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A Body of Perfection

**"The Increasing Standardisation of the Female Body
in Televised Miss New Zealand Beauty Pageants 1964-1992"**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the standardisation of female body image in the media over time and its implications for women who are bombarded with images of ideal physique. The research project was based on video data from four Miss New Zealand beauty pageants spanning the period 1964 to 1992. The main reason for using televised beauty pageants is that they operate to reinforce a particular ideology of gender identity. In addition to these four videos I have drawn upon the printed programme material for beauty pageants from 1960 - 1992. Whilst some of this material is incomplete it nevertheless provided some insight into changes that have occurred. The methodology employed to conduct this investigation is content analysis. Results suggest that a standardisation of ideal body image has occurred since the early 1980s. The ideal body of the 1990s is a taut, long legged body which is attainable only by a few women. This stereotype is powerfully deployed by the media to convey messages to women and other groups in society about what types of behaviour and 'look' they should model. One theoretical consequence of this project is that in spite of recent critiques, both of content analysis and the idea of the stereotype, these continue to be very useful tools in studying the role of the media in a patriarchal society.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict about media representations is a recurrent feature of our times, both in the public realm and in academic research. This is due in large part to the development of a pervasive mass communications system and the continuing inequalities which exist within modern society and which give rise to a variety of experience that the mainstream media inevitably reduces. Rather than attempt to portray society 'objectively', the mass media attract the attention of consumers by using representations of individuals and groups which can be easily identified and judged. The media develop a repertoire of such images and use them to effect when reporting on violence and crime for example. The resulting picture is one that becomes both familiar and contested, as those who have an investment in breaking the stereotypes engage those whose interests lie on the other side.

One persistent conflict concerning media representations/stereotypes is that of gender identity and it is this issue that I am concerned with in this thesis. In particular, I investigate media images of femininity as exemplified by beauty pageants. This controversy over the media and gender images has gathered momentum largely due to the critical analyses conducted by feminists. Feminist media criticism, like feminism in general, is a very diverse body of work and for the purpose of this thesis I have focussed on feminist criticisms which argue for a more realistic representation of women. In basic terms feminists accuse the mass media of portraying women in an extremely limited unrepresentative way. In that sense, feminist critique is a variant of ideology analysis, whereby the media is conceived as transmitting ideologies which serve to hold the current power structures of society in place. The media's role is to 'educate' individuals into believing that the inequalities (such as gender inequality) within society either do not exist, or that they serve a 'natural' and desirable purpose.

One important feminist criticism of media content concerns the media's tendency to focus on a narrower range of representations than can readily be found in society at large. This has meant that there are limited opportunities for women in that supposedly

they cannot and should not expect to achieve outside of the roles they are portrayed in by the media. This makes it difficult for women who wish to try to tap into male domains of employment and sport for example. Women should be able to achieve equally alongside men but certain messages that are sent out by the mass media suggest that there are desirable roles that a woman should perform if she is to be acceptable and functional in her society. Attaining a certain physique as prescribed through various media images is part of the project and projecting femininity through modes of dress and cosmetic adjustments are supposedly necessary requirements for a woman to subscribe to. To express opinions which differ from this or to act and dress differently is clearly condemned by the constant promotion by media of certain standardised images which are said to be synonymous with beauty. Thus there is a stereotype of the ideal woman which is presented as the norm for all women to aspire to. The media use stereotypes which are generalisations of groups and individuals which use certain characteristics to classify individuals and groups. In this instance femininity becomes a classification for a woman who conforms to the above ideals. She is feminine and as such is fulfilling her role within her society and gains acceptability for herself.

Feminists have been making these criticisms of media for a long time and indeed these criticisms have intensified as changes have occurred in society which have seen women undertake paid employment and perform many more public and 'unconventional' roles. For this reason, one would expect that the media would have attempted to diversify their representation of women to incorporate the changes that have occurred in society. Further to this is the criticism of the stereotype (which is still very much used by the mass media) for its inability to grasp the complexities of media images and its inability to account for the many variables within groups.

The purpose of this thesis is to try to discover what sorts of changes there have been in media representations of femininity over the past 30 years. It investigates a sample of post-1960s images of femininity and shows that in fact rather than a diversification the trend has been towards increasing standardisation - that is, the production of one type of image as an accepted norm. For this reason, I argue for the continued utility of the

stereotype concept. The following is an outline of how the thesis goes about the investigation as set out above.

Chapter Two first outlines social identity and how it is formed. From social identity the chapter looks at the depiction of women by the media and the use of stereotypical images to portray women in a limited capacity. This leads to a fuller discussion of stereotypes and the conceptual and methodological issues that must be acknowledged when conducting research on media content. The last section of this chapter focusses on the stereotyping of feminine identity in the media which covers issues such as gender stereotyping and the physical stereotype of femininity. Chapter Two centres on the employment of stereotypes by the media to reinforce acceptable behaviours for individuals to conform to. Stereotypes project images of individuals and groups within a society which serve as a means of reference to the various identities which all individuals take on as part of belonging to their society. The use of stereotypes is also argued to be a discriminatory practice to differentiate the less powerful sectors within a society from those who are in control. The ability of the media to use stereotypes to highlight what is acceptable gender identity identifies them as powerful reinforcers of social control given that identities are used as a form of constraint. Individuals and groups who attempt to step outside of the accepted identities are subject to peer rejection. The fact that social identity has evolved to give an individual a sense of self worth and a sense of belonging make it a powerful form of constraint. In the case of femininity, the vulnerability of women is exploited in order to keep them dependent on male authority. The use of stereotypical images of acceptable femininity which is out of reach to most women, sees women lured to compare themselves to dominant ideals and thus trains their attention on physical beauty. This form of constraint is held in place by the constant pressure via the use of media images to “educate” women into believing that in order to be acceptable they must strive to achieve the ideals promoted by the media.

Chapter Three outlines the methodologies available for conducting research on media content. There are two main types of research method which could be used in an investigation of this nature - that is, semiotic analysis and content analysis. Semiotic

analysis probes beneath the surface of the content being studied in order to uncover the underlying issues involved in the projection of images by the media. The major drawback is that the conclusions from a semiotic analysis may not be easily replicated owing to the high degree of individual interpretation involved. No two researchers may come up with the same findings using this type of analysis and that leads to debate over whose findings are to be considered most adequate. I have relied on the method known as content analysis which is commonly used in studies of media content. Content analysis relies on numerical findings and as such can give a firm foundation for claims such as increasing standardisation. It also offers reliability which further strengthens this type of analysis. Using content analysis, the researcher relies on a more mechanical process of generating information. This type of research is more likely to produce reliable 'findings' but there is still no guarantee that the concepts employed by the researcher will be accepted as valid. For example, if the researcher is conducting analysis on emotive words used in a news item their definition of emotive may not be accepted by another researcher who interprets emotive words from a different perspective. When conducting research on media content it is very important to clearly define all concepts so that other researchers know exactly how the variables have been measured. As well as justification of the method chosen the researcher has to identify and acknowledge the imperfections of their data. In the case of this research there have been gaps in the data which has made analysis more difficult. For example, lack of sound on the first of the four videos of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants used has meant that considerable time has gone into attempting to locate alternative sources to rectify the problem which resulted in a lack of statistical data for this pageant. The sources from which data was obtained and the types of sampling procedures used must be clearly identified if accurate results are to be obtained.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Chapter Four presents the data analysis which was conducted on videos of the four Miss New Zealand beauty pageants as well as the additional statistical information obtained from Good as Gold Productions Limited and newspaper sources. The areas of investigation covered are: employment background, activities required of contestants, comperes, question content, scores, prizes and sponsorship, modes of dress, physical attributes, posture, and sexuality. Chapter Five

summarises the conclusions reached in conjunction with the findings of the data analysis and the theoretical considerations of Chapter Two.

Content analysis was performed on the four videos of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants for the years 1964, 1974, 1987 and 1992. This was the adopted method because the type of data could not be affected by repeated viewing. This repeated viewing of the data was necessary in order to analyse and identify the changes that have occurred over the 28 year period that the data covered. In addition to the videos I had been able to obtain some printed programme material from Good as Gold Productions Limited who are the promoters of the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant. This information contained data on beauty pageants from other years besides the four mentioned above and this allowed me to conduct a better analysis because I had a wider range of data to draw from. I also gathered information from newspapers throughout New Zealand and the New Zealand Woman's Weekly.

The content analysis focuses on the following sorts of variables - personal statistics (bust, waist and hip measurements of individual contestants from a specific pageant), height, age, hair styles and hair length. I focus on them because they allow me to answer my research question about whether or not and in what sense media images of femininity have significantly changed over time. Results suggest that height and thinness have increased while age has remained static. Long hair is still synonymous with femininity.

Overall, the thesis has concentrated on beauty pageants in New Zealand from 1964 to 1992 in an attempt to analyse the changes as well as the continuities in the New Zealand media's representation of images of femininity. The collective nature of beauty pageants makes for a particularly useful analysis and highlights the demands that contestants face in their attempt to conform to the principles of femininity as set down by those who control the beauty industry. The analysis reveals that there is a definite trend towards standardisation which requires women to conform to a certain physique that has become stereotypical with images of femininity. This is in conflict with the social changes that women have experienced in the latter half of this century in terms

of their wider range of roles and political participation in society. In spite of a move in academic discussion towards complexity and uncertainty in the analysis of gender, I believe that my account reminds us of some basic but important issues; that part of the strategy employed by the dominant male power structures within society seeks to keep women focused on themselves in order that they will not seek to step dramatically outside of these bounds and challenge the existing power structures. The media play an active role by constantly bombarding women with these idealised images in order that they will seek to attain them by spending large amounts of money on gymnasiums and cosmetics. The empirical finding of this thesis, that of increased standardisation, is thus theoretically significant with regard to the utility of the stereotype concept in media sociology.

CHAPTER ONE

FEMININE IDENTITY AND MEDIA STEREOTYPES

The Problem

This thesis investigates the changing images of femininity in the media over time, with particular reference to the representation of women's bodies. At their most general level questions about the representation of femininity are questions about social identity. Accordingly, this chapter begins by reviewing the notion of social identity. This will be done by looking at how social identity is constructed, and why it is so important to individuals and groups within a society, as well as its power to compel individuals to conform to the rules which maintain the existing power structures. Social identity is a means of differentiating individuals or groups within a particular society. These identities, are constructed in diverse ways, ranging from child-rearing practices to the legal structure of society. The mass media, such as newspapers and television, are a powerful reinforcer of social identities because they reinforce attitudes towards particular social class, ethnic and gender identities. In this thesis the relevance of gender representation and how women in particular are represented by the media will be discussed. In particular I concentrate on how the media use stereotypes to create images which individuals absorb and imitate. I will critically discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the stereotype concept. Despite its shortcomings the concept remains a very useful tool in the study of media representations of gender.

Gender stereotyping, concerns the representation of men and women in traditional roles. These roles are based on appropriate behaviours which the dominant powers in society deem as feminine or masculine. The stereotyping of feminine identity often appears in the media as a series of ideals, and in particular as a series of physical ideals. Representations within beauty pageants are a prime example of these processes. Particular images of women are promoted as more desirable than others. For example, long hair, long legs, no excess flesh and the body should be taut. I use beauty pageants

as an example of the portrayal of women in the media because they promote females as objects of femininity; women who have succumbed to the pressures of conforming to ideals imposed upon them by society.

Social Identity

Social identity is the product of a combination of societal and individual forces and expectations which start at birth within the family of orientation. Social identity is defined as the individual's knowledge that they belong to certain social groups as well as the emotional and value significance that group membership brings (Hoggs and Abrams, 1988:7). Social identity, and group belongingness are inextricably linked in the sense that a person's definition of who they are is largely composed of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs (Hoggs and Abrams, 1988:7).

Social identification is not a simple, monolithic process. Each individual forms multiple identities. For example, each individual has a gender identity, an ethnic identity, a social class identity, a family identity and maybe a religious identity. By family identity I mean expectations of an individual that are based on what other members of the family have achieved. For example, playing a sport that other members of a family have achieved accolades in, or working in a family business. Social identity works as a form of constraint in society because it imposes boundaries between unacceptable and acceptable behaviour upon our interactions with others. The fact that social identity contains self-evaluative aspects for individuals ensures that human beings are, at least in some minimal sense conformist, because their own sense of self worth is largely dependent upon acceptance by other individuals within their social group.

Society is a field of inequalities. There are always power struggles going on over the definition of identities, because the social construction of these identities is an important way of limiting opportunities for individuals based on their gender, ethnicity or class affiliations. In the case of women, acceptable behaviour for the female gender is suggestive of passivity, conformity and inferior status to males. To attempt to rebel

against these constraints is to be labelled unfeminine and thus unacceptable. For example, feminists who have campaigned against beauty pageants have come in for some scathing criticism with specific references being made to their own lack of femininity. It has been suggested that these women only protest because they themselves are not physically beautiful and as such their protests should not be taken seriously.

There is a perennial debate over whether identities are either socially constructed or naturally in existence. In the case of gender identity, natural divisions of gender are said to exist because of the biological differences between males and females. This argument, known as biological determinism, is largely rejected by today's theorists (McDowell and Pringle:1992:109; Andersen:1993:29-30; Lindsey:1994:42). In earlier times segregation between blacks and whites was based on coloured skin being linked with inferiority. White skinned peoples deemed themselves to be a superior race and set about taking control over and imposing western value systems on races held to be incapable of functioning without white control. An example of this is the missionaries who came to the Pacific in the late 19th century to "civilise" coloured skin peoples termed "savages". However, it has increasingly been recognised that there is no firm factual basis for these types of prejudices, and that power struggles rather than scientific truth have been the deciding factor. Social scientists now realise that they cannot always employ the same methods as those of natural scientists to explain phenomena. Modern theorists tend to focus on the social construction of the inequalities within a society. Identities are therefore held to be socially constructed according to the governing powers within a society who dictate what the norms of that society are. For example, those who control the power in society have the capability to limit opportunities for those from different ethnic and social class backgrounds. This is also the case for women because of their gender (which in a white male dominated society limits their opportunities) they are required to conform to standards and ideals which are imposed upon them by dominant white males who hold the power in society. These identities form a coherent set of shared cultural beliefs otherwise known as social representations - a term introduced by Moscovici (1976; cited in Brown:1985:30).

Moscovici sees social representations as providing a shared “reality” and order for people which enables them to communicate with each other and make sense of their lives in terms of such social representations. Social identities are reinforced by ruling authorities in society who define these identities, and to a large extent prevent, individuals or groups from being able to make changes to these identities. This is not to say that these identities are accepted without question. There is much conflict within society about who should occupy what roles. Over the past few decades feminists have campaigned against existing power structures within society that are limiting opportunities for women to advance in areas that have previously been considered the domain of males only. Some advances have been made in areas of equal pay and equal employment opportunities but the power structures basically have remained undaunted by the challenge from feminists (Bartky:1990:26). In western society the power structures tend to be occupied by white males and any individual who does not fall into this category is subordinate to the existing power structures. The social identities which all individuals have are reinforced by images which are reflected in the mass media. In this respect the media guides an individual’s perceptions on what behaviour is acceptable in terms of what roles should be taken on by the individual. Therefore the mass media plays a significant role in reinforcing the norms that the power structures within a society create as part of their self-serving philosophy.

The mass media has a very important impact on the social life of human beings. They are powerful reinforcers of the value system that society imposes upon its members. McQuail (1994:1) says the mass media are the main means of transmission of information which is considered essential to the working of most social institutions. Mass media usually take the form of television, radio and newspapers and it is reasonable to assume that most individuals would have daily contact with one of these forms of mass media. Their importance as a major source of definitions and images of social reality goes without question in contemporary society. The images that the media produce can have lasting repercussions for particular individuals or groups depending on how they are portrayed. Many have argued that the depiction of women by the media ideologically subordinates women to rule by men. The next section of this chapter looks at the depiction of women by the media.

Women's Depiction by the Media

Women's depiction by the media needs to be discussed in two parts. Firstly in many media representations women are either absent or there are significantly less representations than those of men. For example, in the news and sports coverage there is significantly more coverage of male activities and male sports. Secondly, when women are represented they tend to be represented in particular, unsatisfactory ways.

There seems to be a unanimous agreement among feminist media researchers that women are under-represented in the media due to the roles they are portrayed in. This inadequate portrayal of women has prompted much criticism from feminists. The traditional roles women are portrayed in see them as sexual objects or in roles pertaining to the home and family. This is a reflection of the subordinated roles women are expected to fulfil in society. It does not however give a true indication of the number of roles that women do perform in society.

According to van Zoonen (1994:30) women are underrepresented in the media considering they make up 50% of the population. She believes the media does not reflect many aspects of women's lives and experiences. The amount of coverage on television of women's sport is a glaring example of the lack of opportunity and exposure women are afforded in the media. Lesley Ferkins (1992) conducted a study relating to the coverage of women's sport in New Zealand by the media (that is, television and newspapers). She found that the coverage of women's sport has not significantly increased over the twelve years up to 1992. Coverage of sport in general is dominated by men's team sports which consequently shuts out individual sport. This is where, Ferkins says, women have mostly excelled. Ferkins (1992:80) also points out that while newspapers cover a wider range of sports than does television there is no increase in the coverage of women's sports.¹ I do have an argument with one of Ferkins conclusions and that is by increasing the number of female sports journalists there would be an impact on the amount of women's sports coverage. The problem

¹ In multisport and triathlons women excel but the focus is still on the male competitors.

with this is that while an increase in the number of female sports journalists may be desirable one has to bear in mind that they are working within a traditional male establishment and the path to success is dependent largely upon conforming to the power structures already in place. This means that female sports journalists (as well as female journalists in general) if they wish to succeed in their field of employment, basically have no choice but to perform according to the direction of the male dominated media (van Zoonen:1994:58). To cause conflict within such an established order would probably result in even more negativity towards the coverage of women's sport or other women's issues. Thus I do not think the answer lies in the employment of more female journalists but rather a change in the attitudes of the male dominated media.

Nevertheless Ferkins' work is an excellent example of the inequality women are subjected to with regard to their depiction by the media. The inadequate depiction of women in the media and their attempts to do something to change this situation is not helped by the fact that the media industry is controlled by males and what is produced is based largely on what males want to view (van Zoonen:1994:53). This is particularly so in relation to women and their bodies.

Traditionally there are basically two types of roles that the media use to portray women in. These roles are that of sexual object and that relating to home and family (van Zoonen:1994:66). In recent years women have also been portrayed as sports stars as well as in business and other professional occupations such as law and medicine. Women have also been portrayed in politics but they tend to be seen as less powerful than men and it is the exception rather than the rule that women achieve top status in the above-mentioned areas.

Firstly, in relation to roles of sexual object, women are frequently portrayed in advertisements scantily clad (for example wearing a bikini, lingerie or other clothing which covers as little of the body as possible) as part of an advertisement for selling a car. The point is that the woman's body has little to do with the product being sold but

by using a scantily clad woman she becomes a connotation with the product being advertised.

Secondly, with regard to women portrayed in roles pertaining to the home and family. The majority of advertisements for household cleaning products use women depicted as homemakers who have had their lives changed because they have switched to/or use a particular brand of cleaning product or a brand of soap powder that takes the labour intensity factor out of doing the laundry. In one early study Tuchman, Daniels and Benet (1978:16) found that 75 per cent of all television advertisements using women are for products found in the kitchen or bathroom. This sends out the message that this is a traditionally female area of responsibility. The important question that needs to be asked here is how much of what is portrayed is indeed reflective of reality? Van Zoonen says feminists want more realistic representations of women but she says there is a problem with defining what is reality. By this van Zoonen is asking who is right to decide what reality is. For example within the confines of the male dominated media industry the projected images of women are likely to be in conflict with the images feminists would like to see projected but who can claim to know which images are a more realistic representation? I would argue that van Zoonen has made a valid point here because this type of argument can be placed in the context of self-serving philosophies. Individuals and groups will always want the best possible representation of their own identities and as such no claim for representation can be said to be objective or prejudice free.

The importance of understanding women's depiction by the media would not be so important if there were no relationship between media images and social reality (the actual practices that occur in society). Andersen (1993:57) believes it is important to realise that there is a relationship between images and reality. She cites two main reasons. In the first instance, images reflect social values about women's roles and secondly, images create social ideals on which people model their behaviour and attitudes.

Women's depictions in the media can be seen as social myths by which the meaning of women's place in society is established. Myths provide an interpretation of social truths, beliefs and relationships that guide a society in its vision of the past, present and future (Andersen:1993:61). They establish a "universe of discourse" that integrates and controls its members; gives them a common reality and creates structures for what is said, done and believed. This is again taken from Tuchman's (1979) work although Andersen has expanded upon it. Andersen (1993:62) believes the creation of this "universe of discourse" allows the media to act as powerful agents of social control. This is in fact because the media is controlled by the same dominant white male ideology that controls society itself. By reflecting various social identities as the norm it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals in society to rebel because media are but another form of approval that individuals seek in their quest for acceptability. Thus the depiction of women and men in the media infiltrates our social consciousness and embeds itself in our imagination.

Media sociologists have attempted to explain media representations with several theoretical approaches which illustrate the process involved in transmitting images to society. Andersen (1993:58) usefully distinguishes between four approaches which have been taken by sociologists and communications specialists to explain the depiction of women by the media. These are the reflection hypothesis, role-learning theory, organisational theories of gender inequality, and economic explanations of media organisation. She discusses each of these approaches with their strengths and weaknesses analysed.

The Reflection Hypothesis is cited by Andersen as the most simple explanation. This hypothesis assumes that the mass media reflect the values of the general population. Images in the media are seen as representing dominant ideals within the population. The reflection hypothesis asserts that although media images are make-believe, they do symbolise dominant social beliefs and images. Andersen believes that this hypothesis does not manage to answer the question of whether the media reflect or create popular values.

Role-learning theory hypothesises that sexist and racist images in the media encourage modelling. Andersen (1993:59) underlines Tuchman's belief that the role models portrayed by the media encourage both women and men to define women in terms of men (as sex objects) or in the "context of the family." Using the role-modelling argument one assumes that the media should be a truthful reproduction of social life and that there is some causal connection between the content of the media and its social effects. The role-modelling argument assumes that media images produce stimuli that have predictable responses from the public. This argument sees humans as passive receptors of information via the media. Andersen (1993:59) sees this as a weakness and offers the alternative viewpoint that if people view media images critically or cynically then they are unlikely to modify behaviour to parallel these images. Andersen does not deny however, that children do in fact learn from the media. Signorielli (1989, cited in Andersen, 1993:56) who found that the influence of gender stereotyping on television can be seen in the fact that children who watch the most television are those with the most stereotypic sex-role values. Andersen (1993:59) is critical of the oversimplified perspective that role-modelling theory offers.

Organisational theories of gender inequality attempt to explain sexism in media content by studying gender inequality within media organisations. This perspective assumes that the subordinate position of women in the media influences the ideas produced about them. The absence of women from positions of power where ideas and images are produced, means that their world views and experiences will not be reflected in the images those organisations produce. Those in positions of power come to share a common world view, thus they produce ideas which tend to reflect the values of the ruling elite.

The fourth perspective that Andersen discusses is termed economic or rather, capitalism and the media. This approach stresses the need of sponsors to foster images that are consistent with the products they sell. This approach also claims that it is in the interests of a capitalist power elite to discourage images or reality that would foster discontent and thus present a challenge to the ruling elite. This means that sponsors will promote any values that will sell, and will also encourage traditional views that

help to maintain the status quo (Andersen:1993:61). It is similar in approach to the Reflection Hypothesis mentioned above. Thus the four approaches that Andersen discusses are all attempts to explain how the media interacts with, and is controlled by, society. These approaches also highlight the media's role in helping to control the status quo in society. Unfortunately none of these approaches is able to adequately explain the media's effect on society.

There are other approaches to explaining how women are depicted in the media and Tuchman for example, believes that by viewing women's depiction in the media as mythical (whereby an acceptable image is created for them) then it may be possible to explain how myth and the community of discourse are part of the professional and organisational procedures governing the media. Tuchman believes a better approach to studying media than those currently in use would be to explicate the frames inherent in the media. She believes this explication would enable much more understanding about the media's effect. The frames Tuchman refers to are described as "the principles of organisation which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them" (Tuchman:1979:541). Beauty pageants are one such frame which depict women in a physical beauty context and present a glamorous fantasy for ordinary women to aspire to. Women in this frame are presented as objects of physical beauty who have attained the ideal body shape. They become objects of comparison for other women to measure themselves against. Tuchman (1979:542) believes the structures of frames may contain their own questions and forced responses and she is hopeful that the use of this approach will strengthen the attack on media practices which subjugate women. Tuchman is seeking to illustrate the politics behind the organisational principles of the media. This last point becomes important later in this chapter with regard to stereotypes in the media.

The above approaches to explaining representations in the media all stem from the belief that the dominant male ideology is responsible for creating the inequalities in society which are recreated by the media to further reinforce them. However, there are some media researchers who argue that there are other reasons for the depiction of women by the media. Fiske (1987:197) says that soap operas are one area where

femininity is legitimated and are a source of self-esteem for women who live by them. They provide the means for a feminine culture which struggles to establish itself against patriarchy. In this respect it can be argued that media afford feminine ideals a favourable status within society rather than as a result of oppression. McQuail (1994:102) engages in studies of media audiences which suggest that meaning in texts differs according to the life experiences of the individual viewer. For example, depending on a woman's own experience she might interpret a soap opera heroine as offensive (conflict) or be able to identify favourably with the heroine. Barrett (1992; cited in van Zoonen:1994:107) believes that feminism is looking to other explanations besides patriarchy or capitalism to account for current gender relations. Barrett believes the alternative approach is to look for what meaning is taken from texts by the individual reader and how does the individual reader engage with these texts.

From the above explanations then, it can be said that the general interpretation of ideological domination has tended to be replaced by more emphasis on conflict and negotiation but there is still strong evidence that media images effect the way individuals think about themselves. Therefore in spite of the fact that the dominant ideology approaches mentioned above fall short of adequately explaining the media's effect on practices within society, there can be no doubt that the images portrayed of women by the media do exert a powerful influence over the way women perceive themselves and the way they are perceived by society. For this reason, we cannot ignore the dominant ideology interpretation and the starker use of cultural power. One important way this power is evident is in the media's use of stereotypes.

The next section of this chapter looks at the role of stereotypes and how they are used to create images of reality, especially in regard to the representation of women.

Media Stereotypes

Stereotypes are a tool which we use to differentiate ourselves from others. In respect to the depiction of women by the media this differentiation serves to legitimise the subordinate position women are accorded in society.

Lippmann (1922) is credited with presenting the first definition of a stereotype. He said that stereotypes "are a device by which we make psychological connections between situated local knowledge and the world beyond our empirically charted experience" (cited in Pickering:1991:92). Seiter (1986:15) agrees with Lippmann's definition and says these stereotypes are not always based on direct experience with the groups being stereotyped, but rather as a result of other people's influence/opinions, or from mass media. This is what makes the media's use of stereotypical images such an important issue because we rely on the media for information for example, about other cultures and even other groups within our society. This definition then suggests that stereotypes are used as a means of gaining knowledge about other individuals and groups within our society.

Stereotypes can also be defined in terms of their evaluative nature. They carry evaluative judgements about other people based on their appearance, their behaviour or their culture (Pickering:1991:91). Pickering says stereotypes are highly selective, taking only certain features or traits and treating these as emblematic of whole categories. Pickering cites Allport (1954:191) as saying the stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category (in this instance a category is taken to mean groups or individuals who are defined by some characteristic which has become synonymous with their status). Pickering (1991:91) says that for this reason stereotypes are both generalisations and simplifications of the social and cultural identities of particular groupings.

Stereotypes can also be a condensed form of categorisation whereby a trait belonging to certain individuals within a group becomes generalised to the entire group. For example, the stereotype of the happy-go-lucky Negro does not apply to all Negroes but this stereotype is generalised to include all Negroes. Hall (1992:308) describes this definition of a stereotype as a one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple "cardboard cut-out". This exaggerated simplification is then attached to a subject or place. Its characteristics become the signs, the 'evidence' by which the subject is known. Van Zoonen also echoes this type of definition when she says that stereotypes are radicalised expressions of a common

social practice of identifying and categorising events, experiences, objects or persons. Stereotypes often have social counterparts which appear to support and legitimise the stereotype (van Zoonen:1994:31). Thus stereotypes serve as a quick form of reference that helps us to identify and differentiate between different groups in society. It is a labelling process (often derogatory) whereby we attach certain value judgements to groups or people which can be employed as a discriminatory tool to thus limit their social contact with us.

Pickering (1991:91) says that the real force and effectiveness of a stereotype is its taken-for-granted presence within a collectivity. This means that we accept images of groups and individuals with which we have no direct knowledge, without questioning the motives behind such depictions. As such these stereotypes become an accepted norm within a society and are rarely questioned or criticised. The above section has outlined the various definitions of stereotypes and their use within media and ultimately, society. The next section looks at the conceptual and methodological issues surrounding the critical use of the stereotype as a tool of analysis from conceptual and methodological perspectives.

Conceptual and Methodological Issues of Stereotypes

As a concept, a stereotype operates as a way of differentiating between social groups by viewing such groups as over-generalised collectivities. A group can be identified by certain similarities its members have which on the surface appears to give the stereotype some validity. However, as there is no scope to account for individual differences within a group the stereotype cannot be seen to reflect an accurate assessment of a particular individual who is deemed to belong to a certain group.

Accurately identifying a stereotype from a category is important and Pickering (1991:95) believes a researcher has to be aware of the difference between a stereotype and a category. He cites Allport (1954:191-2) as saying that "a stereotype is not identical with a category rather it is a fixed idea that accompanies the category" and this fixed idea precludes discriminatory thinking. Thus it is very important to

differentiate between category and stereotype when undertaking research of this nature. An example of this would be a category for people with blonde hair. A stereotype exists for dumb blondes. That is, all blondes are dumb but the category for blonde hair would suggest that all people with blonde hair belong to this group. The stereotypical dumb blonde might well fit into the category because of hair colour and thus dumb has come to be associated with people who have blonde hair. It is not necessary to be dumb to have blonde hair. Thus categorisation is done by hair colour only whereas the stereotype label is attached to people with blonde hair because of negative images of dumb blondes which are popularly upheld in society through media messages.

If indeed, as Lippmann suggested, stereotypes are a tool we use to make psychological connections with the world beyond our empirically charted experience (Pickering:1991:92), then we need to look at how the concept of stereotypes is employed. Lippmann believed that the use of stereotypes can be seen in terms of an economy of knowledge. This economy of knowledge becomes necessary due to the increased differentiation of societies and the increased communications across national boundaries which continue to open up. Therefore there is an increased need for compact images and ideas. Stereotypes are in this respect seen as a reflective phenomena. This reflection hypothesis sees media images as being symbolic of dominant social beliefs and images (Andersen:1993:56). There has been debate about what the role of the media is in terms of reflecting or creating popular values. They exist along a circuit running between every day culture and the public media of communications and back again (Pickering:1991:92). Thus the media recreate the stereotypes that we already hold and as such reinforce these stereotypes as "normal". For example, the stereotype of the beauty queen is promoted by the media because that is what the public already accepts as the correct definition of a beauty queen. Pickering (1991:92) cites news media as an example of reinforcement of stereotypical images and criticises this media for their narrow representation. News media are seen to only give emphasis to the accepted use of a stereotype. They do not give balanced objective promotion to any particular group in society. For example, university students tend to be portrayed as antagonists who spend most of their time drinking and

being generally rebellious. It is not usual to see university students depicted as financially destitute and under intense pressure. This portrayal does little to generate empathy for the plight of university students. This inadequate portrayal affords stereotypes considerable power to legitimate the status quo via the media. Stereotypes are the subject of interest for researchers of media content in order to examine how they are used by the media and the how the ideology behind stereotypes can be exploited by the media.

When conducting a research exercise using media, the definition of a stereotype is dependent on the type of research being done. Seiter (1986:14) cites three main types of research and the way they use the term stereotype. The first type of research sees social psychologists define stereotypes as a way in which human beings process information about their social environment. For this purpose stereotypes are generalisations about social groups. This is the illustration of stereotypes that I have discussed so far in this chapter.

Mass media researchers tend to use stereotypes as representations of reality that are false, and by implication immoral. For example, portraying women as sexual objects implies that all women are sexually promiscuous. Many mass media researchers tend to identify the frequency of such stereotypes as they are portrayed in the mass media (Seiter:1986:19). That is, they use a methodology known as content analysis whereby they count the number of times that, for example, women appear in certain roles such as homemaker, and this allows them to then say that women are predominantly portrayed in this role and not seen in some roles at all.

Popular culture critics look for the employment of stereotypes in fiction, film and television. This type of media is not necessarily an account of reality. For example, fiction is not based on true fact but nevertheless it can still employ stereotypes that most individuals can identify with. For example, the white male hero, the rich widow, the beautiful villainess (Seiter:1986:22). In each of these three examples of the different ways in which a stereotype can be employed, the researcher is looking to different areas to conduct their investigation. For the social psychologist it is the

audience, for the mass media researcher it is media in general and for the popular culture critic it is specific texts (Seiter:1986:14). It becomes clear then that the definition of the stereotype as a concept must be established at the beginning of a research project so that it is clear what sort of approach to stereotypes is being studied.

As a concept then, the stereotype becomes problematic if its use is not placed in context and the stereotype accorded its proper status as an ideological tool to convey powerful messages to members of society. For example the use of a stereotype to convey the message that coloured people or women are intellectually inferior, relays the message to members of society that these people should not hold positions of power anyway and their inferior status is by implication, correct. By not attempting to come to grips with the wider implications of the use of stereotypes then it is easy to overlook the usefulness of these stereotypical images to those in power. Portraying women as inferior should not be seen as a valid reason for them not occupying positions of power within society but rather should be seen as a way of reinforcing male domination. Clever use of stereotypes tends to cover up the self-serving prophecy that is white male domination. Thus isolating the stereotype as merely a means of differentiating different groups within a society ignores the ideological weapon behind the stereotype. Ideology is created through norms that are established within society to reinforce existing power structures. For example, the ideology behind women needing to be dependent on males is based on males wanting to dominate and hold the power within society. Thus by creating an ideology that women are vulnerable and in need of male guidance their dominant position in society is strengthened. It has to be noted also that when studying stereotypes there can be no prejudice free research as such in that researchers will be putting a case against using a stereotype because of the discrimination it causes to certain groups but in so doing they may well ignore parts of the representation which are indeed factual. For example, feminists who oppose the idea of beauty pageants tend to see their existence as totally negative for women and base their research around their own prejudices. They fail to accept that some women believe they gain positive benefits from participating in beauty pageants.

Following the clarification of the stereotype as a concept, the next part of this section looks at the methodological issues that arise when conducting a study which involves the role of stereotypes and their use by media to promote images that are supposedly consistent with social reality.

Pickering (1991:95) points out that research can wrongfully serve to justify the position of researchers and professional teachers. By this he means that by acknowledging the external prejudices associated with stereotypes, researchers can claim to be free themselves from such irrational thought processes and can claim their findings to be prejudice free. Thus, one has to be wary of this problem when undertaking investigations of this nature and bear in mind that no study of stereotypes will be prejudice free.

Another problem with studying stereotypes is that choice of research technique such as word-choices in psychological tests, and content analysis of media content can result in a denial that stereotypes are contextually embedded texts. Pickering (1991:95) says that this results in unhistorical and asocial analysis. It also precludes understanding of why some people can use the individualistic generalities of stereotypes in a flexible manner, while others cannot (Pickering:1991:95).

Seiter (1986:25) also has concerns about research techniques saying that research designs must make explicit their orientation to theories of ideology, must account for change in stereotypes (and this will become important in my research whereby the stereotype of a female body shape has changed), must be aware of context and the way meaning on television is produced, and must conceptualise the differences especially race, class, and gender, within the television audience. In my research I have had to acknowledge the place of beauty pageants within media and the messages that these pageants convey to the ordinary woman.

From the above outline of the critiques of using the stereotype concept as a tool of analysis in studies of media content, it is apparent that there is much debate over the correct use of the stereotype either as a concept or as a method of research. One of the

criticisms of the use of the stereotype as a concept is the way in which it is held to ignore the fact that some forms of media programming can be said to challenge gender stereotyping and actually “empower” women. For example, Radway’s work on romance (cited in van Zoonen:1994:108) showed how women read romances as a way of escaping their oppression rather than struggling against it, and depending on their own individual interpretation, they mostly identified with the female characters favourably. However, McQuail (1994:262) believes it is questionable whether these texts which challenge gender stereotyping can be said to “empower” women while remaining within the dominant commercial media system.

There can be said to be a divide within feminist media criticism between those who favour the use of the stereotype concept and those who do not. For example, McQuail (1994:262) and van Zoonen (1994:123) acknowledge proponents of the approach which suggests that individuals engage with texts and take specific meaning from texts but they underline the weaknesses of such approaches believing that these approaches reconstruct gender discourse rather than analyse its dynamics. Van Zoonen also criticises these approaches for being theoretically flawed because they focus on the popular culture and to a large extent have ignored the public sphere of news. The research done in this area has been largely based on constructions of femininity in the media and genres that are read and appreciated predominantly by women, leading van Zoonen (1994:124) to conclude that the question of how gendered audiences make sense of gendered media has only been partially answered. McQuail (1994:261) believes that approaches based on the gendered meaning of texts need to be able to answer the question of how these new texts can offer any empowerment for women while remaining in the dominant commercial media system. In effect, McQuail has similar concerns to that of van Zoonen in that these approaches reconstruct gender discourse but fail to adequately explain it. Radway’s work does not confirm nor deny the stereotype’s use as a tool of analysis but rather she offers an alternative viewpoint which suggests that individuals interpret information in texts in other ways besides conflict. My thesis defends the use of the stereotype concept because theoretically it holds on to the centrality of ideology and domination. The empirical investigations undertaken by this thesis lend support to the value of the stereotype as a concept

worthy of a place in studies of media content. The next section looks at stereotypes of feminine identity and their implications for women.

Media Stereotyping of Feminine Identity

The first part of this section looks at the stereotyping in the media with particular emphasis on gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are applicable to a range of identities in society. For example, stereotypes are used to portray class, race, gender, and religion. Stereotypes of race and gender are particularly common. For example stereotypes of race - the happy-go-lucky Negro (who is commonly portrayed in advertisements for fruit juice); the sporting American Negro (who is seen in advertisements for sports shoes or soft drink). Stereotypes of class are more noticeable in television programmes such as British dramas and even comedies where the rich can be portrayed in roles such as Lords of the Manor, or top professional employment such as medicine or law. Equally as noticeable in this type of media is the portrayal of lower socio-economic status groups whereby they are portrayed as illiterate, ignorant, and vulgar, with no hope of improving themselves. In other words the line is drawn between socially acceptable and unacceptable and the barrier between the two is supposedly insurmountable.

The media are quick to exploit stereotypes because of their common use in society. Andersen (1993:56) believes that for many people, the media are the only source of information about people they have had no direct contact with and about places they have never experienced themselves. Thus the media is a powerful socialising agent with an ability to influence our opinions on people and places that we ourselves have no direct knowledge of. In the absence of this direct knowledge we are prepared to ingest what the media offers and take it as fact without questioning the possible motives for such depictions. This is especially so when the images produced by the media do not conflict with our own values. For example if we have been "educated" into believing that white people are superior to coloured people then we will probably not be offended when confronted with images that suggest that 'blacks', for example, are inferior. If we belong to an ethnic group who are represented in such a way then

we would be offended by images that portray limiting attitudes towards certain ethnic groups. However because of our status we would be powerless in comparison to the dominant groups to instigate changes that would result in a more positive portrayal. The same can be said for women who are content to perform in traditional roles. These women probably will not be offended by the images of women in the media, but for women who want to break away from these traditional home and family roles, and do not identify with the sexual innuendoes that the media associate with women, there is considerable conflict. Again because women do not have access to the power necessary to change these limiting images they can do little about this situation.

Culture defines what are appropriate behaviours within a society and as such define what is masculine and what is feminine. This is done through the approval of appropriate behaviours according to one's gender. Certain behaviours are deemed as masculine such as beer drinking while other behaviours are deemed as feminine such as looking after the home and family, and being interested in beauty.

Gender stereotypes are very much in evidence in the mass media. The limitations for women with regard to the types of roles they are portrayed in have drawn much criticism from feminists who believe that such stereotypical portrayal of women seriously undermines women's chances in society. Given that many women are now advancing into areas which were previously only seen as male roles, this criticism from feminists seems justified. For example, in the field of medicine and law it is now commonplace for women to practice in these professions alongside their male counterparts. True, the media does give a form of lip service to these advances but it still seriously downplays the achievements women have made in the last few decades, preferring still to place them in the context of family roles or roles of sexuality (Lindsey:1994:308; Press:1991:38).

Gender stereotypes are central to this thesis and as such I will develop this stereotype in order to illustrate its application to this thesis. This type of stereotype which is widely employed by the media has been the subject of much criticism by feminists. Gender stereotyping in the media sees masculinity promoted in powerful roles whereby

they dominate women. Gender stereotyping of women as sexual objects or family/homemakers is particularly evident in advertising on television.

Television is a potent socialiser of gender roles. The fact that we increasingly rely on the mass media, especially television, to filter the massive amount of information we receive from other social institutions, means there is a profound impact on our ideas about gender (Lindsey:1994:307). Lindsey believes that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that heavy television viewing is strongly associated with adherence to traditional and stereotyped gender views. Images transmitted by television are further strengthened by advertisements, books, magazines, and other media items which present gender in stereotyped ways. Though media representatives may argue that what is presented merely reflects reality, the question of reinforcing an already sexist society cannot be dismissed as easily (Lindsey:1994:305).

Advertisements in particular, are a powerful one form of media stereotype that represents gender in a stereotypical mode. Lindsey (1994:307) says that although there has been some improvement, advertising images of women are based on traditional gender role norms. Women are viewed as sex objects interested in physical beauty, and dependent on men. Even advertisements of the 1980s and 1990s maintain these stereotyped images but in important ways stereotypical portrayals of women as sex objects have increased. For example, nude or near nude females are used to sell a range of products.

Where women are portrayed as sexual objects, Davies et al (1987:72) believe that this type of portrayal of women trivialises, degrades and dehumanises women. They believe that it affects the way women are viewed by men and the way women view themselves. The male controlled media industry uses women's bodies or parts of them for titillation and to sell products and publications (Davies et al:1987:72). This is done by presenting women as constantly glamorous, alluring and available. The types of women used for this portrayal have of course, the "ideal" body shape - that is, the "ideal" body shape that the governing powers within their society decide for them. This ideal is decided in large part by sponsors who use images of women to sell their products. These images,

which are constructed in large part by males (who control the power structures within society) become the accepted norm which is promoted through the media. The most common forms of media who display this image are television and women's magazines which are largely made up of photographs of glamorous women or stories about their wonderful life opportunities brought about by their beauty and their "ideal body". This places them in a context whereby they are seen as objects to be used for the pleasure and profit of men. According to Davies et al (1987), this influences the attitudes of men toward women.

Male image-makers portray women as objects to be viewed and consumed. Davies et al (1987:76) believe this affects women psychologically because they come to view themselves as men view them. They believe that by creating an image which can only be attained by a very few women then the market is assured forever as the ordinary woman is lured into buying diet products, cosmetic products and paying money to work out in gymnasiums in an attempt to achieve the ideal body. Thus the role of media is a vital one in reinforcing attitudes which are promoted through the power structures of male dominated western society. This is further enhanced by the fact that the media itself is a male dominated industry controlled by dominant white male ideology. As such production and consumption (media produce images that the public demand and/or appreciate) of media is dictated according to the preferences of white male values. These values are not always opposed by women as the study conducted by Radway study on reading romance found. Radway (cited in van Zoonen, 1994:112) conducted a study on women who read romance and found that not all women were opposed to the messages that were contained in this type of media. In this example women had sought to make themselves content within the confines of their patriarchal society rather than challenge it. Radway's work is an excellent example of how negotiation occurs rather than conflict. Instead of challenging the dominant male power structures the women in this study sought to negotiate a better deal for themselves by engaging in texts which produced for them, a specific set of meanings which they could identify with.

Advertisers believe products can be divided according to their emotional appeal. Some are seen as masculine and some as feminine. Men sell women's products such as cosmetics and pantyhose. Men do most of the selling on television, as evidenced by the increased use of male voice-overs in day-time and prime-time television. Advertising puts men in positions where they direct what women buy, which subtly states to both genders that men are in control and are literally the voice of authority (Lindsey:1994:327). This is the stereotypical image of masculinity - that is, in authority and in control of women.

Masculine stereotypes include the macho physically strong bodybuilder image; and the high-powered business executive. Synonymous with the masculine stereotype is the image of power that they command, as opposed to the powerlessness of women, who in turn are seen to be in need of masculine authority and leadership. For women, femininity is promoted as the desired norm that they should aspire to if they wish to be acceptable in society.

With regard to femininity, Ferguson (1983 cited in Lindsey:1994:306) conducted a study of women's magazines over a thirty year period and found that there have been few changes except that the most popular theme of attracting and keeping a man has been replaced by the theme of establishing one's own identity. This must surely be quite a threat to the established male order in society as women are stereotypically portrayed as being of secondary importance so why allow them to establish their own identity? The answer lies in the fact the media are used to promote an acceptable identity for women and as such there is little to no room for individual development (Bartky:1990:80). Ferguson further adds that with four decades of magazines promoting a standard of femininity associated with an almost narcissistic self-absorption, it is not surprising that the dominant theme of the 1990s is on relationships with men, followed by becoming more beautiful. Career achievement is a goal but it is also dependent on physical appearance. The lasting feminine stereotypes which still endure into the 1990s see magazine articles continue to reward self-sacrificing wives and mothers whose identity revolves around the home and who are encouraged in self-expression as long as it does not interfere with traditional roles. The bottom line is that

physical appearance is viewed as necessary to attract and ultimately snare a man (Lindsey:1994:306). This in effect ensures male dominance remains unchallenged to a large extent because by exploiting women's vulnerability and limiting their access to equal opportunities means that they remain to a certain extent dependent on males both economically and socially.

An important part of femininity is the physical stereotype of feminine identity which has become a key element in exploiting women's vulnerability. Coward (1984:39) says concern with fashionable slimness has become a routine part of many women's lives. Dieting, watching food intake, feeling guilty about food, and exercising affect most women to some extent. Coward believes that the changes in fashion and hairstyles disguise a consistent trend in fashion for the past 30 years - that is, the ideal body.

The ideal promoted by our culture is pretty scarce in nature; not many mature women can achieve that shape without extreme effort. We are made to believe that nearly all women have this figure because of the mass of advertising images and glamour photographs. The ideal is in fact constructed artificially owing to the techniques of photography which are all geared towards creating the illusion of the perfect body (Coward:1984:45).

The values attributed by Western society to this body shape are: slim, no excess fat, and well-rounded firm breasts. Coward says the shape is a version of an immature body. The ideal is an older woman who keeps an adolescent figure. Coward says the value of immaturity is noted in the practice of shaving hair to give a pre-pubescent look. Coward believes that the image of sexual immaturity connotes powerlessness. The ideal body is also evidence of pure devotion to an aesthetic ideal of sexuality - a very limited sexual ideal according to Coward (1984:45). This ideal body can also become a financial burden to women who constantly seek to change their image in order to conform to the ideals they are presented with in the media and society.

Hansen and Reed (1986:65) talk about profiteers in the cosmetics industry who get rich by exploiting the ignorance, oppression and fashion regimentation of women. In

other words they exploit women's vulnerability. There are three main gangs of profiteers who batten off the mass of women they dragoon or wheedle into their sex commodity market in search of beauty. There are those who profit by the manipulation of female flesh into the current standardised fashion mould: there are those who paint and emulsify this manipulated flesh with cosmetics, dyes, lotions, emulsions, perfumes; and there are those who decorate the manipulated and painted flesh with fashionable clothes and jewellery.

The role of profiteers serves to reinforce the physical stereotype of feminine identity by creating a market that lures women into spending money on trying to change their appearance in order to try to achieve this ideal physique which is seen at its most powerful in beauty pageants whereby contestants exhibit the ideal body shape and are seen to be rewarded for it.

The first category of profiteers correspond the concept of beauty to physical attributes. For example there is an acceptable height for a female. She must be no shorter and no taller. She must weigh so much and not an ounce more or less. She must have certain arbitrary hip, bust and waist measurements and no other, and so on. If a woman varies from these arbitrary standards then she is not deemed to be beautiful. Hansen and Reed (1986:65) say this causes enormous suffering among women who vary from this standardised, assembly-line mould. Weighed down and frustrated by the real burdens of life under capitalism, which they do not understand, they tend to view their beauty "disfigurements" as the source of all their troubles. They then become victims of inferiority complexes. This inferiority complex renders them vulnerable to the lure of beauty parlours, and cosmetic surgeons, and gyms and aerobics classes and beauty pageants serve as a reinforcer of all these ideals they should conform to.

The second category includes cosmetic dealers, perfumers, dyers and emulsifiers of this manipulated flesh. Women, according to Hansen and Reed (1986:66), are lured into believing that an expensive product will do wonders whereas a cheap product will not work. They say women seem naive and innocent to the fact that both products are

made from the same raw materials. They are guided by the propaganda and stretch their finances to obtain these products.

The third category includes the profiteers who decorate and clothe the now manipulated and painted flesh. Women face a difficult choice in this category as to whether to buy quantity or quality. The rich are in a position to offer a round-the-clock fashion circus with fashions for every part of the day and for every type of occasion. In addition to clothes there is a vast array of fashion accessories to go with whatever they are supposed to go with. Add to that the lure of the latest fashion and the profiteers have an assured market.

One way for these profiteers to get their message across to women that they must strive to improve themselves physically is in the form of beauty pageants whereby the total package from all three categories of profiteers is put together for viewing by the masses. Beauty contestants take on a utopian quality for most women in that these "beauties" are portrayed as having achieved the ultimate success - that is, they are physically perfect and aesthetically beautiful. They stand apart from the ordinary woman but they represent the ideals that all women should aspire to if they are to be seen as socially acceptable.

In terms of beauty pageants there are, I believe, several stereotypes at work. Firstly, contestants associated with beauty pageants are often accused of being academically inferior for even wanting to participate in such a pageant. There is a stereotypical image of the body type of a contestant for example: long legs, tall, blonde hair, tiny waist, big breasts, long hair. These appear to be "essentials" for any chance of success. There is also the underlying theme of sexual object and parading for male approval. In particular, the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants do not expressly promote sexuality but the themes are nevertheless apparent as a part of the culture of beauty pageants. Contestants are promoted as sexually attractive women and certain rituals they perform are designed to show off their bodies in a sexually alluring manner. They do however promote images of women (as does any beauty pageant) who are being controlled by their desire to conform to male-imposed standards of beauty/femininity

and who are prepared to act out various rituals such as parading in a swimsuit in front of an audience and television cameras, in order to “prove” themselves as worthy of the ideals demanded of them.

Conclusion

The construction of social identity is the first direct experience of differentiation that an individual encounters. An individual has many identities in the form of gender, ethnicity, social class, family of origin and religion. These identities give an individual a sense of self worth, a sense of belonging but at the same time a sense of differentiating themselves from other individuals and groups within their society. The media also differentiate different social groups and individuals within society and by using stereotypical images of identities they can reinforce the discriminatory practices already in operation within society. The media stereotyping of the feminine identity is particularly relevant to this thesis and can be summed up as preferably majoring in home and family roles; dependent on a male figure; a physique that includes long legs; be ranged within acceptable height; no excess flesh; firm breasts; and in general the body should not be too curvaceous; possess a willingness to comply with these cultural norms and unquestioningly accept the advice of fashion and cosmetics experts and be prepared to work at keeping this bodily ideal by frequenting gymnasiums to “work off” any excess fat. It is little wonder that we are now allowed our own identity as said earlier, except that it is not our identity it is the identity created for us by the use of stereotypical images presented to us by the mass media.

Women’s depiction by the media is the result of ideological processes operating within society at large but careful and discriminatory portrayals of women by the media result in reinforcing these ideological processes and the blurring of reality and the imaginary. Reality becomes distorted owing to the underrepresentation (some see it as deliberate misrepresentation) of women who in reality participate in society much more than the media gives them credit for. The stereotypical images of women as homemakers or sexual objects there for the gratification of males add to this distortion of reality and do little to assist women to be seen to achieve in areas traditionally

assigned male domains of activity such as sport and politics. Unfortunately the pressures to conform to these roles can be overwhelming and many women do attempt to reach the ideals of femininity (physical beauty and submissiveness) because they believe it is what their role in society should be. The social construction of identity within Western society is such that acceptance by others is sometimes the ultimate objective in one's life regardless of what gender we are. Acceptance determines how we evaluate ourselves and as such is a powerful force which ensures for the most part, conformity to the rules set down in society.

Beauty pageants are one form of feminine ideal that has see-sawed in popularity (perhaps owing to the protests of feminists) but still present ideals that many women would secretly aspire to because this is what is dictated to them by the media and ultimately society. Miss New Zealand beauty pageants, a sample of which form the data for this thesis, are one clear example of how gender can be represented in the media, how women are portrayed, and how the values of femininity are installed in physical beauty (dictated by society's definition of an ideal body). The media's portrayal of "physical beauties" as seen in beauty pageants parading in swimsuits to exhibit their "perfect body" becomes a standard measure for women to judge themselves by. This lure of acceptability (if one achieves this ideal body) is what drives many women to conform to society's ideals and chain themselves to rigid routines of exercise and diet as well as cosmetic makeovers. These makeovers are often pictured in women's magazines as the "before and after" routine whereby a photograph of what society depicts as a very ordinary looking woman is compared with the same woman after she has been subjected to a cosmetic makeover by professional make-up artists. The makeover depicts the woman as a more acceptable female because she has conformed and allowed herself to be reconstructed according to society's expectations). Some women will even go as far as surgical reconstruction of parts of their body in order to achieve these ideals of physical beauty (mostly at the hands of male surgeons who stand to profit financially as most of this type of surgery is done privately at great expense to the woman). As long as we are prepared to work towards achieving these goals we have little time to express discontent at the real problem

(perhaps as Hansen and Reed suggested we do not even see the real problem) which is our oppressed position in society and our lack of opportunity to do anything about it.

This chapter has looked at the social identity and how it is formed; the way in which the media depict women; stereotypes and the conceptual and methodological issues that must be acknowledged when undertaking a study of media stereotypes; and how has the stereotype as a concept been employed by the researcher? The last section looks at the media stereotyping of feminine identity which illustrates how the media employ stereotypes and the implications these feminine stereotypes have for women. The next chapter of this thesis focusses on the methodology employed to analyse the data and support the utility of the stereotype concept as a tool of analysis in the study of media content.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The Research Problem

Questions about ideology are central to studies of media content in society and to fundamental questions being asked about the way the mass media manipulate or dominate on behalf of established power. This is especially true of ideology that relates to class, racial or gender bias (McQuail:1994:236). This research also covers the way in which women are depicted in the media in general. For example, it reveals the roles that women are portrayed in, the stereotypes that the media associate with them, and the ideological processes behind these representations and stereotypes. This research will look specifically at how gender bias operates in the media by investigating mass media images of femininity over time. In particular, it focuses on televised beauty pageants, (which are a very good example of images of femininity) over the 28 year period between 1964 and 1992.

The gender bias of the mass media has brought much criticism from feminist quarters. A number of feminists have undertaken studies that support the stereotype criticism. Evidence of gender bias can be found in any form of media (for example, television, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and magazines). Content analysis is one method which is suited to identifying the gender bias of mass media stereotypes. For example, counting the specific episodes in which women are portrayed in certain roles enables the researcher to assess how often women are narrowly represented in home and family roles, or in roles where they are used as sexual objects. The identification of this gender bias can lead the researcher to conclude that women are underrepresented and indeed misrepresented by the mass media.

Feminist academic researchers have been vigilant monitors of the stereotyped images of women in newspaper articles (including visual images) and advertisements

(Reinharz:1992:151). Contemporary feminist critiques of media content have claimed to go well beyond the critique of stereotyping, in that modern feminists prefer to challenge the underlying sexist ideology of much media content (Rakow, cited in McQuail:1994:261) but this thesis defends the continued utility of that concept.

The next part of this chapter discusses the methods available, the selection of the method that I am using (which is content analysis), and the justification of this choice.

Choice of Method

According to McQuail (1994:275), the methods of research available for the study of media content range from simple and extensive classifications of types of content for organisational or descriptive purposes to deeply interpretative enquiries into specific examples of content, designed to uncover subtle and hidden potential meanings. The choice of which method is best suited to this thesis must start with a comparison of quantitative and qualitative analysis, as these are the two most general types of a method that can be used.

Quantitative analysis involves the systematic counting of the frequency of a certain phenomena, for example the number of times women appear in certain roles in advertisements on television. This type of analysis is used when precise measurement is required. It derives its meaning from numbers and focuses on manifest content (the surface content that is instantly recognisable). Research involving quantitative analysis relies on sampling and believes that all units of content analysis should be treated equally. For example if the researcher wanted to know how many times a female appeared during prime time viewing then this could be systematically counted and replicated. Quantitative analysis also assumes that there is one basic system of meanings for the message and the receiver.

Qualitative analysis on the other hand, carries an evaluative component whereby, for example, the role of a woman appearing in an advertisement would be looked at and attempts made to uncover the ideological basis of the role portrayed by the woman.

Qualitative interpretation is not based on precise measurement and is used for the purposes of understanding phenomena which does not necessarily have to be carried out quantitatively. For example, studying the roles whereby women are portrayed as sexual objects could be done by noting the frequency with which this occurs which would be a quantitative analysis. The same analysis could be done using qualitative analysis to explain the ideological reasons for this type of depiction. Qualitative analysis in the form of structuralism and semiology derives meaning from textual relationships, oppositions and context. For example, using this approach questions would be raised as to why women are not portrayed as having dominance over men; why are women portrayed mainly in roles pertaining to the home and family? Its attention is directed to latent content (which is the deeper underlying meaning of a text) and in this case latent is regarded as more essential (McQuail:1994:278). The reason that latent content is regarded as more essential is because the answers to these questions are deemed to lie in the underlying meanings of the texts and not on the surface. Qualitative interpretation does not rely on sampling and does not believe that all units of analysis should be treated equally. Thus content analysis tends to focus on the manifest or immediately identifiable content while semiology focuses on the deeper content of a text which requires the researcher to probe beneath the surface of the text to uncover these meanings.

A discussion of semiotics is useful in this chapter because a semiotic equivalent could be done with this type of research and I think it is necessary to discuss structuralism (of which semiotics is a branch) and how this method could be applied before I justify the use of content analysis. Semiology is a more specific version of the general structuralist approach. There are several classic explanations of the structuralist/semiological approach to media content. Structuralism has developed through the work on linguistics of de Saussures (1915) and combines with some principles from structural anthropology (McQuail:1994:244). Structuralism has two main differences from linguistics in that it concerns itself with any sign-system which has language-like properties as well as conventional verbal languages; and it is more concerned with chosen texts and the meaning of texts within a specific culture rather than the sign-system itself. Thus structuralism is concerned not only with linguistic

meaning but with cultural meaning and this second concern requires higher knowledge than just a sign-system. It is necessary to understand the ideological reasons behind the cultural significance of sign-systems within a specific culture.

North American and British scholars subsequently worked towards the goal of establishing a "general science of signs" known as semiology or semiotics (McQuail:1994:245). This field was to encompass structuralism and other things besides, thus all things to do with signification (the giving of meaning via language) however loosely structured, diverse and fragmentary. While these theorists all employ the basic concepts in different forms there are some essential elements that require discussion.

Semiotics is a form of qualitative analysis which typically gives no weight to procedures of sampling and rejects the notion that all "units" of content should be treated equally. This would appear to require subjective analyses on the part of the researcher as to which "units" are singled out as being more important than others. Semiotics is also a proponent of the need to acknowledge that different systems of meaning exist, and in the world of social and cultural "reality", the message and the receiver do not all involve the same basic system of meanings. In other words, the same media can mean different things to different people. This is important when analysing the arguments of different sectors of a culture. For example, when feminists see women and their bodies used in advertising to sell products they interpret this as exploitation (van Zoonen:1994:66). Feminists claim this type of message is damaging to women while those in control of producing these images argue that there is nothing wrong with portraying women in this way. A common argument offered is that women enjoy showing off their bodies because they like to be considered attractive and they enjoy the attention. Thus, the feminist researcher's findings may seem absurd to a passive receptor of media content - that is, a member of the audience, who may not think that the messages they absorb from the media affect the way they view women or any other aspect of society that the media promotes.

Advertising is probably the most popular object for semiotic analysis where signification has developed into an art form. Because of the short time span of an advertisement it depends heavily on the successful exploitation of the connotative power of signs. The signs within an advertisement need to be easily recognised and as such it is necessary that advertising draws from relatively common cultural symbols and meanings.

Using semiotic analysis opens the possibility of revealing more of the underlying meaning of a text, taken as a whole, than would be possible by simply following the grammatical rules of the language or consulting the dictionary meaning of separate words. Semiotics has the special advantage of being applicable to "texts" which involve more than one sign system and signs (such as visual images and sounds) for which there is no established "grammar" and no available dictionary.

Van Zoonen (1994:76) says that semiotic analysis can be seen as a formalisation of the interpretative activities ordinary human beings undertake incessantly. She draws attention to the fact that despite its systematic nature semiotics does not have a clear methodology as does content analysis. However van Zoonen (1994:78) does say that it is possible to translate the different elements of semiotic analysis into systematic steps to carry out the analysis. This would start with the identification of relevant signs and their relevant aspects and continuing with examining the paradigmatic (sign selection) combination of these signs, by asking what their absent opposites are and how they relate to each other syntagmatically (sign combination). This process allows the researcher to arrive at an understanding of the different processes of signification in the text; denotation, connotation, myth and ideology (van Zoonen:1994:79).

Although van Zoonen believes it is possible to translate a semiotic analysis into a series of systematic steps, the fact remains that semiotics is not a method that can be used to summarise content. This means that semiotics does not offer a systematic method and it is not accountable in its results according to normal standards of reliability, nor is it easy to generalise from the results to other texts. Thus according to McQuail

(1994:244) it cannot be used to summarise content in the way that content analysis often can be.

There is a problem with semiological analysis which the researcher needs to deal with before embarking on this type of analysis and that is that semiological analysis presupposes a thorough knowledge of the originating culture and of the particular genre. Thus the researcher needs to be fully aware of the various rituals and their meanings within a particular culture being studied or particular genre, before setting out with research questions. For example if a researcher were to study power structures or gender relations within Maori society then a thorough knowledge of Maori culture would be necessary otherwise there is a danger of ethnocentrism or of misinterpreting the signs and thus getting the wrong meaning.

The problem of interpretation does not only apply to individual researchers but also among researchers. Butler (1980:61) believed that qualitative analysis was best served by latent content analysis but the problem of latent significance lies in the ability to find agreement between any two researchers. Butler says that qualitative findings are not trusted in assessment of media performance. By this she means that owing to the differences of opinion between any two researchers (one researcher may find latent meaning and another researcher may claim there is no latent meaning) qualitative findings are more likely to be based on subjective claims by an individual researcher which others may agree with but many researchers may disagree with. Thus qualitative findings may well be found to be useful but lack of concrete evidence that can be replicated may well see them reduced to little more than academic debate owing to lack of firm empirical grounding.

Van Zoonen (1994:85) compares semiotics to content analysis. She says the usefulness and merits of each approach depend on the questions being asked. Semiotics has been said to be a science of forms since it studies significations apart from their content (Barthes; Seiter cited in van Zoonen:1994:85) which means that semiotics first asks how meaning is created, rather than what the meaning is. Van Zoonen illustrates the differences between semiotics and content analysis by saying that

content analysis emphasises the manifest working and non-working roles women are portrayed in and their visual function as a decorative element, while semiotics draws our attention to the power of “woman” as signifier of almost anything between virtue and vice, desire and fear.

The problems of semiotics therefore consist of: (1) the lack of concern with sampling which generates worries about the reliability of generalisations because there is no sample from which to transfer findings to the general population; (2) due to the intense nature of the method only a small amount of media content can be covered. For example, the focus narrows to a tiny segment of the overall picture in that if analysis was concentrated on a woman’s smile then the rest of her face and body would not be analysed. The smile becomes isolated from the total picture; and (3) contradictory nature of interpretation generates concern about the subjectivity of the analysis. In contrast, content analysis relies heavily on sampling and the results it obtains should be able to be replicated by another researcher. The explicit nature of the categories used in content analysis mean that validity should pose no problem for the reader in that it should be clear what the categories entail.

McQuail (1994:276) says traditional content analysis is still the most widely practised method of research. The basic application of content analysis is as follows: (1) choose a universe or sample of content; (2) establish a category frame of external referents (something which may be referred to in the content, for example, religious sects) relevant to the purpose of the enquiry; (3) choose a ‘unit of analysis’ from the content; (4) seek to match the content to the category frame by counting the frequency of the references to relevant items in the category frame per chosen unit of content; (5) express the results as an overall distribution of the complete universe of chosen content sample in terms of the frequency of occurrence of the sought-for referents (McQuail:1994:277). Using this procedure one assumes two things: (1) that the link between the external object of reference and the reference to it in the text will be reasonably clear and unambiguous; (2) the frequency of occurrence of chosen references will validly express the predominant ‘meaning’ of the text in an objective way.

Content analysis does however have a scientific reputation because of its reliance on quantitative methods. (Bennett:1977:29) says its advantages in relation to media studies were that quantification techniques used in content analysis added an objective dimension to subjective qualitative approaches and allowed for widespread collaboration, once categories had been developed and standardised.

Curran (cited in Bennett: 1977:56) believes the modern approach to content analysis is much more systematic and minimises participant bias and distortions generated by unsystematic analysis. For Curran, the value of these procedures lies in their requirement that all of the relevant content is analysed in terms of all the relevant categories in order that investigators cannot just select out elements of content that merely support their hypothesis.

Babbie (1992:328) outlines the strengths of content analysis. He says probably the greatest advantage of using content analysis is its economy in terms of time and money. To undertake content analysis as a single researcher is feasible whereas trying to conduct a survey single-handed is not as viable. Access to the material to be coded and analysed is the only major requirement as there is no need for extra research staff or any specific equipment necessarily. It is also a safe method in that if the researcher makes significant errors then the analysis can be conducted again without spoiling the research itself. This is not possible if using a methodology such as fieldwork or experimental research. It is also possible to redo just one particular section of the analysis rather than having to repeat the entire process again. Content analysis is also very useful if the researcher wishes to study processes occurring over a long period of time such as in my research where I am looking at the changes in feminine images over a 28 year period. Content analysis has the advantage of being unobtrusive which means that the researcher cannot affect the data being studied but the method of collecting the data and the type of data collected may mean that only data that will serve to justify the position of the researcher will be collected.

Content analysis can be very useful according to Reinharz (1992:155). Reinharz says it allows the feminist researcher to identify patterns in authorship (what sort of subject

areas are women writing about), subject matter (what is classed as preferred reading for women and what is classed as preferred reading for men), methods and interpretation (for example certain behaviours that women are portrayed in might be interpreted as deviating from the established order of traditional gender roles such as being a working mother). Findings from such studies are then used to generate or test hypotheses relevant to feminist theory and concerns, such as the depiction of women by the media (the fact that women are underrepresented and portrayed in limited roles) and the negative impact this has on life opportunities for women. The other use of these findings is to use them to press for social change. The social change that feminists press for includes women portrayed in a wider range of roles (crossing traditional gender boundaries), and generally a more positive portrayal of women including roles of power and leadership.

In respect to studying the media, Butler (1980:55) says content analysis provides an initial framework for studying the media. This is especially true when trying to find answers to questions pertaining to sexism in the media. Butler (1980:58) believes content analysis consists of procedures for making everyday observations of media content more systematic.

Butler saw content analysis as providing a useful analytical tool for highlighting media sexism which gives a factual basis for protest groups to press for social change. She says because manifest content is the preferred area of analysis in this domain, quantitative analysis is the best way to study media performance because the analyst has the data to back up their conclusions and resolve any disputes arising from these conclusions. Manifest content refers to the directly visible, objectively identifiable characteristics of a communication - for example, the words in a book. The advantage of focusing on manifest content is the ease and reliability of coding. The reader would know precisely how something was measured. Validity would pose a problem though as the reader would not necessarily be convinced that this was a valid meaning of a particular concept. For example, if a researcher was to state that a subject walked gracefully would the reader be able to identify with the researcher's definition of graceful?

The disadvantages of using content analysis is that it is limited to the examination of recorded communications such as newspaper articles, magazines, letters, legal documents, photographs and televised material. For example does the measure of body image represent a valid measure of that particular concept? The ability to code and recode means that reliability is likely to be strengthened. Reliability is also easier to achieve because of the concreteness of materials being coded.

Some of the problems associated with this traditional approach concern the researcher imposing their meaning on the content, a meaning which is not in the content. McQuail (1994:277) says any category system is selective and potentially distorting. When critically analysing a text in this way a new meaning is given to the text. This new meaning is but one more interpretation of the original text and this interpretation cannot claim to be correct, objective or superior in any way to any other interpretation of the original text. Although a researcher may be able to substantiate claims that their interpretation is significantly better than previous interpretations. This interpretation must be placed in context in that it is an interpretation based on the presumptions of the researcher and is based on what that researcher believes is contained in the text. There may be political reasons for what the researcher wants to believe is contained within the text. For example, a feminist researcher may read sexist undertones into a text when none was intended. The systematic counting of phenomena which is central to content analysis may produce reliable results but the question arises - do these results really tell us something meaningful? Is there a deeper meaning to the text which cannot be uncovered by the use of content analysis alone?

Thus while content analysis has been subject to criticism in the past and indeed still is today it is the most relevant method to use for my type of research. This is because I am looking for patterns that are emerging over a long period of time. As such this method with its systematic counting and manifest content will serve my purpose best. Indeed a semiotic equivalent could be done for this type of research but because of the nature of the sample and the desire for a systematic analysis that can produce results which can be replicated, I have opted for content analysis. Content analysis is also the best method to use in such a repetitive type of analysis because I need to analyse the

data many times for specific areas. I can view the data many times without affecting other parts of it and because I am trying to avoid an analysis that is too subjective I will need numerical findings to substantiate the issues I have raised in my theoretical discussion. An important point to mention here is that content analysis can refute claims that I could make if I were to use semiotic analysis. For example I could state that women are underrepresented or degraded in their depictions in the media using a semiotic analysis but by choosing to use content analysis I can use more concrete evidence in the form of numbers of occurrences of certain phenomena within a specified period or context. The numbers are able to indicate whether there is any significant problem to address.

From the above discussion it can be seen that there are problems with both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. In respect to this thesis, it can be accepted that semiotic analysis does have value as a research technique in studies of media content because of its approach to understanding how meaning works. However, because of its evaluative nature it cannot convincingly answer all research questions. The following section highlights the application of content analysis.

Application of Content Analysis to Thesis

Butler (1980:64) presents some of the questions that need to be asked before the conclusions of a content analysis can be reported. I have included under her headings the way in which these headings are applicable to my research:

- (1) **How is the research problem formulated? The problem should correspond to findings that content can produce.**

The research problem was formulated by looking for the ways in which women's bodies have become a standardised ideal which is beyond the reach of most women. The main content used for this purpose is video footage of four Miss New Zealand beauty pageants spanning a 28 year period. This allows for a sufficient time lapse to identify significant changes in body image - and how much of the body is exposed in

the 1990s compared to 1960s. The content of these beauty pageants including the verbal component also allows for identification of change in the expectations of the contestants. The content will also allow for the identification of a stereotype. For example, what type of person enters a beauty pageant? I believe in this instance the problem should correspond to findings that content analysis can produce.

(2) Are variables defined in a reasonable way?

Variables include age, personal measurements, hair colour, style of swimsuit and accessories. I believe they are defined in a reasonable way because of the concreteness of the variables being analysed. For example, age, height, and personal statistics are defined as physical attributes and are defined within their specific category.

(3) Content analyses involve content and context variables (that is, who wrote the content, when and where did it appear)

In my research the content analysis involves analysing visual images and verbal content of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants. These four pageants which were held in 1964, 1974, 1987, and 1992 appeared on television and have been recorded on video for me by Television New Zealand Archives. I also have printed material on Miss New Zealand beauty pageants which I obtained from Good as Gold Productions Limited who are the pageant organisers, which has enabled me to strengthen the data with statistics from the late 1960s and early 1970s and 1980s. I have also obtained articles from New Zealand Woman's Weekly magazines and newspapers which have filled in some of the details on specific contestants (the winners of each year are usually interviewed by the New Zealand Woman's Weekly). The many problems that I have encountered while trying to collect data such as incompleteness of archives (which required me to look for other ways to obtain the information), is indicative of a general problem of gender bias, with systematic archive collection oriented to "more important male affairs".

- (4) **Does the extent of the content sample across time and media, correspond to the extent of the problem: The power of content analysis lies in comparisons that are possible across time and media (Butler :1980:65).**

This question is better answered in the following section on sampling procedures.

- (5) **Does the content analysis meet the triple test of reliability, validity and utility? Goals in analysing media content rely on approval from other persons (policymakers, media managers, researchers) that the analyses are well conducted (Butler:1980:66).**

My particular content analysis should be able to claim reliability and will, because of the types of measures being sought (for example age, personal measurements, hair colour) be able to produce valid concepts (it is accepted that validity can always be questioned by other researchers and that there is some debate on what is a valid measure of a given concept). Criteria for utility includes whether the findings can be said to be useful, will the findings affect future decisions, and will the findings alter what is done in the future in terms of research or in practice. This is a little difficult to predict as to whether my research will be able to meet the test of utility entirely but it is hoped that the findings of my research will at least highlight some of the situations that women face as a result of limited portrayals and stereotypical images which cast them in an inferior position to men. I would hope that my research will indeed produce similar findings to other studies of gender bias in the media and as I am using a rather different sample I believe, my research will go some way towards meeting the test of utility.

Sampling Procedures

The sample I have chosen has been drawn from available Television New Zealand archives. I have chosen four videos of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants ranging over a 28 year period in order to identify images of femininity and in particular of the female body image. These pageants were held in 1964, 1974, 1987, and 1992. This

gives me one beauty pageant from each decade that is available. The years chosen have sufficient a sufficient gap in between them in order to note significant changes in body image - I suspect that change in body image does not occur rapidly from year to year but evolves over a longer period of time. The reason I chose beauty pageants was because they are made up of contestants who voluntarily put themselves through various rituals in order to compete for the prestigious title of Miss New Zealand. It has also been subject to criticism in the 1980s by feminists who protested and in some cases, disrupted these pageants because they felt women were being exploited. The sample I have chosen has yielded a total of 67 contestants - 16 in 1964, 12 in 1974, 19 in 1987 and 20 in 1992. Because of the relatively small number of units of analysis - that is contestants - I will not be taking a sub-sample but will be coding the relevant aspects of all 67 contestants.

The sample has been recorded on video cassettes in order that it can be viewed many times. This allows analysis of many different aspects of body image which cannot be obtained from photographs or written material in quite the same way. For example, the video recording has shown the contestants parading from many different angles which has allowed me to look at posture from at least three angles (front, back and side) which I would not be able to do if I was analysing photographs or written descriptions. It also allows the material to be coded and recoded as many times as is necessary in order to analyse the data as accurately as possible.

The sample however, is not without some problems. The video recording of the 1964 sample has very little sound because Television New Zealand archives were unable to dub the sound recording as it was very distorted owing to the original material being inadequately stored for a number of years. None of the four samples have the full beauty pageant - basically the sample contains the swimwear section and the eveningwear section plus some of the verbal content such as giving a speech or answering questions put by a compere. This is due in large part to the cost of obtaining the full pageant which was far in excess of available funding. Thus the analysis is focussed on these two sections. The 1964 recording is far from complete as it was taken from film and is not even in sequence, nor is it complete in either of these two

sections, thus analysis is very difficult. The fact that this particular recording is also in black and white makes for difficult analysis in terms of trying to decipher hair colour and swimsuit colour. For example, I cannot talk about the choice of colour in either swimwear or eveningwear. It is also not clear whether the 1974 contestants were required to do any speaking in front of the live audience either in the form of a speech or answering given questions from the compere. Nevertheless the sample is a very interesting one and there is much information to be gleaned from the available resources. Identifying continuities as well as changes will enable a description of the common elements of a beauty pageant and also the common elements that beauty contestants must have in the form of physical and personal attributes. I strengthen this data with some additional statistical information obtained from the producers of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants known as "Good as Gold Productions Limited" as well as newspaper and magazine articles which I have obtained mainly from the Auckland Public Library. This information fills in some of the gaps in the visual data. The 1964 footage is 36 minutes long; the 1974 footage is 37 minutes long; the 1987 footage is 48 minutes long; and the 1992 footage is 51 minutes long. In total the video footage is 2 hours 52 minutes.

The sample contains the contestants performing various rituals such as parading in swimwear, parading in eveningwear, group singing and/or dancing, answering questions put to them by a compere or giving a rehearsed speech on the tourist attractions and other lifestyle aspects (for example, the employment opportunities) of their province.

The formation of the sample lends itself best to content analysis because I will be looking for the frequency of certain phenomena as well as changes in body image as portrayed by the media over the 28 year period (1964-1992) that this research entails. I will be looking at employment background, activities required, comperes, question content, modes of dress, scores, prizes, sponsorship, and overall at the trend towards standardisation in femininity and the female body image. For example I can talk about the frequency of styles being worn by the contestants and the types of rituals that they perform (for example the poses they do for the camera and presumably the

audience), I can analyse the speech content of particular beauty pageants for frequency in types of questions being asked and the responses given by the contestants themselves. Content analysis will allow for a more objective look at the changing of body image in the media across time because it will allow me to produce percentages of the frequency of certain phenomena rather than just highlight that the phenomena occurs at all. By producing percentages and other statistical data a researcher is then able to highlight the significance of certain phenomena and compare phenomena across time. Butler (1980:65) as part of her list of questions mentioned in the previous section, suggested that the power of content analysis lies in comparisons that are possible across time and media. I believe the extent of the content sample across time and media does correspond to the extent of the problem, in that television only began broadcasting in New Zealand in 1960, and my first footage starts in 1964 and my last footage was filmed in 1992. For this reason, I believe my content sample which spans 28 years, can give a fair indication of the changes that have occurred in the way women and their bodies are depicted/portrayed in the media. It also allows me to investigate the use of the stereotype concept by analysing the dominant images that are portrayed in these beauty pageants.

Because there have been many difficulties obtaining data owing to the lack of sound on the 1964 video, considerable time and cost has gone into searching for alternative methods of obtaining the data. This has resulted in contacting libraries and newspapers such as The Alexander Turnbull Library, Dunedin Public Library, Invercargill City Library (the reason for this contact was that the winner for 1964, Miss Lyndal Cruickshank was Miss Southland), Dunedin Town Hall archives (the finals were held in Dunedin that year), Radio New Zealand archives in Christchurch, Television New Zealand archives in Wellington, Canterbury Public Library, The Hocken Library in Dunedin, and Auckland City Library. There have also been many contacts with Good as Gold Productions Limited in Mosgiel because this is the company who is responsible for promoting the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants which is run by the family of the late Mr Joe Brown who was the promoter of Miss New Zealand pageants from the 1960s. Unfortunately as far as the 1964 statistical data is concerned the only information that was of direct use was information supplied by the Invercargill City

Library which included pen portraits of the 1964 contestants together with their ages and occupations. All attempts to locate information regarding the personal statistics of the 1964 contestants was in vain. I have managed through extensive newspaper searches to locate the personal statistics of the top three place getters but this is insufficient to conduct any relevant analysis on that particular year. However the visual images are so different from the latter pageants which I have on video that it is worthwhile including this data in my research. Also, owing to the fact that this footage is among the earliest Miss New Zealand beauty pageants (the first Miss New Zealand beauty pageant was held in 1960) I feel that it is important to retain this data.

The next step was to obtain what information Good as Gold Productions Limited could provide which has taken approximately three months to obtain. Good as Gold Productions Limited have lost much of their early information owing to lack of opportunity for permanent storage of this information. There has been no archiving of this type of information and it has taken staff at Good as Gold Productions Limited considerable time to locate what they have been able to. Some of the information on specific years is not complete but the supplying of programmes from the years 1960, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988 and 1992 (this last programme did not contain a complete set of statistical information) has given me a wider range of data to draw from. Within these years some of the information varies from full statistical information regarding the contestants physical attributes including height, age, personal statistics (waist, bust and hip measurements), hair colour and in one year some of the weights of the contestants were given. In latter years from the 1980s there is little statistical information given out - mainly it is just age. Good as Gold Productions Limited informed me that statistical information regarding the personal statistics has not been asked for since the late 1980s. This has made analysis difficult in that full information is not available.

Reliance on magazine articles and newspaper articles for information leads to some discrepancies. In New Zealand we have two main beauty pageants. One is known as the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant and the other is the Miss Universe New Zealand beauty pageant. The former is the pageant that my data is drawn from. However

when reporting these events in the media sometimes the contestants from the Miss Universe pageant are referred to as Miss New Zealand. Therefore I have had to check carefully to ensure that the contestants I have researched have participated in the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant and not the Miss Universe New Zealand beauty pageant.

Owing to the difficulties of obtaining full information on any particular year I have attempted to obtain as much statistical information as possible on the winners from each year from 1960 to 1993. At this stage it has not been possible to obtain all information on all winners but every attempt has been made to locate at least one newspaper article on each contestant from each of these years. The reasons for this is that in the face of not being able to analyse fully a particular year (although analysis will be done where possible) to further back up findings from a particular year it is felt that including the statistical information of the winners from as many years as possible is likely to produce data that should represent similar trends to those found when comparing information from one year to another year.

In summary, then, there are problems with the data but I have done the best that I can and for an exploratory thesis research there is enough here to generate sound results.

Conclusion

While I could have conducted a semiotic analysis I believe for this research project it is preferable to obtain definitive results on which to base my conclusions. For this reason I have opted to use quantitative content analysis. This will also help to strengthen the reliability of the research because using content analysis a replication should be able to produce similar results to that of my own. I believe that producing research that can be replicated is preferable to producing research that is largely based on evaluative categories which would be the case if I were to conduct a semiotic analysis. The following chapter contains the results of my data analysis using quantitative content analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This analysis has looked at several areas of representation of the female body and females in general. The main areas looked at include the physical attributes of the contestants such as age, height, hair styles and personal statistics. This analysis allows for the identification of the physical stereotype that has become synonymous with images of femininity in the media. Sponsorship has affected the three sections in which the contestants model clothes - that is, the day wear section, the swim wear section and the evening wear section. With sponsorship comes standardisation of the female body which has to fall into line with the demands of the sponsor's product. The poses required of the contestants when they are modelling these clothes require them to have an excellent posture - that is, straight back, flat stomach and no excess flesh.

One important point that must be made in this introduction with regard to the tables used in this chapter that there is a variation in the number of contestants who enter the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant. I have made every attempt to identify whether or not the data I have for specific years is complete and as far as I can ascertain (in consultation with Good as Gold Productions Limited) only 1960 and 1966 are incomplete. There is unfortunately no way of finding out how many contestants actually did enter in these two years because the information has been lost. The tables in this chapter therefore, have a column indicating the number of contestants and this number refers to the number of contestants who entered the pageant in that particular year. Percentages have been worked out using this number.

Occupations

This section first looks at the employment background of the contestants who have entered the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant. As there is information available (taken from the printed programme material supplied by Good as Gold Productions Limited as well as from the video material) on the occupations of the contestants for all years in my sample, I decided to analyse this information to see what type of employment background the contestants have. I expected that there would be a large majority working in employment that was related to the beauty industry because I suspected that this would be a natural lead into participating in a beauty pageant, but the main purpose of this segment of the analysis was to see what type of training and educational qualifications the contestants have.

TABLE 3A OCCUPATIONS OF CONTESTANTS*						
	Clerical Retail	Beauty	Profession	Student	Other	Number of Contestants
1960	40	40	20	0	0	5
1964	31.25	31.25	31.25	0	6.25	16
1966	87.5	0	12.5	0	0	8
1970	46.2	7.7	15.4	23	7.7	13
1972	58.3	0	8.35	25	8.35	12
1973	66.6	8.4	8.4	16.6	0	12
1974	75	8.3	0	8.3	8.4	12
1980	35.7	28.6	0	14.3	21.4	14
1981	43.75	18.75	6.25	6.25	25	16
1982	26.7	20	6.6	20	26.7	15
1984	57.17	7.14	7.14	14.29	14.29	14
1987	68.4	15.8	0	10.5	5.3	19
1988	45	10	15	20	10	20
1992	55	15	0	25	5	20

* The spread of occupations in this table are reported in percentages.

The above statistics suggest that the main occupation of contestants in the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants is clerical/retail. This has remained the case throughout the period that my analysis covers. Very few actually work in the beauty business itself although some contestants list part-time modelling as a second occupation (this information was gained from the printed programme material supplied by Good as Gold Productions Limited and from the video material from which the data was sourced). There has been an increase in the number of students (which include senior high school students as well as tertiary students) but a noticeable drop in professional occupations (which include professions such as school teaching which seemed to be more common in the 1960s and early 1970s). Thus the occupations of the contestants tend to be from the non-professional sector with a minority of contestants having employment in the beauty, professional or tertiary sector. It would appear then that a contestant does not need to have a specific background in the beauty industry to participate in beauty pageants. So what does participating in a beauty pageant involve?

Activities Required of Contestants

There are certain requirements that a contestant has to adhere to within a specific pageant. This data has been obtained from the video sample and has enabled me to identify the changes in requirements since 1964. For example, a contestant must parade in swimwear, day wear and evening wear as well as participate in the verbal component of the pageant, which may include giving a short speech or answering a question put to them by the compere. In more recent times there has been a requirement to demonstrate ability in singing and dancing, thus testing the physical agility and artistic talent of the contestants.

In 1964 the contestants were required to parade in evening wear and give a speech on their province. This was replaced in latter years with a question section whereby the contestants were required to answer a question put to them by the compere or by a member of the judging panel. Then they were required to parade in swimwear. An important point to note here is that these contestants had little to no experience in the

field of modelling therefore they were not used to putting themselves on display for public scrutiny. Considering that parading in swimwear in a beauty pageant involves exposing much of the body to an audience of strangers, these contestants were faced with a rather daunting task. The contestants of 1964 were very much the girl-next-door types. This was confirmed by the 1964 winner Lyndal Howley (then Lyndal Cruickshank) whom I spoke to in November 1995.

In 1974 swimwear was paraded and then evening wear. There were voiceovers by the contestants during this part of the pageant, detailing their interests. There was no evidence of the contestants being asked questions by the compere nor did they give a prepared speech on the video footage that I had. Unlike the 1964 contestants they were considerably more distanced from the audience in that the stage did not project out into the audience. These contestants moved more easily than their 1964 counterparts, while parading for the audience in spite of the fact that they had to execute quite a complicated set of rehearsed moves involving two sets of stairs.

In 1987 day wear was paraded first with contestants introducing themselves followed by the swimwear parade, the evening wear parade and then nine semifinalists were selected. Only these contestants participated in the question section of the pageant. From this section the contestants were pruned to six finalists who answered another question which was the same question fielded to all six finalists.

In 1992 swimwear was paraded first and this was followed by an item where the contestants sing with Lyndal Howley while modelling daywear by Berkahn. This was followed by the ballgown parade. Five finalists were announced and they have to respond to a question from one of the judges. The regional finalists all return the stage for the announcement of the winner and they all dance to the final number by the Irish Rovers.

I think it is fair to say that in terms of choreography there is a lot more expected of the contestants today. Contestants have to be able to dance to music in a group format

(demonstrating physical agility) as well as the parading in the clothing sections with smaller groups of other contestants. This was particularly noticeable in the 1987 swimwear section. The skills required of a contestant in the 1980s/1990s are more focussed on physical abilities and merely parading in a swimsuit and evening wear are no longer sufficient. An ability to sing and dance and execute specific moves to music are a necessary component of a beauty contestant in latter times. There is also a need to demonstrate an awareness of current issues in society by being able to give politically correct answers to emotive questions. An example of the type of question that is put to the contestants was one that was put to a 1992 contestant "... if you were asked to choose a charity to receive a sizeable donation which would you choose and why?" The answer to this question was to feed the starving peoples of the world. These questions really only have one appropriate type of answer and the contestant really has little to no scope to offer alternative answers. For example if a contestant was to offer an answer that suggested a type of charity not commonly topical then they would risk losing out to other contestants who give more standardised responses. Thus the activities required of contestants have become more demanding, requiring a more physically co-ordinated woman, as well as having the ability to respond to questions with acceptable answers that will gain approval from the judges and audience and maybe a favourable interjection from the compere.

Comperes

The Miss New Zealand beauty pageants have come to be known as family shows which are aided by the employment of media personalities who compere these shows. The next section looks at the role of comperes and how they have changed over the years. The personalities who are selected to compere Miss New Zealand beauty pageants have usually come from family show backgrounds where they have hosted game shows which have become household names. The main compere in these beauty pageants has been a male but in the last two pageants that I have on video namely 1987 and 1992 there has been a female compere who acts in a liaison role when discussing the scores from the

judges and verbally relays these to the main compere. In 1987 the female compere was Kerry Smith a well known television personality and in 1992 it was the Miss New Zealand 1991 winner Lisa de Montalk.

The role of comperes is dual purpose in that they not only narrate the pageant for the live audience as well as the television audience but they interact with the contestants during the question section of the pageant. The compere could not be said to be an objective observer in such pageants. In particular their responses to the contestants answers indicate their approval of some contestants. In 1987 some contestant's responses are met with just a "thank you Miss..." while others stimulate a more verbose reaction from the compere. It is clear that the compere has to serve the interests of the pageant organisers. For example in 1987 the compere makes several references to the number of blue eyed blondes in the pageant (Sunsilk were the major sponsors that year). Advertisements for Sunsilk hair products have featured females with long blonde hair and as such I believe the compere's remark is more than just coincidental.

There has been an interesting change in the behaviour of comperes. In 1964 and 1974 the comperes physically touched the contestants drawing them into the microphone. They presumed to physically draw the contestants toward the microphone rather than requesting the contestant to move forward. This behaviour was not apparent in 1987 and 1992. A comment by the 1987 compere that a contestant's interests would make her a good wife was unacceptable for the times. This is because reference to sexist language and sexist suggestions in all forms of media and other written and oral communications was largely outdated by the mid 1980s. Thus the role of compere over the years has become a more passive role with less physical interaction with the contestants but they were able to make comments during the verbal component of the pageant. By 1992 the compere's role was basically that of an announcer/narrator. The interaction between the compere and the contestants was minimal because even the questions were fielded straight from the judges to the specific contestants with no interjection from the compere. The following section demonstrates two important aspects mentioned above - that is, the role of the compere

and the requirement of contestants to give politically correct answers to the questions that were put to them.

Question Content

For the purposes of analysing beauty pageant questions and answers I have analysed two Miss New Zealand beauty pageants which are on video, 1987 and 1992. These two years are the only years giving questions and answers in the video sample. The video sample is the only source of data on this aspect of beauty pageants as it appears that questions and answers are not archived in any other way. Unfortunately this limits my analysis - it means that I cannot generalise across the years since the 1960s. However, the analysis of the data is worth doing because it represents the modern verbal component in beauty pageants which is now a part of international beauty pageants which the winner will have to participate in. Thus it is an important experience factor for the contestant who will go on to represent New Zealand at the Miss World pageant. In earlier years (for example 1964), contestants were required to give a prepared speech on their province.

In 1987, questions were put to the nine semi finalists and then one question was put to the six finalists with the other five finalists unable to hear the question in order that each contestant would be unaware what the question was until it was put to them personally. These questions are preparation for the Miss World contest where the winner of the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant will be expected to answer a given question or questions.

The nine semi finalists were Miss Wairarapa; Miss Christchurch-Canterbury; Miss Auckland; Miss Northland; Miss Wellington; Miss Otago; Miss Counties; Miss Waikato; and Miss Taranaki.

For dialogue see Appendix which contains the full transcription from the 1987 and 1992 footage of the question section of these two pageants.

The questions put to the above nine contestants basically divided into two categories with one question falling in an “other” category. Four contestants were asked a question relevant to their province; four contestants were asked a question relevant to New Zealand and one contestant was asked a question on another topic. This particular question concerned the reasons why the contestant had entered the pageant. It is difficult to determine why what type of question was asked to which contestant. There certainly appears to be no pattern. For example the questions are not alternated. The coding revealed the following: the first three questions were “national” questions; followed by “provincial”; “other”; “provincial”; “national”; and the last two questions fielded were “provincial”.

Responses given were coded as: “**cultural**” which included such things as farming; characteristics of New Zealanders such as friendly disposition; and reference to our bi-cultural background; “**tourist**” which includes reference to New Zealand scenery and specific attractions of a specific province; and an “**other**” category.

Responses were: four contestants responded with answers categorised as “**cultural**”; four contestants responded with answers categorised as “**tourist**” and one gave a response that was categorised as “**other**”.

Cultural responses included things that relate to the specific way of New Zealand life. Reference to Maori culture, farming and friendly disposition of New Zealanders came under this heading.

Tourist responses were given to provincial questions which included scenery and specific attractions of a particular province.

The “**other**” category was formed for the one contestant who was not given either a national or provincial question and as such the response could not fit into the above two categories.

Apart from the “other” question, the eight national and provincial questions are based on territorial identity which connects local with national identities in the same way that many other cultural practices do.

In 1992, questions asked were of a humanitarian nature: influence on young people; advice to future contestants; what is the most unique quality and why; choice of a role model; choice of a charity to receive a sizeable donation and why.

Responses were: friendly/natural characteristics (60%); charity (40%). The responses were basically dictated by the type of questions asked. The contestants give rather well worn answers with respect to New Zealand and New Zealander’s attributes and the same can be said for responses to questions regarding charity. These responses suggest that stereotypical responses are the contestants’ best option. To give a response that will knowingly meet with approval in competitive circumstances, is more likely to meet with success than offering an unexpected response that will more than likely alienate the contestant.

The sorts of questions asked in these two pageants have been questions that require a politically correct answer. For example, in 1987 the question “would you consider entering the pageant topless” put to the six finalists, really only had one acceptable answer which had to be negative. It would have been interesting if all six had agreed to entering the pageant topless. There was a similar trend in 1992 in that the questions tended to be humanitarian and again these types of questions really only have one acceptable response. Bearing in mind that the winner from these pageants has to answer similar types of questions at the Miss World pageant in London, where they will be New Zealand’s ambassador, it is vital that ability to answer questions in the right way is demonstrated. The wording of questions has meant that there are standardised answers which come from within the questions themselves. Thus no individual input is required of the contestant. In 1964 when individual speeches were given, part of the contestant’s personality shone

through via humorous references to their province and their ability to speak eloquently. This individual speech differentiated contestants in a way which does not happen today.

Scores

Criteria for judging these beauty pageants has not been apparent. For example how are contestants graded on their performances? The use of scores on the 1987 and 1992 video footage of the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants gives an impression of objectivity to these pageants. I do not have the daywear scores of 1987 but the two sets of scores relating to the swimwear and evening wear and the final winners and placegetters do not tally. For example in 1987 Miss Wairarapa does not appear in the top nine scores for the swimwear and she only appears as ninth place getter in the evening wear scores and yet she is placed among the nine semi-finalists. Miss Northland appears as sixth after the swim wear section and does not appear in the top nine places after the evening wear section and yet she too is among the nine semi-finalists. This would suggest that the scores mean very little and are not aggregated. As well as the two examples mentioned above I also added the swim wear and evening wear scores of the winner and the second and third placegetters. If the scores were anything to go by, the winner Miss Counties, would have got third and the third placegetter, Miss Wellington would have won. Even without the daywear scores there seems to be enough evidence to suggest that the scores overall are not a deciding factor in who wins the pageant. In 1992 the scores are done by computer and supposedly this is meant to indicate objectivity but again the scores do not tally with the eventual winners and placegetters. The next section looks at the incentives offered to contestants entering Miss New Zealand beauty pageants.

Prizes and Sponsorship

Information on prizes has been gleaned from newspaper articles and video footage of two of the pageants. Thus in some instances the total prize package may not have been reported - the emphasis being on the major prizes. Nevertheless it is fair to say that the

increase in prizes on offer has correlated with an increase in demand for perfection from the contestants. The lucrative prizes on offer to successful contestants has been made possible largely due to the financial backing from sponsorship.

Financial rewards as well as other sponsor donated prizes are given to the winner and, to a lesser extent, the other contestants. Over the years that this pageant has been in existence the prize list has skyrocketed. The following is a brief resume of the prizes that have been offered since 1964. The list is not complete owing to reliance on newspaper cuttings which have only given a brief outline of the prize for specific years. The later years have had their prizes announced on the two later videos I have - namely 1987 and 1992.

In 1964 although the information is sketchy (I have been able to obtain a 1964 programme which lists some of the prizes and an article on the 1964 winner, Miss Lyndal Cruickshank in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* July 6 1964) it appears that the winner flew BOAC to Florida for the Miss Universe and to London for the Miss World contest. There was a two hundred pounds prize donated by Joe Brown, the promoter of Miss New Zealand, to be donated to a charity in her particular district, and a five hundred pounds wardrobe from the New Zealand Wool Board.

The 1967 winner Miss Pamela McLeod won a new car, a one thousand pounds a year contract, (the article does not say what the contract is for) an all-expenses paid trip to America for the Miss Universe contest at Miami Beach, a similar trip to the Miss World contest in Britain (information taken from *New Zealand Herald* 6 June 1967).

In 1970 Miss Glenys Treweek won a personal appearance contract worth \$3000, a \$3000 car, a \$1000 fashion wardrobe and a Miss New Zealand Trophy (*Auckland Star* 2 June 1970).

In 1971 Miss Linda Ritchie won a \$3000 personal appearance contract, a car, a \$1000 wardrobe and the Miss New Zealand Trophy. This was the first time the contest was televised live (*New Zealand Herald* 8 June 1971).

In 1972 Miss Kristine Allan won a \$3000 personal appearance contract with expenses paid for a year; a \$1500 wool wardrobe given by the Wool Board and a Hillman Avenger car (*New Zealand Herald* 6 August 1972).

In 1974 prizes were to fly Air New Zealand to London for the Miss World, a Vauxhall Viva car, a complete wardrobe \$2,500 from the New Zealand Wool Board, a \$5,000 appearance contract and the Miss New Zealand Trophy (information obtained from the video footage of this pageant).

In 1975 Miss Janet Nugent's prizes included a \$1500 wool wardrobe, a \$5000 appearance contract and a Vauxhall Viva car (*Christchurch Press* 22 April 1975).

In 1976 Miss Anne Clifford received \$1000 in cash and a full wardrobe as well as a free trip to the Miss World contest (*Christchurch Press* 8 October 1976).

In 1977 Miss Donna Schultze won \$500 cash, the Miss New Zealand Trophy and a diamond ring amongst other prizes (*New Zealand Herald* 26 April 1977).

In 1982 Miss Susan Mainland won an all expenses paid trip to London to take part in the Miss World contest. Her prizes included a \$5000 wardrobe, bedroom fashions valued at \$2500 and a sapphire and diamond pendant (*New Zealand Herald* 30 August 1982).

In 1983 Miss Maria Sando won an all expenses paid trip to the Miss World pageant, a cash prize of \$12,500 plus other prizes valued at \$15,700 (*New Zealand Herald* 29 August 1983).

In 1985 Miss Sheri Le Fleming Burrow won prizes which included a designer ball gown, a full wardrobe, an emerald and diamond ring, \$4000 in cash and a car (*New Zealand Herald* 25 February 1985).

In 1987 there was \$50,000 worth of prizes and Peter Sinclair the compere for that year noted that this was the most money/prizes ever offered. All contestants received a one year supply of Sunsilk Haircare products; a fashion pack of Mary Quant cosmetics; cultured pearl earrings with 9ct gold fittings; international in-flight bag by Gino Barelli; two pairs of shoes from Hannahs; two swimsuits by Surfseeker. The 1987 winner Miss Karen Metcalf won a trip to the Miss World courtesy of Air New Zealand; a one year gift pack of Sunsilk Haircare products; a one year supply of Mary Quant cosmetics including skincare range an 18 carat diamond and sapphire dress ring worth \$3,600; \$1,500 worth of footwear from Hannahs; \$2,000 sheepskin rugs - from the windward gold medal range; \$3000 compass duty free products; a Modes evening gown; \$4000 fully co-ordinated wardrobe from Peppertree and Sonny; \$4000 American Express Travellers cheques; a complete set of travel luggage by Gino Barelli; and a Nissan Sentra car (information obtained from the video footage of this pageant) .

In 1988 Miss Lisa Corban's prize package included fashion garments, \$5000 in cash and an expenses paid trip to London for the Miss World pageant (*New Zealand Herald* 29 August 1988).

In 1991 Miss Lisa de Montalk won prizes of \$5000 cash, a year's supply of cosmetics, a \$2000 wardrobe, a dress ring, and the chance to compete in the Miss World pageant. The prize also included an opportunity to audition for the William Morris modelling agency in Los Angeles (*New Zealand Herald* 26 August 1991).

In 1992 all contestants received Clinique cosmetics, a sterling silver bracelet from Abbey international courtesy of Weatheralls of Dunedin; Palmolive hair and skincare products; \$100 cash from Miss New Zealand Ltd. The winner Miss Karly Kinnaid, received two

gowns by Kevin Berkahn; an especially struck gold kiwi mounted in a gold border of diamonds minted in 24 carat pure gold from New Zealand Mint Limited courtesy of Weatheralls Dunedin; a one year supply of full cosmetic range by Clinique, Delci Club Plus luggage; two collections of Pazazz swimwear, bodywear, and aerobicswear; a one year supply of Palmolive body care to nourish hair and skin; an all expenses paid trip to Miss Universe in Mexico and Miss World in Sun City South Africa courtesy United Airlines; \$5000 cash from Miss New Zealand (information obtained from the video footage of this pageant).

From the above outline it can be seen that the prizes the contestants are competing for (as well as the prestige associated with such an event) are very much larger than in the earlier years. It has to be remembered though that the money and prizes offered in the 1960s although seemingly small by today's standards were probably not insignificant in their own era.

The prizes offered in latter years are indicative of sponsorship and its effects on the contest. In the early 1960s the pageant was by and large a variety show that spent six weeks on the road performing in a different town or city every night. By the 1990s it was a glamorous fashion event where the standards of the contestants have to be as near to ideal as possible in order to effectively promote the sponsors products which include clothing, swimwear, jewellery, shoes, hair and skin products. The sponsors require a good image for their product and thus we can expect that pressure is on the contestants to have an "ideal" physique. As the integration with the beauty industry increases we can expect increasing physical standardisation to the norms of beauty dominant in that industry. Whether or not this is the case will be investigated below in this chapter.

Sponsorship has become an important part of the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants because it is the financial backing of sponsors which make these pageants economically viable. The sponsor(s) name is used in association with the pageant in return for the contestants wearing their products or in the case of the major sponsors such as Sunsilk or

Palmolive their name is integrated in the title of the pageant for that particular year. This can take the form of cosmetics, jewellery, and clothing including swimwear, shoes, and sunglasses.

The effects of collective sponsorship are apparent in 1987 and 1992.¹ This is in contrast to 1964 and 1974 where contestants were individually sponsored. This detail was obtained from the video footage of these two pageants and in particular in the 1964 pageant where the contestants, as part of their speech, thanked and named their personal sponsor which was normally a local retailer or local community group within their province. Limited choices of style and colour in the 1987 evening wear section made that section monotonous and reflected virtually nothing about the individual. For example, there were five different colours in various combination or as a single colour for the 19 contestants. The contestants came out in groups of two or three and were group according to style of dress or colour of dress. In 1987 there were 19 contestants. Eighteen contestants wore a one piece swimsuit with straps and the other contestant wore a one piece without straps. The colour choice here was limited too with nine contestants (47.4%) wearing black and white. Deep pink in combination with another colour featured four times (21.0%) and powder blue featured three times (15.8%). Peach, pink and yellow featured once each (15.8%). The main sponsor in 1987 was Sunsilk and continual reference was made to hair colour particularly blonde hair. Shoes were sponsored by Hannahs and were all the same, that is - black patent leather high heeled shoes. Sonny, Modes and Peppertree were also sponsors in 1987.

In contrast to the 1987 pageant the evening wear section in 1992 was not sponsored and the contestants wore gowns of their own choice and/or design. In 1992 the main sponsor was Palmolive and Pazazz sponsored the swimwear section. There were four colour choices for the twenty contestants who paraded in groups of five. This gave a very ordered look to the swimwear section especially as they appear on stage in group form prior to parading individually.

¹ See Figure 1

Colour was specific to each section. The first section wore white; the second section wore multi; the third section wore black and white; and the fourth section wore grey-blue. Style was in the ratio: bikinis (6) one piece straps (11) bikinis with skirts (2) one piece with skirt (1). The contestants appeared to have no choice but were conforming to requirements of the pageant organisers and sponsors. Not all contestants are happy about what they are expected to wear and Vicki Lee Hemi the Miss New Zealand winner in 1980 was reported in an article (*New Zealand Woman's Weekly* October 6 1980) that she nearly cried when she saw what they wanted her to wear. Thus there is evidence that choice is not down to the individual.



Figure 1: 1987 Contestants pose on stage in swim wear supplied by the sponsors. There is only two colour choices for the 19 contestants.

Modes of Dress

This section of the analysis applies to the four videos where data on contestants parading in swimsuits and evening wear was available.

The style in 1964 was low leg (that is, no hip exposed), one piece swimsuits and some feature a skirt panel to presumably cover the pubic area. As such the female figure was covered up rather than exposed.

In 1974 there was one style of swimsuit that was worn by all 12 finalists. This was a one piece swimsuit with a halter neck, (strap goes around the neck from one side of the swimsuit to the other rather than over the shoulder from front to back).

The 1987 contestants all wore a much more “daring” swimsuit with a very high-cut leg line. This legline exposed the hips in most cases. It also gave the impression of very long legs and thus if heights were not given it would be difficult to determine who was short or tall.

High leg lines were still a feature in 1992 perhaps even more severe than in 1987. The only interesting feature regarding the legline was that three of the contestants wore swimsuits with ankle length skirts attached, so legline was not featured in these three examples. The swimsuits did not have particularly low back lines in fact backlines appear to be less important in 1987 and 1992 than in previous years. For example the low back lines of the 1964 pageant was where, apart from the legs, most of the body was exposed. Some of the swimsuits in the 1964 pageant were cut to the lower back while in the 1992 pageant the back was, in some cases only cut to below the shoulder blades. The twenty contestants in 1992 were grouped into four sections of five contestants with each section having its own particular colour and style.

The changes in style of swimsuit over the 28 year period analysed would suggest that the swimsuit has become more sexually provocative. The style required to be worn by the 1987 and 1992 contestants demands a certain physique in order to display the swimsuit for maximum effectiveness.

Evening wear is defined as formal dress appropriate to evening wear for females. It has always been a part of Miss New Zealand beauty pageants and has remained an area of elegance.

The emphasis has been on long slim fitting in 1964 and 1992 particular. In 1974 the style of evening wear served to soften the contours of the body but in general the dresses were not figure hugging.² In 1987 the style of dresses were severe around the bodice region which served to hide the shape of the breasts rather than accentuate them and dresses were not necessarily floor length. There was a tendency for dresses to be above the ankle. Attention is drawn to the shoulders in this section of the contest with either strapless dresses or at least one shoulder exposed.



Figure 2: 1974 Evening wear section featured soft flowing gowns that were not necessarily figure hugging

² See Figure 2

There has been a change in emphasis in the evening wear section in latter years to harsher lines that emphasise the thinness and height of the contestants.³



Figure 3: The 1987 Evening Wear section featured harsh lines which accentuated the height and thinness of the contestants.

Physical Attributes

A major point of interest within beauty pageants concerns the physical attributes of each contestant. While they are not judged specifically on physical attributes such as age, height or personal measurements, patterns have emerged which suggest that there are desirable ideals which a contestant should aspire to. In latter times it would appear that the physical attributes have assumed more importance not so much in terms of a particular size but rather in terms of a particular shape of body. By 1992 there was almost a uniformity of body shape which took the form of a tall, thin body. The curvaceous body of 1964 was nowhere to be seen.

³ See Figure 3

This data for this section of the analysis was gathered from two main sources which was the video footage of the four pageants from 1964, 1974, 1987 and 1992 and the programme material supplied by Good as Gold Productions Limited. Over the years there has been an uneven emphasis on publishing certain physical attributes. For example age and height are almost always used but personal measurements are not.

This section of the analysis looks at age, height, hair styles and personal measurements in order to identify the changes and continuities that have occurred over the 28 years from 1964 to 1992. A point to note here is that the weight of the contestants has not been given apart from in 1966 in the printed programme where weight statistics were given for three of the eight contestants that information is available on.

The ages of contestants have been analysed to see if there have been changes in the ages of contestants and winners. To do this I have used measures of central tendency to ascertain the average, mode and range of ages for each year that I have been able to obtain information on.

TABLE 3B AGE				
Year	Average	Mode	Range	Number of Contestants
1964	19.38	18 and 20	18-21	16
1966	19.88	18	18-21	8
1970	19.16	18 and 19	18-21	13
1972	19.08	18 and 19	18-21	12
1973	19.16	18	18-21	12
1974	19.7	19	17-23	12
1980	18.79	18	17-22	14
1981	20.56	19	17-23	16
1982	19.27	19	17-22	15
1984	19.07	19	17-22	14
1987	19	17	17-22	19
1988	19.5	19	17-23	20
1992	18.19	18	17-23	20

The age range has broadened considerably since the 1960s and early 1970s. The average age has stayed around 19 and the mode is 18.

The ages for all of the Miss New Zealand winners from 1960 to 1993 have been calculated and the average age of the winners was 19.41; the mode was 19; and the range was 17-22. The age factor has remained fairly constant throughout the history of the pageant. Thus it would appear that there is a preferred age for a winning contestant of 19 years.

The physical height of each contestant for the years that this information is available has been given in imperial feet and inches. From this information I have been able to determine what the average, mode and range for height is for specific years. This has allowed me to compare these statistics across a 17 year period (1970-1987) for which data could be obtained.

TABLE 3C HEIGHT OF CONTESTANTS*					
Year	Average	Modes	Range	Number of Contestants	Winner
1970	5'6	5'6 5'7 5'8	5'5 - 5'8	13	5'7
1972	5'6.5	5'7	5'4 - 5'8	12	5'6
1973	5'6	5'7	5'3 - 5'9	12	5'9
1974	5'6	5'6.5	5'4 - 5'7	12	5'6
1980	5'8	5'6 and 5'9	5'3 - 5'11	12	5'10
1987	5'7.5	5'8	5'3 - 5'11	19	5'8

*In 1980 there were 14 contestants in the finals but only 12 have height statistics available and as such analysis has been conducted on these 12 contestants. There is only height statistics available for the years used in this table. In other years height statistics have only been available for less than half of the contestants or not available at all.

From the above table it can be seen that there has been an increase in the average height of the contestants between 1.5 - 2 inches and also a much broader range of height within a particular pageant. The winners tend to be taller than average but certainly not the tallest contestants within a pageant. There has however been a trend in latter years to promote the taller contestants as the following section illustrates.

An interesting note re height of the contestants. In 1964 Miss Taranaki easily the most tallest contestant, (although her height is not published the winner for 1964 Lyndal Cruickshank was 5'9" and Miss Taranaki was taller than this) not only looked uncomfortable with her height herself but the compere was not comfortable with her height either. He says "Oh I might put this microphone up a bit for you". The audience laughs. Then he says "that's as far as I can go. Oh we can tilt it a bit" Then he says "come close". As these pageants have evolved height has become a positive feature with positive references to taller contestants. For example, media clippings of former Miss New Zealands have made positive reference to the height of Vicki Lee Hemi (Miss New Zealand 1980). In an article in the New Zealand Woman's Weekly October 6 1980 there is reference to Vicki Lee growing up to be 5'10" while in the New Zealand Listener (November 1 1980) in an interview with Max Cryer, a reference is made to her "being tall enough to satisfy the tiara and cape syndrome that beauty quests demand by right." An article in the New Zealand Woman's Weekly on 24 September 1984 refers to Barbara McDowell (Miss New Zealand 1984) as a leggy 1.75m (5'9") tall. I have also obtained two negative references to the shorter stature of Miss New Zealand 1985 Sheri Le Fleming Burrow who was reported as saying the judges asked her if she was worried about her height as she is only 5'4" (New Zealand Herald 25 February 1985). The second negative reference to her height came in July 1993 when she herself was quoted as saying her personality was strong enough to counteract the fact she was only 1.62m (5'4") tall (*New Zealand Woman's Weekly* July 12 1993).

The manner in which hair is worn and the length and colour of hair have always been features of interest within a particular pageant. Hair length is determined as follows.

Hair that is longer than collar length is deemed to be long. Hair that is long and swept up is also deemed to be long - that is short styled hair is still deemed to be long hair. Hair that is cut short to collar length is deemed to be short hair.

TABLE 3D HAIR LENGTH				
Year	Long	Short	Winner	Number of Contestants
1964	87.50%	12.50%	Long	16
1966	62.50%	37.50%	Short	8
1970	83.40%	16.60%	Long	13
1972	91.60%	8.40%	Long	12
1973	100.00%		Long	12
1974	83.40%	16.60%	Long	12
1980	92.90%	7.10%	Long	12
1981	87.50%	12.50%	Long	16
1982	86.60%	13.40%	Long	15
1984	71.40%	28.60%	Short	14
1987	68.42%	31.58%	Long	19
1992	80.00%	20.00%	Long	20

Without exception hair has always been predominantly long. It is acceptable to wear hair that is long in a shorter pinned up style but short cut hair has never been a common element in these pageants.

Information available on the winners of Miss New Zealand pageants from 1960 to 1992 reveals that only 23.1% had short hair (although this tended to be a full and soft style rather than a close cropped short style). Thus 76.9% of winners in the period 1960 to 1992 had long hair. This information is based on the data in the above table for the twelve years that I was able to obtain information on.

Hair colour falls into four categories. Blonde hair is hair that is white to light brown with the emphasis still on white. This category includes ash blondes which are pinkish blonde or silver blonde in colour. Hair that is slightly more brown is categorised as brown, this

includes light brown to dark brown hair. Black hair is hair that is jet black in colour. There is also an “other” category for hair that does not fall into the above three categories. For example hair that is described as chestnut or brunette which may well fit into the brown category but because it has been differentiated I have opted to do so as well. I have taken the hair colour as given in the specific programmes for each year. However for 1964 and 1992 I categorised hair colour from viewing the video footage because no hair colour was given either in the programme or explicitly stated/broadcast as part of the pageant.

TABLE 3E HAIR COLOUR*						
	Blonde	Brown	Black	Other*	Winner	Number of Contestants
1964	6.25%	12.50%	81.25%		Lt Brown	16
1966	37.50%	12.50%	12.50%	37.50%	Med Brown	8
1970	38.50%	53.80%		7.70%	Dk Brown	13
1972	16.60%	50.00%		33.40%	Hon Brown	12
1973	16.70%	50.00%	16.70%	16.60%	Blonde	12
1974	58.40%	25.00%	8.30%	8.30%	Blonde	12
1987	68.40%	15.80%	5.30%	10.50%	Ash Blonde	19
1992	30.00%	25.00%	45.00%		Black	20

*In this table the “other” category includes the not recorded data which only occurred for one contestant in 1973 while no hair colour was recorded for any of the contestants in 1964, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1984. In 1960 owing to lack of available information I have not included data for hair colour because it is only available for three of the contestants. I have used data obtained from the 1964 Miss World programme for hair colour for the 1964 winner and the three abbreviations I used for brown hair were light, dark and honey brown.

From this table it can also be seen that while brown hair is the norm in the early seventies, the predominance of extreme hair colours that is blonde or black is obvious particularly from the 1974 pageant where blonde hair was reported for 58.4% of contestants and the 1987 pageant where blonde hair was reported for 68.4% of contestants. In 1992 black hair

was reported for 45% of the contestants. Blonde hair appears to be extremely popular when it is in fashion in that the majority of contestants will claim to have blonde hair even if they have to tag an adjective on to it to claim blonde hair. Names like mid-blonde, ash blonde, dark blonde are being used to describe hair colour. At other times these terms might well be light brown or mid brown. Thus there has been a move toward extremes in hair colour.

Personal statistics include the "vital statistics" (bust, waist and hip measurements) of a contestant. From available information it would appear that these were most popularly reported in the 1970s and I have one example from the 1980s which was broadcast as part of the 1987 pageant. It has been almost impossible to obtain a full set of statistics on any one year and it would appear from newspaper cuttings that some years there has been more interest and emphasis on personal statistics than others. For example in 1987 personal measurements were given but in 1992 there are none given. It would appear that statistics are given in order to differentiate contestants but their use seems irrelevant. There is no prize for being the smallest or biggest contestant but there appear to be "acceptable sizes" which have been analysed using modes for specific years. Because statistics are no longer used it appears that they have not been seen as an integral part of pageants. The image of the body rather than the particular size has become more pertinent to Miss New Zealand beauty pageants. However it is important to assess the personal statistics available to see whether there has been any significant changes in body size.

TABLE 3F PERSONAL STATISTICS					
Year	Mode(s)	Average	Range	Winners	Number of Contestants
1970	34-24-34 36-27-37	34.85 - 25.08 - 35.38	34-24-35 - 36-27-36	34-24-34	13
1972	34-24-34	35.17 - 24.75 - 35.33	34-24-34 - 36-26-36	34-24-35	12
1973	34-24-34	34.25 - 24 - 34.67	33-23-33 - 35-25-35	34-24-35	12
1974	34-24-34	34.33 - 24.25 - 34.58	34-24-34 - 36-24-36	34-24-34	12
1987	34-24-36 34-24-34	34.21 - 23.52 - 35.11	32-23-34 - 38-29-37	35-26-36	19

The above statistics are all measured in inches.

From this table it would appear that the average size of a contestant has got smaller but not by any significant margin. There is a difference of 0.64 inches between the average bust size in 1970 to that in 1987; the waist size is 1.56 inches smaller; the hip size is 0.27 inches smaller. The range of size has broadened considerably from two inches between the smallest and biggest contestant in 1970 to six inches in 1987.

The winners' statistics from these five years have been analysed and the mode from these statistics is 34-24-34; the average is 34.4-24.4-34.8; and the range is 34-24-34 to 35-26-36. The winners have tended to be slightly smaller than average but near enough to the mode which would suggest as I predicted earlier that there are desirable ideals for a contestant to aspire to. The mode indicates that there is a popular set of statistics which the majority of the contestants have managed to obtain.

In conclusion, an overall assessment of the physical attributes reveals that contestants have got slightly smaller in body size, taller, with hair that tends to be more extreme in colour (for example in 1992 75% of contestants had either blonde or black hair while in 1972

only 16.6% had blonde hair and no contestant had black hair), while age has remained static even though the range of age has broadened considerably. Maintaining a certain body size while gaining one or two inches in height coupled with more demanding physical requirements could well account for the slimmer body of the 1990s.

Posture

It has become apparent in the latter part of this analysis that good posture is required to enhance the slim, taut body that is now expected.

Posture has been defined as the physical stance of a contestant, when standing. Posture can be scrutinised most critically when contestants are wearing a swimsuit as it very difficult to hide any “flaw” when so much of the body is exposed. The two main flaws of posture are roundness of the stomach and roundness of the shoulders.⁴ At least they are flaws if the advertisements for equipment or special support clothing designed to hide rounded stomachs are to be believed. The same goes for advertisements for bras which are said to “improve posture in the upper back region.”

Contestants’ shoulders have been categorised as round or straight. Round shoulders are shoulders that protrude forward giving the upper back a curved look. Straight shoulders are shoulders that do not protrude forward and thus give a more erect appearance to the upper body. This category of analysis has been appropriate for the pageants that I have on video as the photographs which appear in the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant programmes are front on so posture is virtually impossible to determine as there are no side on views of the contestants. The video footage has allowed for the contestants to be viewed from many different angles which allows for a fuller analysis.

⁴ See Figure 4

In 1964 rounded shoulders were apparent in eight of the fourteen (57.1%) contestants viewed during the swim wear section. Flat stomachs were only apparent in eight of the contestants. As such posture is much different from the 1990s.



Figure 4: The rounded posture of 1964

In 1974 eight out of twelve (66%) had rounded stomachs. This is not to say that stomachs protrude but rather there is a softness that could be considered a natural body shape. In 1987 two out of nineteen (10.5%) contestants had slightly rounded shoulders and six contestants (31.6%) had slightly rounded stomachs. By 1992 all contestants had straight shoulders and nineteen (95%) of the twenty contestants had a flat stomach to the point of being taut.

It can be concluded that posture which highlights a flat stomach and straight shoulders has become more important and that it can be attributed to the requirements of being a beauty contestant in the 1990s. In latter years this type of posture has been a necessary attribute

in order to execute specific poses especially in the swim wear section of the pageant. One important issue surrounding the types of poses that the contestants are expected to perform concerns sexuality. Are these poses sexually provocative?

Sexuality

Within the context of participating in a beauty pageant sexuality can be defined as behaviour or performance that is sexually oriented or has sexual overtones.

In 1964 blatant sexuality was not an issue. The emphasis was along the lines of a variety show with “good taste” being the order of the day. The Miss New Zealand beauty pageant was to become a kiwi institution and as such the contestants conformed to conservative institutional values and in the 1960s good girls were not supposed to be sexually active. The fact that swimsuits served to cover up the pubic areas of the body rather than expose them and the lack of specific poses that these contestants performed would suggest that the swimsuit was the important issued not the body of the contestant or their ability to show it off.

In 1974 this was still apparent although a little more relaxed but the contestants still appeared to project a “good girl” image. All the contestants in this pageant paraded with their hands at their sides throughout the swim wear section and paraded gracefully up and down steps in a manner which could be described as fluid but by no means flaunting their body. This type of movement was noticeable throughout the evening wear section as well. It would appear that the image projected was that of beauty coupled with an innocence of sexuality.

However by 1987 the types of poses the contestants were doing were dramatically different from the contestants of 1964 and 1974. Poses drew attention to hips and thighs

with the strategic placing of hands on the hips or thighs and at the same time drawing attention to the flatness of the stomach region.⁵



Figure 5: Posture in 1987 served to highlight the flatness of the stomach

In 1992 sexuality was blatant starting with the James Bond theme.⁶ Of course Bond himself was synonymous with sexuality. This is a typical example of the media's use of stereotypes. In this case the stereotype of the tough guy who is also a sexual object (Lindsey:1994:328). The James Bond character who was the subject of many movies was always linked to beautiful women. Unlike the female portrayal of sexual object the male stereotype is usually seen (as the James Bond character is) as strong and powerful. The strategic use of wraps, loose transparent hooded jackets, (which were slid down the

⁵ See Figure 5

⁶ See Figure 6

contestant's body or arms and dragged along behind them as they continued their parade) sunglasses (which were taken off and put back on to give an air of secrecy/hide the eyes) and bikinis (which exposed much of the contestant's body) all had sexual overtones. Miss Horowhenua for example walks down the steps with her arms out at shoulder level - she is wearing a bikini and by using this pose she is opening her body out for all to see.⁷ She has a very confident pose.



Figure 6: The James Bond theme was apparent throughout the 1992 pageant

⁷ See Figure 7



Figure 7: Miss Horowhenua demonstrates a confident pose

Sunglasses are used by some contestants to “hide the eyes” to give an aura of secrecy/hidden depth. Wraps were dragged along behind in a provocative manner and jackets were slipped off in the same vein. One contestants wore her wrap around her head and shoulders in a yashmak style with sunglasses.

Thus by 1992 the sexual innocence of the 1960s had been replaced by overt sexuality with contestants expected to demonstrate themselves as sexually alluring. It has become a collective expectation that the contestants will perform to the requirements of the pageant and there is now no room for individuality.

Conclusion

In summary, the changes that have occurred in beauty pageants from the activities required of the contestants to the clothes that they must model indicate that individuality has gone. Unique personal qualities/characteristics of a specific contestant are what gives that contestant their individuality. Over the span of these pageants individuality has given way to collectivity at the hands of sponsorship. Sponsorship demands a tailor-made package and in the case of beauty pageants the package is a standardised body image. Through sponsorship, individual choice is eroded by the demands to conform to standardised modes of dress including colour and style. These standardised modes of dress can only be displayed to maximum effectiveness on the ideal body.

This trend towards standardisation has become apparent in the 1987 video footage and the 1992 footage also emphasises this trend. Examples of this trend towards standardisation are apparent in 1987 where there were noticeable similarities rather than differences in the evening wear section. In this section there were five colour choices for the nineteen contestants with the colour combination being different. This is the result of sponsorship and in this case Modes was the label. It was not a matter of individual choice. This same trend was noticeable in 1992 in the swim wear section whereby the four groups of five contestants were clearly grouped in this manner to best display the sponsors product. Colour and style of swim wear was not down to individual choice. This tends to give these beauty pageants a rather monotonous image and this was all the more noticeable when in 1992 the evening wear section was allowed to be individual choice. Consequently no two dresses were alike. Some colours were similar but the style of ballgowns were refreshingly different.

There are three main examples of standardisation that have occurred in the Miss New Zealand beauty pageants. First, the obvious physical standardisation of the ideal body. There has become a trend towards "achieving" a certain look. This tall, thin look has become the trademark of beauty contestants and there is little to no variation in body type

in the 1990s. It is a far cry from the various shapes and sizes of 1964. This standardisation of beauty contestants has resulted in an “ideal” contestant.

An overall analysis of these Miss New Zealand beauty pageants in this sample has enabled me to construct an image of what an ideal contestant has to be. This has resulted in a portrait of an ideal contestant. They need to have certain qualities which I have highlighted below. Variation on these qualities is not acceptable and this is subtly applied by the media in their applauding certain standardised qualities and by their not acknowledging as worthy anything other than these qualities.

Stomach flat and taut

Legs long and thighs not too big

Personal measurements within the range of 34-24-34

Hair long and preferably blonde

Ability to give answers to questions that are expected

Give interests that are politically correct

Give an air of overt sexuality but be elegant and poised as well

Be able to speak properly

Smile naturally - long and often

Walk gracefully and negotiate steps in the same manner, often while wearing high heeled shoes

This portrait of an ideal contestant is the result of trends towards standardisation that have occurred over the 28 year period of this analysis.

The second example of standardisation is noted in the increasing demands on the contestants to perform as part of a collectivity. There has become much more emphasis on group singing and dancing. As well as the group formations, there is also a trend towards contestants performing poses in groups of two or three during the swim wear and evening wear sections of the pageant.

The last main example of standardisation has occurred through sponsorship which has infiltrated nearly all aspects of the pageant including clothing, jewellery, shoes and cosmetics. This is probably the most powerful form of standardisation because without sponsorship there is no financial backing for beauty pageants and as such they would no longer be operational. Thus there is evidence here to suggest that standardisation of beauty has become the norm.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the changing of female body image in the media over the period 1964 to 1992. The areas this research has covered start with the construction of social identity within society and the role of media in reinforcing identity. The media achieve this by using stereotypical images that individuals identify with. The use of stereotypes is central to any research undertaken on media content and for this reason the conceptual and methodological issues surrounding the use of stereotypes must be taken into account. The media's use of stereotypes has direct implications for the depiction of women in the media. It has been the source of much conflict between agents of media production and feminist critics who voice concerns over the inadequate portrayal that the media afford women. In particular the media construction of feminine identity with its associated physical stereotype, has directed the attention of women away from the real issues within society which concern oppression and the lack of opportunity for women to compete equally with in male-dominated western society. The construction of feminine identity that women are supposed to conform to if they wish to be seen as acceptable turns women's attention toward improving their body image rather than towards improving their position within their society.

The formation of social identity which occurs from the time an individual is born, dictates roles within our society that we have to fulfil. These roles are created for us and are designed to keep the structures of our society in place in order that our social groups continue to survive. That is, social reproduction ensures the survival of our society and culture. For women, this means taking on roles that ensure that they are not competing with males for positions of power but rather women's focus is turned towards their bodies. By creating a single standard for women to aspire to and which attainable for only a very few women then there is little likelihood of women challenging the existing power structures and forcing social change which would see them competing equally with males.

It is a complex and intricate pattern of events which seems to be impossible to break. The media's role in producing images which are consistent with this trend, further complicate this situation of gender bias towards women.

Miss New Zealand beauty pageants, a sample of which form the data for this thesis, are one clear example of how gender can be represented in the media, how women are portrayed, and how the values of femininity are installed in physical beauty (dictated by Western society's definition of an ideal body). The media's portrayal of "physical beauties" as seen in beauty pageants parading in swimsuits to exhibit their "perfect body" has become a standard measure for women to judge themselves by. This is an example of how the media act as powerful reinforcers of social values. The media promote beauty pageants as stereotypical images of femininity. Advertising uses stereotypical images of femininity to sell products such as cosmetics and clothing. Beauty pageants operate on a similar basis whereby sponsors require beauty contestants (who strive to attain the images of femininity that their society promotes) to model their labels and appear to use the sponsor's brand of cosmetics and hair care. The collective nature of beauty pageants makes them especially useful for answering the questions that this investigation posed.

The questions that this thesis posed were what are the changes in female body image and how has women's depiction in the media changed? The thesis also looks at the continuities that have occurred throughout the time frame that the data covers. Chapter Four contains the results of the data analysis. This chapter begins by looking at the employment background of the contestants. This is one area where information was available for nearly every year that I was able to obtain statistical information on. The type of employment undertaken was divided into four main categories - clerical/retail, beauty industry, professional occupations, and a category for students which included tertiary as well as secondary school students. The results indicated that the main occupation of beauty contestants within my sample was in the clerical/retail sector. This has remained a consistent trend from 1960 to 1992. The other main features regarding the employment background of the contestants was the drop in professional occupations

which steadily decreased from 1966 onwards to 1992 where no contestant indicated a professional occupation. There was a fluctuation in the number of students who entered into the pageants during the 1970s and 1980s with a sharp increase from 1987 onwards. This is one area of continuity that the thesis found. I find this particularly interesting in that during this time there has been a strong push by feminists for a more realistic representation of women given that they do perform in a much wider variety of roles than the media give them credit for. The employment background results from this analysis would suggest that there is a certain type of female who enters beauty pageants. This could be a typical example of the ordinary woman who is attempting to adhere to the principles of femininity.

One of the main reasons of interest in the employment background was to analyse the type of skills that the contestants bring to the pageant because the next area of analysis looked at the activities required of the contestants from 1964 to 1992. There has been a trend towards standardisation in the types of activities required of the contestants. The earlier pageants of 1964 and 1974 were based on individual performances. The contestants had to give a prepared speech in 1964. In 1974 there was no evidence on the video footage of any prepared speech but while the swim wear was being paraded, voiceovers of the contestants talking about their interests and occupations were transmitted. In 1987 there was a change of activities required with the contestants no longer parading individually in the swimwear section but instead they were executing poses in groups of two or three. This is where the evidence of standardisation in the form of collectivity started to become apparent. Most activities have now become a standardised group format which included group singing and dancing based on a set of rehearsed moves. There was also the requirement of answering a question which was put to the nine semi-finalists with another question being put to the six finalists. In 1992 the five finalists had to answer a question which was put to them by one of the judging panel.

The other areas of interest from the findings of Chapter Four indicate that standardisation did not only relate to the way in which the pageant was organised. Collectivity was not

only a requirement of the choreographed sections of the pageant but was also apparent in the physical ideals that the contestants were required to conform to. This was in large part due to the effects of sponsorship demanded an ideal body to best display swim wear and evening wear which was by now mostly in the hands of sponsors. In 1987 there were five different colours in the evening wear section for nineteen contestants. This gave the evening wear section a very monotonous look and even some of the designs were identical. In 1992 the evening wear was individual choice and this was very refreshing in comparison to 1987. The swim wear section of 1992 had four groups of five contestants each wearing a colour specific to their group. This year had the interesting addition of bikinis which were worn by eight of the contestants. The type of clothing the sponsors want modelled requires the "perfect" body and there has become a trend towards a standardised physical ideal. The contestants of 1987 and 1992 were noted for their lean, taut bodies and their height. The uniformity of these two pageants enabled me to construct a portrait of an ideal contestant. This contestant has a flat stomach, long thin legs, personal measurements within the range of 34"-24"-34", long hair that is preferably blonde, be aged around 19, have the ability to smile long and often, give an air of overt sexuality but be elegant and poised as well, and be able to walk gracefully in high heeled shoes. As well as these physical characteristics the contestant must be able to answer questions on topical issues such as the starving peoples of the world, they must be able to list interests that are politically correct and be able to speak properly. The overall conclusion that this analysis reached is that variation is not acceptable - there is one physical ideal that all women should aspire to, which the ideal contestant in beauty pageants has come to represent.

The fact that I have been able to create a portrait of an ideal contestant from the results of my data analysis is strong evidence of the trend towards standardisation. This ideal contestant has all the attributes that are valued in Western society according to Coward (1984:39) who believes that the West has a constricting ideal of female beauty which is no less than ideals imposed by some non-European societies. Coward (1984:39) believes the obsession with one particular shape promoted everywhere by the media is a definite

statement about expectations for women and their sexuality. Expectations are formed as part of a constraining process which dictate certain values that individuals should adhere to as part of taking on certain identities with their society. Gender, class and ethnic identities all form part of an individual's society identity which gives them a sense of belonging to their society. It also makes it difficult for an individual to break away from certain identities and create their own individuality. For example, if a woman wishes to dissociate herself from the principles of femininity as set down within her society she faces rejection or at least disapproval from her friends and family as well as society. Social isolation is almost intolerable to individuals and as such the drive to be acceptable and accepted is what conspires against attempts to enforce social change.

Feminists who strive to bring about changes in society that would give women an equal chance face a daunting task to implement any change and what changes they are able to implement still by and large, fall within the confines of male approval within male dominated power structures. Some see the solution in employing more women in high status positions but this is not a solution as long as women have to take on the values as set down by the dominant male ideologies which Western societies are governed by. In this example women would only be given power to carry out rules as already set in place. They would not be given power to change the rules and this is why any changes that have occurred are only changed on the surface of society. The existing power structures which dictate social reproduction remain unchanged.

Femininity, which all women should aspire to according to the norms of our society sees the creation of a set of stereotypical images which constitute the ideal woman. These stereotypical images are generalised representations of individuals and groups within society. They act as a form of constraint on the individual making it difficult for individuals to deviate from the accepted norms. Thus if it is the norm to be feminine then for women this will become a constraining force. Coward (1984:39) says there is a definite female outline which is considered the cultural ideal. She describes this perfect body as having a height of between 5'5" and 5'8", long legged, tanned and vigorous looking but

above all without a spare inch of flesh. This “woman” is put on a pedestal with the help of media images, for all women to identify with. She conforms to the principles of femininity which are reinforced by the media. This gives her a sense of belonging to the various groups which forms this woman’s identity. There are limited roles for her to fulfil, a physique for her to acquire and the reward for this subscription is to be seen as feminine and thus acceptable. We know this woman exists because she fills the pages of magazines, she performs in advertisements on television for the mass audience to view and applaud her and if she is “lucky” enough to possess all the qualities that are the requirements of femininity then she may be seen in one of society’s most elite feminine of roles that of the beauty pageant. This “woman” is sometimes accorded royal status in that she becomes known as a beauty “queen”. She might even represent her country in an international event of this kind and this gives her femininity even more powerful status in that she becomes an ambassador for her country and this is a high honour for any individual to achieve. When beauty is raised into this type of category femininity becomes something to idolise. It must be some achievement when beauty of this type can be competed for internationally.

This global aspect gives beauty a powerful connotation for women in society. Many advertisements for beauty products have a similar line “women the world over are using”. Thus the concept of femininity as a desirable identity for women takes on epidemic proportions which are virtually impossible for individual women to ignore let alone try to change. The fact that femininity is synonymous with acceptability means that most women will subscribe to its ideals to some degree for most of their lives and will spend a great deal of time and money in doing so. As said in Chapter Two the media are powerful reinforcers of social norms and through their use of stereotypes they are able to reinforce acceptable identities. An individual’s sense of self worth is reliant on acceptance by other members of the groups to which they belong. If the media promote these identities as desirable then the result is a powerful form of constraint which is almost impossible for an individual to break away from. Femininity can be said to be conspiratory in nature in that it conspires against women who wish to pursue a different path. It turns women’s attention

toward themselves and toward other women by focussing on their physical appearance rather than on their oppressed position within their society.

Beauty pageants are one form of feminine ideal that has see-sawed in popularity despite the protests of feminists. In New Zealand beauty pageants are no longer televised. Feminists like Sue Kedgley, (*New Zealand Woman's Weekly* July 12 1993 p18) believe that beauty pageants contribute to problems in society (perhaps unwittingly). Kedgley says that the roots of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are attributed to women succumbing to the pressure of the images presented in these pageants. This form of protest has largely been ignored and passed off as jealousy by women who have not been endowed with the necessary physical attributes. It is not clear whether these claims can be substantiated.

The values attributed by Western society to these images of femininity with its ideal body shape are: slim, no excess fat, and well-rounded firm breasts. My analysis has confirmed these values as evidenced by my portrait of an ideal contestant who is symbolic of these images of femininity. Coward (1984:45) says the shape is a version of an immature body. The ideal is an older woman who keeps an adolescent figure. There are numerous pictures in magazines of actresses and singers who supposedly achieve this much idolised body shape and they become role models for ordinary women to judge themselves by. Coward says the value of immaturity is noted in the practice of shaving hair to give a pre-pubescent look. In the 1992 Miss New Zealand beauty pageant owing to the high-cut leg line of the swim suits there was a noticeable practice of shaving/removing much of the pubic hair. Coward (1984:41) believes that this image of sexual immaturity connotes powerlessness. By projecting an image of powerlessness this reinforces the need for women to remain dependent on males as the voice of authority.

Hansen and Reed (1986:65) say that through Hollywood stars and beauty contests of all kinds, these physical ideals are maintained. Portrayed as "beauties" these women are paraded before the eyes of the hypnotised mass of women through every available means

in the movies, on television and in glossy magazines. Hansen and Reed (1986) make an interesting point here which I also found when conducting my own data analysis. They say that the monotonous uniformity of these “beauties” is appalling and every vestige of variety, which she says is the keynote of real beauty has been erased. Hansen and Reed liken these “beauties” to factory produced cookies (Hansen and Reed:1986:66). There are clear examples of this throughout my data analysis in particular when the affects of sponsorship saw individual choices and individuality eliminated from the Miss New Zealand beauty pageant. The evening wear section of the 1987 pageant where five different colour choices for 19 contestants made this section appear rather uninspiring and the 1992 swimwear section where the 20 contestants were divided into four groups of five with each group being assigned a particular colour to model. As well as the elimination of individual choice in clothing, there is now a standardised physical ideal which promotes desirable hair length, hair colour, height, physical measurements and age. The message here is that conformity equals acceptability. There is no room for individual choice. This conveys the message to women that to be yourself is not acceptable you must be what society says you should be. Standardised norms are created and reinforced by the media who put these norms up for all women to aspire to.

Coward (1984:45) says most women realise this image is impossible and relates to the wishes of our culture rather than something which is actually attainable. We remain trapped by the image, though, because our culture generates such a violent dislike of fat. The wearing of bikinis in the 1992 Miss New Zealand beauty pageant was evidence of just how far contestants need to go to prove they have no excess flesh. There would be no way that anything less than an ideal body would have been allowed to display a bikini.

The ideal body is also evidence of pure devotion to an aesthetic ideal of sexuality - a very limited sexual ideal according to Coward (1984:45). With regard to this point about the aesthetic ideal of sexuality which beauty pageants exhibit, it is not so much that contestants are to be seen as sexually active but rather as sexually attractive. Modern contestants are presented as sexually provocative but not necessarily sexually available.

These contestants are not advertising their sexuality but rather they are representing the ideal physique as sexually attractive. The point being that they catch the attention of males which reinforces their desirability. The illusion created by the rituals they execute gives them an air of mystique. They are on show for public scrutiny and approval but not for the public to touch. In the case of the 1992 Miss New Zealand pageant the contestants used a range of moves and props to exhibit sexuality but at the same time their sexuality is was not on offer other than for viewing. The sort of props the contestants used were transparent hooded jackets, wraps and scarfs (sometimes worn in a yashmak style), and sunglasses to give an air of mystery to the eyes.

The significance of these findings indicate that indeed the stereotype has a useful place in the study of media content. This thesis has identified the way in which the media use stereotypes as a measuring gauge for women to compare themselves to and aspire to. By using stereotypes in this analysis it can be seen that women's depiction by the media is not representational of reality in society but rather what society would like women to be. By presenting certain images as ideal then the underlying ideology behind these media images becomes clear. These images are indicative of what patriarchal societies would like women to be. By luring women to conform to these images and by focussing their attention on themselves then there is little likelihood that women will unite together (by going against these images) to challenge the existing power structures within their society.

This study has been limited to beauty pageants which is a narrow but useful media content. It is one area of media where women are on view collectively and competitively and this was one of the main reasons for choosing this type of data. Images of femininity are the basis for beauty pageants and as such analysing these pageants have enabled me to chart the trend of standardisation as it has become apparent in the beauty industry. As said in earlier chapters there is room for debate on which type of methodology is best suited to the study of media content. Studies on audience based research which look for the ways in which the viewer takes meaning from the content would be interesting in that they might give a clearer indication of what images of femininity mean to the individual woman

and how that woman might interpret her own image as well as that of others after viewing beauty pageants. These audience based studies might also reinforce studies which focus on the ideology behind these images.

While I have focussed on a content analysis this type of study might well be strengthened if in-depth interviews were carried out with beauty contestants to gain an insight into how they see femininity in their lives. This could be done in conjunction with interviews from ordinary women in order to identify whether or not women who are not actively involved in the beauty industry interpret images of femininity differently from those who are. It would be interesting to know the reasons why women would be prepared to deviate from these accepted images of femininity and what they feel the consequences would be if they were to do so. Interviewing past winners (which is done from time to time by women's magazines) to see if they feel that there have been barriers to employment and other opportunities as a result of their participating in a beauty pageant would also be useful.

Overall, I feel that this thesis has contributed to media and feminist sociology by empirically identifying the described trend towards standardisation, and theoretically, has highlighted the usefulness of the stereotype concept (in spite of its limitations) as a means of identifying the ideology which lies behind the images of femininity.

Appendix

Transcript of Question Content 1987 and 1992

This appendix contains the transcript of the questions and responses of the 1987 and 1992 Miss New Zealand beauty pageants. In 1987 a question was put to the nine semi-finalists, followed by another question put to the six finalists. In 1992 only the five finalists answered a question.

The nine semi finalists were Miss Wairarapa; Miss Christchurch-Canterbury; Miss Auckland; Miss Northland; Miss Wellington; Miss Otago; Miss Counties; Miss Waikato; and Miss Taranaki.

Miss Wairarapa was asked: "If you were asked in London at the Miss World what New Zealanders were really like what would you tell them?"

Contestant's response: "Well, I'd say that they were probably one of the most friendly nationalities that I can think of. They've got a good sense of humour. They're bright and cheerful and basically just wonderful people to know."

Compere: "We sound so nice don't we?"

Miss Christchurch-Canterbury: "Do you think that New Zealanders are more like English people than other commonwealth countries say Australia or Canada?"

Prior to asking this question the compere commented on Christchurch being often described as the most English city outside England. If the contestant had been aware of the correlation of this remark to her question she could have had an unfair advantage in that it related directly to her question.

Contestant's response: "Yes, I certainly think so. I think probably the accent has a wee bit of an English touch to it as well."

Compere: "Thank you very much Miss Christchurch-Canterbury."

Miss Auckland: “If you were at the Miss World contest as Miss New Zealand what would you most like to promote about this country, New Zealand?”

Contestant’s response: “Well I think that New Zealand has got a lot to offer especially in the Maori culture now - that we are very proud to have another nationality to be in our country and now its coming in the schools and speech and everything and I think our land is beautiful. We are a pollution-free country and I’m very proud of it.”

Compere: “Thank you very much Miss Auckland.”

Miss Northland: “If you were in London trying to tell people of the beauties of Northland where would you begin?”

Contestant’s response: “Well I’d try and have a fresh approach. To try and let that be the first reflection of our country and then I would say that New Zealand is mainly still a farming country and that we have such a vast majority of things to offer in New Zealand ranging from upmarket cities to farming places to the desert to snowy mountains as well.”

Compere: “and all the beauties of Northland too. Thank you Miss Northland.”

Miss Wellington: “Can I ask you on a different note now what made you enter the contest?”

Contestant’s response: “Well I entered it for the experience that it was going to give me and for the fun of being in it and meeting everyone and also to be in a live television production”

Compere: “Well I hope it is up to your expectations is it?”

Contestant’s response: “It certainly is.”

Miss Otago: “What would you like to tell the world if you went to London about your home town Dunedin?”

Prior to this question the compere noted that Otago is the traditional home of Miss New Zealand contest.

Contestant's response: "Um, Dunedin has got a beautiful atmosphere. I'm sure everyone would enjoy visiting Dunedin. We've got beautiful architecture, wonderful scenery and I'm not just talking about Dunedin I'm talking about Central Otago. Its just a wonder place and the people are great."

Compere: "Thank you very much Miss Otago."

Miss Counties: "If you went as Miss New Zealand to the Miss World contest in London what New Zealand products would you do your best to try and promote?"

Contestant's response: "Well I'd have to tell all the English people that New Zealand has the best meat and the best butter in the world."

Compere: "and you would be telling them the truth. Thank you very much Miss Counties."

Miss Waikato: "You're from bustling Hamilton. If you were in London what would you tell the Londoners about Hamilton?"

Contestant's response: "Well I would tell them that Hamilton is called the Fountain City and is very beautiful and um that it is a very good place to meet. Everybody is down to earth and natural and really friendly and they'd really enjoy it there."

Compere: "Sounds like fun to me. Thank you very much Miss Waikato."

Miss Taranaki: "Shelley, You described Taranaki as the powerhouse of New Zealand. Is that what you would tell people if you went to London?"

Contestant's response: "Yes I would but also I would say to them Peter, that Taranaki is also showing great initiative in diversification of industry such as Tourism."

Compere: "Thank you very much Miss Taranaki."

The question put to the six finalists in 1987 was: **"Should beauty contestants be allowed to enter topless?"**

Miss Auckland: "Well I think that every girl has got their own decision to whether they want to do it or not but personally I wouldn't do it. But I don't think that New Zealand as a country would like their ambassador to do perform that overseas."

Compere: "Well said, Thank you Miss Auckland."

Miss Taranaki: "Well I think every girl's got their own opinion and but personally Peter I don't think they should be allowed to because I think that they should be able to preserve some part of their body and of their image to keep to themselves."

Compere: "Thank you very much Miss Taranaki."

Miss Wellington: "Well, my opinion is "no I think it would downgrade it and it would actually put an end I would say to it - the competition - there would be so many girls that would pull out because they would not want to be involved in a pornography television programme."

Compere: "Thank you very much Miss Wellington."

Miss Christchurch-Canterbury: "Well, Peter, I think it takes a lot more to win the Miss World than just going topless and if that is the case I would have been doing it years ago."

Compere: "Thank you very much. Thank you Miss Christchurch-Canterbury."

Miss Waikato: "Well I think if they entered in topless it would become a boob competition not a beauty competition."

Compere: "Fair enough. I think that says it all."

Miss Counties: "No I don't. I think that it would lower the tone of the contest, and its supposed to be a beauty fashion show for family viewing and I think that a person should be judged on more than just their physical attributes."

Compere: "Thank you Miss Counties."

1992 Questions

The format for questions for the 1992 pageant was quite different to the 1987 format. Questions were asked of the five finalists only. These five finalists had to select a card from the compere's hand with a number on it which corresponded to a member of the judging panel. The contestant was then asked a question by that particular judge.

Miss Otago picked a card and answered a question from judge **Louise Brown**.

Judge's question: "Karly, if you could influence young people in today's world what would your message be?"

Miss Otago's response: "My message would be simply just to be yourself. So many people these days try and be something else and be a false person and the image I would wish to portray to young people is an honest image of myself with no added extras of trying to be anyone else."

Miss Auckland selected a card from judge **Sharon Kayward**.

Judge's question: "Nicola, now that you have been rehearsing in the pageant for two weeks have you got any advice to pass on to other young women who would like to enter the Miss New Zealand contest?"

Miss Auckland's response: "Yes, I would definitely recommend entering a contest like this that is so much fun behind the scenes with all the girls. We get really close and made a lot of good friendships through the pageant. I've learnt a lot about not only confidence um in being confident on stage I've learnt a lot about back scenes of television which has really helped me a lot. Thank you."

Miss Canterbury selects a card from judge **Helen Mills**.

Judge's question: "Miranda, what do you consider to be the most unique quality and why?" (The judge does not clearly indicate what was meant by unique quality).

Miss Canterbury's response: "I think the most unique quality of New Zealand is the people and how friendly everyone is. You can go anywhere and make friends automatically and everyone is willing to give to other people and definitely I would have to go for people."

Miss Wellington selects a card from judge **Maisie Bestall-Cohen**.

Judge's question: "Who would you choose as a role model in today's society and why?"

Miss Wellington's response: "Well, I think I would choose Mother Theresa because I think she has given up all of her wealth to help the poor people and she's made tremendous effort and a lot of people don't realise that. Thank you. But that's the one person I would follow as a role model. Thank you."

Miss Horowhenua selects a card from judge **Maureen Waaka** (Miss New Zealand 1962)

Judge's question: "Sheryl, if you were asked to choose a charity to receive a sizeable donation which would you choose and why?"

Miss Horowhenua's response: "The charity that I think I would choose would be the world famine to feed the starving people. I know that there are a lot of starving people throughout the world and it is extremely sad. The media portrays it very well and I think these people should be fed."

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