

## **Effects of Digital Editing in Beauty and Fashion Magazines on Women**

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Photo manipulation or as we like to now call it “photo editing, or photoshopping” is nothing new. The first photo to ever be edited was a picture of five Capuchin monks. The photo was taken in 1841 by Calvert Richard Jones on the roof of a building in Malta. While four of the monks were gathered in a group for the photo, the fifth monk was placed a few steps behind. Jones, not liking how the placement of the fifth monk destroyed the integrity of the scene, he decided to paint over the figure on the negative using Indian ink. Where the fifth monk stood, it looked like a white patch of sky once the picture was printed. By 1878, the photo process changed drastically. The wet plate collodion process was invented, followed by gelatin-silver (dry) photoprocesses becoming one of the most important examples of photo manipulations in history.

In this day and age, the excessive use of Photoshop can be found in almost every single picture we see. Instead of these editing softwares to be used to enhance the quality of photos, they are now being used to completely change the aspect of a woman’s body, turning it into something it simply isn’t. From advertisements to Fashion magazines like Elle, Vogue, and InStyle, we seem to be in a never ending cycle, surrounded by unrealistic images, and portraits of what the female human body should look like. This was always a problem, but I believe it’s worsening as our society is getting more and more comfortable with the normalization of abnormal body standards. Not only does excessive photoshop change someone’s view on how the standard female human body should look, it's also sending out a poor message to others, making them want to conform to something that isn’t physically possible. “Since we’ll see millions more images of women in the media than we’ll ever see face to face, these images form a new standard for not just “beautiful, but also “average” and healthy” in our minds. When

women compare themselves to a standard of beauty, average and healthy that simply does not exist in real life, the battle for healthy body image is already lost.” -Kite and Kite, 2014

### Negative Effects of Photoshop on Women

I believe that excessive photo editing has a negative effect on women. Images shown in Fashion magazines are highly misrepresentative of the real world with regard to body image. The average woman has grown in size over the last ten years from a size 14 to now 16-18 while the standard presented in the media continues to become progressively thinner across various media outlets. Fashion Magazines like Elle, Vogue, and Instyle have been shown to have a pessimistic effect on women leaving them with negative moods, low self- esteem and body dissatisfaction due to the fact that they excessively photoshop the models in their magazines. (Grabe et al., 2008; Hawkins et al., 2004; Lopez- Guimera et la., 2010).

Body dissatisfaction can lead to poor psychological health and depression. Even though we know that imagines in magazines are unrealistic expectations of what the human body should look like, it doesn't stop us from wanting to achieve these unreachable goals. “When women see images of the thin-ideal, they may internalize that unattainable ideal and compare themselves unfavorably, which leads to body dissatisfaction” Myers and Crowther (2007) (p.306). In the U.S alone, five to ten million women suffer from eating disorders. In severe cases, trying to achieve these unreachable, new “beautiful”, “average”, and healthy body goals can result in anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder in which people have an intense fear of gaining weight and can become dangerously thin. Signs of anorexia include less than normal weight, negative body image, and obsession with food, and in some cases this eating disorder can make the person suffering from it to become a compulsive exerciser. Bulimia

nervosa is an emotional disorder involving distortion of body image and an obsessive desire to lose weight, in which sessions of extreme overeating are followed by depression and self-induced vomiting, purging, or fasting. According to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Disorders, almost seventy percent of girls in grades five through twelve said that magazine images influence their ideals of a perfect body. In so-called “pro-anorexia” forums, posters write about watching fashion shows and combing magazines for “thinspiration.” Pearson, 2017. Forty percent of girls in grades 1 through 3 want to be thinner. Seventy-eight percent of seventeen year old girls are unhappy with their bodies, and thirty percent of high school girls have an eating disorder. Teenage girls are reportedly “more afraid of gaining weight than getting cancer, losing their parents, or nuclear war.”

In a world where they are different body types, only one is “represented” countless times and “celebrated”; the fake, unrealistic body type. How do we expect women of all shapes and sizes to feel beautiful when only an edited, photoshopped, men made type is viewed as beautiful and healthy? The average woman in America is 5'4 and weighs 140 pounds and the average woman model is 5'11 and weighs 117 pounds. The average woman model being thinner than ninety-eight percent of American women is still being photoshopped to appear smaller than she already is.

### Photoshop and the Law

With a number of countries seeing the negative side effects that photoshop has on women, new laws have been put in place. In some countries, if you Photoshop a woman's body, your image may be slapped with a warning label. In October of 2017 a new law was passed in France requiring a “photographie retouchee” label on photos that have been digitally altered.

In the United States things are looking up also. Republican Representative Illeana Ros-Lehtinen and Democratic Representative Lois Capps, originally put forth the Truth in Advertising Act of 2014 with the support of the Eating Disorders Coalition and Brave Girl Alliance. The bill was stuck in congressional gridlock but was reintroduced later on in February of 2016 with additional new bill sponsors as the Truth in Advertising Act of 2016.

With the bill being the first step, if the Federal Trade Commission finds that retouched images and deceptive and/ or is causing harm to the consumer, it could exercise their existing regulatory power and require changes to advertising almost immediately. Also Congress could legislate around the Federal Trade Commission's recommendations.

### Rebellion Against Photo Editing

Politicians aren't the only one's petitioning against photoshopping and editing pictures in magazines. A fourteen year old named Julia Bluhm started a petition against Seventeen Magazine at Change.org. She gathered 86,000 signatures, and got the attention of Seventeen Magazine's editor Ann Shoket. Ann Shoket responded back by having her staff sign and publish a "Body Peace Treaty" which outlined the ways Photoshop would not be used.

Celebrities like Zendaya, called out a magazine after she saw an edited picture of herself on the magazine cover. She was 19 at the time and "was shocked" when she realized that her hips and torso were "quite manipulated" and slimmed down. She explained that she didn't approve of the magazine's use of photo-editing software: "These are the things that make women self-conscious, that create unrealistic ideals of beauty that we have."

### Beauty Campaigns with No Photoshop

Brands and celebrities are becoming more aware of the effects that photo editing on magazines pictures have on consumers and are also doing something about it.

Dove, an international company that sells 60 bars of soap per second, announced in June of 2018 that its ads will now feature “ No Digital Distortion Mark” so consumers can see models who don’t sustain a stressful beauty standard. Marketing director, Amy Stepanian of Dove told Popsugar she hopes that this “will help identify reality and relieve some of the pressure women and girls can feel to look a certain way.”

Even though SK-II, a Japanese cosmetics brand has not stated that they would no longer use Photoshop, its latest campaign shows unretouched models showing off their bare skin. Chloe Grace Morets, being one of the models, told Popsugar “I hope that a 13 year old girl on Instagram sees it and will know that I’m not retouched. She’ll realize that you can go out with bare skin and be who you are and not hide behind these false ideals of what beauty is.”

Last but not least is celebrity Tracee Ellis Ross, the queen of Natural Chic did a “Not of Photoshop” photo shoot spread with People’s magazine stating that she feels confident in her body and doesn’t need photoshop.

In conclusion, I believe that fashion magazines should stop excessive usage of editing software. To be honest, I’m not one hundred percent against editing pictures. I, myself, edit my own picture. For example, I think these editing software being used to enhance the quality of the photos is a good idea. They can be used to change bad lighting, or brush up a bit on makeup for a smoother finish, but nothing that is unachievable in real life. Photoshopping software shouldn’t be used to drastically change how a model looks, by making her thinner or wider. Photo editing

software should not be used to change the aspect of a woman's body, turning it into something it simply isn't.

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