince readers through images of “perfect” models that they (the average reader) are not beautiful enough and need to buy beauty products (Wolf 83-84). Second, the magazine would likely lose its readership since women have internalized the beauty myth and often don’t believe that average looking women are interesting enough to be in magazines (Wolf 84). According to Wolf, an unattainable beauty standard, depicted in all forms of media, has led women to self-hatred, especially of their bodies. Since the myth encourages women to buy products, advertisers support magazines with editorial content that encourages and supports unattainable beauty standards. The apparent result is that to be economically successful through advertising revenue, women’s magazines must refrain from challenging traditional messages of beauty. Therefore, this is one example where advertising is potentially influencing the content of women’s magazines. Such influence is often referred to as the blurring of editorial and advertising content. Since women’s magazines have the potential to affect women’s lives by popularizing and non-popularizing ideas, influences on magazine content, specifically, the blurring of editorial and advertising, are important for analysis. To explore the topic further, the next section will discuss the magazine industry’s perceptions of the blurring of editorial and advertising content.

**ASME and Editorial Integrity**

The relationship between editorial and advertising content is not just a consideration in regard to women’s magazines. The blurring of advertising and editorial content has been widely recognized as an issue of concern within the magazine industry and some say it is increasing (Wolf 78; Cunningham 1). Previous associate editor of the Columbia Journalism Review Michael Hoyt, for example, reports that magazines have always been under pressure from advertisers
but what is new is the intensity of their demands. Magazines have experienced an increase in pressure to observe advertisers' demands due to increased competition in the eighties with a rise of all kinds of magazines on the market, and also with other media competitors such as television (Hoyt qtd. in Wolf 78). Former editor of the Boston Globe explains this further:

Magazines are commodities, commodities are there to sell goods, and the competition these days is ferocious. We used to have a silken curtain between advertising and editorial, but no more. Today if you had Watergate you would have to check with the advertising department (qtd. in Wolf 78).

In addition to competition, another reason for the change in the relationship between editorial and advertising may be the changing perspectives of marketers. Stewart Ewen, author of All Consuming Images, explains:

At one time marketers viewed magazines as a place to rent space for advertising. Today they view them as real estate holdings. Once you own real estate, you begin to think about the neighborhood [...] changing the shrubbery [...] (qtd. in Hoyt 37).

The shrubbery and neighborhood in the quotation from Ewen is the magazine's editorial content.

Beyond discussion among journalists and editors, The American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) has specific guidelines for the relationship between advertising and editorial content. Such guidelines illustrate the seriousness with which the blurring of editorial and advertising content is considered in the magazine industry. ASME, to which some mainstream women's magazine editors belong, provides “Guidelines for Editors and Publishers” that state:

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7 The ASME website does not provide a current membership list; however, some past award winners (the magazine has to be a member of ASME in order to be eligible for the award) are beauty/fashion mainstream women’s magazines such as Glamour, Mirabella, and Elle.
Magazines are successful only if readers trust the information and advice given. This trust can be broken all too easily—either by perception or reality. That's why ASME has created guidelines to ensure the clear distinction between advertising and editorial content is never broken, nor blurred ("American").

The ASME guidelines are set up under three categories: editorial and advertising pages, special advertising sections, and new media. Each category clearly outlines guidelines to stop the perception or reality of editorial and advertising blurring. Repercussions of not following the guidelines are as follows:

Any magazine that willfully or repeatedly violates these guidelines may be declared ineligible for National Magazine Awards and ultimately, the editor responsible for the violations [if a member of ASME] may be expelled from the organization ("American").

The National Magazine Awards are prestigious awards within the magazine industry and the award ceremony is well attended by high-ranking editors ("American").

Despite the consequences, a content analysis conducted by researchers Cameron et al. shows that editors don't always comply with ASME guidelines (728). The theoretical reason for an interest in the magazines compliance with the guidelines was based on what is defined as "source credibility." Cameron et al. define "source credibility," based on the literature, as the reason readers are more likely to believe editorial content than advertising content. Schwarz finds that "credibility and memorability of messages were negatively affected when messages were presented as advertiser-based" (Cameron et al. 723). Cameron then makes the point that "readers need to be aware of the commercial source to make a judgement about the credibility of a source" (Cameron et al. 723). As a result, any violations of ASME guidelines in relation to advertorials is something that should be documented. The researchers examined nine magazines including two mainstream women's magazines, Good Housekeeping and Glamour; 273 advertorials were identified. Nearly 1/3 of these advertorials were not marked as advertising, a practice which violates the guidelines (Cameron et al. 726). Design and content
elements of the advertorials were also found to frequently violate ASME guidelines, which state that advertorials have to be in a different typeface than the rest of the magazine (Cameron et al. 727). As a result, the researchers concluded that industry guidelines are not being followed universally.

Whether or not the ASME guidelines are followed is, according to some magazine industry professionals, based on the editor. John Mack Carter, president of Hearst Magazines which publishes Cosmopolitan, Redbook and Harper's BAZAAR among numerous other titles, says, "the integrity of the magazine can be assured only by the editor, not by the rules" (qtd. in Coyle 37). To find out more about editorial integrity, Folio magazine conducted an industry-wide ethics survey of magazine executives including magazine editors. The study found that while the competition increases in the magazine market, the integrity of the editor may be suffering by traditional journalism standards. The survey was composed of hypothetical situations, some of which addressed the blurring of advertising and editorial. Four hundred and five publishing professionals from both trade and consumer titles responded (Silber 48). The editors' responses in regard to the blurring of editorial and advertising resulted in 27% of the editors reporting they would be either very likely or somewhat likely to allow a special advertising section that used the same font and style as their magazine, which is against ASME guidelines (Silber 51). Forty-five percent of the editors said they would be very likely or somewhat likely to buy stock in companies whose products or services their magazine covers, which would be considered unethical since having invested money in a company could result in "biased" magazine coverage of that company (Silber 51). Of those who responded, 45% were from "business magazines," 32% were from "consumer titles," and 18% were from "mixed titles" (Silber 101).

Through both industry discussion and content analysis research, the increase in the blurring of advertising and editorial content, has been documented. The ASME guidelines, which outline how to stop the blurring of editorial and advertising, appear to be routinely ignored. This is significant because the blurring of editorial and advertising content has the potential to influence women’s
magazine content and that content has the potential to affect women's lives. In order to explore the situation further, the next section will explore the blurring of advertising and editorial through a theoretical lens.

Social Postmodernism: Blurring the Social and the Economic

Evidence seems to suggest that in practice magazines do not make clear distinctions between advertising and editorial content; in fact, evidence indicates that in some situations advertising exerts considerable power over editorial decisions. One can then conclude the separation of editorial and advertising dictated by ASME is not successful. Theorist Jean Baudrillard would not be surprised that the separation directive failed. Social postmodernist Baudrillard explains that society is at a stage in economic and social development where "[i]t is no longer possible to separate the economic or productive realm from the realms of ideology or culture, since cultural artifacts, images, representations, even feelings and psychic structures have become part of the world of the economic" (Baudrillard qtd. in Storey 162). Based on Baudrillard's theory, if the goal is to understand the cultural artifact, in this case women's magazines, the economic is an integral, inseparable part of the ideological understanding.

Winship also explores the connection between the economic and social realm. Her study concludes that women's magazines encourage femininity; the way to obtain femininity is through consumption. The consumption focus found in Winship's analysis suggests that when readers examine the magazine, they experience no perceived separation between the purpose of the social/editorial content and the economic/advertising content of the magazine. The result is women are "caught up in defining their own femininity, inextricably, through consumption" (Winship 39). Desire is generated through women's magazines for something more than the everyday and can only be accomplished by what is for most women an everyday activity—shopping. The consumption focus occurs when
the reader is told to carry out certain practical advice or buy a certain product in order to be a better lover, a better mother, a better wife, a better woman (Winship 35). Practical advice to buy products can be found both in the magazines' editorial and advertising content.

Based on Baudrillard's theory and Winship's analysis, advertising (the economic) and editorial (the social) may be theoretically inseparable in women's magazines. At least the perception of editorial and advertising may be inseparable. Such issues, which could influence magazine content, need further exploration. Because the literature indicates the editors have important roles in decisions pertaining to advertising and editorial issues, my study asks the editors of mainstream women's magazines how they perceive the relationship between editorial and advertising content and how, if at all, this relationship affects editorial content. I will explain this approach through a review of feminist cultural studies literature.

Media Analysis: Feminist Cultural Studies and the Political Economy

In an attempt to gain what Kellner calls a "multi-perspectival" understanding, I chose to consider Kellner's "Components of Critical Cultural Studies." Kellner outlines three areas of media analysis: textual analysis, production and political economy, and audience reception. In order to keep my study manageable, I chose to focus on one of these perspectives, the perspective least practiced in general—the production and political economy analysis. Such analysis is important because beliefs of magazine professionals, in particular women's magazine professionals, have been neglected in academic literature (Johnson 135). No American studies I found focused on the editors and their experiences within the context of the women's magazine. Because the editors are key components in the decisions made in regard to the editorial content in the
magazine, they are most knowledgeable in regard to how, if at all, the relationship between advertising and editorial affects editorial content.

Kellner’s political economy approach is well suited to examining editors’ perspectives since the approach studies cultural texts within their systems of production and distribution. The approach, when applied to magazines, includes the political, economic, social, and creative processes in developing the publication before it reaches the newsstand; processes include editing, advertising, writing, art directing, and physical distribution of the magazines. The production and distribution of an artifact is important because it “determines what structural limits there will be [on the artifact] as to what can and cannot be said and shown in the artifact” (Kellner 9). Due to the potential rise in the blurring of advertising and editorial content (Wolf 78; Hoyt 35-41), which based on past literature is shown to have the potential to influence magazine messages, I will interview women’s magazine editors to explore their perspectives of the relationship between editorial and advertising content and its affect, if any, on both general editorial content and social topic stories.

By using the political economy approach I hope to develop, through the editors’ perspectives, possible suggestions for practice and change. Since much of women’s magazine content purports a dominant ideology that does not represent or relate to many women’s realities, suggestions for practice and change may be useful. The nature of the political economy approach lends itself to finding ways to create structural change because the approach explores the production of the media artifact. Kellner’s other approaches, textual analysis and audience reception, do not provide such direct praxis because these approaches don’t deal directly with the structural decisions that create magazines. Nevertheless, all of Kellner’s approaches when applied to women’s magazines and women’s cultural artifacts provide important perspectives and understanding. To explain further, I will now discuss the approaches used in feminist cultural studies literature as it relates to Kellner’s “Components of Critical Studies” starting with textual analysis first, moving to audience reception second, and ending with the political economy. Reviewing the
literature through Keilner’s three approaches will provide further reasoning as to why I choose the political economy focus while explaining relevant themes found in feminist cultural studies research.

First, textual analysis is the most common approach used to examine women’s magazines. Textual analysis, which includes content analysis, genre analysis, and ideological analysis, explores “various forms of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies, image construction and effects” within the artifact (Keilner 10). Although such exploration can create rich understanding, textual analysis does not address the political economy or the production of the artifact. Quantitative content analyses conducted by scholars such as Markham, McRobbie, Schlenker et al., and Pierce have been used as a way of understanding how women’s magazine messages change with social movements. Most content analysis literature, including the studies of Markham, McRobbie, Schlenker et al., and Pierce, has focused on teen magazines for young women. The teen format is similar to that of the women’s magazine format making the methodology of these studies worth analysis.

In the Schlenker et al. feminist content analysis of Seventeen magazine from 1945 to 1990, each page of Seventeen was scanned and the content was put into one of the six categories: appearance, male-female relations, home and cooking, sewing, crafts, self-development, career development, and political/world issues. Significantly, the findings showed higher numbers of “feminist vs. traditional messages” during the women’s movement in the seventies (Schlenker et al. 142). These results show a connection between the content of Seventeen—in regard to feminism vs. traditional messages—and the women’s movement (135). Therefore, the study illustrates that Seventeen magazine’s content can potentially be influenced by social movements such as the second wave of the women’s movement. However, the nature of the content analysis, which does not explore the political economy of the artifact, provides no way to determine how, why, and by whom, based on the production of the magazine, the messages were influenced. A
study that explores the political economy through the perspectives of the editors
would potentially produce practical understanding of how social movements can
influence content.

Another example of textual analysis is Markham’s socially informed textual
analysis of Seventeen magazine from 1945 to 1990. Four codes are identified:
beauty/fashion, entertainment, relationship and consumption (Markham 148). The
four codes are analyzed to uncover the ideologies inherent in them and their
ramifications. Markham concludes that the construction of femininity encourages
readers to pursue physical perfection and romance above all else (Markham 150).
The summary suggests that a girl’s outlook could be different, perhaps more
focused on what Markham calls productive past times such as school and sports, if
Seventeen focused on other past times opposed to beauty.

Throughout Markham’s research, as with most textual analysis studies, the
political economy and editor’s role is ignored. Markham assumes that the editors
are simply part of some predetermined formula used to create the magazine.
However, editors play an integral part in creating the magazine persona and
furthermore, the editor herself is part of the style of the magazine because she is
responsible for keeping the mix of articles and editorial sections going (Ferguson
126). At first glance, women’s magazines may appear simply formulaic. In order to
understand the complexity of women’s magazines, it is useful to compare them to
general interest magazines. The editors’ critical role becomes obvious when

8 The methodology for this study is based on Pierce’s study of teen magazines (1990).

9 The methodology for this study is based on McRobbie’s study of Jackie, a British teen magazine

10 Comparisons are useful because based on the definition of patriarchy—men and masculinity are
valued over women and femininity—women’s cultural artifacts like women’s magazines are not
valued in our society. Comparing women’s magazines to general interest magazines can aid in
seeing past the stigmatization and understanding the women’s magazine format.
women's magazines are compared to other so-called general interest magazines such as Harper's. If Harper's editor changed, the magazine would likely change, even if only in slight ways (maybe a new column, more focus on different issues and writers, etc.). Therefore, based on the assumption that a change in personnel at Harper's would make a difference, one could speculate that there must be some room to move within the magazine formula. Formula movement is based ultimately on the editor but may be influenced by the editor's environment; specifically, it may be influenced by the relationship between editorial and advertising as this study will explore. Despite the significance of editorship, Markham appears to overlook the role of the editor to be important in the shaping of Seventeen magazine.

Furthermore, any social topic stories (as defined under "Women's Magazines: A Place of Resistance and Coercion") are dismissed by Markham. For example, a story appeared in Seventeen during the Vietnam War titled "Face to Face with a Vietnamese Girl in New York." Markham dismisses its serious content: "At heart, however, the magazine was still committed to providing guidance on how to look and feel good [...]" (Markham 73). How does Markham know, without investigating the role of the editor at the time, that providing guidance on how to look and feel good was "at heart" what the magazine was committed to? Such intentions cannot be concluded without considering the producers of the magazine and the environment within which they make decisions.

Moving away from content analysis studies but still remaining within the realm of textual analysis, Winship conducts a thorough textual analysis of British women's magazines. In search of understanding the magazines' formulae and determining the magazines' limitations and potential for change, Winship examines

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11 I use "so-called" here because the argument could be made that Harper's is, in fact, a men's magazine but just not announced as one. In a patriarchal society, men's genres are more valued than women's are. Men's genres are also considered the norm as a result of androcentrism. Therefore, women's genres are often defined as such where men's genres are simply labeled general interest.
the magazine text (Storey 146). She concludes that women's magazines are in fact manuals for survival in a patriarchal culture, that they focus on femininity and obtaining pleasurable femininity through consumption (Storey 148). Winship claims the appeal of women's magazines is based on a range of "fictions" (Winship 67). These can be visual fictions of advertisements and fashion or actual fictions found in editorial content. All of these fictions attempt to draw the reader to the magazine and ultimately into a world of consumption (Storey 147).

Through analysis of the text Winship draws conclusions about women's magazine content and why magazine readers, including feminist readers, enjoy reading women's magazines. Although Winship provides an insightful, thorough analysis, she does not include the editors as subjects of study. By studying the perception of the messages (through interpretation of the text) but not the creation of the messages through the perspectives of the editors, the textual analysis approach leaves a gap in understanding especially if the goal is to change the messages in the magazine using structural strategies.

In conclusion, although content analysis as done by Schlenker et al. and Markham and textual analysis as done by Winship can be effective tools to explain the content of magazines, these methods fail to recognize the political economy and production process. Instead, the focus is on the perception of the magazine messages once they already have been created. Exploration through the editor may provide a practical understanding of the influences on the creation of women's magazine messages. Specifically, based on identified blurring of advertising and editorial and its potential affects on magazine messages, exploring the relationship between advertising and editorial content through the editors' perspectives may provide important practical understanding of women's magazine messages.

Moving to Kellner's second perspective, some feminist cultural studies research uses what Kellner calls the audience reception approach. No women's magazines studies I found focused on audience reception. Audience reception, often studied through ethnography, explores the perspectives of the reader/viewer of the artifact (Kellner 12). Janice Radway, who conducted an ethnographic study
on romance novels, and Ian Ang, who conducted a study on *Dallas*, a popular prime time television drama, are two notable researchers who have conducted studies on audience reception on what are generally considered women’s media artifacts. Although not women’s magazine studies, Radway’s and Ang’s methodologies are important to consider because they are well respected\(^{12}\) and their shortcomings explain in part why I chose to focus on the political economy for my research of women’s magazines.

First, Radway chose to do an ethnography to avoid the preoccupation with the text often found in the textual analysis method; she chose to focus on the very act of romance reading. Radway interviewed thirty-five women (12). All the women interviewed read five to nine romance novels a week. The study illustrated that the romance readers “partially reclaim the patriarchal form of the romance for their own use” and that psychological benefits derive from “the ritualistic repetition of a single, immutable cultural myth [as found in the romances]” (Radway 135). Radway’s findings illustrate how texts can affect audiences and shape beliefs and behaviors (Kellner 12). While Radway’s approach provides understanding of audience reception, the methodology in general doesn’t lead directly to suggestions for change. As Radway explains, the act of reading and, in this case, negotiating patriarchal romance novel messages is a solitary act (Radway 212). Since reading romance novels, like reading women’s magazines, is generally a personal undertaking, the audience often does not carry the collective momentum needed to create change (Radway 212).

Also using an audience reception approach is Ang’s study where letters, written from *Dallas* watchers about why they liked the prime-time television show were analyzed. To determine why people liked *Dallas*, Ang proposes the question: “What is the mechanism of pleasure; how is it produced and how does it work?”

\(^{12}\) By “well respected” I am referring to the fact that Radway and Ang are cited in many studies. The studies are considered groundbreaking being among the first to consider the media consumer as an active viewer/reader.
The study showed that fans of the successful Dallas show located their pleasure in relation to the ideology of mass culture by internalizing the ideology, negotiating the ideology and using 'surface irony' to defend their pleasure against the withering dismissal of the ideology (Ang 109). Ang’s findings created a rich understanding of audience reception. She established the nature of the relationship between media and consumption by exploring why Dallas was pleasurable. Although Ang’s audience reception approach is insightful, Kellner points out pitfalls: “There is the tendency to romanticize the active audience, by claiming that all audiences produce their own meanings and denying that media culture may have powerful manipulative effects” (Kellner 13). Using a political economy approach, I plan to gain an understanding of the blurring of advertising and editorial content which may have potential influence or even “powerful manipulative effects” on media culture. Such understanding could potentially provide a knowledge base for further study of the relationship between the media and their consumers.

The political economy is Kellner’s third approach to be addressed in this literature review. As mentioned before, few studies use the political economy approach; even fewer studies explore the editors’ perspectives of women’s magazines. One British study, now almost twenty years old, does give considerable attention to the editors of women’s magazines. Ferguson’s study consisted of both an historical content analysis of women’s magazines and interviews with women’s magazine editors. Her methodology had two purposes: to identify, analyze and interpret the magazine messages as they evolve over time and to study the process and people who create the messages (Ferguson 4).

Ferguson’s combination of historical content analysis and interviews with women’s magazine editors provided a comprehensive analysis of women’s magazines. First, content analysis identified dominant mainstream women’s magazine themes from 1949 to 1980. Examples of these themes and how they change over time were given through a history of women’s magazines. For example, the “getting and keeping your man” theme from the 1950s to the 1970s was often presented as prescriptive. Ferguson explained: “Dutiful wives were urged
to value domestic skills above book learning, and warned against straying from first duties of Him and Home (Ferguson 47). How to be a good wife advice changed in the seventies to man-less articles such as one in Woman magazine titled “Never Had It So Good!” about a women divorced with three children (as qtd. in Ferguson 83). In general, Ferguson found there was an expansion of women’s magazine themes during the seventies. For example, the principal message of ‘get him and keep him’ changes slightly to ‘helping herself—and then helping herself to find him’ (Ferguson 102). Such evolution was best expressed by “Leap Into The New Year With Love,” published in Woman’s Own February 1980:

Miss 1880 fluttered her eyelashes behind a fan.
Miss 1950 learned to cook like his mother.
Miss 1960 hitched her mini higher; and the seventies’ woman rang and asked him out.
What should Miss 1980 do to get her man in the leap year?

Ferguson’s historical analysis illustrated women’s magazines’ abilities to reflect and perhaps influence dominant ideologies.

Moving from content to creation of content, Ferguson interviewed over thirty-four women’s magazine editors and ninety-seven journalists and managers between the period of 1975 to 1981. The major point on which the editors all agreed was that their role is central and “they [the editors] were the pivot around which the entire editorial process swung” (217). The editors were key players in the expansion of magazine themes and setting the magazine agenda, which makes the editors an important area of analysis. Ferguson explained:

The wider role of women’s magazines cannot be understood by looking at their messages alone: it is necessary to examine also the process through which those messages come into being. A key figure in that process is the editor [. . .]. [I]t is still she who selects the content of the magazine and shapes its form, through dozens of large and small daily decisions (119).
The editor plays an integral role in determining the content in women's magazines. Also, the editorial decisions ultimately made by the editor can set the feminine agenda and, therefore, have social significance. Ferguson explained:

For it is these editors, in deciding what their magazines will deal with, who are also deciding what will be included or excluded from the agenda of feminine concerns [. . .]. [T]hey are able to confer status upon—or withhold it from—individual issues and events by rendering them, or refusing to render them, visible on their pages” (Ferguson 131).

The result is that the editors have a great deal of potential social influence which makes their perspective important when examining women's magazines.

Ferguson finds that the editors' professional success is defined by economic terms; specifically it is defined by “steady or rising circulations and healthy advertisement revenues” (Ferguson 139). Based on this economic focus, one consideration might be whether editorial content is ever in collusion with advertising content. To explore this question, Ferguson asks specifically if the editors “are both manipulated by, and manipulators of, a materialist ideology which purveys a crude consumerism [in the magazine] to the audience in the form of an ever-escalating level of consumer aspirations and expectations?” (146). In response, Ferguson finds that “women's magazine editors are acutely aware of their female audience as consumers, but primarily as consumers of their own magazine” (146). However, then Ferguson goes on to explain there is pressure from outside advertising sources:

They [the editors] are courted and pressurized by manufacturers, advertisement and public relations executives, and the extent to which an individual editor resists or succumbs to such pressures when they are in conflict with her judgement is as much a function of personal integrity in terms of perceived audience responsibility as it is of the constraints imposed by a particular editorial ethos, or by poor climate for advertisement revenue (146).

In other words, Ferguson finds how editors deal with this pressure from advertisers is based on two factors: 1) personal integrity in regard to being true to the audience
and not mixing social (editorial) messages and economic (advertising) messages and 2) the economic situation of the magazine at that time which can determine whether or not the publisher really needs the advertising revenue (146). In conclusion, Ferguson claims the question of whether or not editors collude with advertisers is empirical as much as it is ideological. "It relates both to the shared beliefs of women's magazine editors and to the actions and situational constraints of individuals" (Ferguson 146).

Unfortunately, these short comments are all that is mentioned in Ferguson's study in regard to the blurring of editorial and advertising content. In fact, most of Ferguson's study focuses on the internal production process which includes the editorial brainstorming and conference sessions, and the process an idea travels through before getting to the printed page. Ferguson likely chose to focus more on the internal editorial process than on the external business pressures because almost twenty years ago, when this study was done, the consumer politics of women's magazines were different. Since popular literature such as The Columbia Review of Journalism and Ms. have addressed the blurring of advertising and editorial content, the relationship between the two has likely become more acceptable to discuss with editors. It is possible that twenty years ago, when Ferguson conducted her study, questions on the relationship between editorial and advertising would be seen as rudely questioning the editors' integrity. Therefore, in this new climate, the relationship between advertising and editorial is an approachable and important topic for in-depth analysis. My study plans to explore, in greater detail than Ferguson's, specifically the relationship between editorial and advertising content. Furthermore, I will ask whether this relationship affects general editorial and specifically, social topic stories in women's magazines. Using Kellner's political economy approach, I hope to develop an understanding of the editors' perspectives, which will potentially lead to suggestions for adjustments to the mainstream women's magazine format.
Conclusion

This literature review has explored my personal experience as a mock editor, explained media's potential influence on perception and women's magazines potential ability to create social trends by popularizing and non-popularizing ideas, discussed women's magazine messages as places of resistance and coercion to dominant ideologies, reviewed ASME guidelines and editorial integrity, presented the blurring of advertising and editorial within the theoretical paradigm of Baudrillard's social postmodernism, and compiled feminist cultural studies literature using Kellner's components of analyses. Compiling and interpreting the literature finds that editors' perspectives in regard to magazine content, specifically in relation to the blurring of editorial and advertising content, have not been explored in recent past research and are important to understanding mainstream women's magazine formats. To the end, my study will examine the relationship between advertising and editorial content and how, if at all, editors perceive the relationship affects both general editorial content and specifically, social topic stories in women's magazines. In the next chapter, the methodology section, I will explain how I will conduct my study.
METHODOLOGY

This study explored editors' perspectives of the relationship between editorial and advertising content in women's magazines and how that relationship affects both general editorial content and, specifically, social topic stories. Focusing on a political economy research perspective that draws from feminist interview protocol and ethnographic approaches, I queried women's magazine editors' perspectives in regard to the nature of the relationship between editorial and advertising content and how that relationship affects both general editorial content and social topic stories (Zoonen 47). In addition, I was interested in the editors' perspectives of their autonomy to make magazine content decisions within their environment.

The approach used for the study does not purport to find broad, generalizable results. Instead, the study will give voice to a small sample of women's magazine editors whose perspectives have not previously been considered in academic research. To that end, semi-structured interviews, which have become the principal means feminists have used to achieve involvement of their respondents (Reinharz 18), were conducted with twelve editors of women's magazines. Drawing on feminist interview protocol, I gained the perspectives of women's magazine editors through conversational interviews, allowing for "free interaction between the researcher and interviewee" (Reinharz 18). Feminist interviewing involves a “commitment and egalitarianism in contrast with the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation between the researcher and the subject” (Reinharz 27). In addition, the feminist interviewing approach strives for professional intimacy and, therefore, has the potential to develop long-lasting relationships with participants. Beyond feminist interview protocol, the research process for this study also draws on ethnographic approaches, which helped me to discover and to interpret the editors' standpoints presented within their context (Reinhartz 51). In many ethnographic and qualitative approaches, the standpoint of
the research participant is important for inquiry since asking questions about the social world through the perspectives of those who have hands-on experience creates important scientific understanding (Lorber 115). In addition, approaches such as McCracken’s four-step method of inquiry encouraged understanding of cultural categories and the self as instrument, which suited my research needs of developing an informed interview relevant to the editors' New York publishing culture.

In summary, by drawing from the qualitative research strategies of feminist interviewing protocol and ethnographic approaches while focusing on a political economy perspective, I was able to meet my research goals of gaining the editors' perspectives. These perspectives will be interpreted in relationship to the various social-scientific literatures previously discussed (Lee 47). I will now explain the study step by step, starting with defining the sample, developing the interview instrument, describing the conversation setting, discovering analytic categories, and recognizing limitations of study.

**Defining the Sample**

The sample of editors interviewed for this study was determined by the types of magazines the editors edit. Editors were approached who edited mainstream women’s magazines that consist primarily of fashion and beauty content and target younger women, approximately age 18-34. The magazine content and target age requirements were applied to maintain similar content across the magazines. These mainstream magazines are referred to in the publishing industry as mainstream beauty/fashion magazines and can be easily identified
based on their editorial focus on beauty and fashion ("Hearst"). The majority of these mainstream magazines, with the exception of one which targets an African-American audience, purport a dominant, hegemonic ideology featuring mostly middle to upper class, young, White women. Specifically, then, this study interviews editors of magazines that 1) have a comparatively large circulation of over 750,000, which for this study qualifies the magazine as "mainstream" and 2) have a beauty/fashion format with beauty/fashion advertisers that target women approximately age 18-34. After a thorough review, 12 American magazines seem to fit into this category. Examples of magazines that fit into the sample selection are Cosmopolitan (circulation 2.6 million); Allure (circulation 865,000); In Style (circulation not posted); marie claire (circulation not posted); Jane (circulation not posted); New Woman (circulation 1.2 million); Glamour (circulation 2 million); Mademoiselle (circulation 1.2 million); Vogue (circulation 1.2 million); Harper's BAZAAR (circulation 760,000); Essence (circulation 1 million); and Elle (circulation 875,000).

Editors of mainstream beauty/fashion magazines that target younger women are suitable for this study for two reasons. First, the literature, particularly the experience of Steinem and the research of Bordo, identifies beauty and fashion

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13 Beauty/fashion magazine editorial can be distinguished from other types of women's magazines such as shelter magazines, which deal editorially with home issues including decorating, maintenance, and gardening, or women's service magazines, which appeal mostly to housewives by teaching women how to be better cooks, housekeepers, wives and mothers.

14 The number of magazines is difficult to determine because each year many magazines start up and many fail. As a result, not all of the publications are indexed. However, because the magazines chosen for this study have a large circulation and have proven economic viability, the count is fairly accurate. Circulation figures come from Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory 1998 and from the magazines' Websites.

15 These relatively large circulation figures equate to high advertising revenue. Glamour, for example, brings in $108,025,911 in advertising revenue alone per year. Other magazines revenue per year: Cosmopolitan $153,978,000, Vogue $110,100,167, Harper's BAZAAR $55,535,707, and Elle $75,815,767 (Kerwin 18).
advertisers as one potential influence on editorial content. Due to large readership and therefore, mass exposure, many beauty/fashion companies advertise in mainstream beauty/fashion magazines. In fact, these magazines are advertising revenue leaders according to the Publishing Information Bureau figures for 1998 (Kerwin 18) and a large portion of their advertising revenue comes from beauty and fashion advertisements. As a result, based on the literature, the mainstream beauty/fashion format is an appropriate choice when studying the relationship between advertising and editorial content.

Second, scholars such as Waller and Vaughan-Rees have found messages in beauty/fashion women’s magazines to have potential impact on women’s lives and social trends. As a result, editorial content decisions made at women’s mainstream beauty/fashion magazines have the potential to influence a large, replenishing pool of readers. Since mainstream women’s beauty/fashion magazines have large circulations and bring in high advertising revenue, they have high visibility on the newsstand, which encourages new readership and influence. Such potential impact makes important for study the editors’ perspectives of the relationship between advertising and editorial and how this relationship affects editorial content.

Based on the sample’s celebrity-type status, gaining access required a

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16 As explained in the literature review, Steinem wrote the case study of Ms. which explained her difficulties with beauty advertisers, among others, trying to control the editorial content of her “feminist” magazine. Bordo, on the other hand, found that beauty advertisers, among others, are known to insist on fair-skinned models in Essence, a magazine for African-American women.

17 High newsstand visibility advertises the magazine itself and as a result, attracts new readers. In order to gain front row newsstand and grocery store checkout display, there is usually a Retail Distribution Allowance that has to be paid by the publisher. Mainstream beauty/fashion magazines have the revenue to pay the Retail Distribution Allowance because of their large readership and advertising base.

18 To the public, these editors have a special status that creates a celebrity-type fascination. The editors are often considered the ones to watch for at high-profile fashion shows. Also, as of late, there are many movie and television portrayals of magazine editors.
strategic, organized approach. I first sent a letter requesting participation in the study to the editors-in-chief of all twelve magazines within the mainstream beauty/fashion magazine sample (see Appendix A). The editors-in-chief were my ideal participants since they are the key editorial decision-makers (Ferguson 3). The letter of approach was written strategically in an entertaining, editorial style that would interest the editors while at the same time enforce the integrity and seriousness of my research project. These letters were followed by a phone call. In the phone call I reiterated the purpose of my study and upon request, explained the caveats listed on the informed consent form. In only two cases did I talk with the editor herself before the interview. In most cases I arranged meeting times and details with the editorial assistant. Arranging the interviews required numerous phone calls. I kept a detailed contact log of when telephone calls were made and when follow-up calls were scheduled.19

Interviewing only editors-in-chief proved not possible due to the fact that the editors were not all interested in participating and in some cases, the editors were unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts. Nevertheless, gaining the perspectives of editors representing large magazines within my sample was important for a successful study. In fact, the more perspectives maintained for my study, the richer the data. As a result, when meeting with the editor-in-chief appeared not possible, which happened in five cases, I approached—at the request of the editor-in-chief or the public relations manager—another editor near the top of the masthead. Since the editors-in-chief don't operate alone, the editors near the top of the masthead are fully aware of the workings of the magazine, making their perspectives important for this study.20

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19 This log will not be included as a appendix for anonymity purposes.

20 Editors near the top of one masthead often become editors-in-chief of another. For example, Katharine Betts, a managing editor at Vogue, was recently appointed editor-in-chief of Harper's BAZAAR after BAZAAR's longtime editor, Liz Tilberis, passed away. The Betts example illustrates the interchangeability of the senior or managing editors and editors-in-chief making both their perspectives important for this study.
In addition, I broadened my sample to gain more editors'-in-chief perspectives. I approached two mainstream beauty/fashion magazines that have the same mainstream beauty/fashion format but target a slightly older readership (approximately age 25-45).21 Again, in search of as many perspectives as possible, I also conducted two interviews by email at the request of the participants.

Once I had approached the editors-in-chief or editors near the top of the masthead from all the magazines that fit my sample, plus the two editors of magazines targeting a slightly older audience but with a similar mainstream beauty/fashion format, I abandoned my search for participants because I was confident that a representative number of perspectives was obtained. In total, five editors-in-chief, one executive editor, three senior editors, one managing editor, and one assistant managing editor were interviewed in person and two senior editors were interviewed through email. Since job titles across magazines vary greatly—for example, some magazines have executive editors while others have senior editors—making comparisons in job positions across magazines is difficult. Nevertheless, all the editors interviewed were near the top of the masthead. Nine of the eleven editors interviewed were White women, one was an African-American woman, and one was a White man. Twelve of the editors represented magazines that target women approximately age 18-34 and two represented magazines that target a slightly older audience of approximately 25-40. All magazines represented were mainstream beauty/fashion magazines with a circulation of at least 750,000. Having established my sample, I began to develop the interview instrument.

21 Because both of these magazines participated in the study, the magazine names will not be given for confidentiality purposes.
Developing the Interview Instrument

Based on feminist interview protocol, my goal was to create a conversation relevant to the realities of the publishing industry that answered my research question. There were three main considerations. First, although I had originally planned to conduct an interview approximately 45 minutes to one hour long, based on the editors’ busy schedules, interviews were on average 25-30 minutes. In order to ensure my research question was addressed in this relatively short amount of time, the conversation between me and the participants needed to stay generally on topic. At the same time, the conversation needed to be non-structured enough to give the editors an opportunity to discuss their own ideas beyond the parameters of my research questions. To meet these goals, the questionnaire approach drew from Rubin and Rubin’s tree and branch model. The model established the overall interview sequence through the main questions, which are the tree, and therefore, allowed me to ensure my main research questions were addressed. The follow-up questions, which are the branches, stem from the main questions to create a complete picture (Rubin and Rubin 16). To be interviewee-focused, my follow-up questions were created from the editors’ responses to the main questions. Through the approach, any of the editors’ perspectives that were beyond but stemming from the main questions were explored. In addition, prompts were used. Prompts encouraged further dialogue about comments that were in opposition to the literature and clarified participants’ knowledge and understanding. Also, prompts were useful to reiterate specifically what my questions were asking, which helped keep the conversation related to my research question.

A second consideration when developing the interview instrument (see Appendix B) was that questions needed to be relevant to the editors’ experiences. Relevant questions were developed through a literature and cultural review. These reviews, drawn from McCracken’s method of inquiry, developed a thorough understanding of the literature and explored how personal researcher knowledge related to the research topic at hand.
The literature review requires a thorough understanding of both scholarly and popular literature. Such understanding is essential because my research explores the editors' perspectives in regard to a specific topic—the relationship between advertising and editorial content—and the information has to be obtained in a relatively short interview (Rubin and Rubin 196). A thorough understanding of the literature provided an intimate familiarity with the past and current research on the topic at hand. Such familiarity allowed for the creation of relevant interview questions (McCracken 31).

The cultural review required an exploration of cultural categories including using the self as an instrument of inquiry (McCracken 32). The review involved recalling a past incident where the researcher was directly involved with the topic at hand. The goal of the exercise was to create recognition of important researcher knowledge to develop interview categories (McCracken 33). Exploring personal knowledge about the topic did create categories integral to the construction of the interview design. My recalled incident was when, as a columnist for a newspaper, I wrote a newspaper column commenting on a health story published in a women's magazine, a magazine that fit into the parameters of the sample for this research. The column suggested that the health story was giving information in a format that was harmful to women. My readers expressed interest in the column and contacted the writer of the women's health article. The writer, having seen my column, responded to me through email expressing that she was not in compliance with the health article's published format; she reported that the content of her article was changed due to external influences on the magazine. This author's response illustrated that at least one mainstream beauty/fashion women's magazine writer was open to discussion about the social content of her article. The response, in
correlation with the literature,\textsuperscript{22} emphasized the importance of considering external constraints on magazine content. The personal experience, therefore, helped reinforce the importance of editorial autonomy in my interview instrument.

Beyond using myself as an instrument of inquiry through personal experience, the cultural categories review also provided an opportunity to recognize assumptions. The goal of establishing assumptions and familiarities is for the researcher to think critically about their vision in the world and to create a critical distance (McCracken 33). Distance helps the researcher understand and think critically about their position as a researcher. My researcher position is influenced by the fact that I have worked in the publishing industry. Also, I am a White, Canadian woman of Eastern European heritage who is 25-years-old, currently studying in the northwest United States. Understanding my personal worldview helped me to be aware of personal assumptions and influences when creating the interview questions. To put the relevance of my questions to the test, I consulted others in the publishing industry for a pilot test.

Four pilot interviews were conducted with editors and writers of various media including two newspaper editors, one magazine writer/journalism professor, and one Website magazine editor. The feedback from these interviews proved useful. Through the participants’ responses I came to learn how the interview questions were being perceived and whether or not my questions were being interpreted as intended.

The third consideration when developing the interview instrument was varying content across magazines. Although the magazines represented in the sample are in the mainstream beauty/fashion format, each publication has its own tone, style, and content. To address variations, the questions were non-standardized and tailored to each editor’s magazine. In order to ask important follow-up

\textsuperscript{22} Feminist media scholar Liesbet van Zoonen explains: “In any case, a key issue for any study of media production is to find out which decision criteria are individual and which are determined by the communicators’ environment” (47).

interview questions and show the editors the respect of knowing their magazine, I needed to familiarize myself with both the magazines the editors represented and the literature written about the editors themselves. Perusing twelve recent issues of the editors' magazines and becoming familiar with the style, tone, and editorial sections created this familiarity. I applied three analytical perspectives which were chosen based on my research question and the literature review themes.

First, I looked at the fashion pages and target audience for each magazine. Fashion pages appear to be one of the most apparent determiners of a magazine's personality as related to the target audience. All mainstream women's beauty/fashion magazines appear to find unique ways to cater directly to their readers' economic situation and fashion tastes. Some of the magazines, for example, feature relatively inexpensive clothes from the GAP; others feature extravagant Prada gowns. Still others, who target young beauty and fashion trendsetters entering the workforce, put together fashion combinations such as expensive small items—a Gucci belt for example—matched with inexpensive large items such as Levi's jeans. Since these fashion statements say a great deal about the persona and target audience of each magazine, being familiar with the fashion choices was important when conversing with the editors about their magazines.

Second, I explored the perception of the relationship between advertising and editorial in the magazines. Such exploration involved considering the labeling of special advertising sections, the positioning of advertisements, and the mention of beauty and fashion advertisers on editorial pages. I also examined the layout and design of the editorial and advertising pages to identify differences and similarities in the way the editorial and the advertising looked. Knowing the perceived and physical relationship between the editorial and advertising sections helped me conduct an informed conversation with the editor. Also, during the interview, the knowledge allowed me to point out and inquire further about any discrepancies in the editors' comments that weren't found through my analysis of the magazines.

Third, since part of my interview protocol involved asking specific questions in regard to social topic stories, I identified these stories before the
interview using the informal artifact analysis. Social topic stories clearly stand out from the beauty and fashion pages, making them easily identifiable. The social topics most commonly and most recently found in the magazines were referred to in the interview. Editors were asked how certain social topic stories fit into their magazine's editorial mix and if the stories' content were affected by the relationship between advertising and editorial content.

Beyond the informal artifact analysis of each magazine, I obtained recent source documents, mostly media articles, written on the magazines and/or their editors before each interview. Such information, obtained through the electronic search vehicle Lexus/Nexus, provided the necessary background information about both the editors and the editors' magazines. The source documents went back three years. Examples of knowledge gained from source documents included learning how long the editor-in-chief has been in her/his position, finding out whether the magazine was recently re-designed (if the magazine was recently re-designed and re-launched I could expect the editor to talk about this in the interview), learning about any recent controversy and publicity surrounding magazine stories, and being informed of public appearances made by the editors. While reading through the source documents, I highlighted information that could be relevant to the conversation with the editor. Some of the information was used for reference or follow-up questions during the interview.

After completing all the necessary background work, I was ready to interview the editors but first I needed to gain academic approval. This research was approved through the Internal Review Board of Oregon State University. During the approval process, I declared that the editors' responses would remain anonymous. In order to maintain anonymity, the editors' magazines would also remain anonymous. To avoid identification and inferences, the findings will refer to the editors as Editors 1 through 12 and the names of the magazines the editors represent will not be given. Under these guidelines, I began the interview process.
Describing the Conversation Setting

Nine interviews took place within the editors' New York offices and two by email. The magazine offices were bustling with energy and action—people were clustered in the halls, walking in and out of their offices or in some cases standing up talking over the barriers of their office cubicles. Due to an open office concept, which appeared to be because of a lack of space, overhearing a multitude of conversations while waiting to see the editor—in every case the editor was at least fifteen minutes late—was inevitable. Discussions ranged from the best way to get Chris Rock to come to a magazine party to fashion editors saying a definitive “No” to racks of clothes placed in the lobby.

Once sitting down for the interview, the editors had various ways of participating. Some closed the door, others left the door open but told their assistants not to interrupt, and others encouraged employees to enter the office so the editor could momentarily check proofs for color and placement. Since the goal was to be interviewee focused, whatever style of discussion the editor chose was accepted. In regard to image, the editors all had their own personal designer attire. I, too, wore designer clothes in a strategic effort to fit into the culture and make relations between myself and the editor comfortable and somewhat equal (Reinhartz 27). The interview was conducted in a personal, conversational style, which strove for professional intimacy (Reinhartz 27). When introducing myself I was as natural and honest as possible. I briefly explained my background and how my past endeavors related to my interest in this research (Rubin and Rubin 76). I then presented the informed consent form (see Appendix C). I asked the editors to read, then sign, two copies of the form. One copy was given to the editor and I kept one for my records. After the form was signed, I conducted the interview.

During the interview my goal was to get through all my questions but in no particular order. In most cases, using Rubin and Rubin's tree and branch model, the conversation moved far beyond the main questions through the use of follow-up questions. My background knowledge from the literature and cultural review as
well as the informal artifact analysis was useful in constructing relevant, useful follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin 197). After each interview I examined my questions for appropriateness based on what I had learned in the last interview (Strauss and Corbin 30). Although the general structure of each interview stayed the same, I did tailor each interview to reflect any specific issues relevant to the magazine and to accommodate the social topic stories.

All the personal interviews were audio taped. For confidentiality and practical reasons, I personally transcribed the interviews. The first set of three interviews was transcribed within one week after the interviews were conducted, before the next set of interviews began. Through the early transcription and informal analysis of the first interviews, I gained guidance for the next interviews (Strauss and Corbin 30). The remaining interviews were transcribed after the completion of data collection. Five months passed between the completion of transcription and beginning of formal data analysis, which allowed me to become unfamiliar with the transcripts and then revisit them for analysis with a fresh perspective.

**Discovering Analytic Categories**

An emerging coding scheme, modeled after Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory approach, was used to analyze the data. Data segments that covered key questions, specifically data relevant to the editors’ perspectives of the relationship between advertising and editorial content, were analyzed. Also, data which, based on the literature, provided a relevant context for understanding the potential significance and/or insignificance of the relationship between advertising and editorial were considered. These data included the editors’ perspectives of the readers’ relationships with the magazine and the magazine format’s relationship with current American culture.
Each transcript was first read in search of salient themes. In this open-coding process, the database was reduced from multiple transcripts to a set of themes that characterized the process being explored. During the open-coding process, questions such as “What is this? What does it represent?” were asked while reading through the transcripts. After considering what was being represented, a thematic label was given to each analyzed segment and written in the margins. Several readings of the transcripts were conducted. With each successive reading, categories emerged based on the interrelationship among the themes. Ultimately, some of the categories were collapsed into a single, overarching category. Other larger categories became subcategories collected under a single unifying category. I used the constant comparative approach, first within each transcript then across all transcripts. The approach required looking for differences and similarities in the conditions, consequences, strategies or interactions within the data (Strauss and Corbin 62). Through this process, six categories eventually emerged, four of which were supported by sub-categories. I then created a coding paradigm to visually portray the interrelationship of these categories and subcategories (see Appendix D). At that point, I began to write up the results drawing from the coding paradigm and the categories and subcategories.

Presenting Limitations of Study

This research provides insight into the perspectives of editors of women’s magazines as collected through the approach explained in this methodology section. The research is a useful first-step, which establishes ideas for further research in understanding media makers’ experiences in regard to the relationship between editorial and advertising content. Nevertheless, the study has limitations, which fall into four main categories.

First, due to the celebrity status of the editors, gaining access to interview the participants was difficult. As a result, I chose to include as many perspectives
as possible even if the conditions did not occur as originally outlined by the study. Not everyone represented in the study, therefore, is an editor-in-chief as originally intended and not all the magazines in the originally defined sample are represented. Also, due to the editors' busy schedules, interview lengths varied, ranging from 15 minutes to 1 hour, with the average being 25-30 minutes. These differences will result in some editors' voices being heard more than others in the findings. In addition, two of the interviews were conducted by email, which affected the way the data was collected and therefore, may have altered the nature of the data given. Any of these factors may have affected the results of this study; at the same time, such compromises were necessary to gain the perspectives of a relatively inaccessible group of participants who are not frequently studied.

Second, the use of semi-structured interviews created a limitation to this study. Although semi-structured interviews were necessary considering interview time constraints and the need to answer my research question, the approach may have discouraged the editor from discussing what she thought was important outside of the parameters of my questions. To allow the editor to direct some of what was discussed, I used Rubin and Rubin's tree and branch model as explained earlier. Nevertheless, my specific interview questions may not have tapped all the editors' concerns.

Another limitation is that the editors may have been concerned about confidentiality. Because they are in such a public industry, they may not have believed confidentiality was possible, which could have affected their responses. The fact that the interviews were tape-recorded also could have heightened the editors' confidentiality concerns or made them feel uncomfortable. The informed consent form, however, clearly outlined that their responses would remain confidential. I went over this form with each editor before the interview.

During the interviews I asked the editors for their perspectives, which may have created another limitation. People's perspectives and ways of making meaning out of their experience is fluid; therefore, it changes overtime. It is possible that if the same questions were asked at another time or another day the editor would have
responded differently based on the day’s events and the editor’s mood. It also is possible that the editors’ perspectives were altered because they were trying to please the researcher or in other words, they were attempting to answer the questions as they thought I wanted them to. To minimize the effects, I explored the editor’s responses through follow-up questions, which helped the editor feel her perspectives were valued and encouraged her to keep talking. The follow-up questions also helped clarify the editors’ perspectives.

The way the editor perceived me also may have affected the way the editor responded. For example, although I clearly stated my research agenda, four editors still asked me if I was looking for a job when I was done with school. The editors’ perceptions of me could have influenced their responses. To minimize this influence, I clearly presented my interests as a researcher before conducting the interviews.

Finally, my experience in the publishing industry could be a limitation. Through my familiarity with the area of research, I may have had a tendency to make assumptions or to be too forgiving toward the editors’ predicaments. This limitation was addressed through the review of cultural categories as explained earlier in this section. Overall, despite the limitations, this study is a valuable first-step in gaining the editors’ perspectives. I will now present the findings.
RESULTS: THE EDITORS’ PERSPECTIVES

Drawing on Wolcott’s ethnographic writing strategies, the presentation of the editors’ perspectives draws from “progressive focussing” strategies to guide the reader through the themes which move from general to more specific and then back to general again in a contextualized, clear format (Wolcott 18). Drawing from such an approach, the goal as explained by Richardson, is for the data to tell a story with multiple perspectives. This approach is useful for this study because the focus is on the editors’ perspectives of a specific relationship—the relationship between editorial and advertising—within the women’s magazine publishing structure (Wolcott 18). In order to understand the editors’ perspectives of the relationship in context, the beliefs and circumstances that shape the editors’ perspectives must first be explored. As a result, I will first present a discussion of the editors’ perspectives of magazine readers, followed by, second, an exploration of the editors’ perceptions of women’s magazines as cultural and industry barometers. Third, I will define the blurring of advertising and editorial content based on the editors’ belief systems. Fourth, I will explore the relationship between advertising and editorial through the editors’ discussion of advertisers’ requests and editors’ responses. Fifth, I will discuss the editors’ perspectives of social topic stories and last, I will explain the editors’ perspectives of the blurring of talent and style between advertising and editorial.

In order to truly “hear” the editors’ perspectives, data will be presented through direct quotations. Quotations will be edited slightly for clarity and grammar. Since the editors participated in the study with the understanding that their responses would remain anonymous, names of magazines and editors will not be given when presenting the data. Editors will be referred to as Editors 1 through 12. All editors were interviewed in person except E10 and E12 who were interviewed via email. The editors were assigned numbers at random. In addition, to avoid inferences, if the editor mentioned the name of their magazine inside a
quotation, the name has been taken out and changed to “my magazine.”

If editors mentioned names of magazines besides their own, those were changed to Magazine Title unless the editor’s identity was not implicated. For example, if one of the editors said, “I worked for Time magazine,” then Time would be changed to Magazine Title because using Time would implicate her or his identity based on past employment. On the other hand, if the editor said, “You can notice a change in format if you look at Time magazine,” the name would remain since the use of the name would not implicate the editor’s identity. Using the above criteria, I will now introduce the editors’ perspectives of the reader.

Women’s Magazine Readers: Looking for Advice, Entertainment, and Learning

All twelve editors expressed the importance of the reader and referred to the reader repeatedly during our discussion. For example, Editor 9 said, “[M]y main goal is my reader.” This is not surprising since, as identified by three editors (E9, 2, 3), the reader makes the magazine economically viable. As expressed by the Editor 2, “The publisher’s not paying my salary. The advertising pages don’t pay my salary. Um, the readers are paying my salary.” Ultimately, the reader pays the bills for both the editor and the advertiser through the purchase of the editors’ magazines and the advertisers’ products. As Editor 3 said, “Readers will continue to drive the economy of any magazine.” Based on this economic structure, the reader is considered the primary focus. Editor 2 explained, “First you gotta find what a reader needs, then the ads tag along.” What the editor is referring to is that first, the

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23 “My magazine” is often how the editors—especially editors-in-chief—refer to the magazine they edit which makes the phrase a suitable choice as a replacement for the name of the magazine.

24 None of the editors interviewed said this and Time magazine does not fit into the sample for my study.
persona of the magazine reflects the readers’ needs in order to attract the reader. Once the reader is established, her readership is used to sell the magazine through the publisher and the advertising department, to advertisers.

Finding out what the reader needs was identified or inferred as being part of the editors’ job descriptions by all twelve editors. Since editors create editorial content that is relevant to the reader, the editor needs to have a clear sense of what the reader wants. As Editor 10 said, “The editorial mix is completely designed with the reader in mind.” In this section, the editors’ perspectives of the readers’ reasons for reading the magazine will be captured in three themes: advice, entertainment, and learning.

Editors identified 17 reasons their readers buy and read their magazines, but almost all of the responses fit into three overlapping main themes: 1) readers look to the magazine for advice and take action on the advice; 2) readers look to the magazine for entertainment, entertainment that might provoke dream-like, aspirational ideas; and 3) readers read the magazine to be intellectually stimulated and to learn something new. Although other reasons were identified, such as readers come to the magazine to be “empowered,” comments falling into these three categories were overwhelmingly prevalent.

The first theme establishes the importance of looking at factors that can influence magazine content, such as the relationship between advertising and editorial. According to six editors (E1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10), readers are looking to women’s magazines to either improve or make sense of their lives. For example, Editor 6 explained that the reader, “[...] wants to look better and they want to do what they can to look better [...] They want the magazine to deliver them the information that will improve their life.” Specifically, what the editor referred to is what other editors defined as readers taking action on editorial ideas and tips in women’s magazines in hopes to change or bring meaning to an aspect of their lives. Editor 3 explained the type of action a reader might take on editorial content saying that if the reader takes these steps she is much more likely to keep reading the magazine:
If they have bought the nail polish or have taken a quiz or broke up with their boyfriend or found a new boyfriend or whatever or gotten a raise um or even filled out some form and sent it in, that’s enough, that they’ll wanna get their hands on it [the magazine] again.

Later, the same editor also explained how women’s magazines can function as a type of manual for life:

People want information. I mean the world is complicated, confusing and we’re bombarded by messages and you know there are a pretty systematic set of rules that underlie a lot of our experiences and magazines tell people articulate, we articulate for them so that the reader will have safer sex, happier love life. She’ll look, she’ll express who she is better by the make-up she uses and the clothes she chooses [...].

Another editor, Editor 1, further expressed how readers take magazine messages very seriously—almost like “scripture”—and how the content can greatly influence them:

They say things like ‘You’re my oxygen.’ They love it. They feel that it addresses their needs in a very complete way. I think they see it as a, both a bible, a service magazine, where they—like for instance, we did a story in January, a hair story, that the number of readers who wrote in and said ‘I chopped nine inches off because of your story.’ If it's in my magazine they take it very seriously. ‘Hey, that is a hair trend then and I’m gonna try it.’

So clearly, some editors identified that readers take action based on the messages in women’s magazines.

Two editors, however, did not agree with this viewpoint. These two editors (E7, E5) expressed annoyance at the idea of readers looking to the magazine to tell them what to do. Editor 5 said in an annoyed tone that her reader “does not look to the magazine to tell her what to do, OK?” Editor 7 also did not consider her magazine to operate as a manual of any kind:
I mean let’s face it. It’s a magazine. It’s not going to solve your problems. It’s not going to make your relationship something that it isn’t, you know. It’s a magazine. It’s for enjoyment, entertainment. It’s for fun, it’s a laugh [...]. We’re never like the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts.’ You will never ever in our magazine find how to do a crunch or how to do a jumping jack or sit-up or anything cause frankly all readers know how to do a sit-up and if they want to do sit-ups they’ll do sit-ups. They don’t need to read about it in the magazine [...].

Editor 5’s focus on enjoyment and entertainment leads to the second reason editors identified in regard to why readers come to the magazine: entertainment. Eight editors (E1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10) mentioned entertainment as a reason readers come to the magazine. What entertainment meant varied from editor to editor. With the exception of two editors (E4, E9), the responses generally said that the magazine is “fun” and “exciting” to read. For example, Editor 1 said, “A lot of readers tell us that they call their friends and read them parts of the magazine and it may be something a little outrageous that they’ve read [...] that’s just purely entertainment [...].”

Beyond fun and excitement, another way to be entertained, as stated by Editor 4, is by “aspirational” content. Editor 4 explains that historically and currently, women’s magazines—particularly high-end women’s magazines—have offered aspirational ideas that aren’t necessarily connected to the daily realities of life:

What these magazines offered was a kind of aspirational fantasy um that you could be like look at Elizabeth Taylor, look at Gloria Vanderbilt, look at these women and dream, aspire, imagine uh being the richest little girl in the world, imagine being married to, you know, the head of CBS, imagine being married to Winston Churchill’s son or grandchildren. Imagine sort of a perfect life of um, you know, many hundred acre estates in Long Island or Connecticut and houses in Jamaica and trips to Paris and staying at the Ritz and massages and cars. That was very alluring and it’s still very alluring. That’s why we have fantasies in order to transport from the reality of day-in and day-out life which is about scuffed shoes, cellulite and, you know, an AMEX bill that you can't quite swing this month.
As illustrated from “fun” to “aspirational” content, the editors perceived the reader as wanting a magazine that’s entertaining.

Beyond taking action on magazine content and entertainment, the reader also wants to be informed by and learn from interesting, practical, even intelligent discussion, which is the third theme identified by four editors (E1, 3, 5, 10). Editor 10 explained that her readers, “have a broad, discerning, inquiring mind [. . .] and they are concerned about what’s going on in the world.” The editors work to provide something new for these inquiring readers. Editor 3 explained:

[. . .] she also comes to us for reviews, for work information and a lot of it. A lot of money information and technology information, information about the Internet and technology [. . .]. Upon encountering my magazine you will learn things that you did not know before and that’s not always true with magazines that are softer [. . .].

Similarly, Editor 5 tries to be thought-provoking in her magazine:

[W]e’re not breaking a lot of news stories but we are, I hope, being thoughtful about important things that are in the news about sort of issues that will affect and move women and sort of broaden and enlighten them in some way, you know. So that’s my hope.

The readers’ interests in learning something new allows for interesting editorial content as defined by the editors above.

As shown in the three themes presented, although the editors’ perspectives of their readers’ reasons for reading the magazines have similarities and differences, one distinguishing element across editors is the importance of identifying why the reader comes to the magazine. Because readers must be attracted to the magazine in order for it to be successful, the editors believe their accuracy about what the reader wants is important. To identify what the readers want, the editors tap into what I named, based on their comments, “The Cultural Barometer.”
Women's Magazines: Functioning as Cultural and Industry Barometers

This section explores the editors' perspectives of how women's magazines act as first, a cultural barometer and second, an industry barometer. These barometers are important because they have the potential to influence editorial content. The cultural barometer refers to understanding and responding to the shared attitudes, beliefs, values, goals, and practices of the current generation buying the magazine. The industry barometer refers to understanding and responding to economic changes that influence the magazine publishing industry.

Cultural Barometer

First, since women's magazines have mass appeal and distribution, the editors' perspectives of why their readers come to their magazines are placed within a social context and reflect a cultural mood as the editors described through a discussion of cultural trends. Based on five editors' responses (E1, 3, 4, 5, 6), understanding and reflecting cultural trends is an important survival strategy. In order to reflect cultural trends in the magazine, the editors tailor their magazines' messages to suit the cultural mood. As identified by three editors (E3, 5, 8), the mood can change significantly as different generations of women enter the magazine's target audience. For example, Editor 3 discussed the relationship of her readers, whom she identified as "Gen Xers," with the word, "feminism," and how that relationship stops her from using the word in her magazine:
You know they hate the F word. They hate the feminist word but um you know as long as they say it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, looks like a duck, it’s probably is a duck and they’re very strongly feminist. Now on the other hand, just because you’re a feminist and you believe in equality and you know equal strength and power and potential of women, does not mean that a woman who reads my magazine will not be devastated if her boyfriend’s a jerk. There’s a lot of balancing, you know. The power issues spell out in a lot of different ways and if someone’s got her feelings hurt is probably not completely comforted by the fact that she told him to leave cause he slept with her best friend—it still hurts if she slept with her best friend. So feminism is defined in different ways. I think our readers are very assertive at work. For instance, um they tend to wanna be in control of their finances. They’re very careful of things like financial arrangements within relationships, like who’s paying for what [...]. These are gender politics issues to some extent and the readers are pretty savvy to that but they would never ever call themselves feminist or like 89% of them wouldn’t. They have this image that if you call yourself a feminist, you’ll never fall in love and never get married. I mean it’s just some strange dark aura hangs over that word um and it’s too bad cause it’s a good word. It explains equality for women very quickly but it acquired lot of baggage that it meant you hate men, you’re a lesbian you know, I don’t know what--it’s just bad so we don’t use it [...].

Editor 6, who identifies her reader as slightly younger than Gen X, comments on the recent cultural mood and how that affects the kind of issues covered in magazines:

I think that it’s a bigger cultural issue. I think the bigger cultural issue is that people aren’t cynical right now and they don’t wanna read cynicism. Really, I mean, it’s funny how, you know, you think about even Gen X was cynical and sort of lost and the next generation is not at all, you know. They believe in their parents and they believe in the economy. They believe in the country. It’s a real mood shift and it might be because of the millennium and people feeling like, you know, there’s a certain security they want to hang onto what’s good. I think it has a lot to do with the economy being so strong, unemployment being so low, but all these things affect each other. None of this stuff happens in a vacuum and even though I’m doing a beauty magazine that’s not about politics, I still believe that it all filters into our world. The
smart thing is to be aware of it and to, you know, you have to read everything. You have to respond to whatever the mood is and have a really good barometer for that mood in order to do a magazine and constantly keep your magazine um in touch with your readers so people will buy it, people respond to it, people connect with the tone.

Based on some editors, then, understanding and responding to cultural trends is an essential strategy used to maintain and attract their audiences. Reflecting cultural trends is one way the magazine content is shaped as explained by the editors. Another is through the industry barometer.

**Industry Barometer**

Second, in order to maintain success, editors discussed that women’s magazines act as what I have termed a publishing “industry barometer” that responds to industry changes. The main industry change in the last ten years as identified by six editors (E1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11) was increased competition, which has defined many recent aspects of women’s magazines. Specifically, editors identified heightened competition as affecting the increase in the coverage of two specific topics: sex and celebrities. In addition, the increased competition has encouraged the increase in the blurring of editorial and advertising content. I will now reveal the editors’ comments regarding the increase in sex and celebrities and the blurring of advertising and editorial content before exploring the editors’ perceptions of the blurring of editorial and advertising in detail in the next section.

*Increase in Sexual Content and Celebrity Coverage*

Two of the editors, Editors 3 and 9, referred to the women’s magazine market as “thinly sliced” in the sense that there are many women’s magazines, one
for every segment of the market. As a result of such competition, "boring the reader can be like slitting your wrists and jumping out the window" as explained by Editor 4. To avoid such a death sentence, editors have created coping strategies which include increased coverage of sex and celebrities. An increase in sex content in women's magazines was identified by four editors (E1, 3, 4, and 12). As Editor 12 said, "There's more sex, more sex and more sex." All four editors expressed that sex interested readers and, therefore, sold magazines. For example, Editor 3 explained the use of sexual content to sell magazines on the newsstand in a competitive market:

[There's then a lot of like 'Look at my magazine, you now, read this, you know, yahoo! Sex, blah, blah, blah.' And you're off to the races which is fun because winning at the newsstand is very exciting but boy is it competitive [...].]

So in this case the response to increased competition has altered magazine content.

According to some editors, there is also a sales element to increased celebrity coverage. An increase in celebrity coverage was identified by six editors (E10, 1, 4, 6, 8, 9). Editor 5 explains the link between the industry's increase in competition and celebrities:

The business has become much more bottom line driven and I think that's part of why you see more celebrity covers, more celebrity coverage, because there's a sales element in that so, you know, they're intertwined.

Similarly, Editor 8 noted the increase of celebrities on the covers of magazines:

[I]f people connect with the celebrity, they're gonna pick it [the magazine] up OK? This headline right here [the editor points to her magazine with a celebrity on the cover]. People see that, they pick it up so that's why we put it on the magazine. You want them to buy your magazine, so that your magazine's making money and your boss is happy with you.

The coverage of celebrities, however, does not fit into just one mold. One editor highlighted the aspirational side of celebrities while another focused more on
being “real” with the celebrity. Editor 4 discusses the type of aspirational, voyeuristic appeal that readers are interested in when readers learn about celebrities:

[... ] I mean it used to be that the cover of this magazine was sort of the exclusive domain of models and frequently or historically, frequently those models were anonymous. We didn't know her name. We didn't know who her boyfriend was or where she lived or what she did for breakfast or her exercise program, her mother's thoughts on her daughter [...]. I mean she was just beautiful and she was a mannequin, to put clothes on, makeup on, to sell things with—we didn't care. I mean there wasn't the cult of the personality that we've all invested so heavily in. I mean this is pre-People magazine, pre-US, pre-Entertainment Weekly, Pre E-tonight, pre In Style. It wasn't, you know, at home with um, Jennifer Anniston, at home with Harrison Ford. It wasn't that kind of cultishness and then I think that began to change when the models slowly began to sort of evolve from anonymous women to women with distinct personalities and identities whose lives and whose loves we were interested in a kind of larger culturally, voyeuristically way that we have because, you know, as we're sitting at home eating warmed-over meatloaf from last night, isn't it nice to know that sort of Christie Turlington or Jason Patrick are living happily ever after in a five story Greenwich village town house? [... ] No detail was too trivial, no piece of information too personal [...]. America wants to know and if you can tell them, you can sell magazines that way [...].

Editor 7 used a much more matter-of-fact approach for GenX readers:

[W]e don’t put our celebrities up on a pedestal so you’re not reading, ‘Oh my goodness! So and so is such a wonderful person [. . .]. [W]e’re portraying her how she truly is. We’re not saying she’s this wonderful icon that everyone should worship. We’re portraying them [celebrities] like an everyday person that you and I would run into in the street [...].

Regardless of how they are presented, according to some of the editors, celebrities sell magazines in a competitive market.
Increase in the Blurring of Advertising and Editorial Content

Beyond the focus on celebrities and sexual content is the increase in the blurring of advertising and editorial content as identified explicitly by six editors (E1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11) and implicitly by one (E9). Four of these editors (E1, 2, 3, 8) attributed the increase in blurring to increased competition in the magazine industry. As Editor 3 explains:

[W]hen the ad sales get really, really competitive and when you can't win on the price side, then um smart publishers sell the quality of the readership very, very, strongly. If they can't figure out how to do that, and a good one can, then they do start to make a lot of promises [to advertisers] for positioning for compatible editorial—that kind of thing—um and adding special advertising supplements that kind of thing.

Editor 1 also attributed the increase in the blurring of advertising and editorial content to publishers looking to get more business: "[O]ften in an attempt to get advertisers' business they [publishers] make certain promises and say, 'Well, you can be a part of this.'" The editor is referring to the publisher telling the advertiser that their advertisement or product can be a part of editorial, which would be considered the blurring of advertising and editorial content.

In addition to the six editors who identified the increased blurring of editorial and advertising content, one editor (E9) said that although there has not been an increase in the blurring of editorial and advertising content at her magazine, she suspects that this might be happening at other magazines. However, the editor did not want to be definitive. As Editor 9 explained:

I don't want to say that [there has been an increase in the blurring of advertising and editorial content in the magazine industry] because I can't say that. I don't know about the others. But I do think that from the kinds of requests that we have gotten here in terms of fashion and beauty companies [advertisers'] expectations certainly initially, there is an expectation that we would do business in certain way and when we did not live up to those expectations, they [advertisers] were surprised so I can assume
what they're used to doing. Then again, I haven't worked in those places so I don't know. How's that for getting around that?

Whether blatantly expressed or cautiously suggested, at least half of the editors interviewed perceive an increase in the blurring of advertising and editorial content in women's magazines. I will now explore in-depth the editors' perceptions of the relationship between advertisers and editors which was the main focus for the study. To do this, I will start by defining the relationship based on the editors' perspectives.

The Relationship: Defining the Blurring of Advertising and Editorial Content

All the editors expressed some interest in keeping editorial and advertising content separate; seven of twelve editors (E1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11) said or suggested that the blurring of editorial and advertising is increasing. Two of the editors (E1, 2) specified that the increase is not only happening in women's magazines but to all kinds of magazines, an observation that also is stated in the literature (Wolf 78). Despite the editors' widespread concern and apparent interest in the issue, there appear to be few utilized and uniform industry guidelines used to determine the relationship between editorial and advertising in women's magazines. The ASME industry guidelines were mentioned by only three of the editors interviewed (E1, 9, 10). One editor, Editor 7, seemed to be completely unaware of the guidelines. She discussed a procedure used at her magazine that is against ASME guidelines but never identified the procedure as a violation.25 Another editor (E9), explained that there are stringent, written policies within her publishing organization in regard to maintaining the separation between editorial and advertising and these policies are modeled after the ASME guidelines. Overall, however, uniform guidelines,

25 The procedure was to have the editorial department write the advertisers' special advertising sections, which is against ASME guidelines.
specifically ASME, do not appear to be utilized or at least were not identified when discussing the blurring of advertising and editorial among many of the editors I interviewed. As a result, I will not focus on the ASME guidelines but will instead explore how the editors themselves explained and defined the blurring of advertising and editorial within the context of their experience and publishing organization. First, I will explain the editors' general belief systems around advertising and editorial. Second, I will explain what the editors consider not to be the blurring of advertising and editorial. Last, I will explain what the editors consider to be the blurring of advertising and editorial.

Editors' Belief Systems

Based on the editors' responses, the relationship between advertising and editorial can be contradictory and precarious. On one hand, the editors expressed that their magazines are businesses and the advertisers are their "clients" who need to be shown respect. As Editor 1 explains, "They’re [advertisers] our partners and even though we think of it [the relationship between editorial and advertising] very much as church [editorial] and state [advertising] they’re very much our partners and we respect anyone who advertises in the magazine." Notably, five editors (E1, 2, 7, 8, 9) used the terms "church" and "state" when referring to the separation of editorial and advertising content.

Although respecting the advertisers is important to the editors, the relationship with the reader is considered more important since as identified by the editors (E2, 3, 9) earlier, it is the reader who drives the economy of the magazine, which means maintaining a good relationship with the advertiser must not be at the cost of the reader. According to one editor (E3), if a close economic partnership between editorial and advertising is perceived by the reader, the reader could lose faith in the publication. Editor 3 explains, "You don’t want to shoot the advertiser in the foot and you don’t want to look like you’ve cut a deal either." "Shooting an
advertiser in the foot” refers to not respecting the advertiser’s interests or requests; these interests usually relate to where their advertisement is placed in the magazine and how many times the advertisers’ products receive editorial coverage. The interests can become demands as explored under the section discussing advertiser’s requests. Looking as though “you’ve cut a deal” refers to being too obvious about meeting advertisers’ requests so that the reader no longer feels the magazine is a “genuine” source of information that she can get advice from and take action on but is instead a vehicle that serves the advertiser by pushing the advertiser’s products.

The need to maintain a careful balance between advertising and editorial is based on a seemingly unquestioned assumption that exists among seven of the twelve editors interviewed (E1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10). The assumption is that readers want credible sources and that credibility is delivered by editorial messages not advertising messages. Editor 2 explains and provides an example for the claim:

[W]hat’s interesting is you’re seeing on the Internet right now you’re seeing people thinking that it’s a good idea to mix it [advertising and editorial] all up and nobody will know. You’re also seeing people who really understand why people come to a product saying, even the advertising people saying, ‘Wait a minute! That’s not such a good idea [blurring advertising/economic and editorial-social] because once we undermine what the content is [. . .] we no longer have a draw. People aren’t coming.’ They’re not gonna come once they know that they’ve been misled [. . .]. Is there a reason why? Yeah! Cause readers know if it’s, you know, sponsored by big cosmetics companies, they’re probably pushing their products and it’s probably not unbiased.

In other words, according to some of the editors, readers are looking for a “real, unbiased” story about products through editorial-type content that supposedly does not appear to have an economic interest in the products being discussed. As understood by the editor, if the separation between editorial and advertising is clear then the editorial department can deliver that “true, unbiased” story readers are supposedly looking for.
Editors' Perceptions of “Not Blurring” Editorial and Advertising Content

What, then, do the editors consider to be a separation of editorial and advertising? I will explain through editors’ examples. At this point, it is important to reiterate that editorial pages are those paid for and created by the editorial department\(^{26}\) and advertising pages are those paid for and, in general, created by advertisers.

All twelve editors’ responses imply or specifically state that mentioning an advertisers’ product in the beauty/fashion editorial pages of the magazine is not considered the blurring of editorial and advertising content if two conditions are met. First, the editor must make the decision to cover the advertisers’ product based on the criteria that the product is good and suitable for the magazine reader and not because the advertiser told the editor to cover the product. Second, the editorial coverage of advertisers’ products is not considered blurring if the advertiser does not pay directly for the coverage. Based on the publishing structure, if the advertiser pays for the coverage, that would change the coverage from editorial content to advertising content. Importantly, since editors identified readers as taking action on editorial content, it is not surprising that advertisers have a personal interest in gaining editorial coverage of their products in hopes that editorial coverage will encourage readers to buy their products. The goal, then, is to avoid blurring advertising and editorial based on the two conditions listed above, yet to still being respective of advertisers as “clients.” Editor 1 explained how she does this in relation to her fashion editorial products:

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\(^{26}\) Notably, the editorial department receives its money through the publisher, who receives the majority of revenue from the advertiser. Nevertheless, the editorial department is considered its own entity, which creates editorial content that the advertiser is not supposed to influence overtly.
I make sure that our fashion editors pay respect to the people advertised in the magazine and go and look at their products and they aren’t forced to say, to cover them, if their stuff isn’t good but certainly they look at their material and make a decision on whether this cute dress could fit into the next editorial that we cover.

In this example, the fashion editors make the decision whether to cover the advertisers’ product in editorial and if the product is used, the coverage is paid for by editorial funds. (Paradoxically, editorial is mostly paid for by advertisers anyway since advertising is the magazines’ main source of revenue.) Such a choice is not blurring of advertising and editorial as defined by the editor.

Similarly, to provide another example, Editor 6 emphasized the importance of the editorial department paying for product coverage to avoid the blurring of editorial and advertising. Her comments clearly illustrated the factors which determine what is and what is not the blurring of advertising and editorial. Those factors are who-decides-what and who-pays-for-what. The editor discussed make-up samples, which were placed in a beauty editorial in her magazine:

I could think of ten things that are blurring the lines. This is not one of them. We paid for those samples. We paid a fortune for those samples and we picked which samples we were gonna run. [27] And so many of the companies, you know, we picked the companies and we picked the colors, and we did it entirely editorially. [S]o many companies that we called when we told them that we were doing this—it’s like as far as I’m concerned they should of jumped up and down and said, ‘Thank you for the Christmas present!’ Instead they said, ‘We’d really much rather promote our, you know, fill-in-the-blank foundation.’ I was like, ‘Yes, but you’re not paying for this, we are, so you don’t get to decide, we do,’ and it was very funny to me. So to me that was not a blurring of advertising and editorial. It was just it was almost like taking the technology one step further rather than just having a flat photograph you could do something with the photograph. So it was coming from a pure editorial place [...].

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27 “What we are going to run” is in reference to what goes in the magazine and is based off the idea of “running” the printing press, which prints the magazine.
The perception of the magazine make-up samples, whether found on an advertising or editorial page, may or may not be all that different to the average reader. However, to the editor, the process of who chose the samples and who paid for the page is important in relation to what is considered the blurring of advertising and editorial content. That same understanding surfaced among all seven editors who discussed the topic without my prompting.

Beyond covering advertisers' specific products, often the editors in women's beauty/fashion magazines interview or have a story about designers behind the product such as Tommy Hilfiger or Donna Karen. Covering these designers in an interview or story under both positive and negative circumstance is another form in which advertising and editorial relate. Editors 4 and 5 discussed the nature of this relationship. Similar to the requirement that the coverage of products on editorial pages must be paid by the editorial department, these editors do not see coverage of designers who advertise in the magazine as the blurring of advertising and editorial content. Editor 5 explains her regular interviews with designers as nothing more than interesting articles for her reader:

That's just basic editorial stuff that we do. You know, that our readers would be interested in, sort of a Q and A with. I mean, the thing, that's a running column that we do which is where we interview designers, you know. We interview Ralph, we interview, you know Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, we interview um, you know. Some designers never advertise, you know. What I mean it's just sort of like who's out there? Whose stuff do we love and who do we want to interview?

Editor 4 also said that covering designers, even if they are advertisers, is just an interesting story for the reader. The editor points out that even when controversy surrounds designers, their magazine responds:

Two or three or four years ago there was a very controversial Calvin Klein campaign um and that campaign had to do with a lot of youthful looking people who were photographed in what many people perceived to be very sleazy, questionable circumstances. So there was shag, sort of bad avocado green carpeting and sort of
cheesy paneling on the wall the kind you buy at the store and sort of nail up yourself in the sort lower-end suburban neighborhoods. And then he [Calvin Klein] had these people, the boys would have their leg up and you could see their underwear or the boys would have no shirt on. They looked very young and in the television campaign they were being interviewed by someone on camera and there was this sort of kiddy porn scandal that happened [...]. We did cover it, we did talk about it. I think it was covered not in the editor's letter [...] and sure there has been mention of those kinds of controversial ad campaigns in the magazine probably in the Title section which is the most sort of fast, journalistic, quick hit [...].

So apparently, as identified by two editors (E4, 5), the editors do cover their advertisers’ products, lives, and controversies. Such coverage is not considered the blurring of advertising and editorial when the decisions are made and paid for by the editorial department based on the interests of the reader.

Editors’ Perceptions of “Blurring” Editorial and Advertising Content

In general, when decisions are made and paid for by the advertiser in regard to editorial content, this practice is considered by eight editors (E1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11) to be the blurring of advertising and editorial content. The reason this practice is considered blurring is that the editorial coverage of the advertiser’s product is in some way manipulated by the advertiser’s economic interest. Editor 1 gives an example of what she considers to be the blurring of editorial and advertising content:

When I went to Magazine Title I was told that part of the deal with Campbell’s Soup to get their advertising was that you had to run a certain number of recipes every year that called for not Campbell’s Soup but some sort of soup. Like if you’re gonna make a chicken dish, use Cream of Mushroom soup in it.

The use of soup was a pre-arranged deal between the publisher and advertisers; since this decision for the editor was one mandated by the publisher
and not by the editors on their own, this example is considered by the editors to be blurring between editorial and advertising content. Advertisers collectively fund most of the magazine, yet the editors feel they are the ones who should make editorial content decisions; this juxtaposition can create an adversarial relationship between the editor and the advertiser. In order to illustrate what is considered blurring further, I will now move to the larger category, based on the fact that this research focuses on the relationship between advertising and editorial, of advertiser's requests and editor's responses. This section defines the editors' perspectives of the "push and pull" between advertising and editorial due to three categories as identified by the editors: Advertisers' Desire for an Editorial Presence, Advertisers' Aversion to Controversy, and Advertisers' Interest in Placement, Adjacency, and Collusion.

The Relationship: Presenting Advertisers' Requests and Editors' Responses

I will present what the editors identified as the "advertisers' requests" in three separate but overlapping categories: "Advertisers' Desire for an Editorial Presence," "Advertisers' Aversion to Controversy," and "Advertisers' Interest in Placement, Adjacency, and Collusion." When provided by the editors, I also will present the editors' descriptions of both their responses to the advertisers' requests and the publishers' role in dealing with the advertisers' requests. Editors' interest and enthusiasm varied surrounding the topic of "advertisers' requests." Five editors responded in an enthusiastic, tell-all fashion (E1, 2, 6, 7, 9); another four editors discussed advertisers' requests but relatively briefly (E3, 5, 8, 11); two editors said they didn't know about advertisers (E4, 12); and one editor said that she couldn't talk about advertisers at all and did not provide a reason (E10). When the topic was discussed, approximately half of the time the editors inferred that what was being discussed were "advertisers' demands" not "advertisers' requests"; however, to
avoid overgeneralizations, I chose to use the term “advertisers’ requests” when presenting the data. Noticeably, with one exception, editors of magazines with a target audience at the lower age range of 18-34 discussed advertisers’ requests more than editors targeting the upper end of the reader age range. Also, although the magazines in the sample are all beauty/fashion magazines, editors of magazines that focussed more strongly on beauty discussed advertisers’ requests more.

Advertisers’ Desire for an Editorial Presence

First, as perceived by the editors, advertisers want their products to be mentioned or shown visually in editorial content. According to five editors (E1, 2, 6, 7, 11), some advertisers were persistent to get what the editors call a “plug” in the magazine. Editor 6 told a story which explained how strong the advertisers’ requests or demands can be and how she responded in this case by giving the advertiser what was requested:

There’s an Italian designer who has a whole stack of people employed specifically to count the number of credits, meaning photographs, in the editorial pages of the magazine and when he doesn’t get enough uh, you know, how many he gets versus how many pages of advertising he takes out, versus how many other, he’s always obsessed with how many other Italian designers, you know, what are the other Italian designers getting? When it somehow reaches some point where he feels unfairly represented or improperly represented, he, you get a phone call not from him, of course, but from one of his minions saying, they’re pulling the advertising. They’re going to take all the advertising out today and he’s unhappy and, you know, God on high is unhappy and so it’s a lot of pages of advertising and it’s a famous designer and a designer that most Americans think is pretty fabulous so we pump up the editorial credit and, you know, I don’t think the clothes are worthy always of that kind of coverage. I think sometimes you sit in his shows and you just think, “What in God’s name are we gonna photograph this time around?” cause these clothes are sorry and but you’re stuck and so I feel that [...] I feel, you know, we plug these designers who advertise and we can only represent the
designers who don’t advertise in a very small way and, you know, I mean there’s ways that I go through justifying it maybe just to sort of make myself able to sleep at night where I think well, you know, these little designers who um are making interesting clothes often are not sold in any city except New York in a small boutique so let’s face reality. Let’s get people clothes that they can actually go out and buy, you know. It still makes me feel badly that I can’t be more even handed in that sense [. . .].

Editor 6 appears to feel powerless in the situation with the Italian designer and, therefore, in this case seems to have little editorial autonomy to make editorial decisions. But later, the same editor explains how she stands her ground on some issues despite the often difficult consequences. Standing her ground includes doing what she wants, which means sometimes printing comments advertisers don’t like. According to Editor 6, although advertisers demand editorial coverage, they only want a certain kind of editorial coverage. Advertisers don’t want what the editor describes as “truthful” or “matter-of-fact” in regard to coverage of products. In order to keep the tone of the magazine, however, the editor tried in some cases not to let advertisers influence her. In her comments, she also discussed the publishers’ role in helping her maintain the editorial tone:

I think it’s more important for us to really um put our push in beauty and we do still say, you know, if we’re writing about a night cream we’ll say, you know, your skin doesn’t know the difference between night and day [. . .]. So we still do it [be ‘truthful’ and ‘matter-of-fact’ about beauty products] but the repercussions are often unbelievable and you also have to have a publisher, you know, you know about magazines that there’s editor-in-chief and then publisher? We each operate independently in theory and uh the editor takes care of the editorial content. The publisher takes care of the advertising sales. And you need a publisher who really believes that that’s the way to go. You need a publisher who’s ready to deal with the consequences of, you know, negative words about her, her people that she has to sell advertising to and that’s tougher. I mean fewer and fewer publishers want to go through all that hassle. [. . .] but we have to stand up and I say, you know, we can’t change it. If we change it we’re not us and then that’s, that’s a tough moment, you know, and then we kind of hold on and see what happens the next couple
Based on the editor's comments, the relationship between the editor and the advertiser can be adversarial. This editor, however, expressed more than any other editor the harsh repercussions of not following an advertiser's requests or demands.

Another editor gives her perspective. Editor 2 explained how her last encounter with advertisers trying to get editorial coverage was "push and shove" until the end:

I mean, I had somebody, for instance, come in to, they bought all the ads in a little booklet I was doing and they kept trying to get me to say, they wanted to say on the cover that they had sponsored it and I said, 'You didn't sponsor it. It had nothing to do with you.' Then they tried to get me to say that they teamed up with me. 'You didn't team up with me. You bought the ads in my vehicle. Forget it.' Um, then they tried to get me on the editor's letter to say that they were sponsoring, you know, and it was like just went on and on and on. They were threatening to pull $500,000 worth of ads and I said I can't do that because [...] A, it's not true. We didn't join in any like sponsoring thing. Um they were just looking for extra, you know, an extra hit and they didn't get it [...] And that was a real, that was push and shove right up till the last thing and I was appalled. I was shocked that advertisers would ask. They were asking to see copy. They were, you wouldn't believe what people ask. The question is do you give it to them? You don't.

So obviously, the relationship between the editor and advertiser can be at best a negotiation and at worst a fight.

In relation to the importance of the publisher, three editors (E1, E3, E5) named the publisher as key to editorial autonomy. Editor 1 explains that, "because we're an

28 For an advertiser to see editorial copy before the magazine goes to print is against ASME guidelines and generally frowned upon in the magazine industry.
enlightened company you see the publishers listen to us [editors] and I think there are other places where they would make more an attempt to win.” If the editor “wins,” then she or he was allowed to print what they wanted in the magazine. Based on the language used in the editors’ responses, however, this negotiation is a battle.

Although some editors clearly stated their struggle with advertisers’ demands, two others (E7 and 5) did not consider it significant to give fashion/beauty advertisers a plug in the magazine. Editor 7 saw coverage of designers as a matter of course. She explains:

The publisher can certainly say, ‘Hey, Gucci’s angry we haven’t been crediting enough of their products or something like that in which case, I mean, it doesn’t even happen because you just know, Gucci, you give them credit. They’re huge whether they advertise or not. Donna Karan, you credit them um to their product, in effect, because that’s what people want, too.

Editor 5 also did not consider the blurring of editorial and advertising in the beauty sections to be significant and was instead more concerned about other issues:

I mean in terms of fashion and beauty, I mean, I’ve worked at a lot of places. Um I tend to think it’s fairly innocuous in terms of pink or blue. What do I care? You know, um, if it was something that affected our readers’ health like cigarettes and those kinds of things. We absolutely say bad things about cigarettes.

So to some, covering designers and products is simply part of their job and to others, the topic is a source of conflict. Based on my knowledge of which magazines the editors represented, the differences in perspectives likely reflect the editors’ perceptions of the content and readership of their magazine. The discussion will now move to another advertiser request: to not be a part of anything controversial.
Advertisers' Aversion to Controversy

Moving beyond the advertisers' demands in regard to getting an “editorial plug” in the magazine, editors identified a second theme that has the potential to influence editorial content: advertisers don’t like controversy. Seven of the ten editors (E1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) who discussed controversy asserted that most advertisers don’t like controversial material. Controversy appears to be broadly defined; what an advertiser considers to be controversial is sometimes unpredictable. For example, Editor 6 was shocked when in relation to a story advertisers became upset because the topic was apparently considered controversial:

They hate controversy. They hate it. They don’t want any controversy whatsoever. In fact, one of the Naders29 of my experience in this field was when we run a story refuting the common belief among many women that there is a connection between hair dye and cancer. And we, lots of women believed it, lots of women there are lots like hypothetical stories about it so we reported it and we discovered no, there’s no evidence to say that hair dye causes cancer and one of the leading manufacturers of hair dye for women called me and told me that he would, because of this story he wants to not only, he said I want to destroy you and your magazine. And I’m thinking ‘but we said the opposite.’ He said, ‘but just to even use the words, “cancer” and “hair dye” in the same sentence.’ Oh, and it was hideous. He wanted to start a whole campaign against the magazine and against me personally and wanted to just bring me down and it was terrible. I couldn’t believe that someone could be that sort of fanatical, bizarre and, you know, in the end, uh, nothing happened and the story stood and we were fine and you know everything else but it just was astonishing to me that people would go that crazy and advertisers don’t want the negative. They don’t want the flip side. They don’t want the truth. They don’t want even sort of a suggestion of it.

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29 Ralph Nader is a consumer activist and lawyer who gathered the evidence and alerted the public, Congress, and the media to many issues related to health, safety, economics, environmental pollution, worker rights, and excessive corporate influence. The editor is using his name to refer to her own type of consumer advocacy work with hair dye and cancer.
In this case, Editor 6 presented a case where obviously her mission—to tell her reader the truth—was different from the advertiser’s mission. Although the editor was trying to be what she considered truthful in her content for the reader, she was threatened for not doing what the advertiser wanted. No other editor identified the relationship between advertising and editorial this intensely combative.

Examples of controversy identified by other editors were focused not on beauty but on politics, sex, single moms, and abortion. In some cases, editors tried to cater to the advertisers’ wishes. For example, Editor 1 discussed advertisers’ feelings around sexual content and how that affected her magazine:

I think that readers love the sexual content of the magazine and really want us to be candid and I think we hold back to some degree in our candidness because it’s something that advertisers feel uncomfortable being in an environment that’s too candid that way.

Editor 1 gives another example of how advertisers do not want to be near any controversial material in the magazine:

You’re never supposed to show any advertiser the editorial content. [...]. Near Detroit the car manufacturers [advertisers] had put a lot of pressure on not wanting to be near content that was too provocative or too sexy and provocative not always meaning sexy but just anything controversial. And what was happening [not at her magazine but at other magazines] is that in some cases they were being allowed to see editorial before it was published and decide, ‘Do I really want my car ad next to this?’

Editor 8 also explained her perception of why advertisers don’t want to be next to controversial material:

Say we did an editorial on abortion. They [advertisers] don’t want to be on that page [...]. I think the advertisers, they don’t want to be near editorial that’s controversial because if readers don’t like our take on the story they would associate the advertiser, you know, because they’re [the advertiser] there [the advertiser’s page is near the story]. They [the advertiser] think it’s like a
subconscious thing, that the reader might have a negative [reaction to the story], then not respond to the ad, you know. The reader’s gonna look at that story and not be or be irritated by the story, and therefore, that would supposedly rub off on the ad. Also, some of them [advertisers] don’t want to be near any stories that have any sex in them because they’re very conservative corporations.

Editor 2 also expressed that advertisers do not like controversial content, including coverage of unwed mothers. The editor gives her solution, which was to move the advertiser to a different place in the magazine, away from so-called controversial material:

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. They get all pissed off about that they don’t like, you know, they don’t like sex. They don’t like down, depressing, violent, so you just move them around in the book or you tell them this is not the issue for you. Go to another issue. You know, we try to accommodate them, you know. It’s like, you know, if they hate stories about, you know, unwed mothers we try not to put them next to an unwed mother story. I mean there’s a hundred other pages in the book they can be next to.

Moving the advertisers around in the book to avoid conflict is called adjacency as discussed further in the next section. Changing the adjacency is often the approach used to keep the advertiser from being unhappy due to controversial content. Editor 7 gives a specific example in regard to advertisers’ dislikes of controversial material and the approach used to avoid it. She also discusses what happened if the advertisers’ requests were not met:

Maybelline doesn’t like to run near any sort of controversial editorial, meaning, you know, say you did a story on land mines or living in Kosovo or something like that. Maybelline doesn’t want that type of adjacency so they’ll put that right on the insertion order, saying ‘No controversial editorial.’ Say they accidentally get put next to controversial editorial, they’ll ask for what’s called a make-good. Kind of like ‘Hey, you didn’t follow our rules here, we

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30 Adjacency refers physically placing advertising and editorial in the magazine in relation to one another.
need a free ad' or something, something to that. They need some sort of compensation because their requirements weren’t met. So you do see that happening. You know, we don’t go to them and say, ‘Hey, look. We broke the rules. What do you say?’ You know, they’ll come to us and say, ‘We’re not happy with our adjacency.’

Despite the generally blatant examples the editors gave explaining that advertisers do not like controversy, three editors said that only some advertisers dislike controversy (E3, 5, 12). Editor 12 explains: “Certain advertisers shy away from controversial editorial, while others enjoy it. It completely depends on the advertiser.” Editor 3 on the other hand, expressed that most advertisers, although sensitive, don’t mind controversy:

Oh, they’re pretty good about accepting it [. . .]. We do pieces on abortion. We do pieces on a lot of different topics that are strong for some people. We hear from readers who are offended but advertisers are pretty cool [. . .]. I’ve never had somebody say, ‘Well, I’m not advertising in my magazine cause you did this pro-abortion piece.’ They don’t do that. They’re more sophisticated than that, but I can, you do, have to, you know, work things around cause some of them are sensitive [. . .].

In conclusion, editors varied in their perspectives and concerns regarding what controversial material advertisers are offended by and even if advertisers are offended at all. The variations may relate to the differences in style and content of each magazine since editors of magazines with a strong beauty focus seemed to say more about advertisers in general. Also, the differences across editors could relate to the structural set-up of each magazine; those differences could influence the editor’s communication lines with the advertiser. Editor 3 noted that she seldom hears about feedback from advertisers, which was distinctly different from other editors who seemed to discuss issues with advertisers regularly. To expand on the discussion of advertisers’ demands, I will now explain the third theme as identified by the editors, which is adjacency or where advertisers are placed in the book.
Advertisers' Interest in Placement, Adjacency, and Collusion

This theme is slightly different from the other two themes under this category because although the advertisers demand specific adjacency, editors are also concerned about adjacency for their own editorial purposes. Adjacency, then, is a consideration for editors based on three reasons as identified by the editors. One, seven editors (E1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9) said advertisers request certain placement and want certain adjacency in the magazine and these requests must be met in order to satisfy the advertiser. Two, as identified by four editors (E3, 7, 8, 9), editors are concerned with taste considerations. For example, Editor 3 explained how she avoided having a story about kids facing an advertisement for alcohol because such as configuration is in "bad taste." The third reason to consider adjacency, as identified by three editors (E2, 8, 9), is that the placement of advertisements in relation to editorial could determine whether or not the reader perceives there to be blurring of editorial and advertising content. For example, Editor 2 explained: "I remember looking at a magazine and seeing somebody who hadn't split up the ad and edit and she had a story about cheese and it was a food magazine and then she had Kraft cheese on the ad next to it and I thought, 'That's really bad, really bad.'" The reason the editor dislikes this configuration is that it could be perceived as the blurring of editorial and advertising content.

As a way of responding to adjacency, all seven editors (E1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9) who discussed adjacency referred to a process that takes place in the final stages of the magazine production where the publisher and the editor look at the magazine proofs posted on a wall not only to identify any collusion between editorial and advertising but also to be sure the advertisers' requests have been met. One editor, Editor 9, took me to see what she called "the wall." Posted on the wall, in chronological order, were color proofs of the magazine pages. Some of the pages had red marks indicating changes. The editor explained what she was looking for in regard to first, the advertisers' requests and, second, the readers' perceptions. She
also identified that advertisers are asking for more and more demands for adjacency:

It can be a placement issue um [. . .]. An advertising agency will generally ask for the first twenty-five percent of the book, uh right hand page facing editorial um some spreads of advertising want to be surrounded by editorial. Um, some people [advertisers] will buy specifically, like say they have to have a fashion section. They have to have a beauty section, some scent strips, you know have to be the first scent strip in the book. Or they have to be the first scent strip in the book before page 16. More and more they um the demands that they are placing or that they are asking for in terms of placement they have really increased [. . .]. We're very careful to make sure that the, that we protect the reader from being confused. We don't want them to confuse advertising with editorial. We don't want them to wonder if, um, ‘Well gee, is the reason the magazine’s showing that product because that page facing it is paying for it? We don't like them to get be confused about sponsorship or collusion or any of those things.

Editor 2 also discussed how she is careful to check adjacency since she did not want her reader to wonder if there was collusion between advertising and editorial:

I mean, in fact, we spend a lot of time. It just happened in my October issue. I was offering a gift in my editor's letter a content from Oil of Olay and we saw the layout of the magazine. It just so happened Oil of Olay ad was right across from it [. . .]. There was no other place to move it. They wanted that opening page. So I changed the gift. I put somebody else. I went with Bobbi Brown [. . .]. It would have looked really bad for both advertising and me to have that there even though we came at it two separate ways [. . .]. [Y]ou don't want your reader to think anything like that.

Besides carefully checking the magazine for collusion and making sure the advertisers' requests are met, two editors (E3, 7) said that they alert advertisers ahead of time regarding topics that are going to be in the magazine that may offend the advertisers. For example, Editor 3 explains:
We alert advertising if we've got, you know, the great American smokeout is coming up in November or something like that so we have a big item about that and so we might say, 'We're doing a big item about this,' because, you know, I don't want them to put a cigarette advertisement near that cause they'll lose business. So it's a respectful you know [...]. I would alert advertisers, uh, if we did an article about drunk driving. Anything like that about lifestyle. Um criticism of something about a product which if used properly, like having a beer or something, like that um won't cause problems but when somebody drinks forty-two beers and has a terrible car crash [then the story runs in her magazine] we will alert the advertisers because we don't want them to be embarrassed. They're selling an environment to a reader who they think is likely to drink beer, whatever, and the reader is definitely less likely to drink beer if it's opposite a picture of a crumpled car wreck and ambulances and it says, you know, 'Too Many for the Road.'

In summary, to avoid upsetting advertisers and to meet their requests, as well as to avoid the perception of the blurring of advertising and editorial, the editors pay close attention to placement, adjacency, and collusion. In fact, as shown in this section about advertisers’ requests/demands, editors believe they need to pay close attention to many factors which affect their advertisers and potentially their readers, including how much coverage is given to advertisers and the kind of editorial tone used. Also, the editors need to consider how the advertisers may respond to controversial material. Based on the editors’ responses, the advertisers appear to have a long list of demands expected in return for being “clients” of the magazine.

Social Topic Stories: The Editorial Purpose and the Advertiser’s Response

Interestingly, editors seemed unified that advertisers’ demands did not affect the inclusion or exclusion of social topic stories. All of the editors were asked about social topic stories except for one (E9) because no social topic stories could be identified in that editors’ magazine. Social topic stories were identified in the magazines before the interview by perusing twelve previous issues of each
magazine. Stories chosen were feature stories that did not relate to fashion and beauty and that discussed some kind of social topic in regard to women. As explained in the literature review, these social topic stories, among other traits, focus on women as opposed to women looking good for men.

The editors were asked first what the purpose was of the social topic stories that had recently occurred in their magazine such as, for example, a story on rape, abortion, women in Kosovo, or another topic. Second, the editor was asked whether these types of stories were influenced by advertisers. When asked, all the editors quickly identified with the term “social topic stories” and with the examples that were provided from their magazine. Most of the editors, except for two as explained below, did not talk extensively about these stories but simply identified them as providing important information for the reader. Editor 1 explains:

Well, our reader is interested in everything that could have an impact on her life and when we do a story [...] about security issues [...] we’re informing them that they need to have their guard up a bit that’s it. Then you’re having an effect on one area of their life and you know that’s as important as doing a piece on how to find his G Spot. It's just a different facet of her life.

Two editors (E5, 10) discussed the topic with slightly further description. Editor 10 explained social topic stories by saying that her magazine, “like its readers, has a sense of justice [...]” And Editor 5 expressed that including social-topic type stories—what she identified as doing work that is “meaningful”—in the women’s magazine format is somewhat of a challenge:

You know what I mean. It's [her magazine] not a political pamphlet. It’s not an, um, you know, but for me the challenge as an editor is, within the framework, can I do work that is meaningful, interesting and, you know, um, that can actually do good in the world in that framework? And I think in some ways that’s a more interesting challenge.

In other words, Editor 5 is discussing that she wants to include social-topic type stories in her magazine despite the fact that the beauty/fashion magazine is not a
format—like a political pamphlet—that encourages meaningful, social topic stories. Nevertheless, she sees including interesting stories within her magazine as an “interesting challenge.” The same editor also explained the importance of women’s magazine content as it relates to social topic ideas. She noted that social-topic type stories have had great impact in the past:

Women’s magazines move health agendas in this country in, in the way that few other things can because they’re advocates for women. They’re advocates for women’s health you know [...] in terms of the work that they actually do. They do good and important work.

Editor 5 was the only editor who expressed the importance of social topic stories and the challenge in doing them within the women’s magazine format.

To gain another perspective, as mentioned earlier, one magazine did not print recognizable social topic stories. When the editor (E9) was asked why the magazine lacked such content, she explained that her reader was not interested in what were identified in the interview as “hard-hitting” stories:

When they [readers] come with, when they're with my magazine, they're not looking for that. What they're looking for is a nice, leisurely, comfortable read. They don't want to have to work really hard to get at the information [...] Does that mean we're simple and stupid? No, we're not. Um we don't want to make the reader work really, really hard to get the information that's on the page.

So this editor did not consider social topic stories to fit into the mission of her magazine. She also did not see these types of stories as being what her reader was interested in.

In regard to advertising, editors were asked to identify whether or not advertising affects social topic stories. None of the editors said the advertisers interfere. For example, Editor 12 discussed social topic stories for African-American women: “Advertising doesn't interfere, and advertisers like being part of Black History Month issues, which often contain racial themes.” Editor 8 also
expressed that advertisers don’t affect social topic stories. She responded, “No absolutely, absolutely not [in regard to advertisers affecting the stories].”

On the other hand, although Editor 5 agreed that advertisers don’t influence social topic stories, she did express that advertisers prefer a certain magazine format. Her magazine has what she considers “smart” content which includes social topic content and, therefore, the magazine doesn’t always fit the preferred advertising format. Editor 5 explains:

I mean the thing is it's not something they want to be in. They want to be in, they want to be in something that's easily [...] they want to be in something that you can easily and quickly define in two words, you know. Magazine Title is ‘celebrity junk.’ I mean I love the editors there and all that stuff, you know, so I'm not saying mean things about Magazine Title necessarily but like you get it, like an advertiser gets it, ‘Oh, celebrity stuff, okay, like that I get.’ Um, I'm just trying to think of what else I mean. Well, Magazine Title is sort of, you know, ‘fashion bible’ [...] If you can narrowly define what it is so how do you narrowly define smart? I mean what is a smart mag you know? So, we do have trouble getting advertisers and we have had trouble getting advertisers because even though we have a reader that advertisers very much wanna get you know, advertisers tend to see magazines as, as you know, a way to specifically service their needs to sort of leverage what they need to do at that particular moment. So, you do a beauty magazine and you call it Magazine Title and all the beauty advertisers go in there and it's like "Oh, okay, it's a magazine about our junk." You know what I mean? So, you know my magazine has always been a hard thing to articulate from a marketing standpoint. You know, a magazine for smart women. Great.

So Editor 5, then, perceives advertisers as wanting to be a part of something that’s easily definable and that a smart magazine with potentially smart social topic stories is often not easily definable.

In conclusion, all the editors said that social topic stories were not directly affected by advertisers and that the stories serve the purpose of providing information and variety for the reader. The responses, however, illustrate a broad range of goals and interests among the magazines. Also, notably, Editor 5 identifies that a format that encourages harder-hitting, smarter stories is not as attractive to
advertisers as one that is more simply defined. As a continuation of the relationship between advertisers and editors, I will now explain the blurring of style and talent between advertising and editorial content.

The Relationship: Exploring the Blurring of Style and Talent between Advertising and Editorial Content

A theme that emerged from the interviews was that the style and talent of advertising and editorial were becoming more and more alike as noted in two main ways: one, the introduction of mag-a-logs, which are take offs of catalogs and refer to the idea that magazines are looking more like catalogs in their editorial content; and two, the blurring of industry talent between advertising and editorial. First, three editors (E3, 6, 8) identified the recent introduction of mag-a-logs which look more like catalogs that are published by an advertiser than magazines published by an editorial department. Editor 3 explains the purpose of the mag-a-log and the interest it holds for the reader:

[S]ome magazines are kind of look-a-logs or mag-a-logs—whatever you want to call them. InStyle is like that and I gather InStyle’s coming out with another as an off shoot which I actually took a look at which is even more like that—it’s just stuff to buy. You know, we’re capitalists in this society so there’s a lot, you know, people love the J. Crew catalog. They love all the catalogs. They get, they’re a form of entertainment so there are magazines that are really closer to being commercial vehicles [. . .].

This example of the mag-a-log clearly illustrates a blurring in the style between advertising and editorial content.

Second, beyond but still connected to similarities in the style of advertising and editorial, five editors (E1, 4, 6, 7, 11) referred to the blurring of talent and ideas between editorial and advertising. Editor 1 explains how she gets ideas and inspiration from advertisements and advertisers appear to get ideas from editorial:
And I think more than ever I look at advertising and find, ‘Hmmm. This is inspirational.’ I mean I think of the whole Tommy Hilfiger campaign of a few years ago—I loved the imagery and I ripped out those pages. I always keep books that where I rip out images, you know. I remember when I went Magazine Title ripping out Tommy and ripping out the Nike campaign that was so terrific that had that um sort of hand written stuff from the women where it talked about ‘Here’s who I am.’ [...]. I think that shows that the bar was raised with, with, with many kinds of advertising. I think advertising in some regards has gotten to be more editorial in its flavor and has borrowed from that [from magazines].

In this case, then, Editor 1 is discussing how she potentially borrows from the elements she likes in advertising and advertisers borrow from editorial talent and ideas. Editor 11 also explains that advertising tries to look more like editorial:

I think advertising tries to look more editorial. Sometimes it’s hard to distinguish although with a magazine like my magazine we’re very specific so um, so, you know, I think you can definitely tell what is an ad, what is not, but for a lot of magazines I think it’s, it’s the line is a little bit more blurred [...].

Moving the discussion further, when Editor 4 was asked why it is that sometimes while looking through his magazine it is difficult to distinguish between what’s editorial and what’s advertising, he explained the crossover in talent between editorial and advertising content.

Well, I think that has to do with sort of what I said before which is the level of sophistication. Like there isn’t a photographer in this world who can afford, whose interested in making money, who can turn down a major advertising campaign. Now there are only so many great photographers in the world, at any given time. Now we have, for example, Irving Penn has contributed pictures to this magazine for 50 years. Irving Penn has also shot the Clinique campaign since the inception of Clinique. Same Irving Penn, same eye. Um Richard Avadon who shoots not for us but he shoots for The New Yorker and other magazines, um, has over the years shot for Versace campaigns so it’s inevitable that with the pool of talent and I’m talking about serious major league internationally recognized talent. This is not Joe Smith, your neighborhood photographer. This is Irving Penn, Richard Avadon, Herber
Marcel, Anny Leibovitz, Herb Ritz, Bruce Weber. These are main people that we know so Bruce Weber photographs a fashion story for this magazine. Bruce Weber is also photographing Ambercrombie and Finch's catalog. Bruce Weber is also photographing Johnny Versace's men's wear campaign. So the same pool of talent is involved in both editorial and advertising. The difference is there's more money in advertising. There's more prestige in editorial, um, so and the same applies of models. So if you're a model and you're sort of this year's hottest young model or whatever, this magazine and other magazines might embrace you, um, but this magazine and other magazines would not pay you very much money. But Estee Lauder would. Gucci would. Channel would. Versace would. These companies would, so this magazine and the editorial pages of this and other magazines is for many people talent and the talent would be photographers, stylists, models, hair person, make-up person—any of the creative input. This is the same pool of talent that everybody's drawing on. There isn't one group of talent for advertising.

So in this case, based on the same eye creating the images for editorial and advertising, this editor is not surprised that editorial and advertising often look similar. In fact, the editor clearly describes that these two are often created by the same talent.

In conclusion this results section has presented the editors' perspectives of their reader, the magazine as an industry and cultural barometer, the relationship between advertisers and editors in regard to the blurring of advertising and editorial, advertisers' requests and editors' responses, the purpose of social topic stories and advertisers' response to these stories, and the blurring of talent and style between editorial and advertising talent. The editors' general comments, along with the literature, define the general publishing framework through the relationship between editorial and advertising content. The nature of this framework, from the perspectives of the editor, creates a sometimes adversarial relationship between advertising and editorial as shown under this section discussing advertisers' requests/demands. I will now discuss and interpret the editors' perspectives in the discussion section.
DISCUSSION

This study presented the perspectives of twelve mainstream women’s magazine editors in regard to the relationship between advertising and editorial content and how, if at all, this relationship affects both general editorial content and specifically, social topic stories. In addition, I was interested in the editors’ perspectives of their autonomy to make magazine content decisions within their environment. The results show that, according to the editors, the relationship between advertising and editorial content is complex. Nearly every page of editorial and advertising content—both general content and social topic stories—is likely affected in some way by the relationship between the editors and the advertisers as will be shown in this discussion section. As a result, advertising and editorial content cannot easily be distinguished as truly separate.

One way to explore the complex relationship between advertising and editorial content is through conclusions that illustrate the multi-layered relationship between advertising and editorial content. Four major conclusions—issues relating to the reader, the increase in blurring, social topic stories and controversy, and editorial integrity—emerged from various intersections of the six themes presented in the results section. I will discuss and interpret these four major conclusions based on both the editors’ responses and the literature. Further, I will discuss two implications associated with these conclusions—women’s magazines as cultural and industry barometers and women doing gender—that emerged from the data and are related to the literature. In addition, since my study used a political economy approach\(^{31}\) as a method to create understanding that will lead to change, I also will present suggestions about how to create a clearer separation between advertising and editorial content.

\(^{31}\) The political economy perspective studies cultural texts within their systems of production and distribution (Kellner 9).
The Reader

The first conclusion to be addressed is the pivotal role of the women's magazine reader. The reader was mentioned repeatedly by the editors when discussing all six categories in the results section. The reader is a central factor when understanding the relationship between advertising and editorial content.

The importance of the reader is also cited in the literature. Goldman explains that mainstream women's magazines succeed by delivering certain "demographically identified women's market segments" or, more simply, delivering women's magazine readers to advertisers (Goldman 89). In agreement with Goldman, three editors (E9, 2 and 3) said that the reader makes the magazine economically viable. Editor 2, for example, said, "The publisher's not paying my salary; the advertising pages don't pay my salary; um, the readers are paying my salary." Editor 3 also said, "Readers will continue to drive the economy of any magazine." Based on this economic reality as defined by the editors and the literature, the reader is a primary focus when discussing the editors' perspectives. In order to understand how the focus on the reader potentially affects the relationship between advertising and editorial content, I will now connect the reader to three categories: advertisers' demands, the editors' belief system, and adjacency and placement.

Advertisers' Demands for Editorial Presence

In regard to the reader, the editors explained that the reader comes to the magazine for three purposes: looking for advice, learning, and entertainment. Specifically, the readers' sub-category "looking for advice" is important to explore as it connects to advertisers' requests for an editorial presence. As will be shown, making the connection between these two categories helps us to understand one layer of the complex relationship between editorial and advertising.
Six editors identified that women looked to the magazines for advice on which they often take action (E1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10). Taking action means that readers will, based on editorial directive, buy a certain brand of mascara, get a new haircut, or even break up with their boyfriends (E1, 3, 8). The editors only mentioned that readers take action on editorial content not advertising content.

Readers taking action can be connected to one of the advertisers' requests. Five editors said that advertisers want an editorial presence in the magazine (E1, 2, 6, 7, 11). Advertisers likely want to have an editorial presence because readers take action on editorial content. As a result, if an advertiser's product is mentioned in editorial content, readers might take action on the editorial advice and buy the advertisers' products.

Editors' responses further explain the connection between the categories of readers taking action and advertisers wanting an editorial presence. There is a positive correlation between editors identifying their readers as taking action on editorial content and advertisers requesting an editorial presence. Specifically, the six editors who did identify readers as taking action on editorial content represented magazines that focused heavily on beauty/fashion content and targeted an audience toward the younger end of the 18-34 age bracket, specifically, college-aged women. Two editors who did not identify readers as taking action on editorial content represented one magazine (E5) that targeted the upper end of the 18-34 age bracket and one magazine (E7) that appeared to have more "general interest" content than most beauty/fashion magazines. As a result, according to these findings, readers who are younger and reading magazines with mostly beauty/fashion content may be the most likely to take action on editorial content. According to the editors' responses, if the readers are likely to take action on editorial content, advertisers are likely to want an editorial presence. Such connections present a relationship between advertising and editorial that can potentially affect magazine content.

Further, advertisers' requests for an editorial presence were identified by the editors as potentially creating an adversarial relationship between the editor and
advertiser. For example, one editor (E2) explained how it is “push and shove” right up until the last minute. She gives the example of an advertiser who did not get their “editorial plug” and threatened to “pull $500,000 worth of ads.” Another editor (E6) explained that when advertisers do not get the kind of editorial coverage they want, the advertiser becomes furious and will “scream and yell and carry on.” As a result, the advertisers’ requests for an editorial presence can create an adversarial relationship, which potentially could influence the nature of advertising and editorial content in the magazine.

Not all editors, however, portrayed their relationship with the advertiser as adversarial. Interestingly, there are commonalities among those editors who did present the relationship as adversarial and those who did not. For example, the editors (E1, 6) who expressed the most adversarial relationship with advertisers edited magazines with predominantly beauty content targeted toward the younger end of the target age group. The same editors also identified that readers take action on their magazines’ editorial content. The two editors (E5, 7) who did not express an adversarial relationship with advertisers were the same editors who did not identify their readers as taking action on editorial content. These examples illustrate that there ultimately may be connections between readers’ taking action and the nature of the relationship between advertising and editorial. Specifically, editors representing beauty magazines seemed to express the most adversarial relationship between editorial and advertising but they also expressed most strongly that their readers, who are at the younger end of the 18-34 target age group, take action on editorial content. As a result, the relationship between editorial and advertising content is not universal across magazines. The type of magazine and target audience are two potential factors that define the relationship between advertising and editorial.

The type of magazine affecting the nature of the relationship between advertisers and editors is also addressed in the literature. Specifically, the relationship between beauty magazines and advertisers is discussed. Steinem
explained the double standard when giving an editorial presence to advertisers of beauty magazines opposed to newsmagazines:

If *Time* and *Newsweek* had to lavish praise on cars in general and credit General Motors in particular to get GM ads, there would be a scandal—maybe a criminal investigation. When women’s magazines from *Seventeen* to *Lear’s* praise beauty products in general and credit Revlon in particular to get ads, it’s just business as usual (19).

Praising beauty products in editorial content to get advertisements is, of course, what the editors would consider giving the advertisers an editorial presence. Steinem suggests such editorial presence based on the advertisers’ demands is more common in beauty magazines than other magazines. The editors did not specifically identify the connection; however, as shown, the editors’ responses show a correlation between the kind of magazine and the nature of the relationship between advertising and editorial.

Editors’ Belief Systems

I will now connect another category—the editors’ belief system—to the readers’ interests. Such a connection further explores the multiple layers that affect the relationship between editorial and advertising content. All the editors expressed some interest in keeping editorial and advertising separate. Five editors referred to the relationship between advertising and editorial as being “church [editorial] and state [advertising].”

In general, readers’ interests are the reason for the separation between advertising and editorial according to the editors’ belief systems. As mentioned before, satisfying the readers’ interests is essential to having an economically viable magazine since the readers drive the economy of the magazine. When compiling the editors’ perspectives, one predominant ideology among editors is that readers want what I termed “credibility and truth,” which can be found in the
editors' editorial content. Allowing advertising to impose on the editorial content may jeopardize "credibility and truth," which may jeopardize the loyalty of the reader to the magazine.

To explain further, editors in general claim that editorial content has "credibility and truth"; they seem to assume that advertising content lacks "credibility and truth." For example, three editors used words that describe editorial content as true and credible and advertising content as not true and credible. Editor 2, for example, explained that if advertising and editorial content blur, readers would perceive the blurring as "not unbiased," which assumes that if the blurring doesn't take place then the content is "unbiased." Along the same lines, when referring to advertisers in relation to editorial content, Editor 6 said, "They [advertisers] don't want the truth." The "truth" the editor refers to can be found in her editorial content. When this same editor explained that using make-up samples of advertisers' products in her editorial content does not constitute the blurring of advertising and editorial content, she said, "that [the make-up samples] came from a pure editorial place." The word "pure" provides an inference to being "true or untainted." As a result, one could draw the connection that if advertising is imposed on the editorial content, advertising will taint the editorial content's credibility and truth. Based on the editors' understanding, the readers want truth and the advertisers' imposition may mean the reader will no longer perceive the magazines as credible. As a result, the blurring of advertising and editorial could lead to the reader no longer buying the magazine because the reader no longer believes in the magazine's content.

But what constituted credibility and truth according to the editors needs further exploration. Editors seemed to be mostly interested in the perception of credibility and truth as potentially affecting the reader's perception and understanding. As Editor 9 said, "We're very careful to make sure that the, that we protect the reader from being confused. We don't want them to confuse advertising with editorial." Editor 3 also said, "We don't want to look like we cut a deal [with advertisers]." Editor 2 said, "It would have looked really bad for both advertising
and me to have that there [a product beside editorial which would could be considered blurring] even though we came at it two separate ways [. . .]. [Y]ou don't want your reader to think anything like that." Notably, the editors' focus on the perception of truth or how the configuration between advertising and editorial "looks" can be very different from other kinds of "truth." For example, another kind of "truth" could involve being concerned with checking all the facts in the editorial content. Although editors may possibly be concerned with checking facts in the editorial content, the editors did not present their perspectives as such in relation to the focus of our discussion. Instead, the editors were more interested in "truth" in relation to the editorial content being void of the perception of the blurring of advertising and editorial content.

**Adjacency and Placement**

Adjacency and placement also connect to the readers and affect the relationship between editorial and advertising content. As identified by some editors, maintaining the perception of "truth" through the separation of advertising and editorial content requires certain adjacency, which refers to the juxtaposition of editorial content and advertising content in the magazine. Although adjacency was predominantly a consideration based on advertisers' requests for certain placement in the magazine, three editors also identified (E2, 8, 9) adjacency as a consideration based on the readers' perception of the blurring of advertising and editorial content. For example, Editor 2 explained that it's "really, really bad" to have a story about cheese facing a Kraft cheese advertisement referring to the fact that the reader may think the magazine has "cut a deal." The editors' solution to such adjacency is to move the advertisement to another part of the book. As a result, the editor strategically organizes the perception of the separation of advertising and editorial content.
For a clearer understanding of presenting editorial as "truth," the literature on source credibility as mentioned in the literature review under Cameron's study is useful to explore. Research shows that based on "source credibility" the reader is more likely to believe editorial content than advertising content. Schwarz, for example, finds that "credibility and memorability of messages were negatively affected when messages were presented as advertiser-based" (as qtd. in Cameron et al. 723). As a result of these findings, Cameron claims that readers need to be aware of the messages' sources in order to make a judgement about the credibility of a source (Cameron et al. 723). Using the established ideas of source credibility, the editors' motives to maintain the separation of advertising and editorial based on the readers' interests in "truth" become clearer.

In addition, industry documentation, specifically the ASME guidelines, also encourages maintaining the perception of the separation of editorial and advertising content. ASME guidelines state:

Magazines are successful only if readers trust the information and advice given. This trust can be broken all too easily—either by perception or reality. That's why ASME has created guidelines to ensure the clear distinction between advertising and editorial content is never broken, nor blurred ("ASME").

The wording of the guidelines suggests that the reader believes editorial content is a true source that can only be maintained if the separation of advertising and editorial is maintained. The guidelines appear to follow the editors' ideas of "truth" as found in editorial content and "untruth" as found in advertising content.

An Increase in Blurring of Editorial and Advertising Content, Talent, and Style

The fact that the messages reflected in editorial content are "credible and true" becomes questionable when linked to the editors' identification of an increase in first, the blurring of advertising and editorial content and second, the blurring of
talent and style between editorial and advertising. First, six editors (E1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11) identified the increase in blurring of advertising and editorial content. As identified by four of the editors, the increase is a result of an increase in industry competition. The end result is that advertisers have more bargaining power in regard to the conditions upon which their advertisements are placed in the magazines.

Second, in regard to the blurring of talent and style, three editors (E3, 6, 8,) identified the recent success of mag-a-logs. These new mag-a-logs appear to blur the style and talent, whether intentionally or unintentionally, of advertising and editorial. Editor 3 explains:

[S]ome magazines are kind of look-a-logs or mag-a-logs—whatever you want to call them. InStyle is like that and I gather InStyle's coming out with another as an off shoot which I actually took a look at which is even more like that—it's just stuff to buy. You know, we're capitalists in this society so there's a lot, you know, people love the J. Crew catalog. They love all the catalogs they get. They're a form of entertainment so there are magazines that are really closer to being commercial vehicles [. . .].

The editor compares the magazine to a commercially driven catalog, which means “true and credible” messages free of advertising or commercial influence seem not applicable. In other words, the success of the mag-a-log may show that some readers are not interested in “true and credible” editorial content. Further, the readers may not be concerned with source credibility, which potentially contradicts the literature on source credibility (Cameron et al. 723).

That readers may not be concerned with source credibility relates to Baudrillard's social postmodernism theory. Baudrillard suggests that we have reached a stage in our social and economic development where “[i]t is no longer possible to separate the economic or productive realm from the realms of ideology or culture, since cultural artifacts, images, representations, even feelings and psychic structures have become part of the world of the economic” (Baudrillard qtd. in Storey 162). When applying Baudrillard’s theory to women's magazines,
the social (editorial) and the economic (advertising) are no longer separable because Baudrillard suggests that readers in a postmodern society no longer, as in a modern society, make meaning of text based on the text's origin. In other words, in a postmodern society, the reader does not search for the meaning behind the symbol. As a result, the reader will not make links between what is advertising and what is editorial. Instead, the reader simply accepts what is there as what is real.

If we truly are living in a postmodern society as described by Baudrillard, editors' attempts to separate advertising and editorial may be outdated and rooted in modernity. Perhaps now, with the mag-a-logs' success as evidence, readers are not concerned with the blurring of advertising and editorial content since readers are not uncovering the origin of the message. Whether or not readers are uncovering the origin of the message is, of course, not possible to determine based on this study. However, one can speculate that based on the editors' identification of the recent success of mag-a-logs and a blurring of talent and style between advertising and editorial, readers may be making meaning differently in a postmodern society. Nevertheless, the readers still respond to magazine messages by taking action on the editorial content as identified by the editors. As a result, knowing the source—either editorial or advertising—of the information on which readers take action is ultimately still important.

Social Topic Stories and Controversy: Advertisers' Influence on the General Shape of the Magazine

Until now, the conclusions presented have discussed the relationship between general editorial and advertising content. I will now focus specifically on social topic stories and what was identified by the editors as "controversial material." Since what the editors defined as controversial material—such as stories on abortion, unwed mothers, and Kosovo—fit into the definition of social topic stories as used for this study, I linked what the editors considered controversial
material with social topic stories to understand advertisers' potential influence in regard to social topics. Interestingly, the editors did not identify advertisers as interfering with social topic stories. Instead, the editors simply defined the social topic stories as being there for the interest of the reader. However, there are contradictions in the editors' claims. These contradictions present another layer of how the relationship between editorial and advertising potentially affect the magazine content.

The editors' identification of advertisers' aversion to controversy and the editors' responses to questions regarding social topic stories illustrate a potential influence on the general persona of the magazine. Editors expressed that advertisers do not like controversial material. As explained by Editor 2, "They hate controversy. They hate it. They don't want any controversy whatsoever." Or Editor 7 says, "Maybelline doesn't like to run near any sort of controversial editorial, meaning, you know, say you did a story on land mines or living in Kosovo or something like that. Maybelline doesn't want that type of adjacency so they'll put right on the insertion order, saying 'No controversial editorial.'" One would assume advertisers' aversion to controversy may influence social topic editorial content.

To further explore advertisers' influence on magazines, Editor 5 explains how advertisers don't like a magazine that is considered "smart." As one might assume, a "smart" magazine would consist of many social topic stories:

I mean the thing is it's not something they [advertisers] want to be in. They want to be in, they want to be in something that's easily [...] they want to be in something that you can easily and quickly define in two words, you know. Magazine Title is 'celebrity junk.' I mean I love the editors there and all that stuff, you know, so I'm not saying mean things about Magazine Title necessarily but like you get it, like an advertiser gets it, 'Oh, celebrity stuff, okay, like that I get.' [...] You know what I mean? So, you know my magazine has always been a hard thing to articulate from a marketing standpoint. You know, a magazine for smart women. Great."

Based on the fact that advertisers don't like controversy and that they want to place their ads in an easily defined magazine, such preferences potentially shape
editorial content. If advertisers don’t like controversy, for example, an editor may need to consider the advertisers’ interests when putting together her editorial content. Three quarters of mainstream women’s magazines consist of advertisements (Steinem 21). As a result, if advertisements don’t want to be close to controversy, such preferences could potentially limit the number of controversial stories an editor has room to publish. Or, on a broader scale, if advertisers like an easily defined magazine — and a magazine with social topic stories is not considered easily defined — advertisers’ preferences may influence concepts used in the creation of women’s magazines. As illustrated in the case study of Ms., the magazine could not maintain its feminist content within the constraints of advertisers’ demands. In response, to keep the magazine’s feminist content, magazine founder Gloria Steinem made Ms. ad-less.

Advertisers, then, can potentially have a general influence on editorial content. None of the editors, however, discussed advertisers’ aversion to controversy and responses to social topic stories as influencing the persona of the magazine. Possibly the editors did not identify such influences because these factors do not affect the immediate perceptions of “truth and credibility” which some editors identified as being important. Nevertheless, the literature combined with some of the editors’ responses illustrate that advertising may potentially influence the general persona of mainstream women’s magazines.

Women’s Magazine Editors: Integrity and Editorial Guidelines

The general industry belief as found in the literature seems to be that whether or not the magazine does or does not blur editorial and advertising relates to the editor’s integrity. For example, John Mack Carter, president of Hearst Magazines, which publishes Cosmopolitan, Redbook, and Harper’s BAZAAR among numerous other titles, says in regard to the blurring of advertising and editorial content, “the integrity of the magazine can be assured only by the editor,
not by the rules” (qtd. in Coyle 37). In chorus with Carter, others have approached
the issue of the blurring of editorial and advertising in relation to editors’ integrity.
For example, Folio magazine published a study (as cited in the literature review)
that measured magazine editors’ integrity in the wake of increased competition.
The magazine industry, then, seems to perceive the editor as the gatekeeper in
regard to issues of integrity.

In addition, when looking to the literature, Ferguson, who did the only study
found that examines the perspectives of women’s magazine editors, also concluded
that the personal integrity of the editor in regard to not mixing editorial and
advertising messages determined whether or not the blurring of advertising and
editorial took place (Ferguson 146). My study expands on this literature by
identifying four issues as identified by the editors that influence whether or not the
blurring of editorial and advertising will take place.

Editorial Integrity

First, as Ferguson identified, the integrity of the editor may be an issue in
regard to the blurring of advertising and editorial content. However, what integrity
means is not clear. On one hand, if the editor believes readers want a sense of
“credibility and truth,” the editor may work to maintain “truth” through creating the
perception of a separation of advertising and editorial content. By creating the
perception of truth, the editors could operate within the ASME guidelines and be
considered to have editorial integrity. Nevertheless, to create a “credible and true”
perception the editor may need to conduct a great deal of manipulation of
adjacency; whether the presentation is, then, “true” or simply manipulated to create
“truth” becomes difficult to determine.

Another issue of integrity arises when examining that one editor (E5) said
she is not measurably concerned about beauty and fashion blurring but is concerned
about advertising influencing health or social issues that affect her reader (E5).
Whether the editor's lack of interest in beauty and fashion blurring means she does not have integrity is questionable. The editor may simply not worry about creating the perception of not blurring based on adjacency. As a result, Editor 5's disinterest in the blurring about fashion products may present more "truth" to the reader because there will potentially be less manipulation of adjacency. Therefore, to say the editor has a lack of integrity because of her disinterest in beauty products may be short-sighted especially since her main area of concern is truth about health issues. Nevertheless, ideas that surround the blurring of advertising and editorial, including the ASME guidelines, seem to consider blurring of any kind to be a lack of integrity on the part of the editors. As a result, the ASME guidelines may not reflect the fluidity and complex nature of the blurring of advertising and editorial content.

**Economics**

Second, in conjunction with Ferguson's findings, the editors expressed that the economy can also influence whether or not there is blurring of editorial and advertising. In harder economic times, the magazine may be more willing to give into advertisers' demands. Six editors (E1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11) identified an increase in blurring of advertising and editorial and four of these editors (E1, 2, 3, 8) attributed the increase in blurring to increased competition in the magazine industry. According to the editors, an increase in competition gave advertisers more bargaining power to get their demands met.

**Publishers**

A third factor identified by the editors but only briefly mentioned by Ferguson, is the influence of the publisher. According to three editors (E1, 3, 5) the
publisher needs to resist advertisers' requests. The publishers' approaches could play a large role in the editors' abilities to maintain the separation between advertising and editorial. As Editor 1 explains, "Because we're an enlightened company you see the publishers listen to us [editors] and I think there are other places where they would make more an attempt to win." If the editor "wins," then she or he was allowed to print what they wanted in the magazine. Obviously, then, the publisher is a factor in whether or nor there is a blurring of advertising and editorial content.

Blurring Talent and Style

The fourth potential influence on the blurring of advertising and editorial is that some editors identified an increase in the blurring of talent and style between advertising and editorial. Such blurring has not necessarily been intentional. Instead, the blurring of talent and style can potentially be connected to a larger postmodern cultural force. The literature, specifically through Baudrillard, identified an increase in blurring of the social (editorial) and economic (advertising) in a postmodern society. As a result, the rules surrounding the separation of the blurring of advertising and editorial in magazines may come from a modern perspective where readers make meaning of the message's origins opposed to a postmodern perspective where readers may not make meaning in the same way. The blurring of the social and economic needs further study and exploration but nevertheless is a potential factor that may influence either intentionally or unintentionally the editors' abilities to make decisions surrounding the separation of editorial style and advertising style. Specifically, if readers are no longer bothered by the blurring of advertising and editorial messages, as shown in the success of the mag-a-logs, readers' attitudes may influence editors' decisions about the blurring of advertising and editorial.
In conclusion, four issues identified by this study potentially influence the editors' abilities to maintain the separation of advertising and editorial: editorial integrity, economics, publishers, and the blurring of talent and style. These factors illustrate that the relationship between advertising and editorial is multi-faceted and complex—too complex perhaps for universal guidelines such as ASME. Based on the fact that only three editors mentioned ASME, one could speculate that perhaps the issue of blurring advertising and editorial content is more contextual, based on different circumstances, cultural moods, and economic times for ASME's universal guidelines to be applied successfully. The complexity may mean that ASME guidelines should be restructured or a different approach needs to be taken as discussed further under "Suggestions for Change."

Further Implications from the Literature and Editors' Responses

Interestingly, through the discussion of cultural trends, the editors considered their magazines as what I termed cultural barometers. The editors did not consider their magazines to create reality but only to reflect reality. Based on the editors' perspectives, one could conclude that in fact cultural trends are "out there"; they simply exist and the editor reflects them in her magazine. In effect, then, the reader looks to the magazine to take action on and understand ideas that are "out there" in the culture. Two assertions by the editors and in the literature potentially contradict this notion that women’s magazines simply reflect cultural trends and ideology: 1) how the editors identified that the magazines respond as cultural and industry barometers and 2) how magazines potentially construct gender.
Cultural and Industry Barometers

First, the editors' perspectives of how the magazines act as what I termed an industry barometer illustrated that the magazines may have the potential to create not just reflect cultural trends. Six editors (E1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11) asserted that magazines, in response to an increase in competition, have increased their celebrity coverage and sexual content in the magazines. In this case, then, the increase in celebrity and sex coverage initially reflected a need to sell more magazines. One could speculate that by making these topics forefront on the agenda, readers' interests have been tweaked and perhaps heightened around the topics of celebrities and matter-of-fact sex talk as portrayed in the magazines. As a result, the magazines and other media may have created a cultural trend by responding to increased competition in the publishing industry. Of course, the process as explained is speculation since what creates cultural trends and what defines them is difficult to separate.

Second, another example from the editors illustrates that women's magazines may have the potential to influence cultural trends. As described earlier, the editors explained how the readers use the magazine as a type of manual on which they can take action. Editor 3 explained, "I mean the world is complicated, confusing and we're bombarded by messages and you know there are a pretty systematic set of rules that underlie a lot of our experiences and magazines tell people articulate, we articulate for them." In another example, Editor 1 said that her readers use the magazine as a "bible." In addition, Editor 6 explains that the reader, "[...] wants to look better and they want to do what they can to look better [...] They want the magazine to deliver them the information that will improve their life." Based on these examples, which include words such as "rules," "bible," and "improve your life," women appear to be looking to the magazines as a type of manual to transform or make sense of their lives.

When looking at past literature, referring to women's magazines as manuals has previously been identified. Winship concludes in her textual analysis of
women's magazines that magazines are in fact manuals for survival in a patriarchal culture, that they focus on femininity and obtaining pleasurable femininity through consumption (Storey 148). In other words, readers buy the products that represent femininity, such as make-up, based on editorial directive to obtain pleasurable femininity through consumption. To understand this phenomenon further, I will discuss social constructionist feminism and feminist theorist Candace West's concept of "doing gender." I will then link this idea to women's magazines' abilities to influence cultural trends.

Women Doing Gender

Social constructionist feminism states that gender is a social construction of two binary categories: man and woman (Lorber 160). The rules of being a "woman" or a "man" are not natural understandings but learned behaviors. According to West's concept of "doing gender," learning and following the rules of gender is considered "an accomplishment" in society. Based on the large number of messages found in women's magazines that conform to dominant ideologies, one might conclude that the publications' present rules for femininity provide a means for women to accomplish "doing gender" in their everyday lives. As Winship said, the magazines act as manuals that teach women to obtain pleasurable femininity through consumption (Storey 148). To fulfill this purpose, the magazines discuss or recommend how a woman should wear make-up, do their hair, conduct themselves on dates, and dress for certain occasions. Usually consuming a product is necessary to do any of these identified recommendations. As a result, women's magazines can act as a manual for the women who are looking for a way to "accomplish" doing gender.

Based on the magazines' ability to act as a manual as identified in the literature and by the editors, women's magazines potentially must have the ability to create cultural trends. Or, within the framework of "doing gender" the magazines
at least may have the ability to define femininity. The understanding presented here
is based on the literature and some of the editors’ responses; however, further
research needs to be conducted. Specifically, further research needs to be
conducted on the reader and her use of the magazine.

**Suggestions for Change and Further Study**

Since women’s magazines have the potential to influence women’s lives by
readers taking action on their content and by the magazines potentially creating
cultural trends, influences on the magazines content are important for
consideration. Specifically, if, in fact, women are taking action on magazine
content as editors indicate, women need to know the source of the content. With
such complexity behind the relationship between advertising and editorial as
presented in the discussion section, knowing who created the messages and,
therefore, who is accountable for the messages becomes difficult. Identification of
the sources requires a clear separation of advertising and editorial.

An increase in competition in the industry should not mean an increase in
the blurring of advertising and editorial content due to increased advertisers’
demands. In order to make the separation of advertising and editorial endure
through difficult economic times, the guidelines must be changed. Currently, the
only industry guidelines, which are mentioned by just three editors, are the ASME
guidelines. The ASME guidelines, based on the fact that only three editors
mentioned them, do not appear to be influential. As a result, new guidelines should
be set and enforced throughout the industry.

My recommendation for the new guidelines would be to focus on the
advertisers not the editors. Ultimately, because the advertisers collaboratively pay
for the majority of magazine costs, advertisers have a great deal of power over the
magazine. One approach is for new guidelines to be governed—perhaps by a body
such as the FCC—with offender penalties. The guidelines would not allow
advertisers to make demands to editors for any reason. There would be no special requests or placement issues. Instead, once an advertiser bought a page of advertising they would get just that, a page of advertising. Any logistical issues would be left up to the editor; pleasing advertisers would not be a consideration. If magazines functioned within these guidelines, the editor would clearly be accountable for magazine content. Having a person who is accountable and able to make changes as she wishes is important if the magazine is going to be a “true,” potentially empowering source for women. Currently, due to the complex nature of advertising and editorial content, who makes the messages is not clear, which makes accountability unclear.

More broadly, if women’s magazines have the potential to shape ideology, the magazines’ general persona should not be controlled by advertisers. Currently, there is only one dominant ideology being portrayed in mainstream women’s magazines. This dominant ideology is being maintained by advertisers’ aversion to controversy and request for an editorial presence. In order to allow for more ideologies and to create a “free” press that is not bound by the restrictions of advertisers, there needs to be enforced guidelines that advertisers must follow. Advertisers’ aversion to controversy potentially results in there being no room for “controversial” or social topic stories, stories which have the potential to challenge the status quo. As a result, advertisers should not have the power to influence the persona of women’s magazines.

To encourage more diverse publications, a support system for diverse, start-up magazines could be put in place. For example, for every five mainstream magazines that a large company such as Revlon advertised in, Revlon would have to advertise in one publication that would be considered by some criteria not to enforce the status quo. Such a system would provide an opportunity for start-up magazines to be economically viable even though they did not follow the dominant beauty/fashion format.

Although these ideas may seem radical or even not possible within the U.S. American capitalist structure, I do not think such guidelines are unreachable. Laws
stop monopolies to protect consumers. Why couldn’t laws encourage diversity within women’s magazines? Such guidelines would encourage a broader range of ideas to succeed.

These ideas need to be built on through further research and understanding. To understand the potential of such an approach more research would be helpful. This study is only a foundation for further inquiry. Here are some suggestions for how to approach further research:

- More media makers need to be approached to see if the findings in this study are at all generalizable. In order to gain more perspectives, publishers of women’s magazines should also be approached.
- Advertisers’ perspectives need to be explored. Understanding the advertisers’ goals and approaches is important to create the complete picture of the relationship between advertising and editorial content.
- Since this study asked about a specific influence on the content of women’s magazines—the relationship between advertising and editorial content—further research needs to be conducted which explore other areas of influence on women’s magazine content.
- In order to understand the place of women’s magazines within the media culture, research should be conducted on other kinds of magazines to see if differences exist between women’s magazines and other magazines in regard to the relationship between advertising and editorial content.
- Since young women were identified as most likely to take action on editorial content, these women’s use of mainstream women’s magazines needs to be explored further by approaching the readers. Gaining such knowledge will provide an understanding of the influence and potential importance of women’s magazines.
Source credibility needs to be revisited as an area of study within a postmodern perspective. This will help to further our understanding of the reader in relation to her perception of the blurring of advertising and editorial content.

In conclusion, this study has presented selected editors' perceptions defining the relationship between advertising and editorial content and, specifically, in regard to social topic stories. The editors' abilities to make content decisions was discussed through the four major conclusions presented in this discussion section. From the understanding gained through this study, exploring media through a political economy perspective appears to be a useful approach that needs to be utilized in further literature. Also, arguments for change in the current paradigm to encourage the separation of advertising and editorial need to be developed.
WORKS CITED


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Magazine Address

August 9, 1999

Dear Editor

Re: A request for your valued participation in my Master's Degree Thesis

Like many young women, I was introduced to the world of women's magazines in my late teens. Ever since, these magazines—with their comfortable format and creative flare—have been a monthly treat.

In 1997 I completed a magazine journalism degree at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto, Canada. Now, keeping close to my interests, I am a graduate student and media researcher at Oregon State University.

Since Title is a leading women's magazine, your perspectives are critical to my study. Therefore, I am requesting a personal interview that will focus on editorial decision making as it relates to magazine content. The interview will be conducted in a personal, journalistic style and your responses will remain anonymous.

I plan to be in New York during the month of August. I will call you this week to ask if you will be available and to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and anticipated participation. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

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Appendix B

Interview Questions¹

1. From what I understand, you have been an editor for X years, is that right? //Have you always worked in the magazine industry? //Did you take journalism school?

2. What kinds of editorial content changes have you seen since you've begun working in the industry [or, what kinds of changes have you seen in the last ten years depending on how long they have been an editor]? What kinds of content changes in regard to advertising have you seen since you have began working in the industry [or in the last ten years]?

3. At your magazine, who makes the final decisions about advertising content? //Who makes the final decisions about editorial content?// Do the advertising decisions ever influence the editorial decisions? //If yes, in what ways? //Can you give a specific example? //Based on your experience, is what you described to me the industry standard?

[Prompt]: For example, in The Beauty Myth Naomi Wolf quotes a Washington Post editor who says, "If you had Watergate today you would have to check with the advertising department first, before you ran the story." Can you respond to that idea?

[The next questions depend on the response to question 3. If the editors say, "Yes," that advertising does influence editorial decisions, then 4-10a will be asked. If the editors say, "No," advertising does not influence editorial decisions, then 4-10b will be asked.]

¹The questions as shown provided a valuable framework for the interview. The follow-up questions came from the editors' responses, which resulted in the main questions not always being asked exactly as shown and/or being asked in the order shown.
4a. Do you see this as a challenge? Does it infringe on your autonomy as an editor?

5a. How do you handle this issue in your own magazine?
[Prompt]: For example, has there ever been a time when you wanted to run a story but couldn't because of advertising concerns? Or, is there a time when you had to change a story due to advertising concerns? How did you accommodate these situations?

6a. How much of the magazine's editorial content do you think serves to make advertisers feel comfortable advertising in your magazine?
[Prompt]: Like the beauty section for example, would you say 10% of it is for advertisers or half, approximately half, or how much?

7a. Do you think the blurring of advertising and editorial content is any more prevalent in women's magazines than in other magazines or in other mediums such as newspaper or television?

8a. As an expert in the field, where do you see the industry going in terms of the blurring of editorial and advertising content?

9a. What would have to happen for the magazine industry to change this situation/process that you described [from the last question]?

10a. In regard to social topic type stories, what kinds of social topics do you consider important to have in your magazine? What are these stories purpose?
[Prompts: The prompt will be different for each magazine depending on the magazine's most frequently published social topic stories as found in my informal artifact analysis.] [For example], I noticed that you publish a lot of stories on free choice and abortion, what is the purpose of these stories? [Or, for another example]
from a different magazine], I notice you publish a lot of stories on breast cancer, what is the purpose of these stories?

11a. What are the factors that determine how many social topic stories are in the magazine? Does advertising in any way influence the presence or absence of these stories?

12a. Well, those are all my questions; I appreciate your responses. Is there anything that you would like to mention that I didn't ask?

4b. Does that mean that as an editor you have relatively free reign over your magazine's editorial content?

5b. [If they say "yes" to 4b] That's interesting because from what I've read that doesn't seem to be the norm. How does your magazine keep advertising and editorial separate? Is this an important issue for your magazine?

6b. Do you think the autonomy you feel as an editor is unique?

7b. Is your magazine perhaps a model for others?

8b. What kinds of things, if any, can infringe on your autonomy as an editor?

9b. Where do you think issues relating to editorial autonomy are going?

10b. In regard to social topic type stories, what kinds of social topics do you consider important to have in your magazine? What are these stories purpose? [Prompts same as 10a.]
11b. What are the factors that determine how many social topic stories are in the magazine? Does advertising in any way influence the presence or absence of these stories?

12b. Well, those are all my questions; I appreciate your responses. Is there anything that you would like to mention that I didn't ask?
Appendix C

Dear Editor:

Re: Your consent to be a participant in my study: "Women's Magazine Editors' Perspectives on Magazine Content"

Thank you for taking the time to assist me, a graduate student at Oregon State University, with my research. The purpose of the study is to explore magazine content, including editorial and advertising content, through the eyes of editors. Please note that your participation is highly valued for this research. Current studies that have focused on the content of women's magazines have failed to explore the creative makings of that content. Therefore, your perspectives are an important addition to this body of research.

If you agree to participate in this study, please understand that:

- Your responses will remain anonymous.

- The interview will be audio-recorded and the tapes will be erased by June 2000. The transcripts, from which identifiers will be removed, will be retained until June 2003.

- The interview will last approximately 20 minutes.

- During the interview we will discuss magazine content including the relationship between editorial and advertising content.

- Upon request, I will send you a copy of the study when it is completed.

- Your participation in this study is voluntary and if you do decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.
Questions and Contact Information:
Leigh Felesky, Graduate Student Researcher
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(541) 737-5389

Dr. Judy Bowker, Academic Advisor
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If you have questions as a research participant, kindly call Mary Nunn,
Director of Sponsored Programs, OSU Research Office
(541) 737-0670.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I may
have had and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

----------------------------------------------------------
Participant's name (Please print)

----------------------------------------------------------
Participant's signature                       Date

----------------------------------------------------------
Signature of Researcher                       Date
CULTURAL BAROMETER
Editorial content reflecting cultural trends

INDUSTRY BAROMETER
Increase in coverage of sexual content and celebrities to increase sales

EDITORS' BELIEF SYSTEM
Defines what is blurring and what is not

BLURRING OF TALENT AND STYLE BETWEEN EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING INCREASED REQUESTS/DEMANDS
Due to an increase in competition in the publishing industry

Requests include:
- Desire for editorial presence
- Aversion to controversy
- Interest in placement, adjacency, and collusion

*This guide is created only for purposes of general organization and broad understanding. It represents a composite perspective presented by the editors. The static nature of the chart does not appropriately capture the fluid nature of the editors' standpoints.