

*PICTURE PERFECT: HOW EDITORS OF WOMEN'S MAGAZINES DEPICT FITNESS*

WHAT MESSAGES DO EDITORS SEND THROUGH COVER

SELL LINES AND IMAGES?

A Project presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Missouri

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by

KATHRYN CLARK

Professor Jennifer Rowe, Project Committee Chair

Professor Jan Colbert

Professor John Fennell

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## INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, women's fitness magazines are a puzzling, yet addictive facet of the journalism industry — and not because the publications are overly helpful or provide a great amount of reader service. In fact, after recently glancing at a cover of *Fitness* magazine, I instantly responded: “I would *never* wear a sequined tank top or put on makeup before going to the gym.” I consider myself fairly knowledgeable about health and fitness; however, I have not always been so well-read. The body-conscious words and images plastered on the covers of fitness magazines were what inspired me to investigate the messages these publications relay to readers. In short: the unhealthy, beauty-focused subject matter on fitness magazines' covers were my primary motivation to become a healthier individual.

A brief glance into my past would explain why I am extremely active. Since age four, I was involved in various competitive sports, such as dance, cheerleading and gymnastics. In college, journalism and schoolwork were my main priorities, but I was able to continue my athletic hobbies as extracurricular activities. During the day, I was a journalism student whose favorite magazine was *Women's Health* or *Self*. In the evenings, I was an athlete. At the time, I didn't realize the sports I loved and the publications that fueled my interests placed a large focus on physical attractiveness. And although I love women's magazines and my appearance-focused athletics, they are undoubtedly a large source of my personal insecurities and self-conscious thoughts.

As my undergraduate career came to an end, I wasn't ready to halt my journalistic studies. I yearned to expand my skill set and dive into the world of research. Thus, I applied and was accepted into the 4+1 Master's Program. Despite the grueling task of writing literature reviews and being expected to ingest hundreds of pages of readings within short time spans, pursuing graduate school was the best scholastic decision I have ever made.

I spent the summer before graduate school extremely sick with mononucleosis. While confined to the couch, I flipped through various women's magazines that progressively began to look the same and constantly advertised similar promises for quick weight-loss fixes. Those publications portrayed thinness as a measure of beauty and fitness. As somebody who has struggled with body image and maintaining a healthy relationship with food and exercise, I wanted to further explore these magazines and pinpoint the messages editors are sending to readers. The magazines might be labeled fitness publications, but the content and images did not appear to be focused on athleticism. I knew a graduate-level education would allow me the opportunity to research and dissect these publications' underlying messages.

When it came time to solidify a research idea and craft my project proposal, I remained confident in my decision to study women's fitness magazines, thanks to my class coursework — namely Mass Media Seminar and *The Magazine: Then and Now*. After reaching out to an editor at *Women's Health* magazine, my resume landed in the hands of a human-resources employee in Rodale's Pennsylvania office. She offered me an editorial internship with Rodale.com, the company's online health media outlet, and

assured me I'd receive a hands-on position with plentiful writing opportunities. I was eager to take the internship because I wanted to learn how editors use language and visuals to reach out and connect with readers. My research question is focused on what messages editors send to their readers; in accepting this internship, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the brainstorming process that editors use to construct headlines and choose images. I knew that writing health content would help me learn how editors select their words and photos in order to convey a particular message. I was certain I would learn a method of how to write display type that captures readers' attention and persuades them to dig further into specific content. Additionally, I knew this type of writing experience would aid my research, especially because I'd be able to observe my research topic from a health perspective, yet I would have no immediate connection to the three magazines.

I am confident that completing an internship not directly affiliated with my project's magazines was actually a benefit in disguise; it enhanced my ability to research with an open mind and unbiased opinion. I was able to put all personal preferences or favoritism aside and strictly analyze the magazines, which might have been more difficult had I actually been working at one of those publications.

Having battled my own body-image insecurities, I felt like I had a firm grasp of how readers could potentially interpret cover sell lines and images, and I believe this helped me in identifying what messages editors are sending to readers. As an avid fitness enthusiast, I wanted to uncover the true purpose of fitness publications, and I fully embraced my role as a detail-oriented researcher by analyzing 72 magazine covers.

Essentially, this research shows how women's fitness magazines have evolved and what messages readers receive from the language used in cover sell lines and images.

## FIELD NOTES

### Field Notes: Week 1 (6/6/2012)

#### Tasks Completed:

- I began my editorial position with Rodale.com, a health-editorial website that offers service journalism on a plethora of health topics.
- I met my editors, Emily Main (also my supervisor) and Leah Zerbe, and they took me to my cubicle that is located next to their offices. I spent the majority of the afternoon programming my email and voicemail, filling out paperwork, logging onto and exploring the employee website and becoming familiar with the building as my editors led me around each floor.
- I met with my editors for a brainstorming session to hash out upcoming story ideas. One of our department's duties is to write a segment of the *Eat This Not That* newsletter that is distributed electronically on a weekly basis.
- I was assigned to write an article about choosing healthier options for junk and snack foods, with the stipulation that each food item must be organic or non-GMO certified. Even though the deadline wasn't too tight, I began working on this assignment by researching and setting guidelines for the snack's caloric content and other nutritional values.
- As part of my position with Rodale.com, I'll play a large role in social-media exploration and will temporarily be in charge of the Twitter account (@RodaleNews) to schedule tweets that promote our content.

- I sat in on the online meeting with *Prevention* magazine. The purpose of Rodale.com's attendance is to pitch content we're working on. More often than not, *Prevention*'s editors want us to rewrite our stories in the *Prevention* voice so they can run the content on their website.
- This week, one of my largest tasks was to work on search engine optimization, which is when we use Google Keywords to search key terms. This procedure allows us to tag articles with popular terms that will refer readers to our website. Although it's a tedious process, this effort gives our content a better chance of being pulled up when people search certain terminology on online databases.

### **Reflection:**

Rodale seems like a fantastic employer and so far, I am very impressed by the office atmosphere. In regards to living an environmentally friendly and health-conscious lifestyle, it seems as though the company actually practices what it preaches. There are countless recycling bins around every corner, the cafeteria is all organic, the gym is directly down the street and offers exercise classes, and there is an obvious passion for health and fitness that unites each publication, which they refer to as "brands."

My first week on the job was certainly not overloaded with work. I got the impression that my editors primarily wanted me to become more familiar with the website and acclimated to our weekly routines. Since my two editors and I are the only ones who

provide the editorial content for Rodale.com, I am confident that my role will be very hands on. I look forward to the plentiful opportunities to produce substantive work.

## Field Notes: Week 2 (6/11/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- My week began with me continuing to work on my healthy junk/snack foods story for the *Eat This Not That* newsletter feature article, which will also run as a large slideshow on our site's landing page. I asked Emily how the process of *ETNT* actually works; apparently, the newsletter circulates among Rodale's different brands, so it promotes Rodale.com content every Saturday.
- By Wednesday afternoon, I turned in my final list of 21 food selections for *ETNT*. Emily liked my ideas so much that she wanted me to include all of the food items, rather than narrowing down the list to ten or fewer.
- I searched the *Prevention* and *Women's Health* websites to pull online evergreen content for our website's Mind/Body channel. Since the publications are so interrelated with health topics, sharing content and articles across the separate brands seems to be a common activity. However, I noticed that we typically rework the stories to use our website's voice, instead of reusing identical copy.
- I attended *Prevention's* weekly meeting with the online team and listened to story pitches. They wanted to know what we were working on and requested that we rewrite a few of our ideas for *Prevention*. When this happens, we essentially prepare a version for Rodale.com and *Prevention*.
- I was assigned my first "real" story that was pitched as "6 Disturbing Facts About Your Dinner" Emily discovered an interesting report/study called *The Hands That Feed Us* that revealed horrifying details about the food industry. The issues within



the text focused on employee treatment, wages, benefits, etc. I had to read the report (approximately 90 pages) and jot down the most alarming information. My article would highlight these problems and provide solutions for consumers to get more involved. I also interviewed the executive director of the coalition that published the report. I wrote up approximately half of the article, sent it Emily's way for a few edits and finished writing it.

- I attended a video meeting for Rodale.com to help brainstorm ideas for videos that will populate our home page.
- I pulled images for one of our online slideshows that features the eight best foods to buy at a farmer's market. *Organic Gardening* ran this story online, but we select different photos when we want to run the same slideshow on our site. I selected 38 images and sent them along to my editors to make the final decision.

**Reflection:**

This week, I was busy with various tasks that were small yet necessary duties, but I felt ready and was itching to tackle more intense work or writing that was started from scratch. I was pleased when I was assigned a long-form article that required me to dig into a lengthy report, especially because the subject matter was quite interesting. I have only been at Rodale.com for a short amount of time but am pleasantly surprised with the workload and scheduling. For now, I appreciate that the deadlines are not extremely tight because I can give my writing proper attention and spend more time perfecting my work. This type of relaxed atmosphere has been a pleasant change, especially since I am used to

working in a higher-stress environment where deadlines are not negotiable. One thing I've noticed is: although my editors say that Rodale.com refreshes its content on a daily basis, the same feature story will often occupy the site's landing page for a few days. Even though we might update smaller slideshows or sidebars, I do not necessarily think our site should be entirely classified as a daily if the landing page remains the same for a few days. Nonetheless, I am thrilled to be a part of the Rodale.com team. I am anxious to start my third week, have a more regular routine and work on more stories that delve further into the health journalism industry.

### **Research/Analysis Update:**

Similar to last week, this week has been a little lighter on the research end. Weekdays are long and exhausting, but I plan on getting into the habit of spending a few hours each night working on my project so I don't have to scramble to finish. Although my research does not include international issues of women's fitness magazines, I did spend a few minutes examining a cover of one of *Women's Health* international magazines. I found it humorous because the sell lines were still in English, but the subtext was in the country's respective language. For example, if the cover advertised "Sculpt the Perfect Bikini Body," the explanatory text directly underneath was in Chinese. I am not quite sure of the reasoning for that, but it is evident that regardless of language, there is still a universal focus on body and appearance. Fortunately, since I am working at Rodale, I have unlimited access to *WH* issues; however, I need start to researching and securing the different covers of *Shape* and *Fitness*. I am fairly certain the websites will have archives

of the covers, so I plan on downloading those images. I also would like to look into the Rodale library and see if it is possible to scan copies of the *WH* covers so I do not have to analyze everything in digital form.

### Field Notes: Week 3 (6/18/2012)

#### Tasks Completed:

- I began my week by reaching out to PR and media contacts for my *Eat This Not That (ETNT)* story about organic/non-GMO snacks. I had to request low-res press photos (high-res apparently locks up our email accounts), so I spent a couple hours making phone calls and sending emails. The good news: most websites have a specific media contact or press kits that provide the photos online, so I didn't have to go on a wild goose chase to try and request a single photo of a food product. Within an hour, I had secured nine out of the 21 images, and by Wednesday, I had upped the number to 17. This was a long, ongoing process that can prove to be difficult, especially if companies don't list specific media contacts.
- On Monday, the online slideshow that I pulled the photos for went live on our site. I can't take credit for the writing, but I did pull the majority of photos that my editors chose. You can see it here: <http://www.rodale.com/farmers-market-foods>
- I wrote and submitted a comprehensive first draft (Hed/dek/lede/intro) and 21 snack items with descriptions, nutrition information and hyperlinks to Emily for *ETNT*. This story will run Saturday, June 30, so my final draft isn't due until the Wednesday before. I am glad she gave me a more solid deadline because until now, she really hasn't set many deadlines and I often feel like I have too much time to finish assignments.

- I attended a meeting for online logistics information. It was a combination of representatives from Rodale.com, *Organic Gardening* and *Men's Health* (except the *MH* editor did not show). I'm assuming the editors representing *OG/MH* were responsible for their online counterpart, rather than print. Apparently this meeting is typically more editorial, but today the editors mainly discussed technical problems/terms that were unfamiliar to me. Needless to say, I was pretty clueless.
- I finished the *ETNT* article on Tuesday and sent it on to Emily. One of the best parts of this article is free food! Since I have been contacting companies for press photos, they offer to send samples. I gladly accepted, and enjoyed having packages delivered to me, not to mention I like to actually taste the products that I am advising my readers to purchase — it seems more credible. One company sent me twelve jars of peanut butter (dark chocolate, white chocolate, cinnamon-raisin flavors). I asked Emily what to do with them and she said to take what I wanted and we'd donate the rest to the food bank, which I thought was generous. Upon receiving each sample, I immediately followed up with the respective media contact and sent a thank-you email.
- This week, our *Prevention* meetings (Tuesday and Thursday) were cancelled, but we were unaware of that when we showed up on Tuesday. We waited around for a while, but nobody joined us.
- I secured a press photograph for my "6 Disturbing Dinner Facts" article within an hour. Emily asked me an hour before our 3 p.m. deadline to request a press photo, so I gladly accepted the challenge and called the executive director of the

coalition. I secured the image before deadline, so I was pleased with my efforts, especially since this wasn't a task I had originally anticipated. I usually plan more in advance, but I was able to roll with the punches and secure the image in just enough time.

- I sat in on a conference call meeting to discuss search-engine optimization and key terms for our site and articles.
- On Friday, my story about the employees in the food industry (dinner facts) was the feature story on our site's landing page. This was a great feeling. Here is the link to my article: <http://www.rodale.com/food-workers>
- I scheduled approximately 20 tweets.
- On Friday, Emily asked me if I would help research for an upcoming story. My other editor, Leah, pitched a story about food applications (mainly a round-up that talks about apps that cover pesticides, healthy foods, etc.), and Emily said I could help search for additional apps.

### **Reflection:**

As previously stated in earlier field notes, one of the most surprising things has been the calm nature of Rodale.com's environment and work ethic. I don't want to compare this position to my experience at *Vox* or other Mizzou publications because they truly are quite different, but I think the reason I feel confused in this atmosphere is because it seems my title here holds less responsibility than my prior experiences. I like the fact that I am not constantly overwhelmed or severely stressed out, and I know my journalistic

skills are being put to good use. Nonetheless, I think I could take on more tasks, and I am itching to feel more in the loop and know exactly what content we have in the works. I don't want to assume anything, but I think my two editors have become so accustomed to sharing the roles between each other and carrying out the duties by themselves, they forget I am here to help take on some of the workload. I'm hoping they are simply finishing projects, and I have a hunch the content that's currently being published is material that has been in the works for a while.

Communication is a key component in the journalism world and from what I've witnessed so far, Rodale.com (and the company in general) could work on improving communication and making sure they stay connected or that ideas/meetings/etc. are better solidified so we are not wasting time. This week, there were several instances where people have cancelled meetings or simply not shown up, but we didn't find out until we arrived to the meeting room and found it vacant. Example: Monday, we had a meeting with *OG* and *MH* brands. The editor from *MH* did not show up and no one knew where he was, so we wasted approximately ten minutes waiting for him. On Tuesday, we went to the *Prevention* meeting, but the conference room was empty. Emily said she never received a cancellation email, so we waited around for a bit. Emily went back to her desk to email the *Prevention* editor, which I thought was a little strange because *Prevention* is actually located on the same floor as us. Additionally, we conduct various meetings through conference calls, which has been a poor form of communication because people are usually late, talking at the same time, etc. I guess I'm simply confused because we are

all located in the same building, so you would think that timeliness, attendance and communication about meeting cancellations would be clearer. I hope this does not sound like I am being overly critical, but it's something that has happened frequently. As I'm discussing the topic of communication, I have also been slightly frustrated with the lack of communication about my deadlines and drafts. In prior journalism experience, deadlines were set for the entire semester, so I always knew when to turn in my work, as well as when it would be published. The scheduling here isn't as tight, so when I sent my final draft of "6 Disturbing Dinner Facts," I didn't hear anything from Emily until almost a week later. She told me that she really liked the story and thought it was great, so they'd be running it as Friday's lead story. She also didn't tell me about the Wednesday deadline for the photo until an hour prior (we turn in the content so our producer can generate the newsletter that goes out to subscribers that teases to our story of the day), so I was scrambling to get that photo by 3 p.m. It wasn't much stress on me, but it put me in a difficult position because I felt I was being a pushy by telling the coalition's executive director that I needed the photo *that* quickly. I certainly don't mind pressure, but I felt a little unprofessional and demanding by giving a source that tight time constraint. Again, I'm not sure Emily is used to having informing subordinates about deadlines, but I'd like to be more in the loop. I know I've been asking countless questions, but that is the only way I can learn.

The last thing that I want to analyze most is the editing process, or lack of editing process. After I sent my first draft of the dinner facts article to Emily, she sent it back



with minimal (less than three) edits. I corrected them, finished the article and sent her another draft. She told me the draft looked good and requested that I provide one more fact. I sent her another bullet point, but never received any edits. I actually never saw the final copy of my story until it went live on the website, which kind of surprised me. I wasn't upset by her adding or cutting anything because I know that's an unavoidable part of the editing process, but she added items that were incorrect. On Friday, I sent the story link to the coalition's executive director (Joann Lo) because she wanted to help promote the story through their company's social media outlets. She responded that she enjoyed the article and the format, but she found three errors. This upset me because I didn't remember writing any of the information she pointed out. I pulled up my final draft of the story that I turned into Emily, alongside the published article on the website. The three errors she mentioned were not in the final draft that I turned in, so it was a little disheartening that my editor inserted information that was incorrect and arguably unnecessary. I am not placing blame because I know an editor's job is to enhance and improve stories, but I wish I could have seen the final text before it went live. The story was most of my writing (with a few additions), yet it was mildly frustrating that it appeared as though I provided incorrect information. I'm fairly certain Emily and Leah conduct a "test" e-mail of the newsletter before it's actually sent to our subscribers, so I'm going to request to be included. I was a little thrown off when Joann mentioned wrong pieces of information, especially since I wasn't sure what she was referring to.

**Research/Analysis Update:**

I went to the library so I could pull issues of *WH* and make copies of the covers years.

However, it was my luck that the head librarian was out, so the assistant told me to come back Monday. I plan to stay late after work Monday to make copies and cull through the archives. I have exhausted *Shape's* and *Fitness* websites in trying to find the older covers, but I've had no luck. I am also going to check our library's archives because I know it holds back issues of competitor magazines.

## Field Notes: Week 4 (6/25/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- On Monday, Emily approached me to ask if I could help her and Leah finish writing a story that was a guide to ten different food apps for tablets or smart phones. (It was running the next day.) Since we were working on deadline for 4 p.m., I had to work quickly and efficiently. After some searching the iTunes store, I ran my ideas by her (she liked two out of the three I found), and she then gave me a third app. I finished these blurbs within an hour and sent them her way. They didn't need many edits, and I was glad she didn't make any drastic changes.
- I secured two more photos for my *ETNT* snacks story. Emily told she wants to push it back to run July 14 instead of the original run date (June 30). She said my story was a time-intensive, detailed piece, and wanted it to get adequate traffic and views. The plan is to put it up after the upcoming holiday weekend. Apparently, traffic is slow the two weekends before July 4th, so I really appreciate her wanting the best views for my story and taking those details into consideration. I worked hard on this piece, and I think our viewers can benefit from reading it. However, the only problem with postponing the slideshow date is I feel the need to notify all the sources I called for press photos. I do not want them to be confused when look for the story and it hasn't run.
- I attended our online meeting with *Men's Health* and *Organic Gardening* (the editors made the executive decision to now hold it biweekly). This time, there was much more discussion about editorial content, (the *MH* senior editor was there),

so I felt it was a much more beneficial meeting. The *MH* editor, Kevin Donahue, was quite knowledgeable, and impressed me with his authority and logical thinking about creating content that appeals to readers.

- Our smartphone food apps slideshow ran as Tuesday's lead story. I wrote slides 9, 10 and 11. Here is the link to the story: <http://www.rodale.com/food-apps>
- After conducting research in the health field and seeing what type of content our site tends to cover, I felt confident enough to pitch my own story idea. I watch the news every morning before work and have noticed there has been a recent uproar in regards to sunless tanning, due to the chemicals used in tanning lotions that are thought to be cause DNA problems and genetic alterations. I wanted to pitch something on that topic because most women assume sunless tanning is a safe alternative to the real sunshine and UV rays. However, depending on the method and spray tan they use, they could be wrong. Emily liked my idea and told me to begin working on it. I've noticed that Rodale.com is into the "scare" tactic — although the site's content is very beneficial to health concerns and provide solutions, our method of catching readers' attention seems to be by using shocking titles or alarming facts.
- Emily assigned me a story about unknown benefits of meditation. This story will dig deeper than the normal effects, such as relieving stress/anxiety. She wants me to help reveal other benefits that people might not have considered. I am glad to be simultaneously working on two larger articles.
- I wrote four "bonus tips" for the *ETNT* newsletter. Bonus tips run at the bottom of

the letter and tease to stories on our site or *OG* (depending on who has that day's lead story). Since we are out of the office next week on Wednesday, the day our *ETNT* content is due. Our producers need these tips earlier than usual, but Emily told me about these fairly last minute. She needed them by the end of the day so I wrote four and sent them her way.

- Our staff had a quick meeting to tentatively slate content for the upcoming two weeks. I had to ask my editors to explain certain terms, abbreviations and other lingo, but I caught on quickly. I noticed that if we don't have anything slated, they tend to repurpose and run old content that previously performed well. I also realized that Rodale.com is likely considered a "daily" because the site publishes a new leading story every weekday. However, on the weekend, the leading story remains the same from Friday and does not change until Monday.
- Throughout the entire week, I scheduled a minimum of 25 tweets.
- I pulled images for a summer picnic slideshow Emily is working on.
- On Thursday, at 10 a.m., Emily asked if I'd write a piece to summarize a news blast she received about high-fructose corn syrup and acne. I gladly accepted the challenge. She said she would need it by 4 p.m., and I finished it at 2:45 p.m. I sent Emily a draft and this time around, she emailed me back an edited copy. There were minimal edits — she cut a little and added a few sentences but she wanted me to read through to make sure it was okay. This was an improvement from my first writing experience, and I was glad I was able to look over the final copy before it was published. I also pulled images for this story.

- Before writing the meditation story, I sent Emily a rough list of ideas that I was planning to highlight so she could make sure they were quirky enough. She sent them back with a few suggestions, and I began writing a draft. I will turn in a solidified first draft on Monday.
- On Friday, my article about HFCS and acne was published. Here is the link:  
**<http://www.rodale.com/natural-skin-care>**
- I finished a first draft of my tanning story. I'm going to clean it up and send it to Emily on Monday, even though she hasn't set a deadline yet. She said as long as it is published during summer, it's timely. However, I want it published ASAP, so I am determined to keep it rolling.

### **Reflection:**

Life at Rodale.com has been a seamless transition. I have two great editors that are always available when I ask questions or need help. I am glad my writing chops are in regular use, and I find myself truly enjoying the challenge of writing (and rewriting) a witty lede, or reworking bland news information to make it snarky enough to capture our readers' attention. I'll admit: throughout graduate school, I endured a few rough patches that made me question whether journalism was my calling. However, my experience at Rodale.com has reassured me that this is the profession for me.

It's no secret that research is vital to every facet of journalism, regardless of whether you're in the stages of pre-reporting, writing or fact checking. You must do your research

at every level to ensure your story is accurate, or to see if there is even a story to write. When I pitched my own story, I had to thoroughly research the topic before I presented my idea. If I hadn't conducted adequate research, I would have looked like an amateur who had simply had an idea and ran with it. By doing proper pre-reporting, I had a solid idea and information to support it. Before beginning my job at Rodale, I had a firm grasp on the pre-reporting process — after all, I spent three semesters working at *Vox* as a reporter, editor and TA. However, when I was a reporter, the editors provided me with a vast source of background information, so I just utilized those details instead of digging to find my own. At Rodale, I have learned to dive deeper into subject matter. That may seem like an obvious lesson, but I literally spent an entire day purely on research and reading countless articles about tanning and meditation. In order to avoid any type of error and sound knowledgeable, I must know the information on every level. After all, it is impossible to write a great article if you aren't educated on every aspect of your particular topic. Since I'm not one to settle for mediocre, I've realized my research is equally as important as my writing.

In addition to researching topics I am interested in, I know I still must research the stories and articles that wouldn't necessarily be my first pick. I'll be honest: I don't know the first thing about meditation, nor do I have a huge interest in it, so it was obvious I needed to perform extensive research before tackling that piece. Prior to actually writing, I wanted to brainstorm several bullet points so I could have a confined, direct focus, and my thoughts not all over the place. I had no idea that there is a plethora of meditation

methods that serve different purposes, so researching this article made me respect a topic that was unfamiliar to me. This week, my biggest take-away message is: you can never do too much research, so do everything you can to learn. You want to be educated and reassure your readers you have correct information. Small mistakes add up and will eventually make people view your work as less credible. Journalists get a lot of flack for publishing wrong, inaccurate or negative information, so it's better to cover all areas by researching extensively before you write.

### **Research/Analysis Update:**

This week, I finally had the chance to explore the Rodale library. The library is incredible and, in the near future, I plan on staying to take full advantage of the resources. In addition to ordinary reference materials, they have an entire section dedicated to Rodale books available for check out. I thought this was pretty neat. I always see books advertised in *WH* and *Runner's World*, but I don't necessarily want to shell out \$20 to purchase a book I will likely read once.

The librarian was quite helpful and when I explained to her why I needed to make copies of magazine covers, she was more than willing to show me the archives and how to operate the copy machine. She led me to the *WH* archives and showed me where they house competitor magazines. To my surprise, *WH* was technically introduced to the market in 2005 with a “fall guide” magazine. I am under the impression it was the precursor to the actual magazine. I realized that *WH* was originally launched as a



bimonthly publication, so after consulting with my committee, I made the decision to change my research from covering the 2005 calendar year to 2007. After briefly scanning these covers, I feel I am going to have an extremely interesting analysis.

## **Field Notes: Week 5 (7/2/2012)**

### **Tasks Completed:**

- I continued writing rough first drafts of my tanning and meditation stories. Last week, I ran the ideas and "meat" of the stories by Emily so I could ensure we were both on the same page before I started the articles.
- I finished the first draft of my meditation piece. This was a harder for me to write because I had to conduct thorough research to ensure I wasn't mixing up information and that everything was accurate. As I learned last week, research is vital. After I finished the first draft, I sent it Emily's way.
- I emailed sources for my snack story to let them know the article was pushed back from the original run date.
- I attended our meeting with the *Prevention* online team. The online editor requested a version of my meditation story. If their team ever wants our articles for their site, we shorten and rework a version in the *Prevention* voice.
- I received edits for my meditation story with requests to change a few of the bullet points and add more information/descriptions. I really want to make sure this story is reader friendly, especially because meditation is a topic people might not find interesting. My biggest challenge was ensuring that my writing would appeal to everybody, regardless if they prefer meditation or not. Emily said I did a good job with this.

- I sent the almost-finished draft of my tanning story to Emily so she could edit it.
- Emily assigned me to write and put together a larger slideshow about celebrities who are passionate about being environmentally friendly. This was a request from *Organic Gardening* (we write content for them that we can run on both sites), and it is similar to a piece we've already published about famous people helping the environment. I'm not quite sure if this will be a group effort, or left up to me.
- Emily sent me last edits for my snacks story, which were confusing since it was actually slated to run earlier. I'm not quite sure why I am getting more edits. I guess she wanted additional information to beef up the story, although it is already a lengthy piece.

### **Reflection:**

Similar to many of my experiences at Rodale, I have noticed the editing process does not seem to be as fast-paced and efficient as I initially expected. I'm not sure if I feel this way because my assigned stories are spaced out, so not receiving edits for multiple days is normal. Actually, when I think back to *Vox*, I guess it did take 3-4 days to get first-round edits back to our reporter. The edits are a bit difficult to pick out. Instead of using an obvious method such as track changes, Emily simply types questions and changes the font to all caps. She doesn't alter the font size or color, so it takes a while to comb through my stories and make sure I haven't missed anything. Additionally, the all-caps give me the feeling that she's yelling, which is funny because she is one of the most calm individuals I have ever worked with.

Edits are not timely, at least not in my department. I think one of the best examples to reinforce this statement is my snack story. It was slated to run June 30, but Emily decided to hold it for next Saturday. Then, she sent me another draft with edits, which was perplexing since I had turned the most recent draft into her at least a week ago. Honestly, I had somewhat dismissed the story, as I was under the impression it had been completed. I really liked that story, but it became tiresome to look at. However, I fixed those edits and sent it along.

### **Research/Analysis Update:**

I have started scanning the copies of *WH* covers, and my goal for this upcoming week is to compile the issues of *SHAPE* and *Fitness*. The reason this process is taking a little longer than I'd hoped is scanned copies have to be emailed, and the librarian has limited names programmed into the copy machine's system. If I want to email them to myself, I must type in my Rodale email each time. Thankfully, the librarian has been very helpful and allowed me to auto-select her email address, so she can just forward me each attachment. I'm fortunate she is willing to help me.

As I've been scanning the issues of *WH*, I've briefly glanced at the covers. I don't want to draw any huge conclusions right now until I have performed the formal analysis, but I do have some initial observations. I feel like the earlier years were a little more wholesome and “down to earth.” The cover models looked sporty rather than rail-thin and overly done up — one of the featured women even had wet hair, as if she had just jumped into a

pool. The outfits, make-up and accessories were certainly scaled down from recent issues. The models were typically wearing a bikini (or bikini tops with shorts/jeans), and you do not see any of the flashy tops, huge jewelry or big hair that you would see on recent covers. I am anxious to see how the magazine's appearance has evolved.

## Field Notes: Week 6 (7/9/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- I sent my completed draft of the sunless tanning story to Emily, and I believe this story is running next Wednesday.
- I fixed the final edits for *ETNT* snacks and sent them to Emily. This story went live on Rodale.com Friday, and was featured in the *Eat This Not That* newsletter. Here is the link: **<http://www.rodale.com/healthy-snacks-list>**
- I had the opportunity to attend a seminar with Maria Rodale, CEO of Rodale, Inc. It was more interesting than I initially thought it'd be. Maria had a much harder life than I assumed.
- I was previously assigned a longer slideshow piece that highlights celebrities and Olympians who make a valiant effort to live green or organic and spread awareness by supporting different charities. It's actually for *Organic Gardening*, not Rodale.com, so I'm glad that I am getting the opportunity to be published among a variety of Rodale brands. I started narrowing down our list of 40 celebrities, and Emily, Leah and I are going to meet on Monday to make sure we agree on the celebrities I've chosen before I start the writing process.
- I attended our weekly *Prevention* meeting — in addition to my recent meditation story, the online editor also wants a version of my sunless tanning piece, which means two of my articles will be simultaneously published on Rodale.com and *Prevention*. I am very excited.
- I scheduled mid-week tweets for Rodale.com's Twitter account.

- I tackled another quick turnaround story about conservation in relation to politics. Emily gave me the assignment at 10:45 a.m., and I had my first draft in at 3:45 p.m. I am under the impression this story is scheduled to run Monday.
- I attended an international seminar that explained Rodale's global brands and the process behind launching international magazine editions.
- I pulled images for my meditation piece, and it was Friday's feature story for Rodale.com's landing page. I am happy my article ran on a Friday because it will remain the feature story for the entire weekend. I was originally hesitant to write about meditation since I don't have an interest in it, but I learned a lot and the story turned out great: <http://www.rodale.com/health-benefits-meditation>
- At the end of the week, I was assigned a new story about lead levels in manufactured purses. Emily stumbled across an article that described how brightly colored purses have recently been tested and shown to have a great deal of lead in them that exceed the legal limit. In layman's terms, these purses can be harmful to your health because of the constant, high lead exposure. I interviewed the communications director from the Center of Environmental Health and plan to have a first draft to Emily by mid-afternoon Monday.
- I sent the link for my snacks story to all of the media contacts that provided me with press photos. I received several thank-you emails and they were all very pleased, so this made me feel great. Some contacts even asked me for my address again because they want to send me thank-you samples.

**Reflection:**

Many exciting events occurred this week, but one thing that left a lasting impact was the seminar with Maria Rodale. During this round-table discussion, we had the chance to ask her anything and everything. I learned a great deal about her life and background, as well as the history of Rodale, Inc. I asked Maria several questions about working in the publishing business because I wanted to know what her main role (CEO) is in all of the different brands. I was curious as to how directly involved she is and what factors she considers before launching anything new. You obviously can't create a magazine and invest a great deal of money for it to fold a few months later, so it was interesting to hear the process she implements before embarking on the company's next magazine journey.

It was fascinating to hear about Rodale's inner workings. Maria said the company's next big project is to launch Rodale products via online retailing with a website that is similar to Amazon.com. I asked if there were any new magazine ideas in the works, and she said it would be a while before Rodale launches a new publication, but she does want to eventually introduce a food-based magazine. I think this would be great because Rodale consistently stresses "farm to table" and living a green lifestyle, so a magazine would be another outlet specifically designed for that healthy living aspect. Rodale's existing magazines already publish articles on food and nutrition, so it would make sense to compile that type of content into one publication. Another interesting point Maria acknowledged was the difficulties that come along with taking brands across online platforms and trying to stay on par with competitor magazines' websites.



On a different note, I think the most crucial factor that came into play this week was my ability to work with sources and handle people in a professional manner. Truthfully, I accredit these skills to my time at the Missouri School of Journalism and am thankful I graduated a well-trained journalist. While working at *Vox*, one of my most valuable take-away lessons was: when dealing with people, always be cordial and pleasant, regardless of how they treat you. This summer, I've noticed myself becoming slightly nervous before reaching out to people or making calls, and I tend to verbally rehearse my introduction several times before actually placing the call. I think I am self-conscious because I now represent Rodale, a company with a prestigious reputation. I want to make sure I carry myself with professionalism. I want my sources to have positive experiences and be willing to help us out with future stories and endeavors.

Sources, media contacts, spokespeople and other individuals are the sole reason journalists have successful and detailed stories. As writers, we might brainstorm a story and conceptualize the idea but, without concrete evidence and "real" people to verify the points we are trying to make, our stories would fall flat. I always try to do everything in my power to form quality (and businesslike) relationships with people who play a key role in my articles. After all, if they hadn't allowed me the time to interview them or sent press photos and samples, my life would be much more difficult and my stories not as strong. Since these sources are taking time to help me, I feel like I have an unspoken duty to make sure they see the final product. With that being said, once my *ETNT* snack story went live on our site, I sent all of my *ETNT* press contacts thank-you emails and provided

them with a link to view the slideshow and what slide number for their product. In doing this, they knew that the email was personalized to them and not just a mass message I sent to all 21 retailers. Additionally, I gave them a little background information as to how many people subscribe to the newsletter, that *MH* would tweet about it and let them know they'd always be able to find it on Rodale.com. After I sent these messages, I received countless responses from people expressing their excitement about the slideshow and gratitude for including their product. For me, this was a huge compliment, especially considering they had no obligation to respond with such kind words. Those emails were rewarding because there are too many times when journalists suffer backlash for their hard work. I think it is imperative that journalists learn how to work well with sources and create a positive environment.

**Research/Analysis Update:**

Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to scan all the magazine covers like I had originally planned. My days were jam-packed and the librarians were gone by the time I arrived at the library to start my scanning. I WILL have the magazines scanned and emailed to myself next week. I will not leave the office until it happens!

Although I did not get to handle the magazines as I had hoped, I learned intriguing information at our international seminar that was still related to my research project. The editor showed us international magazines and how many different countries have their own edition (*Men's Health* in over 40 countries). He then described how each magazine

makes slight adjustments based on the country and culture it represents. For example, he displayed two separate country's issues of *Women's Health* and explained how they had to swap out the cover model in certain countries, as it would be unacceptable and condemned to feature a woman dressed in skimpy clothing or showing a great deal of skin. I thought this was compelling because editors must pay close attention to each country's morals and values ensure they do not overstep and offend their customers. This idea closely follows my research question to examine cover images and sell line messages. If a more modest country received a *Women's Health* cover that featured a half-naked model, Rodale would probably receive a negative reaction. Magazine editors have to tailor their cover images and sell lines to appeal to a very specific audience.

## Field Notes: Week 7 (7/16/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- I completed my first draft for my story about purses that contain lead and sent it to Emily for edits. It didn't need a full round of second edits, so she just tweaked a few things. I believe it's slated to run Monday or Tuesday of next week.
- I scheduled approximately 20 tweets.
- I rewrote my meditation story to run online for *Prevention*. This basically means I revised the intro and shortened the blurbs to fit the *Prevention* voice/style.
- I rewrote my tanning story to run online for *Prevention*.
- My story about politics and conservation story was published. Here is the link:  
**<http://www.rodale.com/environmental-preservation>**
- Leah asked if I would help her round up photos and contact PR reps for a story she is writing about Olympians and other prestigious athletes who devote their time to being eco-friendly. The slideshow features 20+ athletes. I reached out to the agents and PR contacts, etc, which was difficult and very time consuming.
- My tanning story went live. Here is the link: **<http://www.rodale.com/indoor-tanning>**
- I attended a meeting with my editors and other employees via conference call for search engine optimization terms and website traffic. This is still pretty confusing to me because I'm not quite sure how it works, and my editors are still trying to learn the hang of it as well. I guess the web people implemented a new system, so we have to learn an entirely new process.

- I began working on a slideshow story for *Organic Gardening*. It is similar to our "Green Athletes" slideshow but it features celebrities that have large gardens or focuses on organic gardening. I was given a list of 40 celebs and narrowed down the list to 15 people. I did this and sent the list to Emily for approval. She only had one celeb that she wanted to swap out, and the rest were good to go.

**Reflection:**

This week, my tasks were mostly writing and finishing things I had already been assigned, so I certainly utilized the importance of time management. My entire graduate-school career made me a master at multi-tasking, which is a skill I will undoubtedly use for the rest of my life. I think I do a fairly good job tackling my duties well enough in advance to not put myself under an unnecessary time crunch. After all, I thrive under pressure — not stress.

When Emily assigns me a story, I usually have a decent amount of time to turn it around. I always finish my articles as quickly as possible, simply because the faster I work means the more articles I'll have. I figure if I work quickly, it will free my time for any other article that comes along. I think journalism (and life in general) is not successful without proper planning, so I always make sure I map out my duties in advance. However, I had to learn how to adjust and try to work on the spur of the moment when Leah asked me to help her round up photos for her Olympic athletes story.

Leah asked if I'd reach out to all the press contacts and round up photos for more than 20 athletes. I was more than willing to help. After my snack story, I feel I now have extensive experience in speaking with press representatives and calling anybody to request a photo. However, the only drawback with assignment was when she asked me, she said she wanted to finish the story within two days. Her advice was to let our sources know about our time constraints. This was difficult because I didn't want to come off as demanding, especially because the source can say no and not provide a photo. Also, it is extremely difficult to contact media relations (some athletes were even international) for 20 athletes and expect them to respond instantly. Nonetheless, I accepted the challenge and did my best to contact everybody on the list.

This round of contacting press was much more difficult than my previous endeavors for other articles, and I assume it was because professional athletes' information is not as publicized as it would be for products like snacks. A few athletes were professional football stars and did not have personal websites. In this type of instance, I actually had to contact the NFL and have them point me in a better direction. Situations like this were frustrating because I suspected there'd be no way to receive a photo within two days. I received a few photos, but the majority of my requests went unanswered. I decided to wait a day before approaching Leah about alternative solutions. When I spoke with her, I provided an entire list of photos I'd secured, the athletes we had left (how often I'd contacted them, if I left a message, etc.) and athletes with no personal websites. She seemed to appreciate this, and I think she realized the story would not be able to run that

quickly. I think she plans on having somebody from our corporate PR department handle this task, as they might have alternative resources. Regardless, I think it's vital to always get a head start and not wait until the last minute to do something. I am not complaining by any means, but if Leah had given me this information last week, I would have more time to put in requests and devise a back-up plan.

**Research/Analysis Update:**

I've started scanning magazine covers but did not get to completely finish them. After all, scanning 24 issues (past and present) of three separate magazines — that's 72 magazine covers — produces quite the amount! They will be scanned as black and white, but I plan on taking my own photos of the covers so I can reference them after I leave Rodale.

Although my research is focused on the words and sell lines, I think color does contribute to the overall feel of a magazine, so I want to make sure I have the colors documented to observe the differences.

## Field Notes: Week 8 (7/23/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- I continued to work on optimizing our search terms and finished the entire list of priority URL links. We had a meeting Friday, so we wanted to have our priority URL terms completed.
- I attended our weekly *Prevention* meetings.
- I pulled images for our "13 Foods to Eat When You're Sunburned" slideshow. It's been beneficial to learn the Compass research system, and I'm starting to understand the terms to search in order to get the types of photos I have in mind.
- My meditation story for *Prevention* went online. Here is the link: **<http://www.prevention.com/health/natural-remedies/4-reasons-you-need-meditate>**
- My tanning story for *Prevention* also went online. Here is the link: **<http://www.prevention.com/beauty/beauty/danger-tanning-lotions>**
- I finished my first draft of the celebrity gardeners slideshow for *OG*, and sent it to Emily for edits.
- I rewrote my lead purses story for *Prevention* and sent a draft to Emily.
- I got to film and be featured in an infomercial for the *Men's Health* Delta Fit program. This was probably the most exciting part of my week. You can see the infomercial here after the video loads in the top right corner: **<http://www.speedshredforwomen.com/speedshredforwomen/index>**



- I wrote a quick turnaround story about Sysco (the world's largest food distribution company) vowing to quit using gestation crates for their pork meat sources. I was assigned this article Wednesday evening and finished it Thursday afternoon. Here is the link: **<http://www.rodale.com/animal-welfare-pigs>**
- I scheduled a minimum 20 tweets for the Rodale.com Twitter account.
- I learned how to use Drupal, which is the content management system we use to upload articles and slideshows. I was also included on the email exchange between Emily and our producer, so I can see how our newsletter preview process works. After Emily discovered I was interviewing for a producer job with *Men's Health*, she made the effort to make sure I know additional information about using a digital background.

### **Reflection:**

Although I handled a lot of social media and editorial duties this week, I was intrigued to learn more about our CMS and how our stories are uploaded into the website. I typically send my articles to Emily, and she lets me know when the link is up. Although this hasn't really bothered me so far, being more aware of how everything works makes me feel like a full-time member of the team. To my surprise, the system we use (Drupal) is extremely similar to Django, which is the CMS I've used in the past. Specific content fields have a designated place where you will always enter something (title, pre-title, metatag, byline, etc) before it can go live and is published. The program seemed simple. On Friday, I noticed an error in a byline, and I felt confident enough to log in and fix it. I was able to

do so without any trouble, which was a relief because Emily said they've been having some issues with the system being temperamental. Emily also showed me how to build slideshows. It was interesting to watch her do that and then see how it transferred over to what our viewers see on their end. The back-end looks nothing like what you see on the site's landing page. The articles are easy enough to upload, but the slideshows are a little trickier. Emily said that she wants to write a newsletter soon (filling in the text and HTML codes). It was certainly beneficial to have this crash course before I head into interviews for the position at *Men's Health*!

**Research/Analysis Update:**

I have made a nice-sized dent in scanning all the magazine issues, and I plan to have that task completed and out of my hair by the end of this week. I need to spend some time going through all the covers and noting the different categories for each piece of text/image. Then, I can create rough categories to sort and distinguish sell lines.

## Field Notes: Week 9 (7/30/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- After digging around and doing some research, I decided to pitch another article to Emily and Leah. I came up with the idea to write a story about over-the-counter vitamins and supplements, and if they truly deliver what their respective labels promise or actually provide benefits. Most people are unaware that supplements are not regulated; therefore, there is no concrete guarantee that consumers are getting what they pay for, or if they even take in adequate amounts of the promised supplement. In addition to that aspect of my idea, a lot of supplements have pretty sketchy ingredients — calcium chews have been known to have tons of added sugar, corn syrup, etc., so it's not proven that the “benefits” outweigh the ingredient list.
- My editors liked this idea, so I wrote a first draft of the supplement story and sent it to Emily. This took an immense amount of time and research because I didn't want to report false information, especially on a topic that is easily subjective.
- I conducted a phone interview with the president of Consumerlab.com so I would have better knowledge and accurate information of what supplements to cover.
- I attended our online *Prevention* meetings. I am still not a fan of the conference calls with the NYC staff — it's hard to control the meeting and keep it moving while people are always trying to talk over each other.
- We held a Rodale.com meeting to slate content for the next few weeks.

- Next week is Farmers' Market Appreciation Week, so we are writing a large round up of top farmers' markets from across the country. Emily, Leah and I pulled approximately 15-20 farmers' markets from the American Farmland Trust's lists of best markets, and divided them among the three of us.
- I called my share of farmers' markets (five locations) and spoke with four representatives. I am waiting on one more source that is supposed to call me back on Monday. This was fun and it interesting to hear about the different markets and how their items vary depending on where they are located.
- After receiving a few edits from Emily on the celebrity gardeners piece I'm writing for *OG*, I tweaked the 15 blurbs and rewrote them to be punchier.
- I monitored our Twitter account and scheduled approximately 20 tweets.
- Last but not least, I got a job! (And endured several interviews to get there!)

### **Reflection:**

This week was a whirlwind and I feel like I was constantly busy, so I didn't have time to sit back and observe too much. However, I learned a great deal about the professional world and gained a vast amount of experience to carry into my career.

Contrary to the difficulties I had while trying to secure courtesy photos and contact sources for our eco-athletes story, the farmers' market piece was easier. It's funny to see how companies, organizations and people who are not as well-known will jump at the chance to be featured by a company like Rodale. Celebrities are already so popular that

their agents have the luxury of picking and choosing if they want to get back to us. Most of the farmers' markets I was assigned didn't list direct phone numbers but did give out personal email addresses. I emailed them all towards the end of the day on Wednesday. The next morning, I had four enthusiastic replies, and my last reply came mid-afternoon. Everyone I talked to was very gracious and willing to answer any question. I assured them I'd send a story link once the article was published. It's great dealing with people who actually want to be a part of your story. I also noticed that sometimes people like to go off on tangents and talk about things that don't necessarily pertain to what I am asking; however, in order to form relationships and create a bond, you have to listen and give them a little freedom. If the conversation does a complete 180 from what you originally started talking about, you obviously need to take the reigns and steer it back in the right direction, but let your sources speak their minds. If they feel like you truly care about what they're saying and are interested in what they do, they are more apt to be cooperative and provide you with complete, elaborative answers. Plus, they'll often volunteer information you might have overlooked, and it's always helpful when they willingly offer other elements you can add to a story.

In regards to the professional world, I experienced my first "real" interview. Although I have been through interviews for organizations, TA jobs and phone interviews, this experience was different. Typically, I have interviewed with people I've already met, so I've felt a little more at ease. For my *Men's Health* application, I interviewed with one editor who has frequented our meetings, and a *Women's Health* editor I'd never met.

I actually prefer personal interviews because people can sense a vibe and feel your energy. Phone interviews will suffice, but you can only hear so much and do not have the chance to observe a person's enthusiasm, body language, etc. Personally, I think I thrive in face-to-face interviews because I can express my feelings and my interviewer can see my passion and sincerity. Nonetheless, I learned that although you cannot anticipate the questions your interviewer will throw at you, you should do your best to prepare. When I met with both interviewers, I brought a hard copy of my resume, even though I had delivered it digitally. This was a useful tactic because both editors asked me about previous experience and although I could rattle off my journalism roles, it was easier to produce my resume and provide visual evidence. I am glad I took the opportunity to dabble in a variety of classes at Mizzou because aside from my strong editorial background, I have experience in other areas and know a little bit about everything.

Thanks to my time at *Vox*, I knew to send thank-you emails for each individual's for time and interest. Rodale's atmosphere is fairly relaxed so I'm not sure they would have noticed if I hadn't done that, but they both responded to my emails about how it was a pleasure meeting with me. That gesture showed I truly wanted the job and could conduct myself in a professional manner. Also, as awkward as it can be, I made sure I held eye contact with both interviewers. I know people can get uncomfortable and shift their gaze, but maintaining eye contact proved I was completely engaged in the conversation and had great interest in what they were saying.

### **Research/Analysis Update:**

After looking through the magazine covers, I have loosely created categories to sort the sell lines and identify a common theme among the topics directly advertised on each cover. While I don't want to create too many categories, I want to be as thorough as possible. There are a variety of topics, and the sell lines change from cover to cover. I have tried to think of the most logical way to group things, but I am sure you all could provide some insight. Here are the categories I've come up with so far, and please feel free to tell me if you think any of them could be combined with another:

- **Weight loss** (includes anything from shrinking inches, jean size, pounds, etc.)
- **Diet or how to eat** (diet talks, skinny foods you should be eating, flat-belly plans, etc.)
- **Burning or cutting calories** (anything that directly talks about calories or metabolism)
- **Hair/beauty** (hair, makeup, skin or beauty advice)
- **Body slimming** (being skinny, slim, sexy — not necessarily weight-centric.)
- **Clothes/fashion** (what to wear to the gym, new styles and trends, etc.)
- **Well-being and success** (focused on inner health, stress, achieving your goals, etc.)
- **Exercise help** (tips for effective exercise, workout suggestions, physical activity)
- **Feeling good** (how you feel, not achievement — different from success/well-being)

## Field Notes: Week 10 (8/6/2012)

### Tasks Completed:

- Emily, Leah and I divided up the farmers' markets, completed interviews and each wrote our individual slides. The slideshow story ran on Friday. Here is the link: <http://www.rodale.com/best-farmers-markets> (The first six markets are mine, and I was the only one who completed all of my assigned markets.) The slideshow is shorter than we originally planned, but it turned out well.
- A few days before the story ran, I had to go back and contact my farmers' market managers for press photos. A few days before deadline, I asked Emily what we were running for photos since it was a slideshow, and she had completely forgotten that we'd need images to pair with the copy. She praised me for asking, and I was able to quickly contact all six markets for courtesy photos.
- I began my training for my new job at *Men's Health*, and my first session was a crash course in navigating Drupal, our content-management system. Thankfully, we use this system for Rodale.com, but I have never been too familiar with it.
- One of my next training sessions was newsletter training. We send out various newsletters every day, so this is a very important task that doesn't allow any room for any mistakes. Also, most members of the online team each handles our own "channels" on the website, and I've been assigned the fitness channel.
- I also received training on how we search for images, what we look for, how to build slideshows — basically, everything photo-related. This was important



because we must pay attention to the different copyrights for each photo and consider the budget if we need celebrity shots, etc.

- I edited my supplement story for Rodale.com. Emily slated it for Thursday's lead story. Here is the link: <http://www.rodale.com/vitamins-and-supplements>
- I attended our weekly *Prevention* meetings with the online team.
- I attended an edit meeting for Rodale.com to brainstorm story ideas and slate the next week's content. I pitched two suggestions, and Emily seemed eager to use them. I am little bummed they will run after my time with Rodale.com ends, but I look forward to see what they do with those articles.
- I pulled 10-15 images for a slideshow story that Emily wrote about seeds and super foods.
- I scheduled approximately 20 tweets.
- I wrote our daily newsletter that was sent out on Friday to all of our subscribers. I really enjoyed this task.

### **Reflection:**

At the end of this week, I was given the task to write our *Daily Fix* newsletter that is sent to our subscribers. This was something Emily promised me I'd do, so I was excited to take on this task. It didn't occupy as much time as I anticipated, and I was surprised to see the process behind our newsletters was actually quite simple. Aside from our lead feature story that is pre-determined, our newsletters tease to other health-related topics on Rodale.com. Emily showed me how they choose the stories to advertise in these specific

three side slots. We always showcase the previous day's lead story, then select two other stories from the health channel that relate to the lead story. For example, Friday's lead was the farmers' market piece, so we chose two other stories that were also focused on farmers' market and local food. I thought this was logical and makes the newsletter look cohesive. One thing I learned is that "writing" the newsletter typically doesn't involve a lot of creativity or writing skills — you're typically copying and pasting stories/links/heds/deks into certain spaces. However, if the deks aren't eye-catching or explanatory, we rewrite them to be more user friendly.

At the bottom of the newsletter, we have a space that advertises all of the other brands (*Men's Health*, *Women's Health*, *Runner's World*, etc.) and previews a story per brand. When Emily showed me this slot and was explaining how to write the newsletter, she said that those stories are basically whatever you think is compelling. I've always wondered how those stories were chosen, so I was surprised to learn there isn't a better method to determine those stories that link back to our newsletter. In my opinion, the content that I find interesting might not necessarily appeal to others or be the best representation the other brand's respective websites. When it comes to health, there are various aspects such as weight loss, diet, workout advice, etc., so I found this task to be slightly challenging. I know most websites' clicks won't come from the teasers in our newsletters, but it's little difficult to represent the brand by using my own judgment.

**Research/Analysis Update:**

I have not been able to really concentrate solely on my research because I have been focused on learning my new job duties, relocating and other life festivities, but I am trying to set a deadline to have all the categories coded and accounted for. I want to have all of this completed by the end of August.

## EVALUATION

Prior to beginning my position at Rodale.com, I was skeptical that the internship would provide the editorial experience I was seeking for my professional project. My ambitions for my research project were to learn about language and how editors use word choice and images to send messages to readers. Additionally, I wanted to absorb as much knowledge and experience as I could in writing effectively, constructing headlines, selecting images and using word choice to entice readers. After the first few weeks of joining Rodale.com's small team of two editors, all of my concerns completely vanished, and I remain confident in my decision to accept the internship. I gained a vast amount of health-writing experience, which strengthened my research component and enhanced my journalistic skill set.

Although my first week on the job was a little slow, I quickly felt like a valued writer and more than just an intern. Unlike most internship horror stories, I wasn't instructed to complete grunt work or perform mundane tasks. Instead, my editors treated me like their equal, recognized my capabilities and utilized my talents. They handed me large assignments and did not hesitate to progressively increase my responsibilities. I was comfortable in my position, but I was originally tentative to pitch my own story ideas; therefore, I willingly accepted any articles my editors passed my way. However, by the fourth week of my internship, I felt extremely confident in voicing my opinion and brainstorming ideas, which led me to pitching stories that eventually ran as the main articles on our website's landing page. My editors acknowledged that additional effort

and expressed their appreciation toward my input and contributions. I'm proud I took the initiative to pre-report and dig up topics I thought would interest our readers, instead of simply waiting to receive assignments.

Looking back, I wish I had pitched even more stories, especially for *Prevention* magazine. Unbeknownst to me, a few of the Rodale brands frequently collaborate and, if possible, share content across their online platforms. Each week, the Rodale.com team met with *Prevention*'s online staff to discuss what stories we currently had in the works. Sometimes, the other editors would ask us to write another version of our stories in the *Prevention* voice so they could run the piece on their website. We also had biweekly meetings with *Organic Gardening*'s online editors. Over the course of my internship, I had four of my Rodale.com articles published on *Prevention* and *Organic Gardening*'s websites. In hindsight, I am disappointed that I did not have more time to research and pitch additional stories for *Prevention*, mainly because their brand is geared toward women and could have been an asset to my overall research. Nonetheless, I am quite pleased with the amount and quality of the work I produced.

Before actually starting my internship, I anticipated that my duties would consist of writing smaller pieces and pulling countless research studies. Instead, I was writing stories that were featured on our home page and daily newsletters, health updates that required quick turnarounds, lengthy slideshows and social media blasts via Twitter. Additionally, since I received bylines on *Prevention* and *Organic Gardening*'s online platforms, and I completed my internship with articles that circulated among three of

Rodale's eight brands. At the end of my ten-week internship, my published work included:

- Nine articles/health updates, three slideshows and a minimum of 15-20 tweets per week (beginning my second week) for Rodale.com
- Two articles for *Prevention*
- Two articles and one unpublished slideshow for *Organic Gardening*.

Although I enjoyed the majority of my writing assignments, I'm most proud of my sunless tanning and supplements stories, both of which I conceptualized and pitched. I pitched my sunless tanning story during my fourth week on the job, and proposed the supplement story idea during my ninth week. I researched, interviewed sources and completed both stories within a week and half after the pitches were approved. I took pride in my work and valued that I was able to oversee the articles through the entire publication process.

I have always been partial to print journalism because of its tangible reader experience, but this internship made me appreciate the flexibility and freedom of working for an online media outlet. I was glad I could write without strict space constraints and had generous time to revise and polish my work. At times, the deadlines seemed a little too lax, especially because I often had up to two weeks to finish my articles. When I was assigned a snacks slideshow in the first week of my internship, my editors gave me nearly three weeks to turn in the final copy. Although that particular piece was lengthy and required a great deal of research, I was not used to such a long window of turnaround time. Nonetheless, I took advantage of that longer edit period to ensure that my stories

were in prime condition. Now, I actually prefer writing for online instead of print — it's instant gratification when you crank out stories and turn in final drafts that are published within the next few days.

The research and analysis portions of my professional project proved to be a challenge, but not because they were overly difficult to complete. The task of tracking down and scanning 72 magazine covers was tedious, but manageable. However, the free time that I had previously reserved for my research, analyzing each cover and writing the findings was overtaken by my transition to the “real world.” As my internship came to an end, I interviewed and landed a job with the online team at *Men's Health* magazine.

While I was elated to secure a position at such a prestigious magazine and wouldn't have changed anything in regard to accepting the job, my time after life at Rodale.com consisted of the following: I completed my internship, traveled home to Texas for five days to pack up my life and returned to immediately start my job. I had no extra break period to knock out my research within a specific time span. Instead, I had to analyze the sell lines and images in smaller increments. There were moments when I felt like giving up because I wanted so badly to defend my project by the original deadline I'd set, but the prospect of finishing in the fall was slim. Although, I would have preferred to write everything at once and not be forced to complete my work in portions, I wanted to produce good, quality work — more time seemed to be the only option.

I was a little discouraged when I finally admitted I'd need an extra semester to finish my project. I asked to postpone my graduation for one more semester, and I felt like I was letting everybody down, myself included. However, I continued to push

forward, buckled down and plowed through my research and writing. Now, I'm relieved that I made the choice to postpone my defense. After finally settling into my new job and life, I was able to devote entire weekends to creating categories, scrutinizing magazines, sorting sell lines and interpreting information. People rarely use the word "fun" as an adjective to describe research; however, I was intrigued by my findings and truly enjoyed digging deeper into the fitness magazine industry.

Aside from my defense date, I wouldn't have made any drastic changes to my overall research process. I found my research question quite compelling and, thanks to Professor Rowe and my committee's guidance, I know my research method was appropriate and logical. A qualitative content analysis allowed me to dissect every aspect of these fitness magazines' covers, and it was extremely fascinating to observe the publication's evolutions from 2007 to present. Although it was a grueling process, I enjoyed the challenge and fully embraced my research. I'm not one to boast on my accomplishments; however, when I reflect back on how hard I've worked over the past two years, both in and out of the classroom, I'm overwhelmed with relief and joy. I am incredibly proud of my professional project, and I hope my effort and dedication is evident.

This professional component taught me that the use of language, word choice and images largely affect how readers receive content, especially when a publication's subject matter is related to health. Regardless of whether I was writing heds, deks or body copy, my editors always coached me on the type of writing style we should use in order to appeal to readers. Ultimately, we wanted people to benefit from reading our content, so



my editors would offer tips to ensure that my writing was compelling. I learned that Rodale.com is very much focused on the “in your face” or scare tactic; before launching into the main story, they entice readers by highlighting alarming or quirky information. For me, this type of voice was a welcome challenge, and I believe my journalism skills improved because I learned how to use a specific voice to attract and inform readers.

My internship at Rodale.com undoubtedly helped me conduct my research. Although I looked forward to going to work each day and completing the professional component, I favored the time I spent executing my individual research. The tools and writing methods I learned at my internship were key components that helped me dissect my chosen magazines’ cover content. I became more skilled at recognizing the topics the editors seemed to emphasize most. A firsthand experience in health journalism certainly benefited my research by helping me identify and understand the messages that editors were projecting to readers.

I have always taken a great interest in research, so I enjoyed my professional project. To me, it was fascinating to compare magazine covers from 2007 and 2011; over the four-year time span, the publications quickly evolved and made significant changes to their cover content. After sorting through 72 covers of women’s fitness magazines, one of the greatest take-away messages I will keep in mind as I continue my journalism career is: If possible, make every effort to remain true to the publication’s mission statement. Cover sell lines and images are not arbitrary decisions — editors carefully select these components, so they should make significant efforts to provide suitable cover display that reinforces the magazine’s mission statement.



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400 SOUTH TENTH STREET  
EMMAUS, PENNSYLVANIA 18098-0099 PHONE: 610 967-5171 FAX: 610 967-8964 www.rodale.com

Emily Main  
Online Editor  
Rodale News

To the Graduate Faculty at the University of Missouri School of Journalism:

Kathryn Clark served as Rodale.com's intern for the Summer 2012 term, and I honestly can't say enough about her hard work and journalistic abilities. Her duties included writing regular news articles for the site, aiding with photo research, and website production. In each task, she exhibited sharp attention to detail, and her writing skills are among the best of any intern we've worked with.

Kathryn is also a quick learner, which proved invaluable to our small staff, and we were able to throw her into some rather complicated tasks, such as search engine optimization of a wide range of our articles, without her requiring much oversight. She also wrote a number of detailed and insightful articles on topics she hadn't previously covered. I was more than happy to recommend her for a position here at Rodale when I got the chance.

Sincerely,

Emily Main

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Over the duration of my internship at Rodale, Inc., I gained a vast amount of editorial experience across several different media outlets. In addition to completing my regular assignments for Rodale.com, I was also given numerous opportunities to write for two of the company's other online platforms: *Prevention* and *Organic Gardening* magazines. These brands focus on helping consumers live a balanced, healthy lifestyle and have a similar target audience, so it is convenient for the editors to circulate content among all three websites. During our weekly meetings, if the *Prevention* editors requested my articles, I rewrote my Rodale.com stories in a voice that was geared toward a primarily female audience. For my pieces that went online for *Organic Gardening*, the editors ran the identical content from Rodale.com.

I am incredibly proud of the amount and quality of work I produced over the course of ten weeks. Among all three websites, I had a total of 16 published items, which includes articles, slideshows and health or news updates. In addition to this work, I also helped manage Rodale.com's Twitter account, where I wrote and scheduled approximately 15 to 20 tweets per week. I also compiled images and text for a lengthy slideshow for *Organic Gardening*, but Rodale did not end up publishing the piece. My last task was to help research search-engine optimization terms. In conducting this duty, I used a Google program to comb through frequently searched phrases. Then, I was able to see what keywords we should use to tag our articles and lead readers back to our website.

For all of my published writings, the turnaround time and deadlines varied. When I was assigned a slideshow or article, I usually had between five to seven days to finalize the copy before the piece was published. Sometimes, lengthy slideshows or articles were allotted edit periods of two weeks because I had to collect images from each source. However, I also wrote shorter news updates about breaking health or environmental concerns. Those types of stories had tight deadlines, where I was assigned the piece in the morning, then had to research, write and submit a finished version by the end of the day. There were instances when I felt like my deadlines were generous, but I used the additional time to edit my work and ensure that it was in prime condition. At the end of my internship, I was proud to display such a wide range of published work, and I am glad I was able to write a comprehensive variety of subject matter.

## ABUNDANT PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

### RODALE.COM

#### 1. ARTICLES

- 6 Shocking Facts About Your Dinner
- 6 Surprising Benefits of Meditation
- 3 Secrets About Your Sunless Tan
- Why You Should Never Buy a Yellow Purse\*
- Your Supplement's False Promise

#### 2. SLIDESHOWS

- The 21 Best Organic Junk Foods\*
- The 10 Best Food Apps
- Insider Secrets from America's Favorite Farmer's Markets

#### 3. HEALTH UPDATES

- The Secret Trick for Radiant Skin
- More Positive News for Pork Lovers
- Move Over Disney World: Americans Prefer Nature, Survey Finds
- Plant More Trees, Live Crime-Free

### PREVENTIONMAGAZINE.COM

#### 1. ARTICLES

- Do You Really Want That Fake Tan?
- Reduce Hot Flashes By 40%

\* Indicates published work that was also featured on *Organic Gardening's* website.

## 6 Shocking Facts About Your Dinner

Pink slime? Drugs in meat? There are even dirtier secrets about the food industry.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Farmers pick your food—then head out to pick up their food stamps.

When you dine out at restaurants or cruise through the aisles of a grocery store, your eye is on the prize: filling your stomach—or pantry—with your favorite foods. Little thought is given to those who actually harvest, prepare, serve, and sell what you choose. Yet, those workers constitute one-sixth of the nation's workforce, and according to a new report, they're among the most exploited.

The Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), a coalition of 14 organizations and unions representing food workers on farms and in slaughterhouses, processing plants, canneries, restaurants, and grocery stores, surveyed hundreds of food-system workers and their employers in the United States. The result of their efforts? "The Hands That Feed Us," a report that exposes the unfair and even unhealthy conditions that exist in the U.S. Still taking your plate for granted? You might not after you read these six startling foodie facts.

**#1: Food workers can't afford food.** As paradoxical as it sounds, the food industry's employees actually risk going hungry. "There are higher levels of food insecurity compared to the general workforce, which is ironic because the workers who produce and serve our food aren't able to buy healthy and nutritious food for themselves," says FCWA director Joann Lo. Food-system workers use food stamps at a rate that is twice that of the rest of the U.S. workforce.

**What you can do:** Do your research. The nonprofit Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) has put together a National Diners' Guide that ranks the nation's 150 most popular restaurant chains based on how they treat their workers, such as how well they pay their employees and whether they provide basic benefits like sick days.

**#2: Food workers live in poverty while the food industry rakes in profits.** The food industry represents 13 percent of the U.S. economy—no small amount—and it's grown at a rate of 135 percent since 1990. Yet, shockingly enough, only 13.5 percent of the surveyed food workers earn enough money to support a stable lifestyle. More than 86 percent of surveyed workers live on wages that are classified as low or poverty level.

**What you can do:** Let retailers and restaurant owners know that you are truly concerned about their employees' welfare. And don't be afraid to get involved politically. Lo is urging consumers to contact their representatives in Congress to support the Rebuild America Act, a proposal that would increase the tipped minimum wage (the amount restaurant owners are required to pay before employees receive tips) from its current \$2.13 per hour—where it's been for 20 years, Lo adds—to at least \$5.50 per hour.

**#3: Poorly paid workers are making you sick—literally.** When food-system workers fall ill, they are out of luck. Sixty percent of workers don't have the luxury of having any paid sick days, and 19 percent employees are unaware if they're even entitled to them in the first place. What's more disturbing is that more than half of workers surveyed continued to handle and serve food while sick, upping your risk for foodborne illness. Most workers reported working an average of three days while ill. "Many go to work sick because they can't afford not to, and that's not good for our public health," says Lo. To make matters worse, employees often reported not having access to basic hygiene equipment that would facilitate a clean food supply. Ten percent reported not having a working toilet at work, and 4.5 percent reported not having access to sinks with soap and running water for hand washing. Of those groups, a majority were farmworkers and those who work in meat-processing facilities.

**What you can do:** When food workers don't benefit from sanitary working conditions and health benefits, such as sick days, we all suffer. Another measure before Congress, the Healthy Families Act, would require employers to provide paid sick leave. Another reason to get your Congressmen on the phone: Let him know you want food workers to stay healthy so the food supply can, too.

**#4: Child labor isn't a thing of the past.** The report revealed that 23.2 percent of the surveyed food workers observed approximately 10 to 20 minors laboring in their workplace. Though it's not always illegal, it's highly dangerous. The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs has reported in the past that as many as 500,000 children work in fields and orchards, being exposed to toxic pesticides linked to hormone disruption, cancer, Parkinson's disease, and neurological disorders.

**What you can do:** Buy organic to support a system that protects adults and children alike from toxic substances. And find a local farmer who's forthright about the atmosphere he or she provides for employees. If you know where your food comes from and who is preparing it, you'll be able to enjoy it even more.

**#5: Career advancement? What's that?** In the food industry, segregation and discrimination still exist, and blacks and Latinos primarily hold the lowest-wage jobs. In food processing and distribution, whites make, on average, \$3.07 more per hour than black workers. The poor working conditions and bad wages deter people from staying in the industry, the report found. One-third leave after five years, so climbing up the career ladder is essentially impossible. While almost half of food-chain managers were white, less than 10 percent of minority workers were employed in similar occupations, according to the report.

**What you can do:** Follow groups who are working for a more equitable food chain and can alert you to businesses that are discriminating against workers, and those that are working for good. A few mentioned in the report are the Coalition for Immokalee Workers, Warehouse Workers for Justice, OUR Walmart and Focus on the Food Chain/Brandworkers International.

**#6: Food with a "feel good" halo isn't always kinder to workers.** Foods advertised as sustainable, organic, kosher, or any other commendable title are undoubtedly better than standard factory-farmed or processed fare in many ways. But those labels don't always ensure equity for workers. The report called out the Darden Corporation, the largest full-service restaurant company in the world, which has made great strides in offering nutrition-friendly children's dining options at Olive Garden, one of its larger chains. But not all of its food-service workers get sick days, and in 2011 one Darden employee had no choice but to work while stricken with hepatitis A. The result? Three thousand people had to undergo testing to ensure they hadn't been infected.

The report also highlighted more than a few Kosher-certified factories and slaughterhouses that have been sued by workers for wage theft, unpaid overtime, and dangerous working conditions. Another target: Wild Edibles, Inc. (the top seafood retail and wholesaler in New York), which prides itself on providing sustainable seafood. However, its workers had been frequent victims of wage theft, lack of safety equipment, and foul management.

**What you can do:** There are a lot of sustainable food companies doing a lot of great things to lessen their impact on the environment *and* improve working conditions for low-wage workers. But just know that the two don't always go hand in hand. Before dining or buying from companies that tout themselves as sustainable or health conscious, make sure they have the same concern and attention for their employees as they do their food.



## 6 Surprising Benefits of Meditation

It's not just a hippy-dippy practice anymore. A growing body of research supports the idea that we can all benefit from 15 minutes of meditation.

BY KATHRYN CLARK

Think meditation is just for former Beatles and people with too much time on their hands? Think again. This underrated practice could be one of the most valuable medical devices you're not using. Research has shown that it can help with everything from getting over a stressful day to staving off a potentially fatal heart attack. There are a lot of other reasons why you should shut out the world for 15 to 30 minutes with meditation.

**Here are six of the most compelling benefits of meditation, supported by scientific research:**



**#1: Meditation can make you more productive.** If you feel like you're just not as sharp as you used to be, give mindfulness meditation a shot. A study in the journal *Emotion* found that mindfulness, a meditative practice that requires you to sit quietly for a few minutes focusing on your breathing and other specific physical sensations without letting your mind wander, was highly effective in improving

people's working memory; working memory is the short-term memory system we tap into for managing information, controlling emotions, problem solving, and complex thought. The best part? The study found that you could reap all these benefits with just 12 minutes of meditation per day.



**#2: It's good for surly teenagers.** Remember your teenage years, when it felt like the entire world was against you? If you'd been meditating, you probably wouldn't, according to research from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. In a study of high-school students' demeanor, psychologists found that deep breathing and relaxation improved their moods—a free (no-stress!) way to cope with all the drama of teen years and those hormonal mood swings.



**#3: Meditation helps you ditch the painkillers.** A 2010 study by researchers in Montreal found that a particular type of meditation called Zen actually thickens

the part of the brain that regulates pain, and that thickening of the brain lowers your sensitivity to it. Zen meditation is the form favored by Buddhist monks. It's similar to mindfulness meditation, but rather than focusing on a specific physical sensation, you focus on breathing and posture while trying to keep your mind from wandering.



**#4: It'll keep you happy.** Meditation has been frequently used to help combat the nasty side effects of multiple sclerosis, which include fatigue and depression. One study in the journal *Neurology* had people with mild to moderate multiple sclerosis take an eight-week class on mindfulness meditation, and at the end of the study, those people saw a 30 percent reduction in depressive symptoms and lower levels of fatigue. Though that study was on a specific group of people suffering from a chronic condition, multiple studies reinforce the idea that meditation can help people with depression, in part because those people learn how to avoid focusing on negative thoughts. Researchers in Wisconsin have also found that people who meditate have more electrical activity in the brain's left prefrontal cortex, an area associated with positive mood.



**#5: Meditate, combat hot flashes.** During menopause, the one feeling most women try to shut out is body awareness. After all, who wants to embrace the

uncontrollable bodily changes that signify the next phase of life? However, mindfulness meditation might actually aid you in dealing with the inevitable. Various studies suggest that this type of relaxation therapy helps women handle menopause symptoms. You might feel funny when you first try meditation as a way to settle your menopausal anxiety, but it beats taking medication to try and fight off those unruly hot flashes or night sweats.



**#6: Your heart loves it when you meditate.** Haunted by heart problems? Your cardiovascular system benefits from any practice that reduces stress, and both Zen and Transcendental (when you let your mind go free and 'transcend' the present by repeating a mantra over and over again) meditation are effective stress-relievers. Zen is thought to improve certain aspects of your body's inner workings, such as blood circulation and breathing, by helping counteract stress arousal and anxiety. And Transcendental Meditation might save your life. In a study presented at a previous American Heart Association annual meeting, transcendental meditation produced lower rates of heart attacks and strokes by 50 percent.

### 3 Secrets About Your Sunless Tan

Think creams and sprays are safer than beds and beaches? They're not, but you can still benefit from indoor tanning of a different sort.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



A tan-from-a-can is no better than one from a tanning bed.

Summer is in full swing, and the battle to be bronze is going full force—except it's not enough to have a back-from-the-beach glow that fades after a few weeks anymore. Women—and men—want to retain that golden hue long after their last beach visit, and they're going to great, and sometimes dangerous, lengths to get it.

Nowadays, it's well known that indoor tanning beds increase the risk of melanoma, the most dangerous and deadly form of skin cancer, just as much as too much time spent baking in actual sunlight. The use of tanning beds before the age of 35 increases the risk for melanoma by 75 percent, according to the National Cancer Institute. Public education campaigns, along with local age-related bans on indoor tanning, have helped deter their use to some extent.

The problem is, the other sunless-tan alternatives aren't much better. The "all-natural" creams and spray tans many people are turning to contain iffy chemicals and put your body at risk for other health issues. "If we had to have one way to summarize our thoughts on tanning, it would be to accept and love your skin tone as it naturally is," Environmental Working Group spokesperson Leeann Brown said. "Any process that modifies the skin's color, whether to darken or lighten, has the possibility of side effects."

Still not ready to give up that sunless tan? Read these secrets, and maybe you'll be more inclined to go *really* all-natural.

### **1. Your fake tan could be illegal.**

The most popular alternative to tanning beds has become the spray tan, a salon service that essentially sprays a tanning cream over your entire body to give you an even bronze glow. A closer look at the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) guidelines, however, shows that their legality is questionable. The agency originally approved the primary ingredient in these products, dihydroxyacetone, or DHA, when over-the-counter lotions and gels were the only self-tanning options, and the FDA guidelines only apply to "external" exposure, which does not include the lips or areas that surround the eyes and eyebrows—or your lungs. Once you step inside those cave-like mystic-tan booths and envelope your entire body in the chemical, your tan is technically not FDA approved because you will have inhaled DHA.

If you have your spray tan applied by a professional, you should be able to avoid those no-tan areas and instruct them not to spray your face. However, most people, including tanning-salon employees, are unaware of the risks associated with DHA (more on that in a bit). "We would like to see more publicly available safety data on DHA and many other chemicals which are commonly used in personal care products," Brown said.

### **2. Your fake tan is damaging your DNA.**

DHA is a sugar that reacts with your dead skin cells and turns them brown. Sounds harmless enough, right? It might not be. In an investigation by ABC News, a group of scientists reviewed the existing science on DHA and found it has the potential to produce genetic alterations that could potentially lead to cancer or tumors. And it poses a particular risk when used in spray-tan products that could be inhaled.

"The reason I'm concerned is the deposition of the tanning agents into the lungs could really facilitate or aid in systemic absorption—that is, getting into the bloodstream," Rey Panettieri, MD, toxicologist and lung specialist at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine said in an interview with ABC News.

Keep in mind that spray tans last approximately a week, 10 days at the most. Is painting yourself a few shades darker really worth messing with your DNA?

### **3. You could be getting a safer tan from eating vegetables.**

Why risk DNA damage or other inhalable toxins from a spray tan or a cream when you could get the same healthy glow at your farmer's market? In a study published in the *journal Evolution and Human Behaviour*, researchers found that a diet rich in carrots and tomatoes could produce a brighter skin glow than repeated UV exposure. Both get their color from carotenoids, which are the antioxidants that soak up compounds produced by stress, and they pass that color along to you when you eat them. So if you're looking for a healthy, natural skin tone, ditch the tanning beds, sprays, and stifling heat, and head to the fridge. "Sunless tanners are unnecessary like most cosmetics and appearance-changing products," Brown says. Up your veggie intake—your skin (and pocketbook) will likely thank you.

# Why You Should Never Buy a Yellow Purse

Forget what's trendy. Here's the best reason to stick with the basics.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



It's trendy, yes, but what's lurking inside that colorful yellow purse?

You probably don't associate your purse with major health problems—unless you're talking about those shoulder pains you get from loading it up with everything but the kitchen sink. But a new report from environmental health scientists in California may give you pause the next time you gravitate to that trendy bag.

Recently, the Center for Environmental Health, a nonprofit consumer advocacy group in Oakland, CA, tested 300 purses and wallets from 21 national online and brick-and-mortar retailers located in the San Francisco Bay Area, including Amazon.com, Forever 21, and Neiman Marcus, for lead contamination. Results showed that lead in 43 purses, handbags, and wallets exceeded 300 parts per million (ppm), a limit California set for purses in 2010. Even more upscale brands fell prey to lead paint: A \$200 Tory Burch wallet purchased from Neiman Marcus had 58,700 ppm lead, 195 times higher than the set standard.

Though lead is prohibited for use in children's products and can't exceed 600 ppm in house paint, there is no federal law restricting lead in purses or other consumer products intended for adults. "We usually see this problem in faux leather, vinyl,



and different kinds of plastics that have bright colors," says Center for Environmental Health (CEH) Communications Director Charles Margulis. That's doubly disturbing because such bags are often marketed as "vegan" or "eco-friendly"—labels that imply they're better than animal leather, which doesn't contain as much lead.

This is the second go-round for the group when it comes to lead in purses. In 2009, they conducted a similar test and found similarly high levels of lead in a wider percentage of the 300 purses they tested. As a result, the group worked with 40 leading retailers and reached a legal agreement that set the 300-ppm limit for lead in handbags and other accessories. The CEH conducted this round of testing to ensure that retailers were sticking to their end of the agreement. "We wanted to see if the industry in general was cleaning up," Margulis says.

These numbers are a decent improvement from past lead tests, he says, acknowledging that purse makers have made noteworthy progress. "But we still think the industry can do a lot better."

Lead is no joke when it comes to your health. Every major medical and public health organization in the world has admitted that there is no safe level of exposure to this toxic metal, which does more than just impair neurological development in children. It builds up in the bones and fatty tissue of adults, leading to serious late-in-life problems such as Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, and kidney failure. Some scientists suspect it could even be linked to Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS.

**For women hoping to protect their health and steer clear of lead, Margulis offers a few shopping tips:**

- **Steer clear of brightly colored accessories.** Lead acts as a stabilizer to preserve the color of really bright hues, particularly in the yellow and red family. It's pretty rare to find high a lead content in a black or brown bag, Margulis adds. These colors might not be as fun to flaunt, but at least you'll lessen your chances for health issues, which, in addition to those mentioned above, include mood disorders, infertility, and memory loss.

- **Stick with real leather or canvas.** The tests rarely revealed lead in real leather bags. It's more of a problem in vinyl, polyurethane, and other leather alternatives made from plastic, Margulis says. If you want to avoid animal products entirely, buy a canvas bag. (Can't find one you like? Check out this Summer Bag Everyone Needs to Buy.)

• **Shop smart.** Though there are countless retailers selling products that contain lead, here are some well-known brands that tested positive for lead at levels that exceeded the 300-ppm limit:

- 5-7-9
- Rainbow
- BCBGMAXAZRIA
- Big Buddha
- Forever 21
- Guess
- House of Harlow 1960
- Tory Burch
- Lodi's
- Ralph Lauren
- Nine West

## Your Supplement's False Promises

Vitamins and supplements may sound healthy, until you read the fine print.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Are those miracle pills all they're cracked up to be?

Ever since the invention of the Flintstones vitamin, savvy marketers have successfully convinced Americans that the best way to stay healthy is with a tiny Dino-shaped, candy-flavored pill. And why not? We're told every day of the benefits of this vitamin or that supplement and given to think that optimum health is nothing more than a pill bottle away.

Putting your health in the hands of a supplement might be a wasted effort, though, based on a *Consumers Reports* investigation published in the magazine's September 2012 issue. Between 2007 and April 2012, dietary supplements were the source of more than 6,300 adverse events reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the magazine found, and those included 115 deaths and 2,100 hospitalizations—figures that don't exactly make anyone want to shout "Yabba-dabba-doo!"

So what's going on? It all points to weak regulations and a federal agency that's loath to try to exert control over a powerful industry that rakes in billions every year and often advertises dozens of promises that can't be delivered in a tiny pill.

**False Promise #1: If it's in a bottle, it has to be safe.** According to the FDA's website, "generally, manufacturers do not need to register their products or get FDA approval before producing or selling dietary supplements." So essentially, any company could create and market a supplement without first undergoing government approval or testing. Looking for a new part-time job? Just create a capsule that supposedly will boost metabolism, weight loss, or energy—things people are always looking to improve—and you're golden.

*Consumer Reports* also noted that the FDA doesn't require supplement manufacturers to post drug-interaction warnings on labels, which puts people in danger of other problems. For instance, St.-John's-wort lowers the efficacy of birth control pills, as well as blood pressure medications, and magnesium supplements may decrease the absorption of certain antibiotics, lessening their effectiveness.

**False Promise #2: Yes, our vitamins really do contain what we say they do!**

Because supplement regulations don't appear to be a huge FDA concern, the makeup of supplements is left to a company's discretion, so whatever the company thinks are proper ingredient amounts is what's in that company's supplement. To paraphrase the great philosopher Forrest Gump, you never know what you're gonna get.

Tod Cooperman, MD, runs ConsumerLab.com, an independent website that tests supplements for quality and analyzes whether they deliver the levels of vitamins promised on the label. His tests have revealed that many supplements claim to contain a certain quantity of a certain vitamin or mineral but in reality contain much less. "The product is supposed to contain 100 percent of what it claims, but that doesn't mean it will," he says.

In addition to that, ConsumerLab has found lead in calcium supplements, mercury in fish oil pills, and a number of other contaminants in popular vitamins. And you're not going to see any of those on a label. "Manufacturers are required to test ingredients that go into their products and check for contaminants, but the government doesn't specify the method or criteria for determining whether the quality is there or not," Cooperman says.

**False Promise #3: Yes, they're healthy!** Other than the fact that some supplements don't always practice what they preach, the nutrients they promise often wind up in gummies, chocolate chews, granola bars, brownies, or dozens of other "functional foods" that are fortified with a plethora of vitamins and minerals accompanied by a shameful ingredient list. Sugar, corn syrup, trans fat—laden

hydrogenated oils, and artificial food dyes and flavorings are not uncommon in these supplements and foods, and you might not think to read the ingredients label of something that's supposed to make you healthier. Does eating a supplement outweigh the risk of all those extra calories? You might as well drink a glass of milk or eat a regular piece of dark chocolate, both of which have known health benefits without the added food processing chemicals unlike those candy wannabe supplements, and call it a day.

**The solution? Eat whole foods and do your research.** Before you start popping gummy chews that look—and taste—like glorified fruit snacks, Cooperman encourages you do your research, and don't buy anything on a whim. "In most cases you're better off getting vitamins and minerals from your food and drinks," says Cooperman. And according to Jose Mosquera, MD, medical adviser for *Consumer Reports*, people really shouldn't be taking supplements for vitamins and minerals unless they've been diagnosed with a true deficiency.

Our good friend calcium is the perfect example of too much of a good thing, and a number of recent studies have found that overdoing your calcium intake might lead to heart problems. "You're getting this big burst of calcium, which might increase the risk of calcification within your arteries and your chance of a stroke," Cooperman says. Absorption of calcium is typically slower with food, he adds, so your body isn't hit with a megadose all at once, as it is with a supplement.

You only have one body, so make sure you're taking care of it. Toss the glorified candy aside, and reap nutritional benefits from real foods and drinks.

In the event that you are diagnosed with a deficiency and need to take a supplement, look for ConsumerLab.com—certified products, or those bearing either the U.S. Pharmacopoeia's USP Verified Dietary Supplement or NSF Certified Dietary seals. These verify that vitamins and supplements are free of contaminants, they deliver what their labels claim, and the manufacturers comply with the FDA's good manufacturing practices.

## The 21 Best Organic Junk Foods

**It's okay to indulge your sweet tooth every now and then—as long as you keep it organic or GMO-free.**

BY KATHRYN CLARK



### Snack Smarter

Snacks are not the nutritional devils we often make them out to be. Two well-timed snacks over the course of your day can stave off hunger with healthy fats and—yes, even ice cream—can keep you from diving into a junk-food binge, which helps you stick to a healthy diet. But it's the quality of those snacks that matters most, and not just when it comes to calories. According to the Grocery Manufacturers Association, approximately 80 percent of packaged foods contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that—among other health concerns—put you at greater risk for food allergies and gastrointestinal problems. Because GMOs aren't labeled as such, you can't protect yourself from these iffy ingredients and identify them in that lengthy list of ingredients you either can't pronounce or have never heard of. That's why we compiled this list of the best, healthy certified-organic snacks and snacks certified under the Non-GMO Project Verified program, which tests foods for residues of unhealthy, pesticide-riddled, GMO ingredients.



## Equal Exchange Organic Chocolate Caramel Crunch with Sea Salt

Adding sea salt to a classic combination like chocolate and caramel delivers a crunch guaranteed to satisfy your sweet tooth. Plus, this tasty bar is certified organic! [equalexchange.coop](http://equalexchange.coop)

**Per 9-piece serving size (about ½ bar):**

200 calories

2 grams (g) protein

21 g carbohydrates (carbs)

13 g fat



## Beanitos Chipotle BBQ Black Bean Chips

Free from corn or wheat—and GMOs—Beanitos chips are made with black or pinto beans and provide a satisfying snack that has twice the protein of genetically altered corn chips. [beanitos.com](https://beanitos.com)

### Per 1-ounce serving:

140 calories

4 g protein

15 g carbs

7 g fat





## **Peanut Butter & Co. Cinnamon Raisin Swirl Peanut Butter**

Most flavored nut butters are saddled with extra sugar and hydrogenated oils. This GMO-free spread has half the sugar of other flavored peanut butters, with the added bonus of cinnamon, which helps control blood sugar. Spread it on whole-wheat crackers, or make the old snack standby, Ants on a Log, using organic celery. [ilovepeanutbutter.com](http://ilovepeanutbutter.com)

### **Per 2-Tablespoon serving:**

160 calories

6 g protein

13 g carbs

11 g fat



## **B'More Organic Mango-Banana Smoothie**

If you want a powerful protein punch after your next workout, look no further than B'More Organic. The certified-organic smoothies contain skyr, an Icelandic yogurt made from skim milk that's rich in protein, which aids in muscle growth and recovery. It's also sweetened with Stevia, a natural, zero-calorie sugar alternative. [bmoreorganic.com](http://bmoreorganic.com)

### **Per 8-ounce bottle:**

130 calories  
16 g protein  
16 g carbs  
0 g fat



## Late July Bite Size Cheddar Cheese Crackers

Back away from the Cheez-Its ... We've got a certified-organic alternative that will blow those processed cheddar chunks out of the water. [latejuly.com](http://latejuly.com)

**Per 30 crackers:**

130 calories

3 g protein

19 g carbs

4.5 g fat



## Equal Exchange Apricot Geobars

Chewy fruit-filled bars are great for an on-the-go breakfast, dessert in your packed lunch, or a quick snack, and the fiber from the wheat and rice makes it a perfect midmorning hunger-killer. [equalexchange.coop](http://equalexchange.coop)

**Per bar:**

120 calories

1 g protein

24 g carbs

1 g fat



## **Straus Family Creamery Brown Sugar Banana Ice Cream**

Studies have shown that indulging in a little dessert every now and then actually helps you stick to a healthy diet. Just don't make it boring! Made with roasted banana, chocolate chunks, and dark brown sugar, this ice cream is loaded with banana-split-in-a-cup flavor. What could be better? And it's certified organic, to boot.

[strausfamilycreamery.com](https://strausfamilycreamery.com)

### **Per ½-cup serving:**

250 calories

3 g protein

32 g carbs

11 g fat



## Country Choice Organic Snacking Vanilla Wafers

Reminiscent of childhood snack time, these cookies don't disappoint, and they're the perfect addition to a homemade banana pudding. [countrychoiceorganic.com](http://countrychoiceorganic.com)

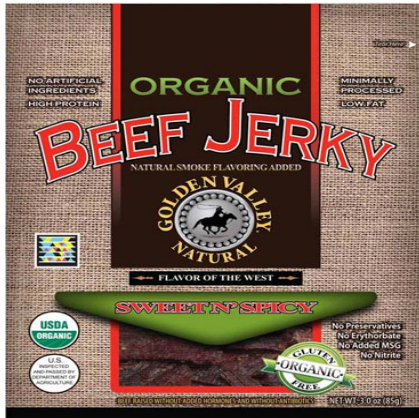
**Per 7-cookie serving:**

140 calories

1g protein

22 g carbs

5 g fat



## Golden Valley Natural Sweet 'n' Spicy Beef Jerky

Nix the gas station jerky and check out this beefy snack. Like other forms of processed meats, jerky is typically chock-full of synthetic nitrites, which have been linked to cancer. But this certified-organic alternative has none of those, nor has the meat been injected with hormones, antibiotics, or genetically modified feed. (Also available in turkey or buffalo.) [goldenvalleynatural.com](http://goldenvalleynatural.com)

### Per 1-ounce serving:

70 calories  
11 g protein  
5 g carbs  
1 g fat



## Nature's Path Macaroon Crunch Granola Bars

This crunchy certified-organic granola bar has the perfect amount of chocolate and a subtle hint of coconut to satisfy a sugar craving, without all the sugar. Two bars have just 8 grams of sugar, half the sugar of other candy-like granola bars. [naturespath.com](http://naturespath.com)

### Per 2-bar package:

200 calories

3 g protein

27 g carbs

8 g fat





## Clif Kid Strawberry Z Fruit Rope

Remember your old friend, the Fruit Roll-Up? A quick glance at its ingredients list will make you realize why the world needs an organic version: hydrogenated oils, corn syrup, and concentrated fruit juice, but no actual fruit. This organic spin on a childhood favorite contains said fruit and little else—not even sugar. [clifbar.com](http://clifbar.com)

**Per piece:**

70 calories

0 g protein

17 g carbs

0 g fat



## Late July Dark Chocolate Sandwich Cookies

It's like an Oreo, only organic. Grab the milk and start dunking. [latejuly.com](http://latejuly.com)

**Per 3-cookie serving:**

150 calories

2 g protein

21 g carbs

6 g fat



## **Nuts.com Organic Trail Mix**

Nuts are a filling snack, not to mention a fantastic source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats. Add dried raisins, cranberries, banana chips, and a few pumpkin seeds and you get a dose of potassium and magnesium, which keep your mind sharp during those mid-afternoon slumps. [nuts.com](https://nuts.com)

### **Per 1-ounce serving:**

120 calories

1 g protein

22 g carbs

4 g fat



## Pure Organic Cranberry Orange Bar

Prefer to get your nuts in bar form? Grab one of these bars, which mix walnuts, almonds, and cashews with real orange zest and antioxidant-rich cranberries. It's like Thanksgiving cranberry dressing—in bar form! And they're gluten-free. [thepurebar.com](http://thepurebar.com)

**Per bar:**  
190 calories  
6 g protein  
27 g carbs  
8 g fat



## Snyder's of Hanover Organic Honey Whole Wheat Pretzel Sticks

These sticks are a sweet zing on the classic crunchy favorite, and they're made with whole wheat, a more filling alternative to the refined white flour used in ordinary pretzels. [snydersofhanover.com](http://snydersofhanover.com)

### **Per 1-ounce serving:**

110 calories

4 g protein

20 g carbs

2 g fat



## **Luna & Larry's Organic Coconut Bliss Ginger Cookie Caramel Ice Cream**

Ginger cookies mixed with caramel mixed with coconut ice cream...do we really need to say more? Actually, it gets better: Aside from the fact that it tastes fantastic, this decadent dessert is both certified organic and verified as non-GMO, and is made with Fair Trade–Certified vanilla. And because the ice cream is made from coconut milk, it contains all the heart- and immune-protective properties found in coconut fats and oils (though it still has a lot of sugar, so keep that in mind before you down the whole pint, tempting as that may be) and is a good dairy-free alternative for people who are lactose-intolerant. [coconutbliss.com](http://coconutbliss.com)

### **Per ½-cup serving:**

220 calories

2 g protein

24 g carbs

14 g fat



## Rumiano Organic Mozzarella Cheese

The smoky taste of this mozzarella opens a whole new world for grilled-cheese lovers. Or cut up the block into individual string-cheese-style sticks for an easy snack—it's worth the effort. Rumiano's cheeses are certified both organic and Non-GMO, and are from animals raised entirely on grass, which means the products are full of healthy omega-3 fatty acids. [rumianocheese.com](http://rumianocheese.com)

**Per 1-ounce serving:**

90 calories

7 g protein

1 g carbs

6 g fat



## Lakewood Organic Lemonade

Try selling this at your next lemonade stand and see if sales suddenly skyrocket. Ironically, very few lemonades on the market can claim to contain nothing but fruit juice. Most are doctored up with artificial flavorings, high-fructose corn syrup, and other sugars. But this stuff is the real deal—lemons, fruit juice, and that's it. [lakewoodjuices.com](http://lakewoodjuices.com)

### **Per 8-ounce serving:**

80 calories  
0 g protein  
20 g carbs  
0 g fat





## Kettle Brand Organic Salt & Fresh Ground Pepper Potato Chips

Kick your old pesticide-laden chips to the curb. These organic chips have just enough seasoning to spice up your life without the toxic pesticides used on conventional potatoes. [kettlebrand.com](http://kettlebrand.com)

**Per 1-ounce serving:**

150 calories

2 g protein

16 g carbs

9 g fat



## Attune Foods Erewhon Organic Cinnamon Grahams

Dip them in milk, spread them with some of our recommended cinnamon-raisin-flavored peanut butter, or eat them plain. There is no wrong way to enjoy these classic crackers. [attunefoods.com](http://attunefoods.com)

### Per 2 full cracker sheets:

130 calories

2 g protein

24 g carbs

2.5 g fat



## So Delicious Mint Marble Fudge Ice Cream

This creamy, cold treat doesn't disappoint—imagine eating a Girl Scout Cookie, but in soft-serve form. The added bonus? It's made from organic soy, so even those who prefer non-dairy can enjoy without worrying about the toxic pesticide residues that contaminate genetically modified soy products. [sodeliciousdairyfree.com](http://sodeliciousdairyfree.com)

**Per ½-cup serving:**

140 calories

1 g protein

27 g carbs

3 g fat

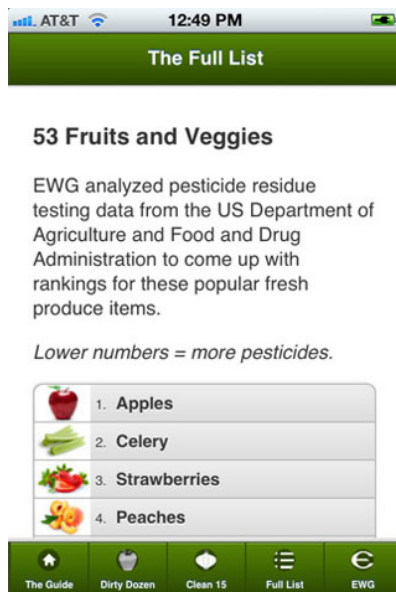
# The 10 Best Food Apps

Don't hit the market without one of these invaluable tools in your pocket!

## Put That Smartphone to Use

So you've mastered Angry Birds and you're bored with Words with Friends. Now what to do with that smartphone that's weighing you down? Use it to create a better world—through food. Whether it's avoiding pesticides or ridding your pantry of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), there's an app for any of us who want to vote with our forks for a better food system. We've rounded up the 10 best must-have smartphone apps for anyone concerned about the who, what, when, where, and how to have the best weekly grocery shopping trips.

### (My Slides)

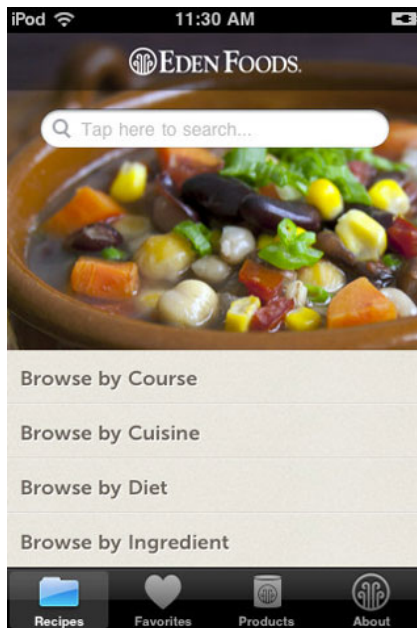


## Dirty Dozen

Paranoid about your pesticide intake? Look no further than the Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen app, which helps you determine which foods you should always buy organic and which conventionally grown foods have the lowest pesticide residues. The nonprofit painstakingly pores over U.S. Department of Agriculture data every year to come up with its "Dirty Dozen" and "Clean Fifteen" lists. While it's best to buy organic as much as you can to reduce pesticides that wind up in our air, soil, and water, this app makes it easier to know which foods are safe when organic isn't widely available.

**Devices:** iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, Android, and Windows Phone compatible

**Price:** Free

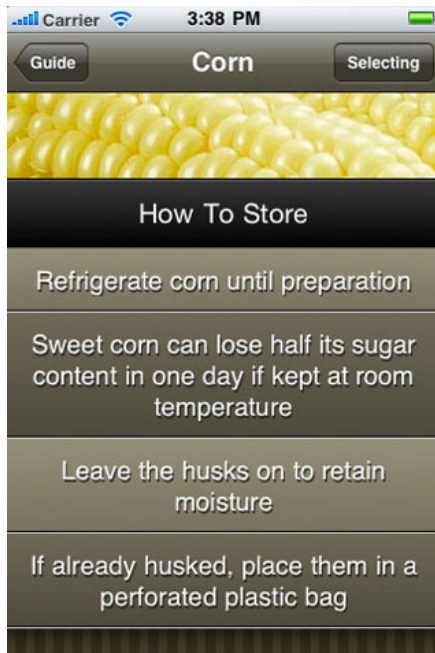


## Eden Foods

One of our favorite companies and a pillar of the organic food movement (it's been around since the 1960s), Eden Foods sells organic, vegetarian foods packaged in the only cans on the market that use a less-toxic alternative to hormone-disrupting bisphenol A. Now the company has an app so you can figure out what to do with all their foods, whether a can of kidney beans or that package of soba noodles. The app has more than a thousand recipes to share, organized by course, cuisine, dietary restriction, or ingredient.

**Devices:** iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad compatible

**Price:** Free



## Harvest

Have you ever shuffled mindlessly through the produce department, unsure of what to look for when selecting your fruit? Are you really supposed to thump a watermelon or shake an avocado? Download Harvest, a comprehensive app that offers instructions and techniques for picking out the best produce, from strawberries to squash. The app also provides storage tips and incorporates the Environmental Working Group's information about pesticide levels on produce, so you don't have to switch back and forth between apps.

**Devices:** iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad compatible

**Price:** \$1.99

# Insider Secrets from America's Favorite Farmer's Markets

Nab the best farmer's market fare using shopping secrets from the experts.



## Tips from the Pros

Whether it's the earthy smell of fresh carrots or the chance to connect with the local farmer that grows them, Americans are having a love affair of sorts with farmer's markets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its most recent figures showing their increasing popularity: The number of markets increased 9.6 percent between 2011 and 2012, a number the agency released just in time for National Farmer's Market Week, which ends tomorrow. Yes, farmer's markets have become so popular they've achieved "appreciation week" status.

Every year, the nonprofit American Farmland Trust holds a contest for the most popular of all popular farmer's markets, and we wanted to know what makes these markets tick—and what they know that we don't! So we polled the managers of the markets that made the Trust's most recent awards to get their best insider tips on making market shopping easier (and sometimes cheaper!) and why they've drawn such a devoted community of supporters. (Want to vote for *your* favorite market? The 2012 contest is going on now, and you can [vote here](#).)



## Punta Gorda History Park Farmers Market

Punta Gorda, FL

**Insider secret:** Block out a decent amount of time to fully explore the market's wonders. "Come, shop, and enjoy the beautiful grounds and park," says market manager Louie Desguin. He also encourages people to browse before buying, and not to purchase the first thing they lay eyes on. "Make it a two or three-hour event and tour everything."

**What makes it popular:** Visitors get a dose of history with their local food. Contrary to typical farmer's markets that might set up tents in desolate parking lots, this market has a prime location in the Punta Gorda Historical Society, a village-like square where people can learn more about the city's history.



## Lakeside Farmers' Market

Henrico/Richmond, VA

**Insider secret:** Don't wait around to try and snag a bargain—chances are you'll be too late. "If you want something in short supply, you should come early," market manager Peter Francisco says.



**What makes it popular:** Other than providing a wide array of juicy, in-season produce, one of the market's claims to fame is its supply of fresh eggs, which come from a small farm located directly behind the market.



## **Falls Church Farmers Market**

**Falls Church, VA**

**Insider secret:** Cruise the aisles before you lay down the dough. "My little tip to people is to walk through the entire market before you start to buy, and see what's available that day," says Howard Herman, market manager. "The prices are usually pretty close, but you might find somebody who's a little less expensive and you could save yourself a few bucks."

**What makes it popular:** One perk of being on the East Coast is the access to tasty, high-quality seafood. "One of the things that really attracts a lot of people is a gentleman who brings freshly made crab cakes with Maryland and Virginia crabs," Herman said. "He sells out of those pretty much every week."



## Snellville Farmers' Market

Snellville Farmers' Market **Snellville, GA**

**Insider secret:** Strike up a conversation. "Be sure and talk to the farmers," Market Manager Gretchen Schulz says. "You can learn so much by talking to them about farming methods and preparation ideas—a lot can give great ideas on how to prepare different vegetables that they sell."

**What makes it popular:** Seeing as Georgia is known as the "Peach State," it's no surprise that this plump piece of produce is in high demand at the Snellville Farmers' Market. Aside from that succulent treasure, the market often sells out of other unique heirloom vegetables like lavender eggplant and callalou, a green native to Jamaica and the Caribbean.



## Williamsburg Farmers Market

Williamsburg, VA

**Insider secret:** Bring the right equipment to transport your swag. Libby Oliver, the market manager, recommends carrying some sort of cooler so you can load up on cheese, eggs, ice cream, and other perishables without worrying about it melting or turning

rancid. They even provide wagons that people can borrow to help tote coolers and other heavy produce.

**What makes it popular:** Aside from the crabs, oysters, and bison that make the market popular, some of the most sought-out products are the peanuts, one of the state's most valuable crops.



## **Lyme Farmers Market**

**Lyme, CT**

**Insider secret:** Always scope out the entire lineup because vendors might change. "We're always rotating people in and out to keep things fresh," Market Manager Chip Dahlke says. "We set up about 20 seasonal tents, but usually 10 are guest vendors that we swap out."

**What makes it popular:** What's better than a farmer's market on an actual farm? The market is located on a working farm with cattle, goats, chickens, and horses. So if there's one thing you need to purchase before leaving the market, it's beef. "We raise the beef cattle here, so I tell people to go to that tent," Dahlke said. And though he's a vegetarian, he still takes pride in the meat. "We grill up hamburgers and hotdogs, so it's nice to point to a steer in the field and tell people that's where the meat came from."

# The Secret Trick for Radiant Skin

Protect your face from the dangers of high fructose corn syrup!

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Sugar and spice isn't all that nice to your face, especially if that sugar is high fructose corn syrup.

When you glance in the mirror and find yourself greeted with a newly formed pimple that, in your mind, is the size of Mount Everest, most of us assume that stress, hormones, or oily skin are the primary culprits for these blemishes and bumps. We don't usually think about the cereal we eat or the instant oatmeal or soda, or any other food where high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) hides.

The sweetener is a common ingredient found in everything from breads to salad dressings, mainly because it's so cheap, and researchers from Princeton University have conducted studies finding that the average American consumes 60 pounds a year. In addition to feeding one of America's most prevalent health issues—obesity—high fructose corn syrup's dangers include liver damage and tooth decay. As if that's not bad enough, it's often contaminated with brain-damaging mercury, and recent research suggests this common food ingredient could be making you stupid. Now, some dermatologists think it might cause acne.

Amy Piacentino, a nutritionist from Beverly Hills, CA, had a hunch that aside from weight gain, HFCS could factor into skin issues, as well. "When I have changed the diet of my patients, and took away 90 percent of their high-fructose corn syrup, the first thing I notice is how their mood improves and the pores of their skin shrink," Piacentino said in an interview with *NewBeauty* magazine. She thinks it has to do with the makeup of HFCS. The body doesn't process it the way

it does regular cane sugar, and that causes the body to overreact to it, which triggers problems like acne and cellulite.

The good news? You can zap those zits right out of your life by eliminating or reducing your HFCS intake. Before purchasing new pantry staples, check nutritional values—if HFCS is listed in the ingredients, toss that product aside and make a smarter choice.

Still battling acne? Try a few of these natural acne remedies from our Rodale Home Remedy Finder.

- **Leave your face alone.** You might be tempted to squeeze the life out of those pesky pimples, but you'll cause more inflammation and irritate other pores—not to mention, increase your chances for possible infection.
- **Get to know your skin.** The majority of facial cleansers, creams, and spot treatments have benzoyl peroxide as their active ingredient. If you have dry skin, you'll want to pick a product with a lower strength so you don't irritate or dry out your face. Just remember: After application of acne products, skin reddening is normal.
- **Go for the natural look.** The more makeup you slather on your face, the greater your risk for breakouts. Give your face a break—and time to breathe—by embracing your natural beauty.

## More Positive News for Pork Lovers

The largest catering company in the world is getting pregnant pigs out of cruel crates.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Another food industry leader is getting pigs out of tiny crates. But is that enough?

Although a little fashionably late to the party, Sysco, the world's largest catering company and food distributor, has announced its decision to stop buying pork from distributors whose pigs are housed in gestation crate facilities. For those who are a little rusty on animal welfare for pig's lingo, gestation crates are metal cages that hold breeding sows until they're butchered—not the most comfortable situation for a pregnant pig. A female pig is rarely let outside of those tight living quarters and, once she's given birth, she's immediately re-impregnated, which doesn't allow the sow an opportunity to experience life outside a gestation crate. Often, the pigs are so tightly confined—in spaces that are barely larger than their body size—they can't even turn around, much less have room to walk. It's not exactly ideal to spend your entire life behind bars.

Although a detailed timeline is still in the works, Sysco has jumped on the pork-friendly bandwagon, along with various other companies that have vowed to purchase their meat from distributors that market more humanely raised meat. In addition to high-profile chain restaurants such as McDonald's, Burger King, and Wendy's, corporations like Hormel, Safeway grocery stores, and Smithfield Foods, the world's leading pork producer, have also made the move to boycott companies that treat pigs poorly.

Sysco's recent action is in response to consumers and animal advocates who have expressed their growing concerns about animal treatment and wish to ultimately eliminate the use of gestation crates altogether. And although a majority of food distributors still keep their animals packed like sardines and confined to alarmingly small pastures or warehouse facilities, well-known names like Sysco—which has 400,00 customers worldwide—have started a movement and set the tone for better animal treatment by advocating for pigs to reside in more natural environments. Our dear friend Babe, America's favorite pig, would be proud.

# Move Over Disney World: Americans Prefer Nature, Survey Finds

A new survey finds surprising political unity when it comes to environmental preservation.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Higher taxes are worth it, if it means saving this, a new survey says.

In a controversial election year, countless debates fly back and forth from both political parties, particularly about environmental issues—be they climate or controversial natural gas grilling. But there appears to be one environmental issue on which all Americans agree, and that's environmental preservation.

Last month, The Nature Conservancy asked two public-opinion research groups (one Democratic, one Republican) to conduct a survey for them. Through phone interviews, the groups polled 800 registered voters about their views in regards to natural resources conservation, which resulted in near unanimous findings.

"Overall, it is clear that conservation is an issue that more often unites, rather than divides, the American people," David Metz, of the Democratic poll group Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, said in a statement accompanying the survey. Environmental conservation does more than just unite voters as an idea they can get behind. Indeed, most Americans feel it's their patriotic duty to protect the wild and preserve America's national parks. Here are a few of the survey's key findings:

**1. Americans consider it their duty to watch over the environment.** Regardless of political party affiliation, four out of five Americans consider protecting natural resources a patriotic obligation and think citizens should take pride in conserving our nation's land and water.



**2. People are willing to pay more to conserve wild places.** Although cost cutting has been a huge topic of debate in political circles the past four years, 74 percent of voters surveyed objected to federal budget cuts for conservation, claiming that natural resources are patriotic and there should be funding to preserve the land, air, and water. In fact, most people seem to be die-hard conservationists, with 83 percent of voters saying they were willing to pay higher taxes to protect land, water, and wildlife habitats where they live.

**3. Forget Disney World—most Americans would prefer a National Park vacation.** Sure, a lot of summer vacations include visits to theme parks, the mountains, or tropical destinations; however, 75 percent of voters claim they'd prefer to take a vacation to national parks in public lands than spend time away in the typical tourist hot spots.

**4. Voters believe that protecting the land will encourage a greater love of the outdoors.** In our current technological age, it's not uncommon for children to spend hours upon hours indoors with their eyes plastered to a television or computer screen. Eighty-two percent of people surveyed believe that kids do not spend enough time outside in nature, and in their opinion, preserving the environment might facilitate more outdoor activity and encourage kids put down the joystick in exchange for fresh air.

# Plant More Trees, Live Crime-Free

Planting trees does more than just beautify your neighborhood.

BY KATHRYN CLARK



Well-groomed trees are their own form of home-security system.

Over a 50-year lifespan, a tree provides you and everyone around you with \$31,250 worth of oxygen, and \$62,000 worth of air-pollution control, according to the nonprofit environmental group Delaware Riverkeeper. But its contribution to your public safety? Priceless.

Results in a recent study published in *Landscape and Urban Planning* supported the idea that areas with more trees had lower crime rates. After comparing observations from aerial photography and city crime rates in Baltimore, researchers found a surprising link: Increasing tree canopy in city parks and on public lands by 10 percent corresponded to a 12 percent decrease in crime rates.

Like natural security guards, groomed trees and a well-tended landscape give the impression that a neighborhood is under careful watch, and that criminal behavior will be likely noticed, the study authors wrote.

If you're ready to take advantage of all the benefits of a tree-filled yard, fall is a good time of year to plant certain varieties of trees, since they're starting to go dormant but the ground hasn't yet frozen solid, so it's easier for you to dig holes for planting. The best trees to plant are those that are native to your area. They'll be lower maintenance and better able to tolerate the amounts of rain (or lack thereof) in your region, and they'll attract a host of native birds and other wildlife to your front yard.

Need help narrowing down your choices? Doug Tallamy, PhD, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* (Timber Press, 2009), recommends these trees for each region:

New England—sugar maple, white pine, paper birch

Mid-Atlantic—white oak, American beech, river birch, red maple

Midwest—bur oak, honey locust, crabapple

Deep South—live oak, loblolly pine, tupelo

Northwest—Douglas fir, yellow cedar, beaked hazelnut

Just say no to the foreigners. Many non-native species are sold at nurseries and big-box garden supply stores, even though they have been imported from other countries and are killing biodiversity. A successfully growing non-native stifles the growth of native plants that insects and animals rely on for survival. Avoid trees that are listed as invasive in North America, such as Norway maple or spruce and Japanese maple.

Prevention News

The Danger Of Tanning Lotions

## **Do You Really Want That Fake Tan?**

The scary reasons you should love your natural complexion

By **Kathryn Clark**



Forget natural sunlight and indoor tanning beds—sprays and lotions are the new tan of choice. But while you're busy avoiding damaging UV rays, the sprays and lotions you're inhaling or slathering on your skin could be just as damaging. "If we had to have one way to summarize our thoughts on tanning, it would be to accept and love your skin tone as it naturally is," says Leeann Brown of the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit that studies the safety of personal-care products.

Why are fake tans so iffy? We've got three reasons for you:

**1. Your fake tan could be illegal.** The most popular alternative to tanning beds has become the spray tan, a salon service that essentially sprays a tanning cream over your entire body to give you an even bronze glow. A closer look at the FDA's guidelines, however, shows that their legality is questionable.

The agency originally approved the primary ingredient in these products, dihydroxyacetone, or DHA, when over-the-counter lotions and gels were the only self-tanning options. However, the FDA guidelines only apply to "external" exposure, which does not include the lips or areas that surround the eyes and eyebrows—or your lungs. Once you step inside those cave-like spraying booths and envelope your entire body in the chemical, your tan is technically not FDA approved because you will have inhaled DHA.

If you have your spray tan applied by a professional, you should be able to avoid those no-tan areas and instruct them not to spray your face. However, most people, including tanning-salon employees, are unaware of the risks associated with DHA (more on that in a bit).

**2. Your fake tan is damaging your DNA.** DHA is a sugar that reacts with your dead skin cells and turns them brown. Sounds harmless enough, right? It might not be. In an investigation by ABC News, a group of scientists reviewed the existing science on DHA and found that it has the potential to produce genetic alterations that could potentially lead to cancer or tumors. (Check out *Is Your Self Tanner Truly Safe?* for more on that.) And it poses a particular risk when used in spray-tan products that could be inhaled. "The reason I'm concerned is the deposition of the tanning agents into the lungs could really facilitate or aid in systemic absorption—that is, getting into the bloodstream," Rey Panettieri, MD, toxicologist and lung specialist at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine said in an interview with ABC News.

Keep in mind that spray tans last approximately a week, 10 days at the most. Is painting yourself a few shades darker really worth messing with your DNA?

**3. You can fake it by eating veggies!** Why risk DNA damage or other toxins from a spray tan or a cream when you could get the same healthy glow at your farmer's market? In a study published in the journal *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, researchers found that a diet rich in carrots and tomatoes could produce a brighter skin glow than repeated UV exposure. Both get their color from carotenoids, which are the antioxidants that soak up compounds produced by stress, and they pass that color along to you when you eat them. So if you're looking for a healthy, natural skin tone, ditch the tanning beds, sprays, and stifling heat, and head to the fridge—your skin (and pocketbook) will thank you.

## Prevention News

4 Reasons You Need To Meditate

# Reduce Hot Flashes By 40%

The technique you need to try now

By [Kathryn Clark](#)



We know, we know—you've heard a million times that meditation is something you should do. And it's not like you're opposed to it, you just haven't gotten around to it yet. But here's why meditation deserves to be bumped up on your to-do list: A growing body of new research shows that just a few minutes of meditation can do everything from curing a backache to putting out hot-flash fires.

Here are four science-backed reasons to get your ohm on:

**1. Meditation can make you more productive.** Squeezing in another activity might sound counterintuitive, especially if you're stressed, but a recent study in the journal *Emotion* shows that mindfulness—a type of meditation that requires you to sit quietly for a few minutes and focus on physical sensations—was highly effective in improving people's working memory, the short-term memory needed for managing info, controlling emotions, and problem solving. The best part? The study found that you could reap all these benefits with just 12 minutes of meditation per day.

**2. You can cut down on the amount of pain pills you pop.** Zen meditation works just as well as aspirin, according to a 2010 study. It appears that meditation that involves focusing on breathing and posture while trying to keep your mind from wandering can actually thicken the part of your brain that regulates and lowers your sensitivity to pain. (Try our Meditation For Pain technique.)

**3. It helps kids ditch the drama.** Temperamental teens can lose the attitude with some simple meditation, according to a recent study from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Easy meditation techniques, such as deep breathing and

relaxation, were shown to significantly improve teenagers' less-than-pleasant moods. (Give these Breathing Meditation techniques a shot.)

**4. Meditation can help with your menopause temperature control.** When researchers at the University of Massachusetts Medical School had women with frequent hot flashes learn mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques in a weekly class for eight weeks, they got more than they bargained for: Not only did the women's quality of life improve overall, but the severity of their hot flashes actually plummeted by 40%.

Ready to give it a shot? It's best to learn meditation techniques through a class; you can find ones near you through the Center For Mindfulness site. Or check your local library for easy-to-follow meditation DVDs.

## PROFESSIONAL PROJECT ANALYSIS

Last summer, I completed my professional project at Rodale.com, the health-editorial website of Rodale, Inc., which is located at the company's headquarters in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Rodale.com is branded with the phrase "Where health meets life," and its primary mission is to educate readers about growing environmental and health concerns, in addition to encouraging them to implement healthy practices and lifestyle changes. As an added bonus of working at Rodale headquarters, I was also given the opportunity to rewrite several of my articles for *Prevention* magazine's online platform. According to its media kit's mission statement, *Prevention* prides itself on being a publication that "inspires, challenges and leads readers to passionately embrace a healthier life, from nutrition to food, medicine to mood, exercise to the environment." *Prevention's* purpose is to use its health, fitness and nutrition content as means to inspire and encourage readers' self-confidence.

While working at Rodale, Inc., I aimed to study and understand the meaning behind cover images and sell lines, particularly in the field of women's fitness magazines. My experience at *Rodale.com* and *Prevention* magazine were crucial tools in helping me explore how editors use the publication's content, tone, language and word choice to capture readers' attention and relay a specific message. Having a better understanding of these writing tactics aided my research of three women's fitness magazines: *Fitness*, *Shape* and *Women's Health*.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ***Key Terms***

Before reading this literature review, it is imperative to define several key terms that are crucial elements in understanding this research component. These terms are: *language, interpretation* and *body dissatisfaction*.

Language can be viewed as a simple concept but has various elements that are often overlooked. As defined by Eskes, Duncan and Miller (1998), “Language means both: ideas found within language itself and specific words and phrases used to communicate these ideas ... dominant ideas about the social world are found in language” (p. 323). Editors use text and images to communicate messages to readers, but language extends beyond syntax — accompanying images are also vital fundamentals of language. Although readers might consider images to be dissimilar from written communication, “the visual is often just as loaded with ideology about health and beauty as written discourse and can be read as text” (Eskes et al., 1998, p. 323). Words and images work together to formulate languages that relay magazines editors’ messages.

Eskes et al., (1998) defines interpretation as “decoding messages located in features of the text” (p. 324). In this research, interpretation is essential in exploring how readers understand and decipher the messages found in women’s fitness magazines after viewing cover sell lines and images. Interpretation is the reader’s ultimate take-away message and the magazine’s lasting impression.

Body dissatisfaction is explained as “negative appearance evaluation” (Sinton, Birch 2006, p. 165) and closely relates to psychological well-being. When readers experience body dissatisfaction, their mental states are negatively affected, which causes them to develop poor self-esteem.

Knowledge of these key terms will help with understanding this research component and provide clarity on the following subject matter.

### ***Fitness Journalism***

The women’s fitness magazine industry originated in the early 1980s, with the creation of *Self* in 1979 and *Shape* in 1981, which were the first publications to heavily promote women’s fitness and health content. Fitness journalism aids readers in self-improvement and is service-driven. However, in regard to women’s fitness magazines, instead of stressing the importance of overall health and well-being, this magazine genre offers suggestions and practices that place large focus on enhancing readers’ appearances — not necessarily achieving the best fitness level. Duncan (1994) found that women’s magazines encourage readers to take part in a “frantic pursuit of bodily perfection” (p. 49). In correlation with body-focused sell lines, cover images encourage women to alter their bodies. “In the early 1990s, women’s fitness magazines emphasized the importance of positive self-esteem. Confidence and positive self-esteem were important attributes for an attractive, fit women” (Markula, 2001, p. 159). The literature revealed that the first women’s fitness magazines showcased accurate depictions of fitness, health and self-esteem.

Editors send messages to readers that allude to the idea that confidence is found through body shape and size. Although fitness magazines' editors claim to send inspirational messages by encouraging readers to become their best versions and develop healthy lifestyles, various publications have diverted their textual attention to emphasize slimness rather than physical fitness. "These magazines unmistakably construct a woman's worth based on her looks" (Markula, 2001, p. 166). Editors of women's fitness magazines are more concerned with size and weight instead of actual fitness level. These publications relay messages that do not always suggest ideal health implications; thus the content found in women's fitness magazines does not always offer advice in improving athleticism or getting in shape. This literature review will analyze different facets of fitness journalism's messages and vocabulary, and focus on how featured cover content can relay body-conscious messages.

### ***The Beauty Emphasis***

According to Fouts and Burggraf (1999), female obsession with beauty is instilled early in life because "the vast majority (86%) of appearance enhancement" (p. 473) is targeted to young viewers and "suggests a trend toward an increasingly thinner stereotype of the female body" (p. 474). Regardless of how much advice and suggestions are featured within the interior of fitness magazines, outer covers show an undeniable emphasis on women's external appearances, which is communicated through sell lines, headlines and photographs. By reading body-focused text, readers are exposed early on to "the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most

important assets, and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain” (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz, 2003, p. 711). Rather than framing fitness and health as something women should strive for to satisfy individual happiness, confidence and self-gratification, fitness magazines use language that subtly and blatantly alludes to an obsession with one’s looks. These types of publications imply that “body image is malleable and can be influenced by observing ideal body shapes” (Fouts and Burggraf, 1999, p. 474). The words, phrasing and images on fitness magazines catch readers’ attention, persuade them to buy the publication and falsely promise that readers can look similar to the models featured on the cover. “Messages found in magazines support and even encourage the perception that female happiness is tied to physical traits, with ultra-thinness being the hallmark of beauty” (Sauer, Robels-Pina, 2003, p. 4). Magazine editors are suggesting that in order to be happy and healthy, readers must correct their body imperfections.

Women’s fitness publications primarily use language that appeals to readers’ cognitive feelings and behaviors, and Duncan (1994) proposed the idea that a magazine’s definition of fitness is determined by factors such as thinness, external beauty and weight — not cardiovascular level, physical activity or strength. Instead, fitness magazines are “functioning to ensure women’s compliance to a public and monolithic feminine body standard of slenderness and beauty” (Duncan, 1994, p. 52). Thus, women continue to receive advice on how to strive for an unattainable body, rather than embracing their own natural physique and becoming healthier individuals. In regard to fitness and appearance, “areas of body work provide women with ‘socially approved vocabularies’ that explain

their failure to accomplish ideal beauty and thus serve to neutralize the flawed identity that an imperfect body implies in Western society” (Gimlin, 2002, p. 15). Fitness magazines’ covers repeatedly provide women with an abundance of body-slimming or weight-loss advice, so readers are constantly told they are flawed and should correct their imperfections.

### ***The Importance of Size and Weight***

As a direct result of societal pressures, women’s cravings for thinness have escalated into a cultural phenomenon that is largely fueled by fitness magazines. Readers see “portrayals of thinness as a desirable trait” (Harrison, 2000, p. 121) and become accustomed to regularly reading about unattainable body images, which makes them feel inclined to lose weight so they can “produce and maintain a healthy body, which is defined primarily in terms of its appearance” (Gimlin, 2002, p. 213). Fitness magazines imply that if readers reach a certain weight and size, they have met the standards of being fit, beautiful and successful. Additionally, women’s fitness magazines “seem to focus on improving one’s life by changing one’s appearance, especially by losing weight” (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 654).

Women refer to fitness publications for advice. When readers are exposed to rhetoric that is primarily geared toward encouraging women to strive for a specific body image that might not be within reach, women’s focuses shift from personal accomplishment and physical ability to concerns with image. To further emphasize fitness magazines’ hints at beauty, verbal encouragement and reference to body size

“seems to indicate that the thin woman has accomplished certain goals, attained a certain social standing, and has rid herself of other life problems” (Williams, 2007, p. 103).

Thus, it is through fitness magazines’ language that female readers learn how to define femininity and fitness by shape and weight instead of cardiovascular stamina or athletic merit. Fitness magazines also reiterate the notion that women should have a will to health and constant vigilance to being fit. Language and word choice imply that women are shameful or morally wrong if they do not adhere to certain body standards. “It is implied through both images and text that being thin means being happier, sexier and more lovable” (Malkin et. al, 1999, p. 654). When fitness magazines pair this type of text alongside specific images, readers compare themselves and strive for preposterous fitness standards, which can ultimately lead to body dissatisfaction.

### ***The Use of Display Type***

When Eskes et al., (1998) analyzed fitness magazines from 1995, the researchers deduced that display text was related to femininity and empowerment because it was used to “construct and maintain an image of the ideal female body (e.g. slender, muscular and curvy) while using words, phrases and ideas that urge women to pursue this ideal to empower themselves” (p. 319). Fitness magazines’ editors use words to persuade consumers to read the publications and transform their figures to look like the featured cover models. Duncan (1994) found that “editorial comments invite the reader to take note of these inspiring examples of personal initiative. Personal choice and commitment are presented as the keys to a perfect body, which is within the reach of every individual”

(p. 53). These publications convey the idea that in order to be fit, one must be beautiful and thin. Eskes et. al, (1998) describes:

The discourse of feminism, embedded in words such as strong, choice and empowerment, and other words that denote have been co-opted and used as a device to convince women of the necessity of bodywork, all while citing the future gains in health, and more important, beauty. (p. 341).

Textual and visual components influence readers to be more concerned with attractiveness than health, which heightens women's feelings to alter their bodies. "The text suggests that so long as one wants this private conversion experience, one can have it. What the text fails to point out is the body shape being advocated is cut from a single, public mold. It is a slender, toned fashion model shape free of flab and cellulite, with only minute variations allowed" (Duncan, 1994, p. 53). Cover sell lines imply that it is easy to mirror a specific image, so women should work to transform their bodies to match a featured look. Women's fitness magazines encourage readers to always be aware of their bodies, when "the reality is that most magazines airbrush photos and use expensive computer technology to correct blemishes and hide figure flaws" (Derenne, Beresin, 2006, p 257). Language within fitness magazines indirectly implies that if females are not constantly maintaining a hegemonic body size and mirroring specific images, they are less beautiful or less healthy than those who successfully fulfill said body standards.

### ***The Impact of Cover Sell Lines and Images***

Previous research has focused on exploring body image and how readers perceive themselves after consuming fitness publications and appearance messages, namely from the magazines' covers. Fitness magazines' covers appeal to readers through a specific beauty ideal, and "for the majority of women, this ideal is impossible to attain and may lead to feelings of inadequacy" (Malkin, Wornian and Chrisler, 1999, p. 647). These messages imply that fitness is related to beauty and in order to be beautiful, you must adhere to a picture-perfect image. When looking at women's fitness magazines, research has also shown that covers are arguably one of the most vital publication elements because "often it is the cover that initially attracts the reader to the magazine. Titles, catch phrases, and pictures displayed on magazine covers are usually all that the reader has time to look at in a store" (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 649). Cover elements are largely influential because they are used as attention-grabbing sales tools —sell lines and images carry great clout. The aforementioned study also found that "an examination of body types displayed on magazine covers revealed that 94% of the covers of women's magazines showed a thin female model or celebrity in excellent shape" and that women's magazines were "likely to contain messages about diet, exercise and cosmetic surgery to change body size" (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 651). This type of advice encourages readers to alter their bodies in order to be accepted.



## ***Conclusion***

Readers consume women's fitness magazines that frequently use the words "weight," "fat" or "diet,"— language that implies that instead of strength, cardio level, physical shape or stamina, external qualities are primary indicators of fitness level. Likewise, the images that featured are on these publications' covers do not necessarily portray an ideal health level; in some instances, these body parameters are not attainable because the images have been digitally manipulated. Editors of these fitness publications claim the magazines provide beneficial advice, but display text skews the magazine's definition of healthy and allows readers to believe appearance is a measure of fitness. Furthermore, cover images have transformed since fitness magazines' surge in the 1980s. Fitness publications have diverted readers' attention away from being physically fit and healthy for individual fulfillment. Instead, readers now focus on maintaining a certain size and shape so their bodies are deemed presentable. Rather than using language and providing content that is applicable to a variety of readers, fitness magazines' editors send messages that imply readers should be follow the same standards and obtain identical physiques. Additionally, readers become accustomed to believe fitness is dictated by looks — the covers of fitness magazines depict these concepts as a unified idea, and women are told to view fitness as a measure of beauty.

Fitness magazines' covers remind women to focus on enhancing their looks and "links feeling good to looking good so that real health issues are subordinated to beauty issues," (Duncan, p. 51), which does not encourage a realistic or accurate definition of physical fitness. When readers are exposed to dialect and images that continually

reference size and shape as a measure of fitness, consumers fixate on external appearance instead of maintaining a healthy lifestyle because “the discourse of shame and confession fuels both of these mechanisms [initiative and commitment] by deepening motivation and imparting a sense of moral urgency” (Duncan, p. 51). Previous research shows that in regard to health and fitness, magazines’ specific text and images urge women to focus on fulfilling a specific body standard. This research project will seek to further understand the meaning behind fitness magazines’ cover sell lines, in addition to analyzing the word choice and images that deliver editors’ messages to readers.

## THEORY

Theories form the basis and groundwork for research. In *Doing Qualitative Research* (2009), David Silverman claims, “without a theory there is nothing to research” and “theory provides both a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized into what is known” (p. 110). My research of women’s fitness magazines will be driven by the framing theory as a way to explore how readers interpret text and images, in addition to connecting magazines’ messages with social responsibility and reality. Framing is the practice of bringing forth particular viewpoints to understand what is emphasized in a publication’s message. “Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 1997, p. 11). This research will explore how magazines’ framing portrays a specific message to readers.

The concept of framing is attributed to Erving Goffman, who declared that a frame is “defined by its use” (Silverman, p. 29), and is largely dependent on the engaged participants. In regard to women’s fitness magazines, it is crucial to use the framing theory because it plays a key role in how a magazine’s language and overall presentation translates to readers. For this research, framing helps narrow the focus to analyze the messages magazines’ editors are sending to women.

In a recent study by Aubrey (2010), framing was used to document how fitness magazines frame health advice, and the study was focused specifically on three

publications: *Shape*, *Self* and *Fitness*. Aubrey's research was concentrated on "investigating whether exposure to appearance frames (i.e., do something in order to look better) affected women's body-related self-perceptions compared to health frames" (p. 50). By using the framing theory, Aubrey's research shed light on how, depending on a publication's frame and language, "one might expect that messages in health magazines would be more focused on health and well-being and less on familiar themes of attractiveness and sexiness" (p. 50). Framing created a guide and point of reference, and Aubrey was able to evaluate messages derived from text and images focused explicitly on body and external image.

My research uses the framing theory as a means to determine editors' motivation behind using specific language and photos on the covers of their respective fitness magazines. It was important to use framing to understand the thought process behind text interpretation, because "media frames can have an influence on thoughts and actions of audience members" (Aubrey, 2010, p. 51). It was also vital to examine headlines because that particular language and images set the tone for the entire magazine, and also communicated the magazine's goal and purpose. This theory was helpful in analyzing appearance frames in fitness magazines and allowed to me to see that magazines often fixate on and portray slimness and additional body traits as a measure of fitness.

## METHODOLOGY

Rodale, Inc. publishes *Women's Health*, the world's second-best selling women's fitness magazine that has a total circulation of 1,616,737 and a rate base of 1,500,000, as reported in ABC Publishing's June 2012 statement. My research focused on exploring the evolution of *Women's Health's* covers alongside the two other leading women's publications (*Shape* and *Fitness*) to see how editors formulate their language for sell lines and cover images. Because women's health and fitness magazines have such a prevailing presence in the journalism industry, I chose to delve further into this niche and analyze the text and images used by these publications. To execute my research, I conducted a qualitative content analysis that focused on one question: What messages do editors send through cover images and sell lines?

When devising my research strategy, I chose to compare each magazine's issues from the 2007 and 2011 calendar years. I selected these specific time periods because although *Women's Health* officially entered the market in 2005, the publication was bimonthly until 2007 when it became an almost-monthly magazine. (They publish approximately ten issues per year.) Because 2007 is the first year all three magazines competed against one another on a consistent basis, I wanted to pinpoint the editors' emphasis and focus. Additionally, I chose to compare the second year's worth of magazine covers from 2011 because that was the most recent calendar year prior to my research; I wanted to observe what changes each magazine had implemented as they continued to grow as publications, while still fueling and satisfying women's interests.

Because each magazine promotes mission statements that declare a strict focus on fitness, I decided to explore if these publications were actually meeting their mission statements while simultaneously serving their audiences.

After concluding my extensive research, scrutinizing a total of 72 magazines (24 from each publication) and comparing both the text and visuals that command each cover, I determined each magazine's emphasis and where the editors placed focus. Rather than painting an overall picture of health, physical fitness or encouraging women to live confidently and embrace their bodies, the magazines collectively encouraged low weight, wearing a small clothing size, and external appearance as vital components to achieving overall success in being physically fit and happy.

While performing this research, my focus was to reveal the prominent message of these three fitness magazines and determine whether the publications' editors followed through with their claims of promoting active and athletic practices that zeroed in on healthy lifestyles. To a certain degree, physically fit women tend to naturally have a toned physique and aspire to showcase their outer beauty through mindful habits, but fitness is not a topic that can be generalized to fulfill every reader's individual health needs. Before embarking on my research, I combed through the magazines and created ten categories that would help me sort through cover lines and assign the text to specific subject fields. One of the largest difficulties I faced when creating my categories was determining how to differentiate between subject matter and assign the content to specific fields. When I originally began coding the magazines' text, my category definitions generally remained the same, and I made a few minor changes. I had approximately

categories that were broader, so they included many more sell lines. However, when I repeated my coding process to finalize my sorting, I found myself shifting a decent number of sell lines among the different categories and creating new fields. Because the original categories became so large, I decided to break down the subject matter into more descriptive areas. For instance, instead of having a blanket category that included size and weight, I divided that type of content into two fields: Weight-Loss Strategies and Body Slimming. Each had enough sell lines to stand on their own, and I think it was important to make my categories more distinct. As I continued to solidify the definitions and type of content and language each category needed to entail, I made any additional, necessary changes. My final categories included the following:

- Body Slimming, Toning, Shaping and Sculpting
- Weight Loss Strategies That Reference Food, Eating Less, Dieting/Fad Diets, Cutting Calories, and Portion Size
- Overall Well-Being With an Emphasis on General, Mental and Physical Health
- Exercise Help, Workout Advice and Tips for Becoming Physically Fit and Staying in Shape
- Beauty and Grooming Tips and Tricks
- Cooking Tips, Food Advice or Swaps, Recipes and Overall Healthy Eating
- Boosting and Gaining Self-Confidence, Feeling Content and Self-Assured and Viewing Happiness as Success
- Sexual Appeal, Sex Secrets and Tips and Physical Enhancement

- Clothing, Apparel and any Fashion-Related Item (Includes: swimsuits, casual attire, exercise clothing, running shoes, etc.)
- Miscellaneous (Items such as: contests, quizzes, money-focused content)

After completing multiple rounds of textual coding and comparing images from 2007 and 2011, my results suggested that regardless of how much variety each magazine tried to incorporate with its coverage, the underlying theme circled back to one dominant category: Body Slimming, Shaping, Sculpting and Toning. This finding was evident; after combining both years' sell lines, the "Body Slimming" category had double the amount of sell lines as "Exercise Help" (ranked third) and one-third more sell lines than "Weight Loss," which was tied with "Overall Well-Being" for second place.



## FINDINGS

### ***Fitness Magazine***

*Fitness* is a women's monthly national magazine that originated in 1992 and, in 2005, was acquired by Meredith. *Fitness* ranks among the company's top five magazines and has a circulation of 1,511,170 and rate base of 1,500,000, which is identical to *Women's Health* (ABC Publishing, June 2012). The publication's title essentially speaks for itself, with a mission statement that declares: "*Fitness* motivates women to move — for fun, for health, for life. With workouts and diet plans that get results, plus inspiring beauty and health tips, *Fitness* empowers women to be fierce about reaching for and achieving body success, however they define it" (*Fitness* Media Kit).

In 2008, *Fitness* welcomed a new editor-in-chief, Betty Wong, who led the magazine to several prestigious journalism awards, which include a Folio Eddie Gold Award, MIN Editorial and Design Award and Ad Age Media Vanguard Award (*Fitness* Media Kit). In regard to readership, *Fitness* has a median age of 39, with 63% of its readers falling into the 25-49 age bracket. I examined 24 covers of *Fitness* (one issue per month) from 2007 and 2011 and sorted each sell line, including phrases and teaser statements into the aforementioned categories. I also compared images. My findings were quite interesting, as they did not directly coincide with the information promised in the magazine's media kit and mission statement.

### ***Fitness: Textual and Qualitative Content Analysis:***

On each glossy cover of *Fitness*, readers can locate a recurring tagline that reads “Mind, Body & Spirit,” various sell lines that advertise that particular issue’s content and a large image of a female model who is usually wearing a bikini or other revealing attire. The model is typically positioned in some sort of standing pose, and the image displays approximately three-fourths of the model’s body. Out of all 24 *Fitness* issues, only three covers feature a complete body shot that show the model in a seated pose. Otherwise, the cover image normally stops when the photo reaches the model’s shins. The image selection is interesting. In 2007, all 12 *Fitness* magazine issues featured the cover model dressed in a bikini, and only two issues displayed women wearing a full-length cover-up over their swimsuit top to conceal their stomachs. The clothing choices are slightly outlandish, especially considering that readers likely are not wearing swimsuits during the winter months, or apply full makeup and style their hair before heading to the gym to exercise. The cover images from 2011 are fairly similar to 2007 though there seems to be slightly more effort in covering the models. There are approximately six covers where the model is wearing a shirt over her bikini top, or even a shorter dress-like cover up. The images splashed across the magazine’s covers speak volumes; when studied alongside the accompanying sell lines, the reader interprets a different meaning of fitness — a meaning that is determined by looks and a certain number on the scale. The covers are plastered with phrases such as, “Lose Your Belly Bulge: Drop a Jeans Size, Banish Cellulite, Get Rid of Back Fat,” (*Fitness*, March 2007) or “Lose 10 Pounds: Your 20-minute plan to get sexy, slim and summer-ready” (*Fitness*, April 2012). These types of cover sell lines were

prominent and made it easy to place items into the “Body Slimming” Or “Weight Loss” categories. Rather than learning new exercise tips, workout suggestions or how to achieve a certain level of athleticism, *Fitness* magazine’s sell lines send messages to readers that imply the following: Appearance is a key element in being considered fit, in shape and attractive.

*Fitness* magazine’s media kit provides an editorial breakdown of the following content percentage: 35% Fitness, 21% Food/Nutrition and 14% Health/Medical science, which totals to 70% for the Health and Wellness Edit. However, after performing my research and sorting through sell lines, I found that the “Body Slimming, Sculpting, Shaping and Toning” category (subject matter distinguished from anything fitness or exercise-related) ranked first for both 2007 and 2011 because it had the highest number of results than any category. Based solely off cover language, *Fitness* editors are sending a message to readers that instead of stamina, strength or athletic performance, body size and shape are appropriate indicators of physical fitness.

In 2007, the category titled “Exercise Help, Workout Advice and Tips for Becoming Physically Fit and Staying in Shape” trailed behind the body-slimming category by approximately half the number of sell lines, which suggests that concerns about body size was the message editors were sending readers. Additionally, in 2011, the exercise category dropped another notch to third place and took the back burner to the two leading categories that centered on body slimming and weight-loss strategies. Considering the magazine’s title, it seem as though the editors would focus on more appropriate content that fulfills the publication’s name and mission to inspire women to

reach their peak fitness levels. Nonetheless, these results are not overwhelmingly surprising, especially after examining the covers and reading sell lines that constantly fixate on self-absorbed topics such as “Shrinking Belly Bulge” (*Fitness*, August 2007), promote “Doctor-Approved Crash Diets” (*Fitness*, November 2007) or encourage women to “Go from Heavy to Hot” (*Fitness*, September 2011). Ironically enough, these particular sell lines are the phrases that are displayed in bright, bold text and capitalized fonts, which make them stand out more than those with smaller typography. I found that although the headlines might be written enthusiastically and more conversation-like, these “trigger” words, such as fat, thin, body, weight, flab, inches, pounds, lose and shrink are the words that dominate the covers. Furthermore, these phrases are typically located alongside the model’s chiseled body, which creates an overall aura that is fixated on body image.

### ***Shape Magazine***

*Shape* was created in 1981 and, in 2003, was obtained by American Media, which touts the magazine as a woman’s playbook to a happy and healthy lifestyle. The magazine prides itself on aiming to maintain a positive and motivational tone, with a mission statement that builds the publication “to be the leading authority on the active lifestyle and the go-to resource to empower women to live life to its fullest” (*Shape* Media Kit). When reading through the publication’s goals and intentions, I noticed that *Shape* acknowledges that it does, in fact, touch heavily upon beauty and looks. The publication’s media kit clearly states that while the content is focused on fitness and

nutrition, “*Shape* provides all the information and inspiration she’ll need to achieve her health and wellness goals...and also offers essential lifestyle advice, covering style and beauty, to guide our reader as her new look takes shape.” I found this statement to be an accurate depiction of the publication; when comparing all three magazines, *Shape* definitely appears to be the most glamorous with a greater emphasis on beauty.

In 2010, Tara Kraft joined the publication as editor-in-chief. The magazine’s circulation totals 1,633,333, which puts the publication in first among all three magazines. The median reader age is 40.3, with 79% of readers falling between the ages of 18-49. Although the *Shape*’s mission statement somewhat admits that the magazine is more focused on women looking their best instead of performing well athletically or actually being in shape, the publication remains extremely popular. According to ABC Publishing’s statement from June 2012, *Shape* had the top circulation in the active lifestyle set and ranked first among these three magazines. *Shape*’s total circulation weighs in at 1,635,933; *Women’s Health* follows closely behind with a circulation of 1,617,737, and *Fitness* takes third at 1,511,170.

### ***Shape: Textual and Qualitative Content Analysis:***

Aside from the recurring phrase that reads, “Shape Your Life,” each *Shape* cover from 2007 featured a toned model dressed in attire that revealed her bare stomach. Most covers featured the women wearing two-piece swimsuits, which was similar to the *Fitness* covers. After examining the images, I was able to point out only one cover that appeared semi-athletic. In that particular issue, a tennis star was featured, so she was

obviously clothed in a sports bra and tennis skirt, which although it was not a bikini, it was still an outfit that revealed her stomach. *Shape*'s second set of cover images from 2011 includes similar photos though obvious styling efforts added a few long-sleeved shirts over the models' swimsuit tops. Similar to 2007, *Shape*'s cover models' attire was also consistent with *Fitness* — both publications made a point to add more clothing on their 2011 covers. Nonetheless, there was one glaring cover that stood out above the rest, and that was because the featured actress, Kate Walsh was photographed entirely nude. On this particular magazine issue, aside from carrying over the phrase, "Shape Your Life," the published sell lines were ultra-shallow and focused solely on physical traits that are showcased by a few of the following phrases:

- "Lose That Arm Jiggle for Good"
- "Kate Walsh Bares All: How She Stays This Hot at 44"
- "Fight Fat & Win!"
- "Lean & Sexy Now! Flat Abs, Toned Thighs, Tight Tush"

*Shape*'s media kit also includes a statistic that lists 26% of its total content as fitness/sports material, which occupies the highest percentage. In their pie chart, fitness/sports ranks first and is closely followed by beauty/style. These published claims seem inaccurate, especially because none of these abovementioned phrases even mention physical fitness and instead, promote body image and beauty. However, sell lines are not necessarily indicative of the entire magazine's content because these cover blurbs are meant to sell the magazine, not represent the entirety of inner subject matter. It is possible there is more fitness-related content inside the magazine but, based on the cover, that is

not the message editors send to readers. If editors want women to adopt healthy habits and truly learn about fitness and sports, the previously listed phrases, language and emphasis do not reflect that objective. In fact, according to my coding results, from 2007 to 2011, *Shape* magazine's heavy focus on body image increased.

Although the editors at *Shape* might have good intentions of promoting fitness and sports content, my research suggests differently. Similar to my findings with *Fitness* magazine, the "Body Slimming" category was most dominant and increased as the years progressed. Ironically enough, in 2007 the "Exercise Help" category was positioned in second; in 2011, it dropped to fourth place, behind "Body Slimming," "Weight-Loss Strategies" and "Overall Well-Being." These results lead me to believe that the editors at *Shape* might have a more skewed and superficial view of fitness and are trying to send readers a message that is primarily concentrated on body size and shape. The magazine's title, *Shape*, could refer to women actually being in shape and fit; however, my findings suggest that the publication's message places a greater focus on readers' body shapes and sizes. This notion is evident, especially after seeing that my "Boosting Self-Confidence" category ranked dead last in 2007 and, in 2011, only elevated to seventh place out of ten total categories. My research supports that the editors at *Shape* view fitness as having a tight, toned and solid body, and that fitness tests or confidence in exercise do not necessarily fulfill their standards of being in shape. *Shape*'s voice is intended to be "always positive and motivating" (*Shape* media kit), yet the advertised content and short blasts are so fixated on picking apart readers and telling them they need to transform themselves. For example, the April 2007 cover told readers "You Can Do It! Burn More

Fat in Less Time: Drop 5 Pounds This Month With These Calorie Blasters,” while November 2007 encouraged them to “Stop Winter Weight Gain Before it Starts.” In March 2012, *Shape*’s editors showed readers how to “Lose that Arm Jiggle — Fast!” or “Fight Fat and Win.” The magazine’s tone might be more relaxed and attempt to be inclusive, yet it encourages readers to highlight their flaws and indirectly hints that their current state and weight are not up to *Shape* standards.

### ***Women’s Health Magazine***

In 2005, Rodale, Inc. successfully launched *Women’s Health* as the sister counterpart to *Men’s Health*, the world’s largest men’s magazine that sports 39 editions in different countries. In 2009, the publication acquired a new editor-in-chief, Michelle Promaulayko, who remains in that position. Although *Women’s Health* is somewhat new to the women’s fitness magazine world, it has steadily built its reputation as a lifestyle resource that provides readers with the “must-have action plan for today’s modern woman. *Women’s Health* gives readers the tools they need to make instant, positive changes in their lives” (*Women’s Health* media kit). Similar to *Fitness* and *Shape*, *Women’s Health* declares itself different from other brands because of its distinctive approach that propels women to improve their lifestyles.

As previously stated, in regard to circulation numbers, *Women’s Health* is sandwiched between *Shape* and *Fitness*. Its circulation numbers are commendable at 1,617,737, and since its fairly recent origination, the publication has climbed the ladder of women’s fitness publications to trail closely behind *Shape*. Before conducting this



research, I was most intrigued in studying *Women's Health* to see if it fulfills the editors' promise of providing readers with a satisfactory and well-rounded amount of content, instead of emphasizing beauty and appearance as measures of worth.

***Women's Health: Textual and Qualitative Content Analysis:***

This publication and its editors declare that they want readers to be proactive in gaining healthy habits in a physical and emotional sense. To achieve this goal of connecting with readers on a level deeper than surface qualities, the magazine's main communication strategy is to use a "frank, irreverent voice of a trusted girlfriend" (*Women's Health* Media Kit). I wanted to see if this tone was evident, especially since the publication is promoting the idea that its voice is different from the average women's magazine.

After performing my coding for the *Women's Health* year's worth of magazine issues from 2007, the one notable difference I found was the winning category was very different when compared against *Fitness* and *Shape*'s. The category that rose to the top of *Women's Health*'s list was "Overall Well-Being." Thus, in 2007, the magazine did support its media-kit claims that it was striving to help women achieve a balanced lifestyle and be well-rounded in all areas of health; the abundance of sell lines in the well-being category reflected that. In fact, contrary to *Fitness* and *Shape*'s leading category in 2007, the "Body Slimming" division was ranked sixth of ten for *Women's Health*; whereas, it came in first for the other two magazines. The weight-loss category placed second, so body image was not entirely ignored though the sell lines were not as image-

focused as *Fitness* and *Shape*. Similar to the other two publications, *Women's Health* used large lettering with an all-caps style, bold colors and exclamation points to highlight statements and make its writings translate as more conversational.

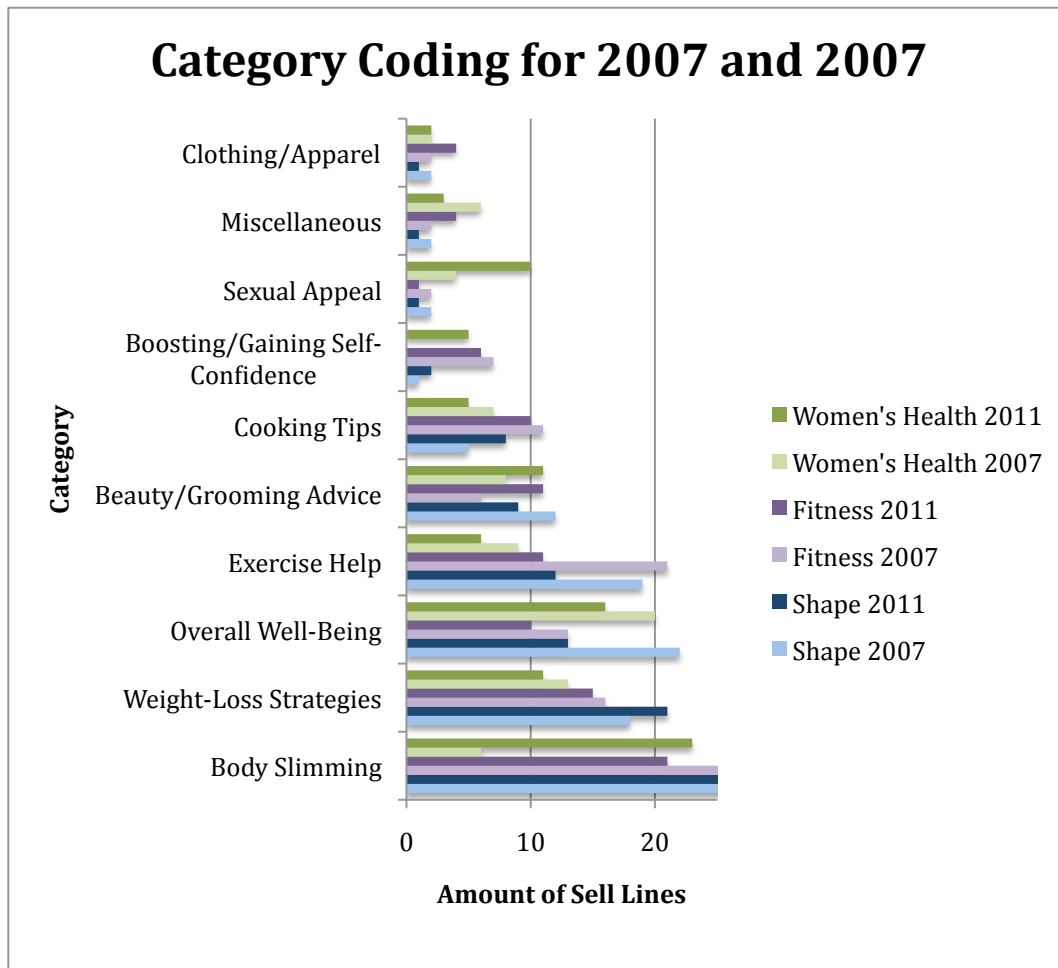
Although *Women's Health* remained loyal to its mission statement in its early years, from 2007 to 2011, the content type and focus undoubtedly shifted. Four years later, as *Women's Health* continued to compete against seasoned women's fitness magazines, the "Body Slimming" category jumped from sixth place and landed the top spot in first. This drastic jump suggests that as the magazine grew and was compared against other women's publications, editors needed to change their focus and content level so they could keep up in competition with the other two magazines. This is certainly supported after observing that the exercise category dropped from third to sixth place. In 2007, *Women's Health* featured phrases such as "8 Simple Steps to Perfect Health," (June 2007) and "Jeans That Flatter *Any* Shape." (September 2007). However, in 2012, the sell lines shifted to "Look Great Naked! Burn Mega Calories, Build Lean Muscle, Sculpt Sexy Curves," (May 2012) and "Resize Your Thighs! Lose Belly Fat Fast!" (July/August 2012). Additionally the phrase "It's good to be you" was stamped across every cover in 2007 but, in 2011, that branding tagline was only seen on two out twelve covers. On the ten covers missing that phrase, nothing replaced the tagline. I think that was a bold move, especially because it was featured in a small font that did not obstruct the page; that phrase was a constant reminder that women could truly be happy with themselves. It is a correct statement to say that in 2011, the focus of *Women's Health's* editors deviated away from enjoying inner happiness to perfecting outer image.

As *Women's Health's* content evolved, its images followed suit. In 2007, there was abundance of swimsuit styling and in eight of the twelve cover photographs, the model's bare midriff was flaunted. The only difference between *Women's Health's* swimsuit photos than from the previously listed publications' images was that *Women's Health's* covers had a more realistic, sporty feel. Although there certainly was a concentration on how the women looked, a large portion of the photos were women wearing plain swimsuits or walking out of the ocean with their hair wet or pulled up into a ponytail. This differs from *Fitness* and *Shape* because in those publications' 2007 covers, the models were always dolled up with overdone hair and makeup; it was hard to convince readers the women were actually on the beach in a bedazzled swimsuit or taking part in any type of physical activity. *Women's Health's* 2007 covers were more toned down and did not have as large a focus on glamorous clothing or emit a high-fashion feel. However, in 2011, *Women's Health* cover images also certainly stepped it up in the looks category, and the models seemed to get smaller in size, and dolled up in makeup and overall appearance. Although editors began styling the models in dresses, jeans, and other clothing besides swimsuits, which was a drastic difference when compared to *Fitness* and *Shape's* 2011 covers, the models' appearance overshadowed the apparel choice because they were considerably more made up. This action implies that the magazine's editors felt the need to emphasize women's appearance to remain competitive, and this idea is reflected in the cover content and photographs.

Fitness magazines' text and images support the idea that editors use covers as marketing vehicles to entice and convince readers to buy their respective publication.

Magazines have a duty to serve readers, but they also have pressure to remain competitive and produce a profit. The results from my qualitative analysis reflected that as the magazines strived to become the frontrunner of women's fitness publications and vie for the top spot, editors' primary focus shifted from providing strictly fitness content. Instead, editors appealed to readers by promoting beauty tips and weight-loss tactics. My research suggests that editors certainly recognize these pressures to land the top spot, and there is so much at stake to ensure that their publication is considered the best — especially in a market that is as competitive as women's fitness magazines. When comparing magazine covers from 2007 and 2011, the majority of the cover content shifted from fitness to body slimming. Instead of adhering to the magazines' mission statements, it is clear that magazine editors aimed to please readers and framed their content around interest and entertainment, rather than providing realistic advice for healthy living.

**Figure 1:** This bar graph is a visual representation of my category coding. The bars represent each magazine's number of sell lines per category for both 2007 and 2011.



**Figure 2:** This chart also displays my category coding, but with specific numbers. In list form, this chart displays the category breakdown and provides a comparison of each magazine's numbers.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS:**

### **Rankings for total sell lines from both years:**

1. Body Slimming: 143 total
2. Weight-Loss Strategies AND Overall Well-Being: 94 total
3. (See above; tie for second)
4. Exercise Help: 78 total
5. Beauty and Grooming Tips: 57 total
6. Cooking Tips: 46 total
7. Boosting and Gaining Self-Confidence: 21 total
8. Sexual Appeal: 20 total
9. Miscellaneous: 18 total
10. Clothing and Apparel: 13 total

### **Comparison from 2007 to 2011 for EACH category and magazines**

#### **BODY SLIMMING**

2007: 68

2011: 75

OVERALL INCREASE

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Shape 2007 = 27

Shape 2011 = 31

INCREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 35

Fitness 2011 = 21

DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 6

WH 2011 = 23

INCREASE (Largest increase)

## **WEIGHT-LOSS STRATEGIES**

2007: 47

2011: 47

STAYED THE SAME

---

Shape 2007 = 18

Shape 2011 = 21

INCREASE (Largest increase)

---

Fitness 2007 = 16

Fitness 2011 = 15

DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 13

WH 2011 = 11

DECREASE

---

## **OVERALL WELL-BEING**

2007: 55

2011: 39

STAYED THE SAME

---

Shape 2007 = 22

Shape 2011 = 13

DECREASE (Largest decrease)

---

Fitness 2007 = 13

Fitness 2011 = 10

DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 20

WH 2011 = 16

DECREASE

---

## **EXERCISE HELP**

2007: 49

2011: 29

DECREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 19

Shape 2011 = 12

DECREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 21

Fitness 2011 = 11

DECREASE (Largest decrease)

---

WH 2007 = 9

WH 2011 = 6

DECREASE

### **BEAUTY AND GROOMING TIPS**

2007: 26

2011: 31

INCREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 12

Shape 2011 = 9

DECREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 6

Fitness 2011 = 11

INCREASE (Largest increase)

---

WH 2007 = 8

WH 2011 = 11

INCREASE

### **COOKING TIPS**

2007: 23

2011: 23

STAYED THE SAME

---

Shape 2007 = 5

Shape 2011 = 8

INCREASE (Largest increase)

---



Fitness 2007 = 11  
Fitness 2011 = 10  
DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 7  
WH 2011 = 5  
DECREASE

### **BOOSTING AND GAINING SELF-CONFIDENCE**

2007: 8  
2011: 13  
INCREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 1  
Shape 2011 = 2  
INCREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 7  
Fitness 2011 = 6  
DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 0  
WH 2011 = 5  
INCREASE (Largest increase)

### **SEXUAL APPEAL**

2007: 8  
2011: 12  
INCREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 2  
Shape 2011 = 1  
DECREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 2  
Fitness 2011 = 1  
DECREASE

---

WH 2007 = 4  
WH 2011 = 10  
INCREASE (Largest increase)

### **CLOTHING AND APPAREL**

2007: 6  
2011: 7  
INCREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 2  
Shape 2011 = 1  
DECREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 2  
Fitness 2011 = 4  
INCREASE (Largest increase)

---

WH 2007 = 2  
WH 2011 = 2  
STAYED THE SAME

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

2007: 10  
2011: 8  
DECREASE

---

Shape 2007 = 2  
Shape 2011 = 1  
DECREASE

---

Fitness 2007 = 2  
Fitness 2011 = 4  
INCREASE

---

WH 2007 = 6  
WH 2011 = 3  
DECREASE (Largest decrease)

My research question is: What messages do editors send through cover images and sell lines? To investigate this inquiry, I conducted a textual and visual analysis that yielded obvious results: Editors of women's fitness magazines, particularly *Fitness*, *Shape* and *Women's Health*, send a message to readers that they should focus on improving physical traits and body characteristics; their idea of fitness is exclusively based on how women look, and being "fit" is not necessarily determined by physical activity or athleticism. Although each magazine had a few slight differences in how it presented its content and images, body slimming was essentially the main selling point, especially within the most recent calendar year.

*Fitness*, *Shape* and *Women's Health* are frontrunners in the women's fitness magazine world, and I expected to see similarities among the publications' covers. In addition to featuring sell lines that are primarily focused on body traits, all three magazines are bright, colorful and jam-packed with various tips on self-improvement. In 2007, *Women's Health* was more distinctive because its cover content was focused on giving women peace of mind and informing them about overall health while *Fitness* and *Shape's* editors emphasized body slimming. However, in 2011, my coding revealed that *Women's Health's* editors also stressed the importance of body appearance, which meant the researched publications became more similar and collectively emphasized external beauty.

All three magazines use a light-hearted, comfortable tone to relate to readers and encourage them to take control. Although the excessive use of exclamation points can seem overwhelming — especially when used six times on a cover, as demonstrated in

*Fitness*, June 2007 and February 2008 — I do agree the voice is friendly and not overly formal, which likely appeals to readers. Nonetheless, aside from visual presentation, the publications' tones and word choices have the potential to be misinterpreted, especially because the subject matter could be a sensitive topic among the targeted readers. If women have currently been struggling with weight loss or poor body image, sell lines that tell them they are not skinny or thin enough could be detrimental to their ego and self-esteem. If women are reading that their efforts are not on par with ideal fitness standards, they might become discouraged, rather than commending themselves for their hard work. Duncan (1994) found that women's fitness magazines projected "a blanket invitation to all readers to assess their bodies for their flaws and reshape their bodies accordingly" (p. 54), which remains evident in my research. My research paralleled with these findings because the magazines heavily emphasized slimness as a measure of physical fitness and necessary trait for success. Because women's fitness publications imply that readers will benefit from taking their advice, readers feel pressured to change their bodies in order to be accepted and live up to fitness standards that are displayed on magazines' covers. If these publications' editors were strictly concerned with helping women and providing a guidebook to a happy and healthy lifestyle, body shape and size would not be constantly reiterated.

This research is important because it exposes underlying messages that are transmitted through magazines' cover components. There are various ways readers can interpret images and phrases, but these three fitness magazines' word choices and languages imply that weight, size and shape define readers' fitness statuses. It is crucial

for editors to understand how readers could potentially receive the magazines' messages so they can use covers as outlets to provide useful and realistic fitness suggestions and tips. Women want to feel included and implement the magazine's advice into their daily lives, so it would be compelling to see how circulation and readership changes in response to noticeably different cover content. The act of promoting a healthy image and providing women with attainable weight and exercise standards would expose readers to a more practical depiction of fitness and be a positive influence on their self-esteem.

Cover language is a vital tool that editors use to engage readers. During my internship with Rodale.com, I learned that editors select specific words and phrases to capture readers' attention, and my editors coached me how to write headlines in order to achieve their readership goal. At Rodale.com, the tone of voice was very much "in your face," and the editors' intentions were to use language to alarm or shock readers so they would continue to read further into the article and drive more traffic. Using this knowledge and referring back to my previous research and readings for my literature review, I expected to find a sizeable number of the fitness magazines' messages and word choice to be heavily focused on external body traits. However I did not anticipate the hefty amount of weight-centric sell lines that drastically overshadowed any type of fitness focus. Malkin et al. (1999) found that women's magazines were "likely to contain messages about diet, exercise and cosmetic surgery to change body size," (p. 651), but my findings revealed that weight-loss methods were the most recurring, promoted topics. This discovery is important because it displays how women interpret fitness magazines' cover messages. Additionally, after conducting my research, I was appalled when I saw

how frequently each magazine featured half-naked women. Before performing my content analysis, I suspected to see a great number of swimsuits, but the total quantity of covers with barely-clothed models exceeded my original expectation. Sauer and Robels-Pina (2007) found that “messages found in magazines support and even encourage the perception that female happiness is tied to physical traits, with ultra-thinness being the hallmark of beauty” (p. 4). That finding was certainly evident in my own research, which is an important development in pinpointing how readers could interpret magazines’ messages, as well as how editors depict fitness. If editors want readers to consider their publications to be exercise and healthy-lifestyle guides, they are not using cover sell lines and images to execute that goal.

To correlate with editorial changes, magazine editors should improve their cover-image selection to feature women who look healthy and athletic — not frail and meek. They could also learn how to dress their cover models in attire that is fitting for the current season or trend, and not always picture them in a bikini or skimpy clothing that shows off their flat stomachs. It would be more logical to style the cover models in clothing that is trendy or practical, so readers could replicate these styles.

Editors of women’s fitness magazines rarely produce covers that are solely focused on fitness. *Fitness*, *Shape* and *Women’s Health* find similarity in their approach to readers, and my research supports the following: Through cover images and sell lines, editors of women’s fitness magazines send self-absorbed messages that stress the importance of outer image and how you look rather than physical ability and fitness level. Although each publication has a few individual touches, all three magazines cohesively

promote a similar idea of health, fitness and wellness, yet their cover content showcases other intentions. If women's fitness magazines are truly focused on athleticism, appearance and weight-based concerns should be irrelevant. Instead of picking up one of these publications and following suggestions to improve stamina, exercise performance or overall health, readers are instructed to be self-conscious about their weight and fixate on correcting their body flaws.

### ***Conclusion***

I believe all three publications could make vast improvements on their cover sell lines and images if they want to encourage women to live a healthy lifestyle. Because circulation numbers and readership have only increased since each magazine's origination, the editors have the flexibility to rework how they frame these publications' message without losing their followers. After performing this research and studying 72 magazine issues, the coverage on body slimming and sculpting was exhausting, yet eventually expected; cover after cover, readers were always instructed to lose weight and alter a different part of their bodies. My main concern with the magazines' stress on weight loss is that some of their readers do not need to drop pounds; thus, the magazines could actually be detrimental to readers' self-confidence and cause harm rather than benefit, which ultimately leads to body dissatisfaction. Also, editors of these fitness magazines need to be mindful of the messages that their respective publication's cover image sends. Aside from the fact that the majority of the covers featured half-naked, petite celebrities and models, the images often have little correspondence to the featured

sell lines. If a sell line encourages women to be “Confident, Healthy and Strong” (*Fitness*, August 2007), or “Dance Off Pounds” (*Shape* August 2012), it would be more appropriate for readers to see images that depict those actions. It seems all too easy and expected that every cover is going to feature a model who was photographed in a swimsuit, so I would recommend providing the readers with greater image variety.

The editors of women’s fitness magazines, specifically *Fitness*, *Shape* and *Women’s Health*, are similar to personal trainers and readers refer to their content for advice on being healthier individuals. Therefore, fitness magazine editors should concentrate on helping readers set individual health and physical fitness goals instead of highlighting body imperfections. Rather than assuming that all of their readers need to lose an overwhelming amount of weight, editors should inspire women to work toward improving and maintaining their overall health. By promoting progress instead of perfection, the editors of women’s fitness magazines could send positive messages that encourage fitness instead of thinness.

After conducting my qualitative content analysis, I believe future research should involve human subjects or some type of reader panel. Researchers could use a focus group or survey to record readers’ reactions to the presented fitness content. It would be fascinating to learn how these women interpret cover content and gain insight on readers’ thoughts and emotions after they are presented with body-centric material. A potential research question for readers would be: How do you feel after viewing the covers of fitness magazines? I suspect the results would vary and the research would likely be an extensive process, but it would be worthwhile to interview an array of women who differ



in age, weight, size and fitness level and gauge their reactions. It would be perplexing to observe whether readers' current physical traits or athletic level affect how the take-away message they receive from the magazines' cover sell lines and images. This type of future research could help editors ensure that they are staying true to their mission statements. By providing readers with better tools and advice to living a healthy and active lifestyle, these publications would better meet their promoted goals.

As additional research is conducted on women's fitness magazines, I think it would be extremely interesting to explore how readers respond to specific numbers. During my internship at Rodale.com, my editors described how quirky numbers seem to resonate better with readers. For example: Instead of settling on 20 healthy junk foods, I provided viewers with 21 snack ideas. My editors said that, although it seems strange, stories that have quirky, uneven amounts tend to get more traffic and hits than typical numbers such as 10, 15 or 20 ways to improve your health. I am sure subject matter plays a large part of readership, and page views are likely not based solely on number choice, but it could produce interesting findings.

Furthermore, the most pertinent area of research would be to study immediacy and readers' reactions to time frames and deadlines. Women's fitness magazines tend to provide time pegs to achieve your goals, such as: See Results in Just 10 Days (*Fitness*, February 2007), Bikini Body Diet—Our Easy 3-Month Plan Starts Now (*Shape*, April 2012) and A Flat Belly in 15 Minutes (*Women's Health*, September 2012). It would be compelling to see if specific time frames directly affect readership or, to take it a step further, impact newsstand sales. Readers like to be reassured that their hard work will pay

off, and they like to have a certain end date or time period to reach their goal; thus, it would be fascinating to explore if content that provides a set time span encourages and promotes reader demand and loyalty.

## APPENDIX

### *Category Descriptions*

#### **Weight-Loss Strategies That Reference Food, Eating Less, Dieting/Fad Diets, Cutting Calories, and Portion Size**

Fitness magazines will often reference eating habits, food and diets as a way of shedding pounds to look your “best.” The cover content found in this category tends to fall under the weight umbrella and tells readers they should eat less, suppress hunger, or participate in other food-restriction tactics that help decrease the number on the scale.

#### **Body Slimming, Toning, Shaping and Sculpting**

A slim and trim figure doesn’t necessarily have to correlate directly with weight. Nonetheless, fitness magazines tend to focus heavily on body size and the idea that having a picture-perfect figure makes females attractive or more accomplished. This category includes any mention of slimming down, body shaping, acquiring a toned body or sculpting a sexy physique. In contrast to the weight-loss category, this content favors inches, not pounds, but can still mention eating “right” in order to obtain a perfect body.

#### **Exercise Help, Workout Advice, and Tips for Becoming Physically Fit and Staying in Shape**

Women’s fitness magazines give readers the impression that they can help females gain control of their physical fitness abilities and improve athleticism. Fitness level isn’t based

solely on weight and shape, so this category contains content that does not allude to appearance. Since fitness is more related to workout stamina and skills, rather than being thin and weighing a certain amount, these sell lines and images encourage readers to develop consistent exercise routines and strive for athletic goals.

### **Overall Well-Being With an Emphasis on General, Mental and Physical Health**

It's typical for fitness magazines to promote topics that stress external traits, so women often forget that appearance is not a proper indicator of health. This category includes subject matter that is not related to weight or losing pounds to achieve a certain beauty goal. Instead, this content informs readers about general health concerns and advice on living well and developing healthy habits. Although food might be mentioned, the focus is on substantial foods you should be eating for your health, nutritional levels, and to fuel your body — not “skinny” foods. Essentially, this category includes different elements of living a balanced, physically and mentally healthy lifestyle.

### **Boosting and Gaining Self-Confidence, Feeling Content and Self-Assured, and Viewing Happiness as Success**

Success and happiness are not always determined by beauty and appearance, but by acknowledging mental factors such as self-confidence and assurance, pride and self-worth. In this content category, the cover images and sell lines focus largely on mental state and inner feelings, and imply that true success is achieved by happiness, body love, positive attitudes or emotions, and being satisfied with yourself as a person instead of being a pretty object.

### **Beauty and Grooming Tips and Tricks**

Your body or weight does not necessarily dictate beauty. However, although women's fitness magazines might encourage self-confidence, they also stress the importance of maintaining a polished appearance and looking your best to feel your best. Covers also often display different tips and suggestions to enhance outward appearance and improve physical attractiveness. Any topic that relates to beauty hair, skin, nails, looks, aging, etc. falls underneath this category.

### **Clothing, Apparel and any Fashion-Related Items**

Regardless of season, a women's fitness magazine always covers some element of fashion. Depending on the time of year and current trends, the cover might feature swimsuits, scarves, dresses, boots, etc. This category is composed of any and all apparel content, which includes clothing that's popular, what colors are considered to be "in," or how to dress for your body type.

### **Sexual Appeal, Sex Secrets and Tips, and Physical Enhancement**

In today's industry, fitness magazines often focus on factors other than physical fitness and exercise. Sex and physical attraction have become highly covered topics, and magazines often offer women tips and advice to help them become more sexually attractive or better their performance in bed. In this category, readers will learn any and all content that relates back to sex and has a more sultry tone.

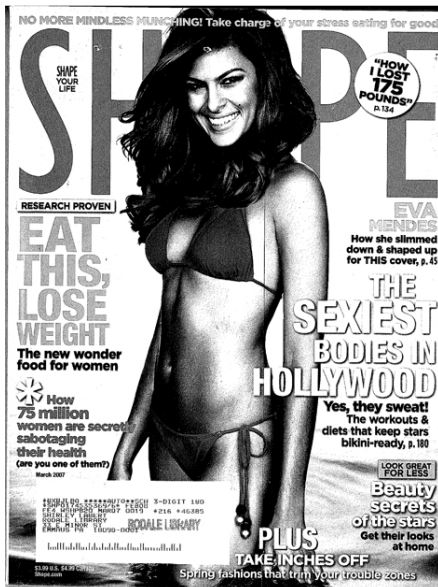
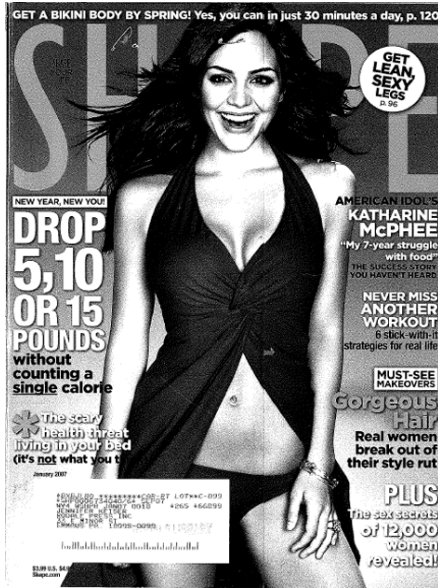
### **Cooking Tips, Food Advice or Swaps, Recipes, and Overall Healthy Eating**

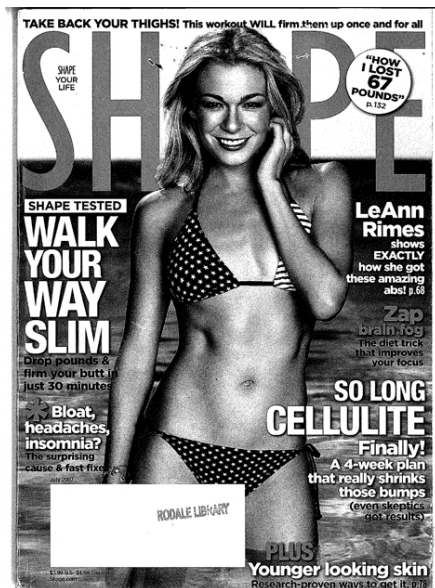
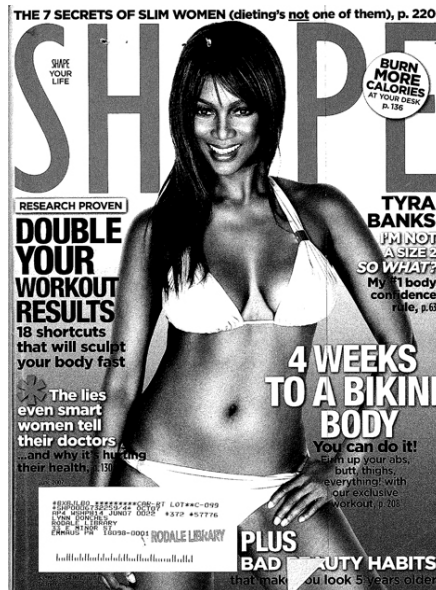
Although women care about food in relation to fitness, there are certain circumstances where you want to enjoy a meal without the guilt or strict calorie counting. This particular category blankets over all food-related content that does not make a direct callout to losing weight. This type of content refers to articles that promote ideas such as making smarter dessert choices, providing easy recipes, or offering food swaps to make meals slightly healthier with fewer calories. It also houses content that helps you eat for better skin, fertility, etc. However, in contrast to the Weight-Loss Strategies category, this grouping's sole purpose is not fixated on dropping pounds or abiding by a particular diet plan to achieve weight-loss goals.

### **Miscellaneous (Contests, quizzes, money-focused items)**

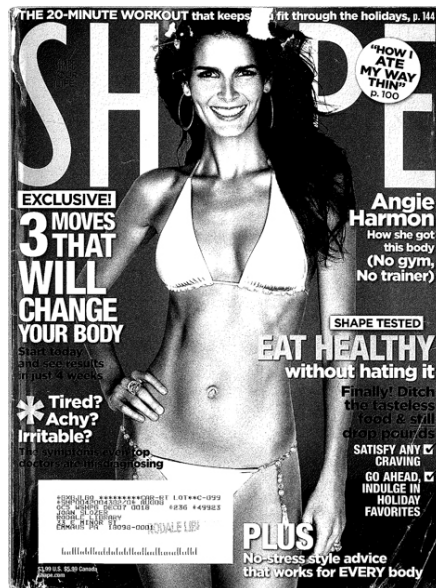
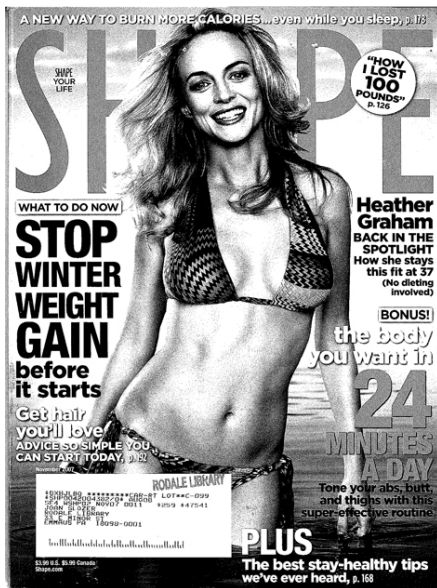
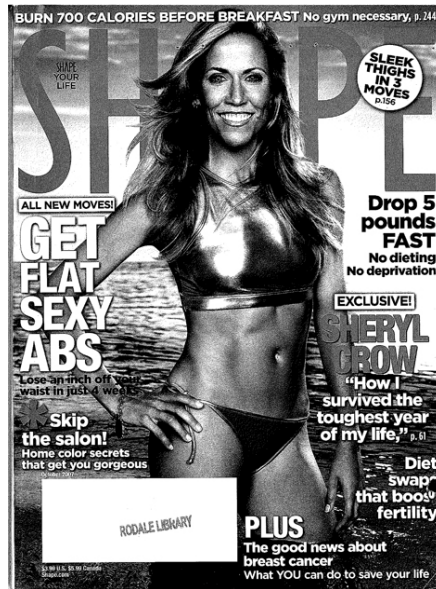
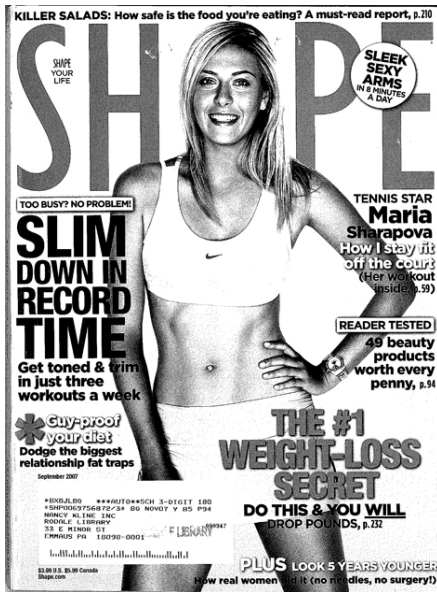
Aside from their regular content, fitness magazines will also add additional elements to customize and fill each issue. The most common “filler” content tends to be giveaways, contests, quizzes, etc. There are also sporadic articles that touch on the topic of money. This category includes cover and sell lines that did not clearly fall underneath any other department and were not strong or frequent enough to stand alone.

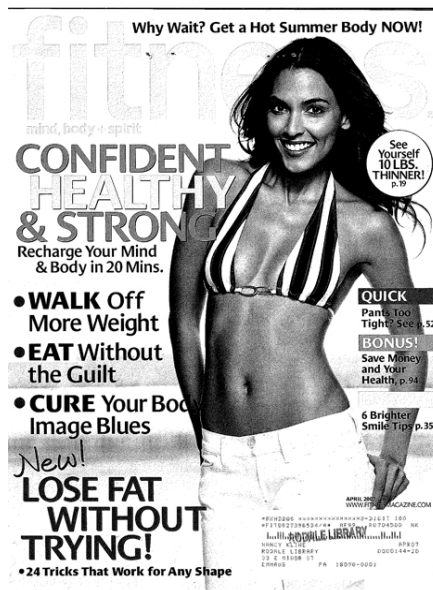
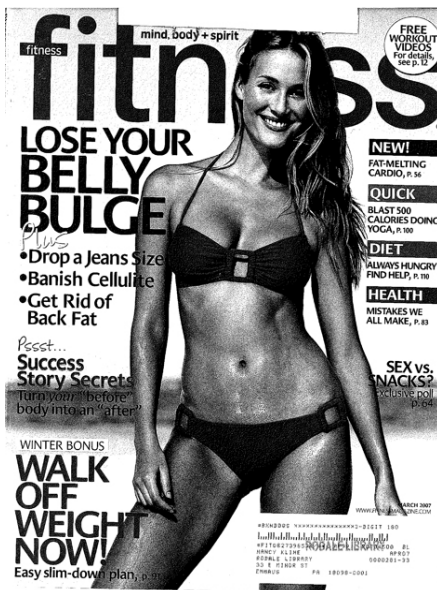
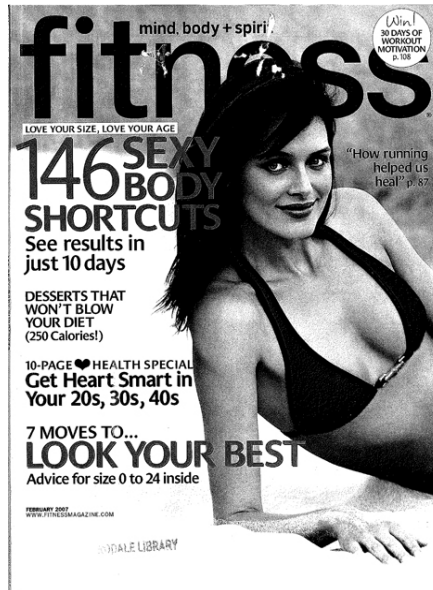
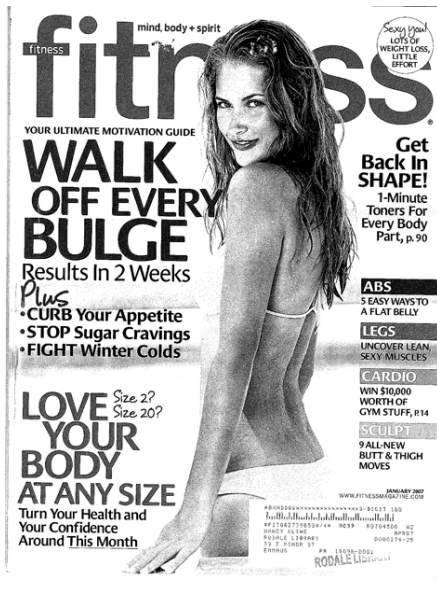
## MAGAZINE COVERS

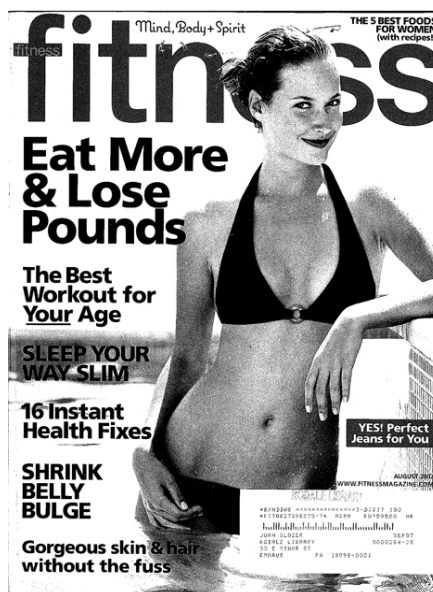
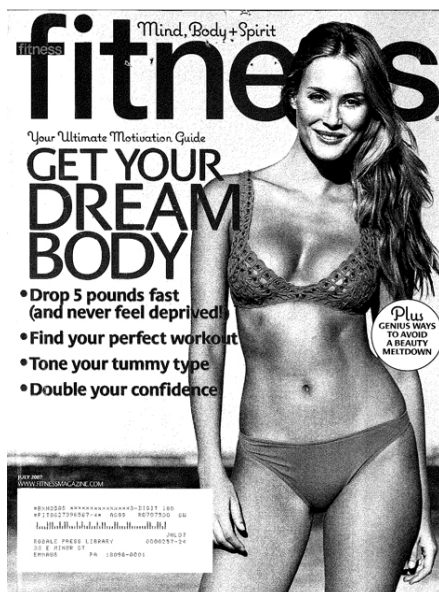
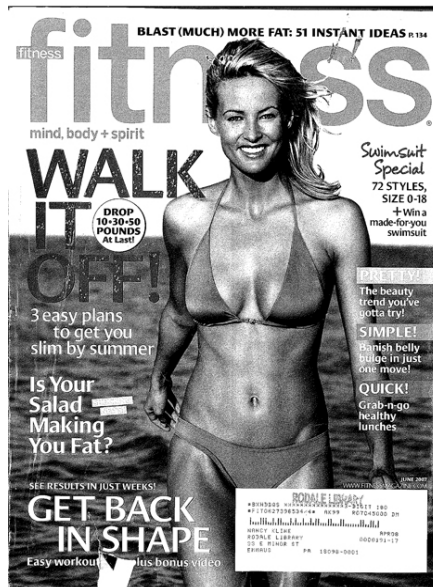
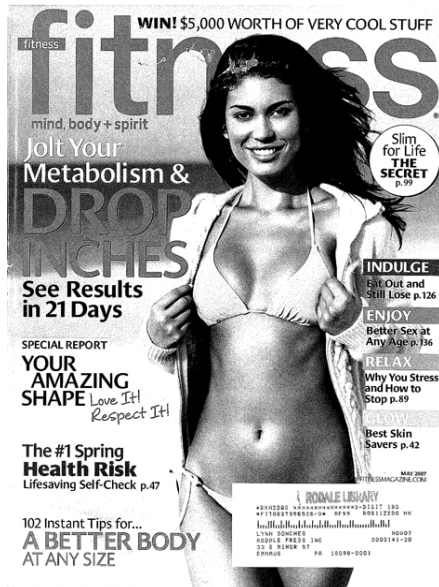


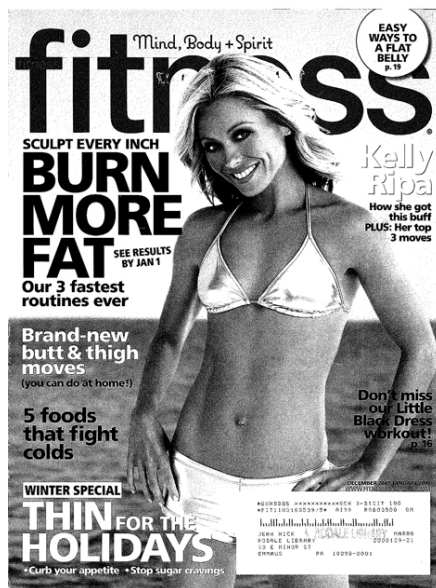
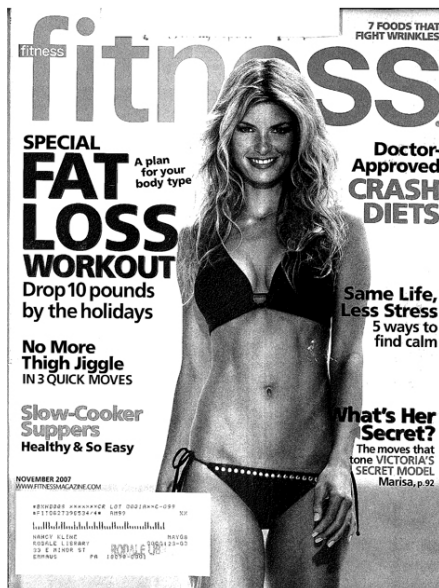
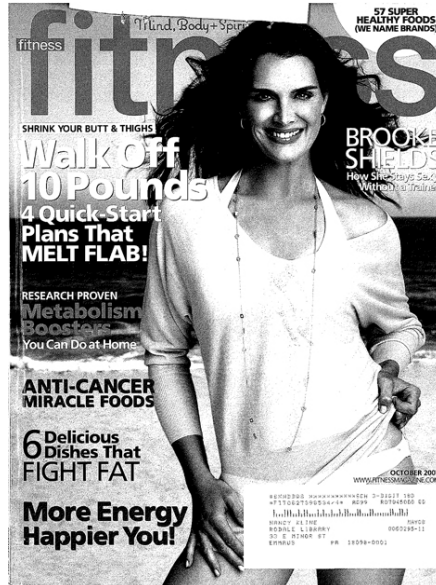
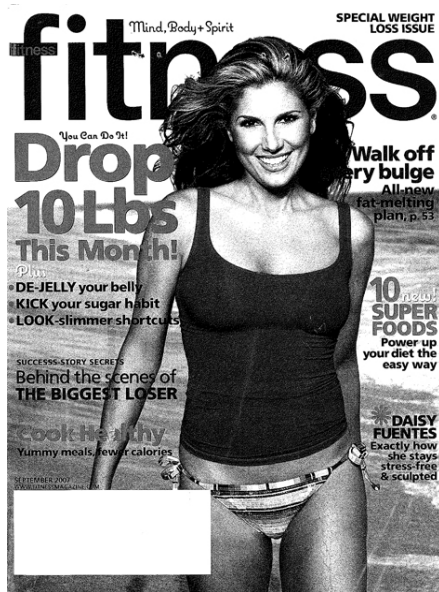


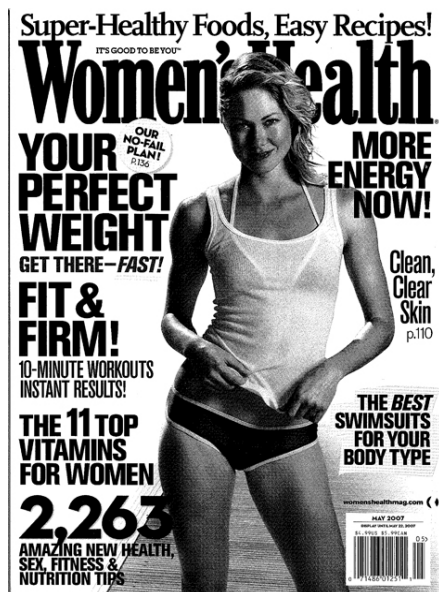
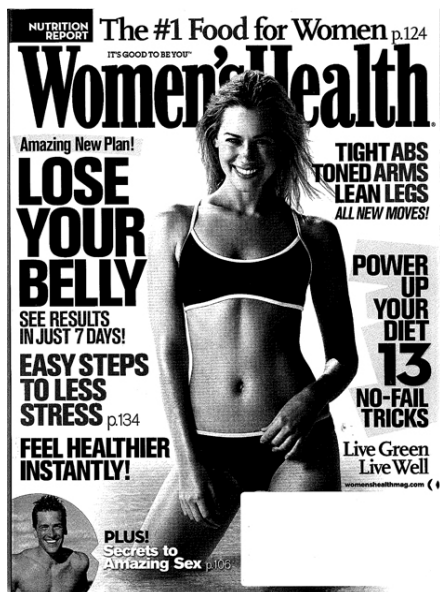
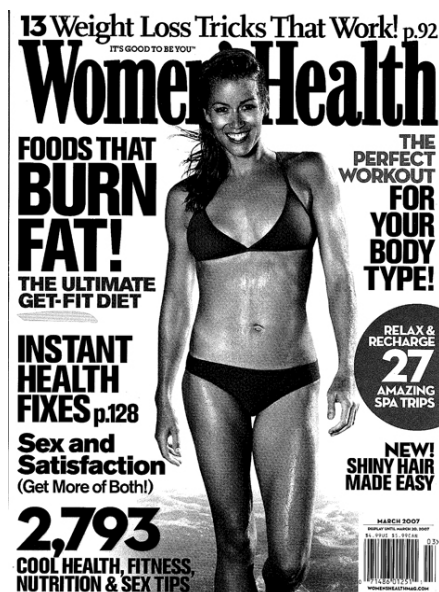
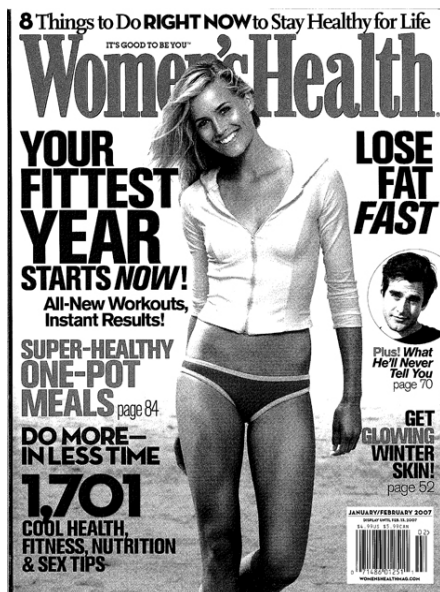


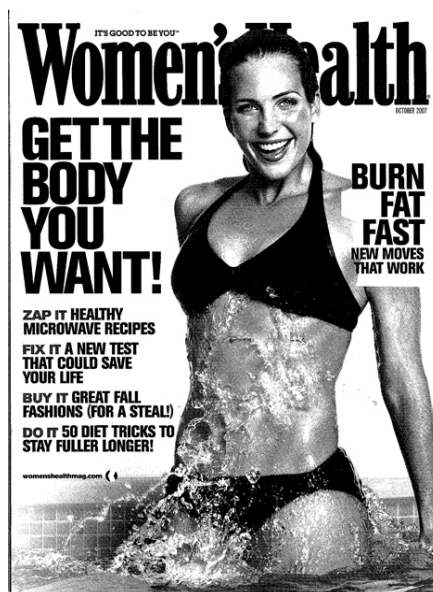
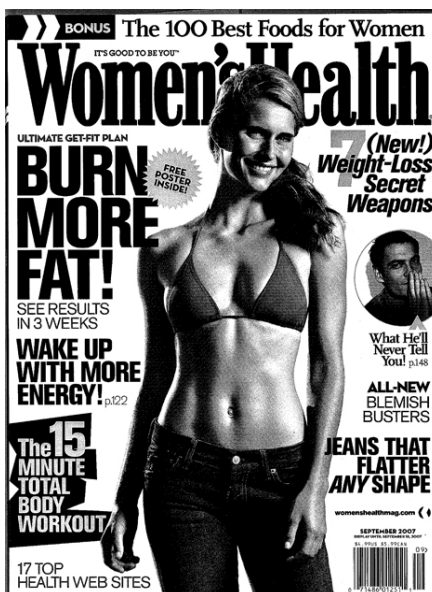
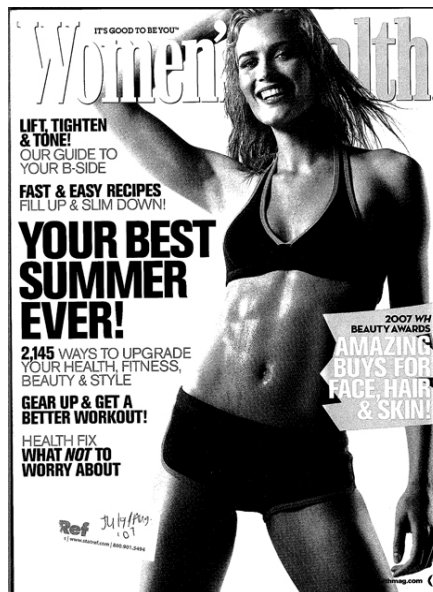
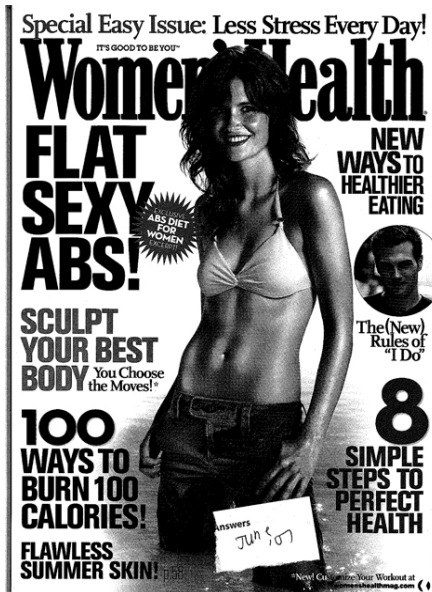




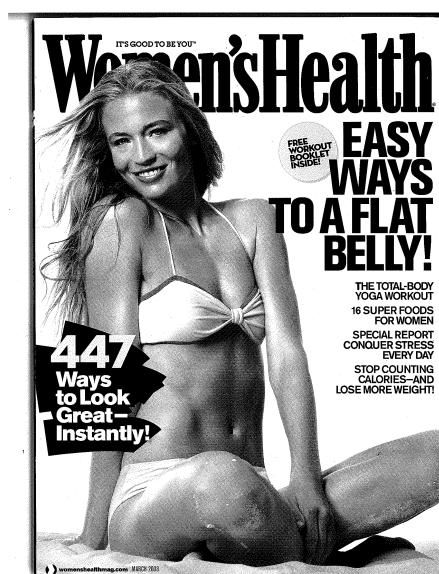
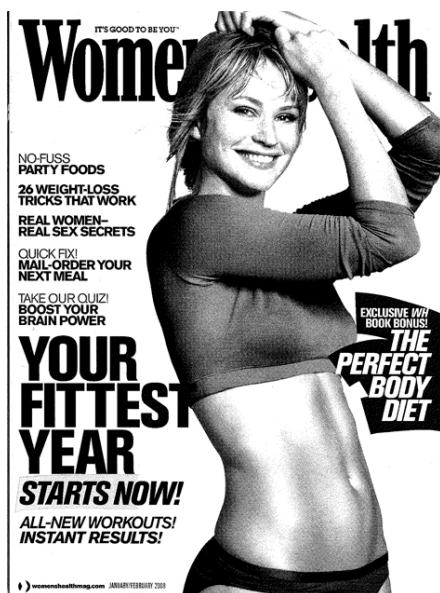
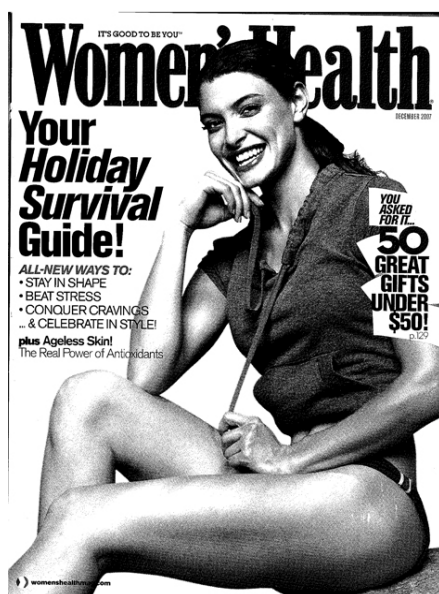
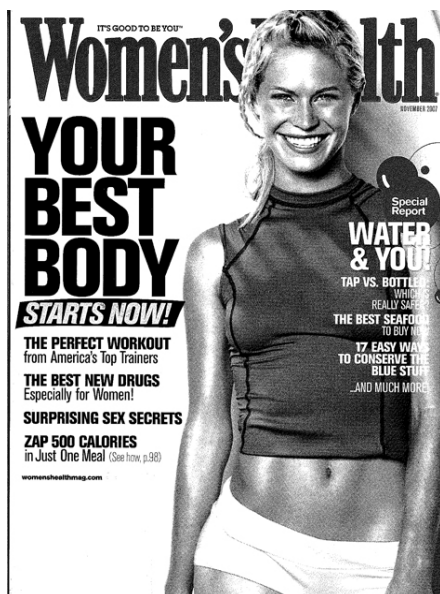


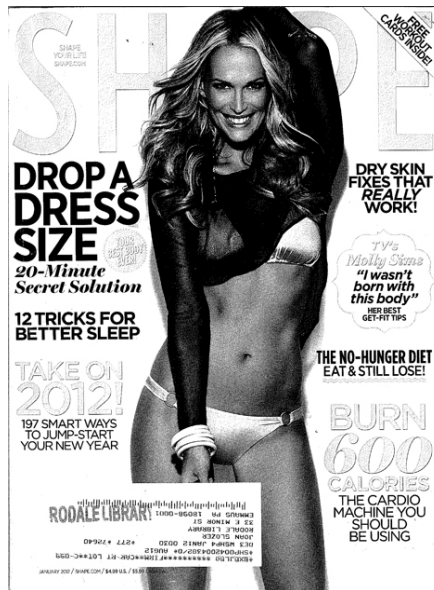






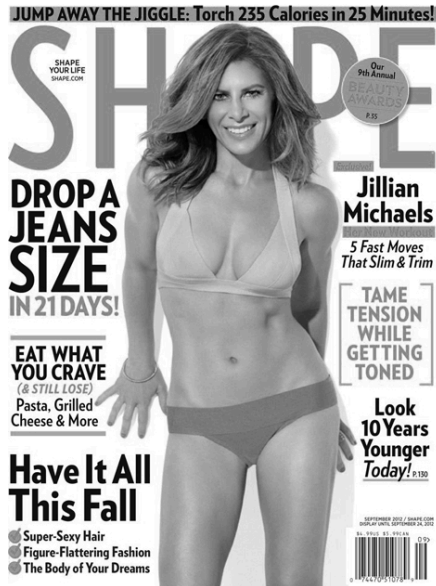
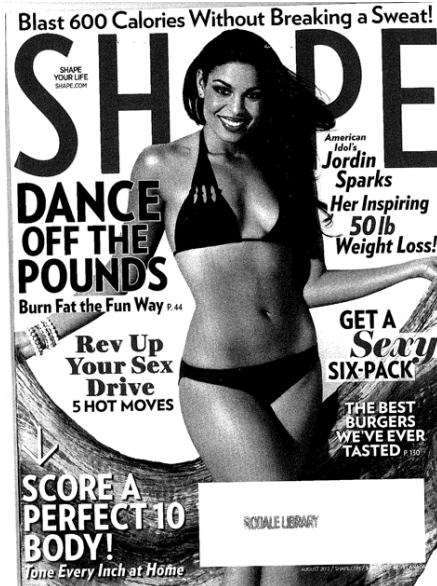
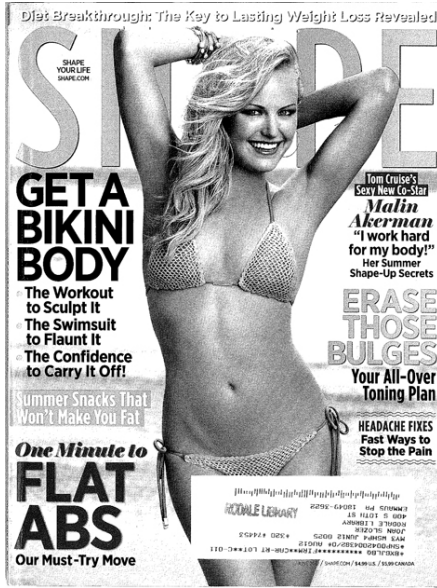


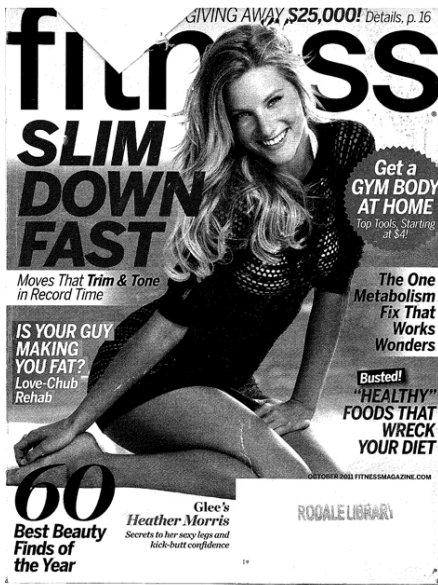
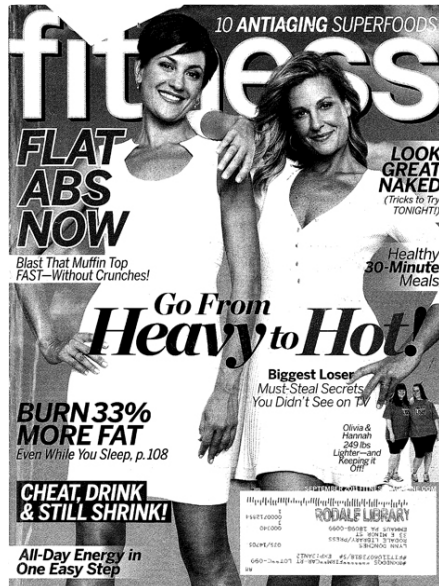
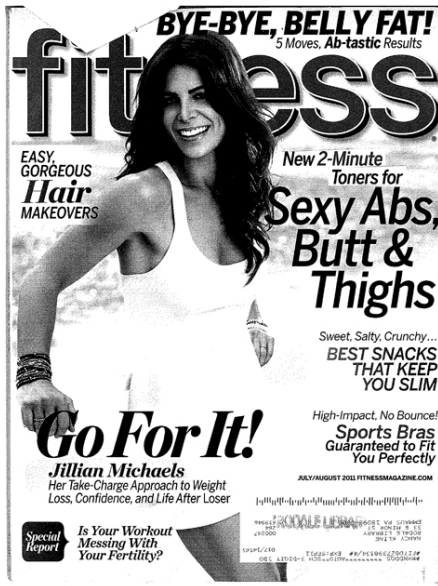


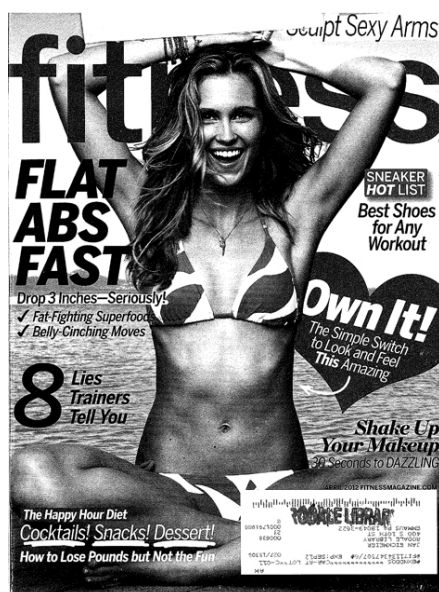
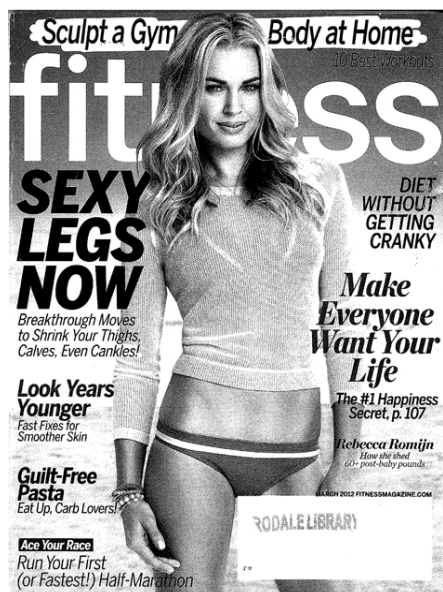
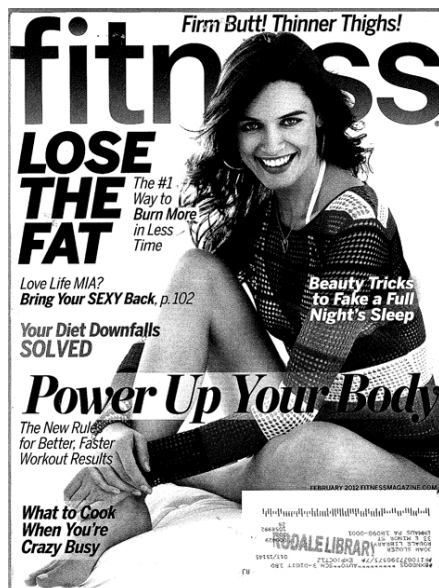
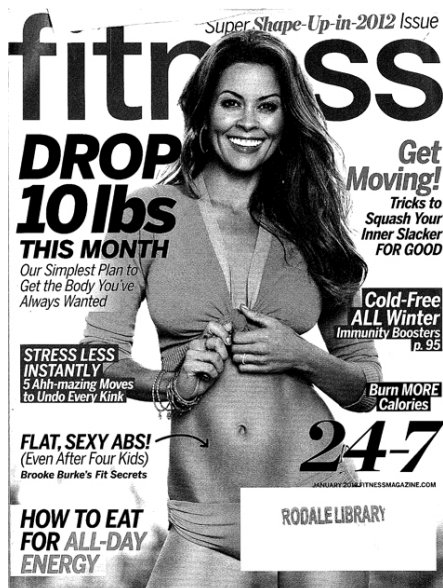


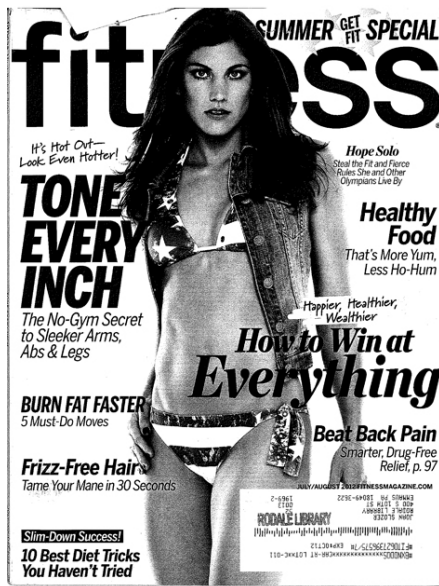
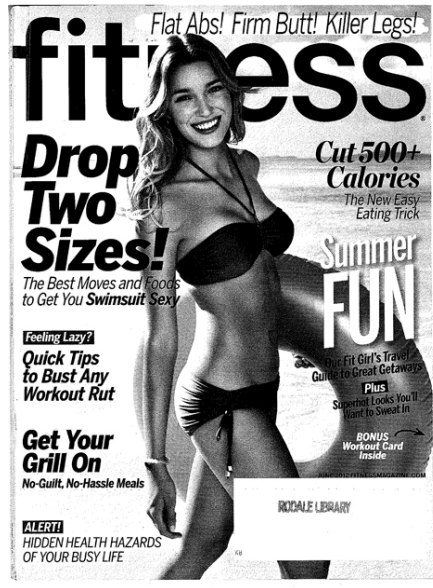
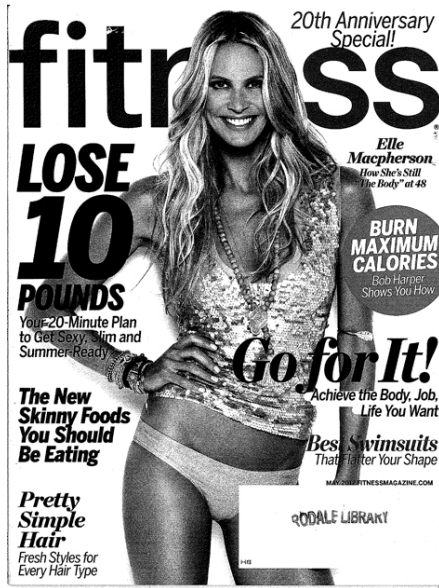


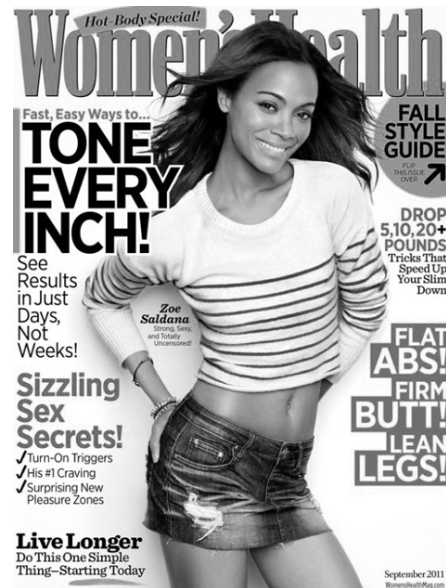




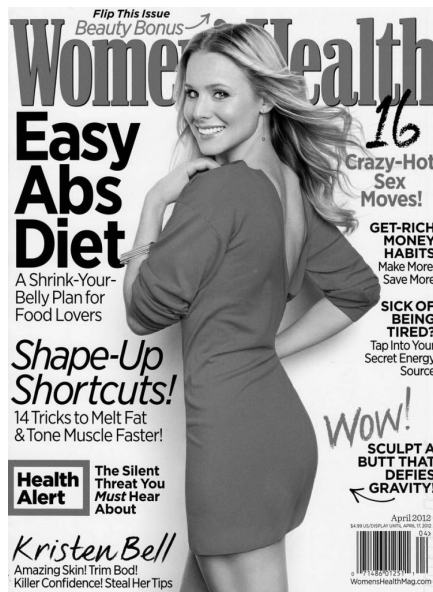
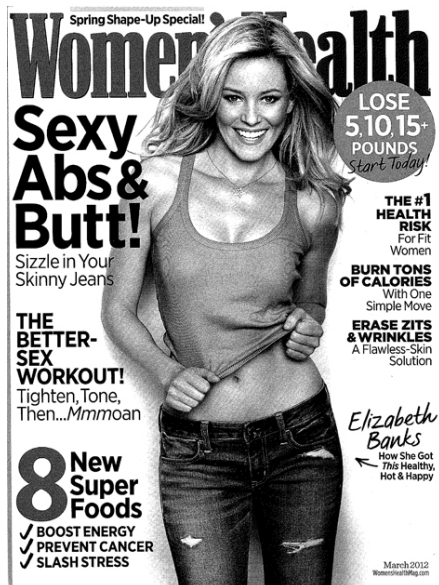
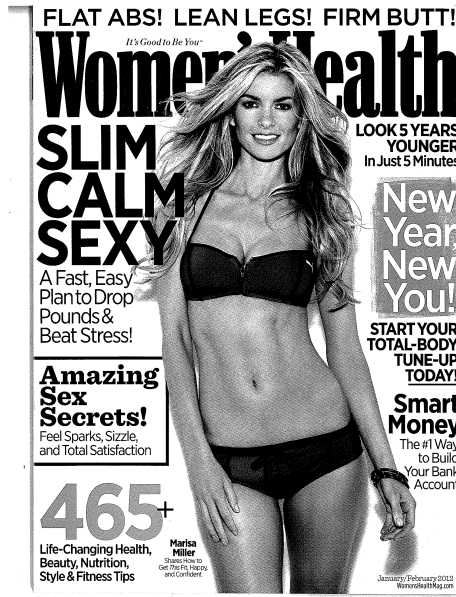
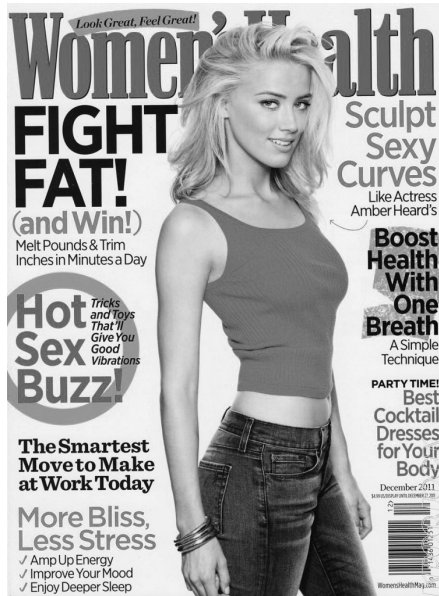


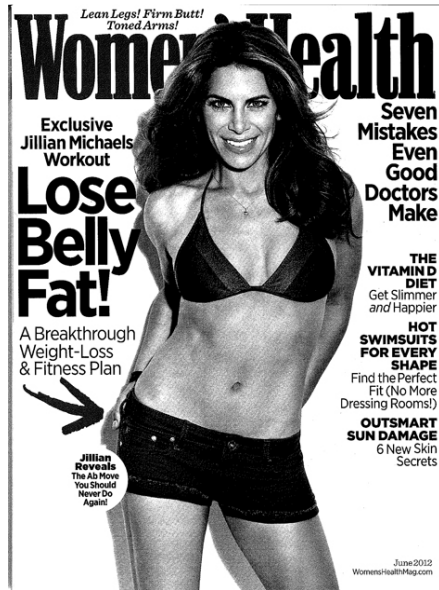














## PROFESSIONAL PROJECT RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### ***Introduction***

When I first stepped foot inside the University of Missouri School of Journalism, I was an intimidated, pre-journalism student who had an unwavering love for the English language paired with a passion for magazines. In my opinion, journalism is an art that cannot necessarily be learned. I believe it is possible to teach the logistics and ethics of journalism as well as how to write effectively with style and voice, but superb journalists possess raw talent. A good journalist can write a compelling story; however, a great journalist can piece together words to form a story that captures readers' attention and keeps them fully engaged until they finish reading the article. My time at the Missouri School of Journalism has allowed me to sharpen that raw talent and expand my journalistic abilities. Upon entering the Journalism School, I had a clear path in mind: I wanted and *knew* I was destined to be a magazine editor.

During the first two years of my undergraduate career, I was fortunate enough to land a position as Kim Townlain's work-study student, which was my first exposure to a city magazine's office, and that job allowed me to observe how a weekly publication operates. For hours, I watched editors scurry around the room, fact check over the phone and edit countless story drafts. I periodically made copies for Professor Jennifer Rowe, and I recall curiously glancing over magazine editing tests that, two years later, I would eventually take. Although I was merely an observer and not actually working directly

within the chaotic magazine world, I fell in love with editing and the *Vox* office, not knowing it was a place that would soon become my second home.

My most memorable journalism experiences all took place within the walls of Lee Hills Hall. After surviving the roles of a *Vox* reporter and Intermediate Writing student, I was finally able to enroll in the one class I had been impatiently waiting to take: Magazine Editing. Professor Jennifer Rowe has been one of the most inspirational teachers I have ever studied under, and her class not only reminded me not only of how much I love language but also provided explanation and justification as to why journalists should adhere to specific grammar rules. She is a phenomenal teacher, and her passion for journalism and story construction is contagious. I would venture to say that only a handful of students enjoyed attending a two-hour grammar lab every Friday afternoon; however, I craved it. After Magazine Editing, I then had the pleasure of enrolling in Magazine Staff as my capstone class, where I worked on *Vox* magazine, which was also under Professor Rowe's direction. After spending a semester pitching stories for the music, arts, books and endnotes departments, editing copy and feature manuscripts, working patiently with writers and fact-checking articles, I learned sleep was overrated but, more importantly, that I was a talented journalist who had acquired a comprehensive skill set. Nonetheless, working at *Vox* only reassured and confirmed my decision to become an editor.

After my acceptance into the School of Journalism's 4+1 Master's Program, I realized I still had more to learn and yearned for the challenge to fully exercise my journalistic ability, which prompted me to spend my first semester as Managing Editor

for *Vox*. There is no doubt in my mind that this was the most beneficial editing lesson I have ever experienced, and I am thankful for the opportunity to work for a city magazine as an upper-level editor. As the first semester came to an end, I realized I had spent ample time strengthening my editorial skills, but understood that in order to be a well-rounded journalist, I would need a solid design background as well; thus, I spent my last semester of graduate school as Professor Jan Colbert's head teaching assistant for the Magazine Design class. From this position I was able to grow leaps and bounds and gain more confidence in my design background, as well as improve my journalistic versatility. This experience taught me a valuable take away lesson: Although I might have originally labeled myself a "words" person, visuals are an extremely crucial component to pair with text in order to form a cohesive journalism package — one cannot exist without the other.

This professional project combines my love for words with another passion of mine: fitness and nutrition. I strive to live a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle, and this master's project will allow me to research whether my favorite magazines encourage their readers to do the same. This study will allow me to test my abilities and exercise my love for language, which will hopefully steer me in the right direction to pursue my dreams of eventually becoming an editor at a health or fitness publication.

### ***Professional Skills Component***

Rodale Inc. has left its mark as a dynamic health source in the journalism world; the company is not only responsible for myriad health, fitness and overall wellness magazines but has also expanded its portfolio to include special publications, books,

interactive media and, most importantly, online counterparts. The company strives to promote health and wellness, and its various platforms encourage readers to adopt sustainable lifestyles in attempts to receive individual health benefits and help preserve the planet.

In April 2009, Rodale launched *Rodale.com*, an online health-editorial department, that is branded with the mission statement, “Where health meets life.” The website’s content is updated daily and supplies readers with a plethora of health information, which includes articles, slideshows and videos within the following departments: Health, Food, Family, Mind and Body, Pets and Organic Living. *Rodale.com* also allows readers the option to sign up for its free newsletter, *The Daily Fix*, which sends email updates about the latest developments in health, food and the environment.

From June 6, 2012 until August 17, 2012 over the duration of approximately 11 weeks, I will hold an editorial position by working at *Rodale.com* and report to my supervisor, Emily Main, who is one of the health-editorial’s two online editors. As the Editorial Intern, I will be required to work approximately 40 hours a week and perform various roles and responsibilities that include the following:

- Research — I will conduct research and help gather source material for new health stories, articles and slideshows, which will require me to use the Rodale library, in addition to other online databases. I will also monitor news and additional health information sources, as I will be expected to pitch article ideas.

- Social media — Because social media is essential in promoting *Rodale.com*, I will assist with social media efforts by scheduling communications and general website maintenance for Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.
- Reporting — I will write and report stories for the website and its daily news offerings. This also includes pulling stock art/images as well as performing other photo research.
- Other — One of my other primary duties will also be to prepare future and existing content for Search Engine Optimization considerations (web titles, decks, internal linking, etc.).

In addition to performing these tasks, I will also document weekly field notes. In doing so, my key focus will be to explore the website's emphasis on language and how the editors use word choice and rhetoric to relay specific messages to readers; in doing so, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how health publications use text to appeal to their readers and communicate their overall mission statements and themes.

### ***Analysis Component***

#### **Research Question**

Women's magazines, particularly health and fitness publications, have the power to affect readers' daily regimes and encourage women to engage in routines that teach them to sustain healthier lifestyles. Fitness magazines claim they positively serve readers by providing nutrition tips and exercises that help women achieve their best selves, but

how much of this information is truly focused on being fit or healthy? Does having flat abs, a small jean size or low number on the scale define how healthy or in shape a woman is? Throughout recent years, it has become increasingly obvious that, instead of stressing the importance of overall health and well-being, various fitness magazines' primary focus has shifted; these publications now tend to offer advice, suggestions and practices that prominently focus on enhancing a reader's external appearance. Furthermore, the language publicized in fitness magazines often trains women to believe that well-being is linked to beauty rather than health and fitness level. This research focuses on three national women's fitness magazines, *Women's Health*, *Fitness* and *Shape*, and evaluates how each publication's language ultimately portrays its definition of fitness and health, and how the magazines have changed since 2007. I chose these three publications because each magazine puts a large emphasis on health and fitness, yet their language also implies a focus on appearance. In 2011, a statement for the American Bureau of Circulation released publication rankings that were based on circulation totals. In regards to all women's magazines, *Shape* ranked fourth, *Women's Health* ranked fifth, and *Fitness* ranked sixth. The frontrunners for women's magazines were beauty publications, so these magazines were the obvious, top three choices for conducting research that focuses exclusively on women's fitness magazines. I also will compare an entire calendar year of publications and chose 2007 and 2011-2012 because 200 is when *Women's Health* became consistent, and 2011 to now is the current calendar year. Using *Shape*, *Women's Health* and *Fitness* magazines to execute this study, the following research question is proposed:

**RQ:** What messages do editors send through cover images and sell lines?

This is a vital research question because magazines are largely influential and women can be affected by fitness magazines' appearance-related messages that are not necessarily strong indicators of fitness level or well-being. Fitness publications might have good intentions but, due to distinct language, images and word choice, the magazines' messages have the potential to be misinterpreted. This research question has a compelling theoretical interest because it explores the take-away message readers are likely to receive from fitness magazines' projected covers, as well as how readers might interpret messages from specific fitness magazines. Additionally, this question is intriguing because it draws attention to images, and the proposed research will study how this component has also developed and changed along with the magazine's language.

### ***Theory***

Theories form the basis and groundwork for research. In David Silverman's *Doing Qualitative Research*, he claims, "without a theory there is nothing to research" and "theory provides both a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized into what is known" (p. 110). This research of women's fitness magazines will be driven by the framing theory as a way to explore how readers are likely to connect specific magazine messages with social responsibility and reality. Framing is the practice of bringing forth particular

viewpoints to understand what has been emphasized in the publication's message. In this study, the research will explore how framing is used to classify fitness magazines' language and images, as well as contribute to the overall goal. "Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 1997, p. 11).

The concept of framing is attributed to Erving Goffman, who declared that a frame is "defined by its use" (Silverman, p. 29), and is largely dependent on the engaged participants. It is important to look at framing because regardless of a writer's intentions, framing diverts the readers' attention to a particular reality and plays a key role in how the magazine's language and overall presentation translates to its readers. In this research, exploring the framing concept helps narrow the focus to analyze the magazine's message about fitness, and how it relates to society and reality past and present.

Fitness magazines often reference body image, and the way readers understand a publication's underlying theme can potentially affect readers' cognitive behavior. Previous research has found that framing is frequently manifested in language and "symbolic devices making up media texts constitute the epiphenomena of the underlying principle" (Gandy, et al., 2003, p. 14).

In a recent study by Aubrey (2010), framing was used to document how fitness magazines frame health advice, and the study focused specifically on three publications: *Shape*, *Self* and *Fitness*. Aubrey's research was concentrated on "investigating whether exposure to appearance frames (i.e., do something in order to look better) affected women's body-related self-perceptions compared to health frames (i.e., to do something



in order to feel better)” (p. 50). In conducting this analysis and using the framing theory, Aubrey’s research primarily shed light on how depending on the frame and language, “one might expect that messages in health magazines would be more focused on health and well-being and less on familiar themes of attractiveness and sexiness” (p. 50). However, results showed that health is not always emphasized. Framing created a guide and point of reference; therefore, Aubrey was able to evaluate the potential meanings that can be derived from text and images that focuses explicitly on body and objectification, which showed that different media frames make appearance and beauty seem more salient than physical fitness or athleticism. It is important to use framing in order to understand the thought process behind text interpretation, and the framing theory “suggests that media frames can have an influence on thoughts and actions of audience members” (Aubrey, 2010, p. 51).

After analyzing text and headlines that were paired with specific images, Aubrey’s research revealed, “those assigned to appearance frames reported more body shame and appearance-related motivation to exercise than women assigned to health frames” (50). It was vital to examine headlines because that language and text sets the tone for the entire magazine, and also communicates the magazine’s goal and purpose. After reviewing her findings, Aubrey concluded that framing represented how three separate fitness magazines’ text “highlighted the tension between the magazines’ purported mission statements, which are to empower women to be as healthy as they can be, and their missions to make profit” (56). Aubrey found that the text alluding to body shape and size often persuaded readers into buying the publication, but also contradicted

the idea of using fitness motivation for health and well-being; instead, language emphasized the need to be thin and beautiful as a way to be considered fit and successful. This study evaluated the difference between looking good versus feeling good and striving to obtain a healthy lifestyle and used framing as the means to determine the motivation behind the language, text and photos published in fitness magazines. Ultimately, the framing theory aided Aubrey's conclusions that "appearance frames led to semantically related thoughts related to their own appearance" (p. 61). This study's approach to framing and analyzing text was helpful in exploring the idea that appearance frames in fitness magazines tend to emphasize being healthy as a means to look appealing, rather than reaping actual health benefits.

### ***Methodology***

The research question stated above will be examined through triangulation that consists of textual analysis and qualitative content analysis. A textual analysis is a way for researchers to scrutinize different texts and present an argument based on the language presented in the text. Alan McKee (2003) defines textual analysis as "a way for researchers to gather information about how human beings make sense of the world." A textual analysis focuses on the written word and unveils different meanings that can derive from certain text and word choice. "When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text" (McKee, 2003, p. 1). As women remain faithful readers of fitness magazines, it is inevitable that they will be repeatedly exposed to cover language that focuses

exclusively on appearance-related messages as a reference point for physical fitness and health. Thus, the overall goal of this research is to make sense of the text in fitness magazines and “understand the likely interpretation made by the people who consume them” (McKee 2003, p. 2).

When performing a textual analysis, Larsen (1991) stated, “the text, then, should not be regarded as a closed segmented object with determinate, composite meanings, but rather as an indeterminate field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects intersect. The task of the analyst is to bring out the whole range of possible meanings, not least the ‘hidden’ message of the text” (p. 122). A textual analysis evaluates the direct text in order to uncover indirect meanings.

In Aubrey’s study, she analyzed dominant cover headlines and categorized the text in relation to three frames: appearance body competence, weight loss and health; then, she determined how health advice influences the ways in which readers perceive their bodies. I will use a similar system to observe the most commonly used language on fitness magazine covers to explore how frequently the chosen publications refer to fitness or beauty. However, rather than introducing other concepts such as readers, self-perception and the effects of text, my research is focused solely on word choice and cover images and, when paired together how both imply the magazines’ missions and purposes.

Previous research shows that consumers typically receive and ingest preferred meanings, or “the meanings that producers of media texts build into the magazine with the intention of shaping the messages derived by the audience” (Hunt, 2004, p. 613). To simplify this definition, display text is constructed with a particular goal in mind;

however, the language and word choice can be misleading, which allows readers to misinterpret the message or take other social factors into account. Language can vary in how others perceive the written word because “we are not only concerned with texts as such, but also with the interactive process of meaning making” (Fairclough, 2003, p.10). Although there may be explicit meanings that are quite obvious, text and language can often leave the magazine’s implicit messages up for individual interpretation.

To dissect the meanings behind the covers of fitness magazines, this researcher will conduct a qualitative content analysis that examines word choice and association. Gimlin (2002) observed that as a result of reading fitness text that was primarily focused on body image, women received advice about exercise to help them feel more empowered, and they ultimately associated fitness level with beauty. After reading instructional fitness texts, the subjects’ primary objective was to be more active and healthy “in order to produce and maintain a healthy body, which is defined primarily in terms of appearance. A healthy body looks ‘good’ by being thin, muscular and fit” (Gimlin, 2003 p. 213).

Likewise, in another discourse study conducted by Pirkko Markula (2001), researchers analyzed the text in issues of *Shape*, *Self* and *The New Weekly*. Markula observed that there was a greater focus on how women should use exercise and fitness as a means to gain beauty rather than improve overall health and wellness. “These magazines unmistakably construct a woman’s worth based on her looks ... the magazines prefer to compartmentalize the female body through exercise that promise to transform the problematic body parts into sleeker form” (166). In that study, a textual analysis was vital in understanding how readers might interpret messages in fitness magazines, and

whether the publications encouraged a lifestyle devoted to health and fitness, or beauty and vanity.

A qualitative content analysis is considered to be “a research method that has come into wide use in health studies in recent years” and a “flexible method for analyzing text data” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). Furthermore, this content analysis will also take into account the various images that accompany the words plastered across a magazine’s cover in order to provide an explanation or understanding of both the explicit and inferred messages. Mayring (2000) also provides an accurate description of a qualitative content analysis “as an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication” (p. 2). In using a qualitative content analysis, the focus is not primarily on the words itself, but also takes into account the entire setting and context of the magazines; thus, this method will provide a well-rounded, comprehensive study of every element included on a fitness magazine’s cover.

This proposed research will implement a textual and qualitative content analysis to closely examine covers of the following magazines: *Women’s Health*, *Fitness* and *Shape*. This research will be comprised of each magazine cover from a full calendar year in 2005 and 2011, which totals 72 magazine covers. In order to conduct this research, I will focus mainly on display type printed on the covers as well as cover images. By narrowing my text choice to the previously listed options, I will be able to scrutinize the text that jumps off the page and catches readers’ attention. It is important to analyze display type because these specific words and phrases comprise the language that the reader is first introduced to and helps develop and contribute the magazine’s overall,

implied mission. The combination of these two methods will allow the opportunity to document how often weight, appearance, health or exercise level plays a role in how each magazine defines fitness, and how the images and text comprise a specific health ideal. After careful examination, I will then determine if the particular magazine's language focuses more on physical fitness and health, or beauty and appearance obsession.

Women's fitness magazines occupy an irreplaceable role in society and serve as lifestyle models that consumers try to embed in their daily lives. In contrast to other media, Abrahamson (2007) declared magazines a product unlike alternative media forms because they skew readers' perceptions of reality by exercising text and language to imply certain social messages. "The editorial content of magazines is specifically designed by its editors and looked to by its readers as something that will lead to action" (Abrahamson, 2007, p. 669). Because magazines are intended to be applicable to readers' lifestyles, the language and words are often misleading and emphasize a greater focus of beauty being a representation of fitness and success, which can essentially lead women to believe they are morally inadequate. Likewise, images are misleading because it is not often that a normal, healthy reader can acquire a figure identical to the digitally manipulated and airbrushed bodies that grace fitness magazines' covers. A textual and qualitative content analysis is necessary to reveal exactly what types of messages can originate from the language used in women's fitness magazines. By viewing and scrutinizing the language and images manifested in fitness magazines, I will thematically evaluate the variations within display word choices and make note of fitness magazines' primary focus.

## ***Literature Review***

Fitness journalism aids readers in self-improvement and is typically intended to be service-driven; however, it has become increasingly obvious that, instead of stressing the importance of overall health and well-being, this magazine genre offers advice, suggestions and practices that places a large focus on enhancing a reader's appearance rather than achieving her best fitness level; likewise, cover images are very misleading in the sense that women tend to feel pressure to like identical to models with perfect physiques, which puts a blow to their self-perceptions. "In the early 1990s, women's fitness magazines emphasized the importance of positive self-esteem. Confidence and positive self-esteem were important attributes for an attractive, fit women" (Markula, 2001, p. 159). However, magazines have now shifted and appeal to readers' external appearance as the means to being attractive; confidence is now found through body shape and size. Although fitness magazines claim to be inspirational and encourage readers to become their best versions by developing healthy lifestyles showcased in the magazine, various publications have diverted their textual attention to promote fitness as being thin or slender, which emphasizes beauty and vanity rather than of physical fitness. "These magazines unmistakably construct a woman's worth based on her looks" (Markula, 2001, p. 166), and fitness magazines often stress a concern with looks, size and appearance rather than actual fitness level. These publications relay messages that do not always suggest ideal health implications; thus, a fitness magazine does not necessarily equate fitness level with athleticism or being in shape. This literature review will analyze

different facets of fitness journalism's messages and vocabulary, and also focus on how featured display type and images can relay specific body-conscious messages.

According to Fouts and Burggraf (1999), female obsession with beauty is instilled early in life because "the vast majority (86%) of appearance enhancement ... target young female viewers" (p. 473) and, regardless of how much advice and suggestions are featured in fitness magazines, there is an undeniable emphasis on external appearance, which is communicated through photographs, headlines, sell lines and various other display type. By reading this type of text consumers, particularly women, understand feminine ideal as "the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets, and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain" (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz, 2003, p. 711). Rather than framing fitness and health as something women should strive for to satisfy individual happiness and self-gratification, fitness magazines use language that subtly (and obviously) alludes to vanity and obsession with one's looks. The words, phrasing and images within fitness magazines catch readers' attention, persuade them to buy the publication and convince them that by doing exactly what the magazine says, they too can look similar to the models featured on the cover and finally achieve a worthy level of fitness. "Messages found in magazines support and even encourage the perception that female happiness is tied to physical traits, with ultra-thinness being the hallmark of beauty" (Sauer, Robels-Pina, 2003, p. 4).

As women's magazines primarily use language and play to readers' cognitive feelings and behaviors, Gimlin (2002) proposed the idea that a fitness magazine's



definition of fitness is determined by other factors rather than cardiovascular level, physical activity or strength; thus, women continue to learn that they should strive for an unattainable body rather than embrace their own natural physique. In regards to fitness and appearance, “areas of body work provide women with ‘socially approved vocabularies’ that explain their failure to accomplish ideal beauty and thus serve to neutralize the flawed identity that an imperfect body implies in Western society” (Gimlin, 2002, p. 15).

In regards to magazine covers, there have been various studies that focus on bodily appearance and how readers perceive themselves after consuming fitness publications and gender-specific, appearance messages. Fitness magazine covers appeal to readers through a beauty ideal, although “for the majority of women, this ideal is impossible to attain and may lead to feelings of inadequacy” (Malkin, Wornian and Chrisler, 1999, p. 647). In looking at women’s fitness magazines, research has also shown that covers are perhaps one of the most vital elements because “often it is the cover that initially attracts the reader to the magazine. Titles, catch phrases, and pictures displayed on magazine covers are usually all that the reader has time to look at in a store” (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 649). Thus, it is evident that cover elements are largely influential because they are used as sales tools — a reader typically decides to purchase or indulge in a magazine based on cover appeal. That particular study also found that “an examination of body types displayed on magazine covers revealed that 94% of the covers of women’s magazines showed a thin female model or celebrity in excellent shape” and that women’s magazines were “likely to contain messages about diet, exercise and

cosmetic surgery to change body size” (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 651) and encouraged readers to change and improve their bodies.

As a direct result of societal pressures, women’s desire for thinness has escalated into a cultural phenomenon. Readers see thinness depicted as the social norm and become accustomed to regularly reading about unattainable body images, which makes them feel inclined to lose weight so they can “produce and maintain a health body, which is defined primarily in terms of its appearance” and ultimately be considered physically fit (Gimlin, 2002, p. 213). Rhetoric in fitness magazines addresses the fact that readers refer to a publication for advice; when readers are exposed to word choice that has a primary goal of encouraging them to attain a specific body image that might not be attainable for their fitness level, their focus might shift from personal gain and physical ability to concern with image. Additionally, women’s magazines “seem to focus on improving one’s life by changing one’s appearance, especially by losing weight” (Malkin et al., 1999, p. 654).

To further emphasize fitness magazines’ subtle and obvious hints at beauty, verbal encouragement and reference to body size “seems to indicate that the thin woman has accomplished certain goals, attained a certain social standing, and has rid herself of other life problems” (Williams, 2007, p. 103). Thus, it is through fitness magazines’ language that female readers learn to define femininity and fitness by shape and weight instead of any type of cardiovascular or athletic merit. Fitness magazines also reiterate the notion that women should have a will to health and constant vigilance to being fit. In moral terms, language or word choice implies that women are shameful or morally wrong if they do not adhere to certain body standards. “It is implied through both images and

text that being thin means being happier, sexier and more lovable” (Malkin et. al, 1999, p. 654), so when fitness magazines pair specific text and words with images, this is the type of result readers are exposed to.

When Eskes, Duncan and Miller (1998) analyzed fitness magazines from 1995, they deduced that text implied femininity and empowerment because display text was used to “construct and maintain an image of the ideal female body (e.g. slender, muscular and curvy) while using words, phrase and ideas that urge women to pursue this ideal to empower themselves” (p. 319). Fitness magazines use words as tactics to not only persuade consumers to read their publication, but also as a means to earn their place in society by transforming their figures to look like cover models. Specifically, these publications convey the idea that in order to be beautiful, one must be fit. “The discourse of feminism, embedded in words such as strong, choice and empowerment, and other words that denote action, vitality, force and aggressiveness, have been co-opted and used as a device to convince women of the necessity of bodywork, all while citing the future gains in health, and more important, beauty” (Eskes et. al, 1998, p. 341). Rhetoric components influence readers to be more concerned with beauty than health, which heightens the feeling for women’s need to control their bodies to meet socially constructed standards. As a result, the appeal of fitness magazines encourages women to be aware of their bodies at all times. Language within fitness magazines indirectly implies that if females are not constantly watching their health by maintaining a hegemonic body size, they are considered more immoral or less beautiful than those who successfully fulfill said body standards.

## ***Conclusion***

Readers consume fitness publications that frequently use the words “weight” and “fat” and “diet,” — language that implies that rather than strength, cardio level physical shape or stamina, external qualities are the prime indicators of fitness level. Likewise, the images that are on covers do not necessarily portray an ideal health level or, in some instances are not attainable because the images might have been digitally manipulated. This genre of publications claims the magazines provide beneficial advice, but language tends to skew the magazine’s definition of healthy by allowing readers to believe that appearance is a large indicator of being fit or in shape, and cover appeal has transformed since fitness magazines’ earlier years. Fitness magazines have diverted readers’ attention away from being physically fit and healthy to satisfy individual fulfillment; instead, readers focus on maintaining a certain size and shape so their bodies are presentable to society and pleasing to others. Rather than using language and providing content that is applicable to a variety of readers, fitness languages makes the generalization that each reader should be able to follow the same standards and obtain identical physiques. Additionally, readers are progressively learning that fitness dictates beauty; these two concepts have now becoming interchangeable and meshed into one. Instead of establishing the idea that fitness indicates health, women understand that fitness is a measure of beauty and worth. Recent literature has shown that evaluating language that appears in display type and introductory paragraphs helps answer the question of whether readers truly receive suggestions to fulfill health benefits or instead, learn to be primarily concerned with appearance and vanity.

It is through fitness magazine covers that women are reminded to focus on improving themselves, which does not encourage a realistic definition of fitness. When readers are exposed to words, dialect and images that continually references size and shape as a measure of worth and fitness, consumers they fixate on external appearance instead of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This research project will seek to further understand the meaning behind the text in fitness magazines, as well as pinpoint and infer take-away messages provoked by specific word choice.

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