Girlish Images Across Cultures: Analyzing Japanese Versus U.S. Seventeen Magazine Ads

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The authors address cross-cultural variability in the manner in which advertising portrays teenage girls. Specifically, the level to which "girlish" images are portrayed in Japan and the United States by employing a content analysis of 263 advertisements appearing in eight issues of Seventeen, four Japanese and four American. Culture-based differences in advertising are discussed with a specific focus on how advertising constructs the image of teenage girls, and how, in turn, teenage girls are encouraged to identify with their mediated images of self. Chi-square analysis shows a significantly higher frequency of verbal and visual girlish images in the Japanese Seventeen issues.

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The authors thank Barbara Stern, three anonymous reviewers, and Chris Lee for helpful comments on previous versions of the article.

A casual skimming of Japanese magazines targeted to teenage girls reveals many smiling faces, especially in the advertisements. A quick glance through similar U.S. magazines, however, shows fewer smiling faces. Although some of the American girls smile brightly, many do not. The June 1995 issues of the Japanese and American versions of the teen magazine Seventeen provide a good example of the way that the portrayal of young females differs by country. The model pictured on the cover of the Japanese Seventeen is wearing a red knit cap, short blouse, and shorts, and she sits with her legs draped over the armrest of a bright yellow wicker chair. She smiles broadly, looking directly into the camera, appearing relaxed and happy. In contrast, the model on the cover of the American Seventeen is clad in a short, tight, blue blouse and bikini bottom and she strikes an almost defiant pose. Standing, she offers a sultry expression, neither smiling nor frowning as she looks straight into the camera. Although her lips are closed, her eyes hint at a smile and her head is tilted in the direction toward which her long hair drifts.

Such differences between Japanese and U.S. advertising images suggest that aspects of culture may influence the way in which teenage girls are portrayed. As noted by Pollay (1986), advertising works within a cultural context, selectively reinforcing the styles, roles, and values of the culture. In terms of societal standards of style and beauty, the idealized images portrayed in advertising help shape a person's self-image, contributing to the way one's identity is defined in society (Richins 1991; Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo 1992). Therefore, examining advertisements can illuminate how assumptions about and understandings of self are culturally constrained. We examine female adolescent images in Japanese and American mass media by investigating the extent to which visual and verbal portrayals of "girlish images" are used in magazine ads.

Many recent studies have examined the accuracy and fairness of portrayals of women (see, e.g., Baldwin 1996; Peirce 1993; Snyder 1996). In our study, however, we analyzed the prevalence of girlish images in a magazine representative of those targeted to teenage girls in Japan and the United States without positioning "girlish" within a political context. In general, when analyzing a phenomenon in a cross-cultural context, researchers must avoid the natural, unconscious tendency to refer to their own value system (the "self-reference criterion" in the international marketing literature,

Journal of Advertising, Volume XXVIII, Number 1 Spring 1999
Cateora 1997; Keegan 1997) and assess each culture as objectively as possible. We therefore hold in abeyance any judgment on the appropriateness of “girlishness.” The primary goals of our study were (1) to use content analysis to compare the prevalence of girlish images in U.S. and Japanese ads aimed at teenage girls and (2) to examine the cultural factors that underlie differences in the portrayal of young women in the two countries by drawing on prior literature and experience.

**Literature Review**

**Girlishness**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989, p. 530) defines “girlishness” as “of, or pertaining to girlhood” and gives the example sentence, “girlish feelings prompt this anticipation of satisfaction.” Although the *Feminist Dictionary* (Kramarae and Treichler 1985) does not include “girlish,” it appears to capture attributes of “girlishness” in its definition of “girl” as “a word to imply conformity, purity, delicacy, non-aggressiveness, and non-competitiveness” (p. 176). We do not conceptualize “girlish” as perjorative, but instead view the terms “childishness” or “childlike behavior,” “dependency,” and a general “nonthreatening demeanor” as constitutive of the term “girlish.” Additionally, the less commonly used term “girly-girly” captures the “exaggerated or affected manner” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p. 530) of girlishness. For our study, we drew on the preceding definitions to operationalize the term “girlish” to mean “a socially constructed, often playful childlike pose, spoken or acted out, that explicitly displays the vulnerability of approval seeking.”

“Girlish” need not apply exclusively to young girls. Ginsberg (1996), for example, applies the notion of “girlish” to the 50-year-old Goldie Hawn—“she erupts into her famous girlish giggle, completely contagious” (p. 106)—and describes Hawn’s approach to sex as “simple, direct, an unlikely combination of girlish innocence and worldly womanliness.” Further, “girlish” is clearly a gender-specific term in that it applies to females exclusively. The ironic reading of Joe Piscopo’s “my girlish figure” in the 1980s farcical Miller Lite commercial underscores the equation of “girlish” with attributes of manner or physique associated only with females.

Our study compared the frequency with which girlishness is portrayed in the verbal and visual components of Japanese and U.S. magazine ads. Although several studies have contrasted Japanese and American advertising (Lin 1993; Madden, Cabellero, and Matsukubo 1986; Hong, Muderrisoglu, and Zinkhan 1987; Miracle, Taylor and Chang 1992; Mueller 1987; Ramapurasad and Hasegawa 1990; Sherry and Camargo 1987), they have some limitations. How the language in the advertisements communicates to the audience in subtle, nuanced ways remains unclear. For example, previous studies have not examined nuanced distinctions such as those between a headline that reads “Stop” and a headline that reads “Whoa.” Whereas both denote the imperative command for cessation, the word “whoa” is a milder, more indirect way of saying “stop” or “hold on just a minute now.” Moreover, “whoa” affords the opportunity of characterizing the speaker, adding a hint of personality.

We contend that unless language-specific information is included in the analysis of text, the visual aspect of an advertisement assumes a disproportionate role in the way a researcher codes the advertisement. Content analyses that simply count and categorize on the basis of the visual do not fully capture the complexities of the way advertisements “mean” (see Stern 1996). When a researcher is categorizing foreign-language advertisements in particular, linguistic devices used in headlines can be overlooked if English translation is used for coding (Mueller 1992). Subtle but telling contextual aspects such as the style and manner in which the spokesperson speaks to the reader can easily be lost in translation. Hence, the advertisements must be coded in their original language if the visual components are to be captured adequately. The lack of micro-analysis of the language in Japanese advertising text may be due to the difficulty of dissecting the intricacies of the Japanese language. We used coders who were fluent in Japanese to overcome that problem and to allow for a close examination of how pictures and words work together in forming the message aimed specifically at the target audience.

**Self-Image, Identity, and Mediated Interactions**

A key reason for exploring the concept of girlishness in advertising is that, at a societal level, media can play a significant role in the development of one’s self-image or self-identification (Belk 1988; Cathcart and Gumpert 1983; Martin and Gentry 1997; McCracken 1989). The images one looks at contribute to the way one perceives what is acceptable, normative, or even “perfect.” According to Cathcart and Gumpert (1983), the more advertisers project images the reader has been taught to value, the more the reader will see himself/herself in them, creating a feedback loop in which readers strive to produce a self-concept (identity) that confirms the image.
The transfer of images through the mass media occurs within a cultural context, and to understand fully the societal impact of advertising images we must consider the cultural context in which images and messages are conveyed. In general, advertising serves the role of transferring meaning within that context, as McCracken (1989, p. 314) points out:

Advertising serves as an instrument of meaning transfer in a deceptively simple manner. The transfer process begins when the advertiser identifies the cultural meanings intended for the product (i.e., the type of gender, status, age, lifestyle, time, and place meanings).... In the language of current advertising practice, the advertiser decides what he or she wishes the product to say.

Once this choice has been made, the advertiser surveys the culturally constituted world for the objects, persons, and contexts that already contain and give voice to these meanings. These elements enable the advertiser to bring the selected cultural meanings into the advertisement in visible, concrete form.

A key to the success of advertising transference of culturally based meaning associated with a product is receiver identification with the stimuli in the ad. Kamins (1990) theorizes that celebrity endorsements work by means of a convergence of the image of the celebrity and the image of the product in a way that stimulates receiver identification, referring to that idea as the "match-up" hypothesis. Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo (1992) extended Kamins' match-up hypothesis to suggest that there are different types of physical attractiveness and that specific types of attractive models (or endorsers) should be matched with specific types of products. For example, a "girl-next-door" model (with a natural, un-made-up appearance and simple attire) might be appropriate in ads for products such as milk or basic clothing, whereas a model exhibiting "classic" beauty (with perfect physical and facial features) would be appropriate for products such as upscale cosmetics and perfumes (Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo 1992). Through "beauty match-up," the advertiser increases the chance that people will relate to the ad (Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo 1992). Further, specifically in marketing, peer pressure in terms of social influence from one's reference group drives the rationale for frequently introducing a same-gender, same-age spokesperson in advertising. Marketers generally assume that actors and models in advertisements should "be like" the target audience so that its members can relate to the ad (Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty, 1989).

Advertisements in both the Japanese and U.S. Seventeen magazines targeting teenage girls promote a sense of membership in a group to which one already belongs or which one aspires to join. Because identifying with the model is key to the process, physical appearance and facial expression of the spokesperson are determinant factors. By transposing a mirrorlike image of the readers' idealized self, the text producer hopes to ensure that the reader identifies with the image being advertised. Identity and rapport are achieved by closely matching the physical appearance, dress, style, and expression of the spokesperson with those of the intended reader, or with those of the reader's idealized self. Our study focused particularly on the notion of building girlish rapport with a young, female audience.

Conceptualization of Girlish Rapport and Hypotheses

A central construct in our study was girlish rapport. Ads characterized by girlish rapport attempt to build a high level of consistency (or match-up) between the images presented and the image the young female reader has of "self." That can be achieved through the use of models who strike girlish poses or speak girlish talk designed to foster identification with the reader. Operationally, girlish rapport is created by the advertisement's portrayal of models who are the same age and same gender as the readers and who smile, look directly into the lens of the camera, and speak to the reader (often through the guise of a headline) in the manner of a good friend or sister. For example, an ad in the January 1996 Japanese Seventeen prominently features a young woman smiling very broadly into the camera (visual rapport) and telling the reader that now, thanks to VO5 shampoo, she has gone from simply "care" to "aesthetics" and that her hair is revived, supple, and shines with luster (verbal rapport). The manner of her speech is girlish in that it is marked with exaggeration and onomatopoeia (the naming of a thing or action by vocal imitation of the sound associated with it, such as buzz or hiss).

In developing hypotheses about portrayals of girlish rapport in Japanese advertising in general, we needed to consider social positions of men and women, characteristic communication styles, and general attitudes toward notions of femininity. Japanese society is characterized by a clearer distinction in gender roles than is present in U.S. society (Rosenberger 1991). Fujimura-Fanselow (1995) attributes Japan's "miraculous" economic growth in part to the societal norms that privilege corporate employment for men while making women responsible for household matters and caring for children. According to Rosenberger (1991, p. 179), Japanese government policies sanc-
tion complementary societal positions by gender in requiring men to "devote themselves to large, private businesses with close governmental ties" while expecting their wives to "stay home at least part-time to support these men, their children and their parents." Japanese bifurcation of societal duties by gender suggests that men more frequently than women are encouraged to work toward a serious professional career. Although Japanese women now show signs of resistance to traditional ways (Fujieda 1995; Yoshizumi 1995), many young women are ambivalent about the pursuit of higher education (Brinton 1989). At the risk of promulgating essentialized masculine/feminine and work/home polarities, despite emergent structural changes, the woman's position is still circumscribed because "Japanese society is largely organized on a rigid gender division of labor (Tanaka 1995, p. 306). Hence, although a significant number of Japanese women are in the workforce (including many who work part time), a majority of Japanese women still focus primarily on traditional roles.

Insofar as traditional gender roles carry significance, difference in the language used by women and men is one of the characteristic features of the Japanese language (Barnlund 1989; Endo 1995). Given that communication influences interaction between the text producer and the reader, the female receiver's gender influences the shape, manner, and style of the text created to reach her. The Japanese advertiser builds affinity with young females by showing distinct characteristics of Japanese young girls' speech, such as a questioning, tentative, tone-emphatic elongation; liberal use of colloquial expressions; and/or a penchant for "in-words" commonly used by a peer group (Horiuchi and Oomori 1994). Boys' and girls' speech in the United States may not be as clearly demarcated, yet according to Tannen (1990) the difference between genders in interactional styles of speech is likely to influence both the form and content of conversations.

In a magazine such as U.S. Seventeen targeted exclusively to female adolescents, gender- and age-specific communication style is expected. An ad for Maybelline depicts a closeup of a teenage girl (with an expression on her face that says "And...?"), who is holding up three shades of a certain lipstick alongside the headline "WhatEVER!" She speaks to the audience's interest in personal grooming and does so in a voice that establishes rapport. The use of the teenage slang term "whatever" helps to establish the rapport (Dictionary of American Slang 1995). Magazines directed to young women in their teens who are entering into courtship are expected to address such topics as how to deal with young men, how eat a healthy diet, how to plan for a successful career, and so forth.

Social norms and gender roles suggest a greater bifurcation of advertising based on gender in Japan than in the United States. Consequently, societal attitudes toward femininity suggest that the portrayal of girlish rapport is more prevalent in Japanese ads. Miller (1993, p.481) contends that as a result of Japan's historical development whereby women have been assigned the role of keepers of the "native Japanese" spirit, in "numerous styles, schools or currents of calligraphy, poetry and art" traditional female roles are seen as having positive value. Rather than being viewed as a polar opposite to masculinity, femininity is viewed as providing an alternative positive value, at least in the artistic and social realms. Hence, whereas the high value placed on equality in the United States often leads to a focus on the ways in which masculine aspects of society have historically excluded women, the Japanese cultural value system does not seem to be concerned with making the sexes equal. In fact, according to Smith (1987), equality between the sexes is not viewed as a positive goal by most Japanese men and women because it is seen as a threat to the survival of the family. In sum, Japanese culture appears to view girlishness as acceptable manner of behavior for girls and young women without ascribing to it ideological notions of inequality to masculinity, inherent weakness, or social powerlessness.

**Girlish Rapport – Visual**

Communication in magazine advertising involves interaction actualized by both verbal and visual features. Especially relevant are the eye contact and smile of the spokesperson appearing in the ad. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1992), direct, straightforward eye contact accompanied by a smile generates a feeling of "closeness" between the person portrayed and the reader. Identity and rapport between the visualized subject and the reader, then, are achieved by the subject's direct eye gaze into the camera at close range. Goffman (1979, p.48) also offers insight on the meaning of a smile, stating that smiles "often function as ritualistic mollifiers, signaling that nothing antagonistic is intended or invited, that the meaning of the other's act has been understood and found acceptable—that the other is approved and appreciated." Hence, we conclude that a close-up shot of the spokesperson's face, smiling and making eye contact, invites rapport and identification with the reader.

Visual features of girlish rapport advertisements are characterized by (1) a dominant spokesperson of the same gender and age as the reader and (2) a
spokesperson who smiles at the reader. The effect is a personal and social mirror. The mirror is personal because the model in the advertisement resembles the reader and is social because the depiction of the model cues the reader to the appropriate way to present herself in society. The photographed model is seen somewhat close up, the face prominent in the advertisement. Products appearing in girlish rapport advertisements are subordinate to the spokesperson in terms of both visual dominance within the ad and relative emphasis. In such advertisements the spokesperson—even when other people are present—physically dominates the layout so that the reader is drawn into the modeled “self-image.”

For Japanese teenage girls, being “girlish” is not only acceptable (at least for a period of time), but also clearly and unambiguously desirable, even in sometimes exaggerated forms that highlight differences between the sexes in a way that is not typical in the United States. In comparing the visual aspects of Japanese and U.S. advertisements aimed at young women, we expected more of the Japanese ads to build girlish rapport through the portrayal of eye contact and smiling.

H1: The Japanese Seventeen issues contain more visual girlish rapport advertisements than the American Seventeen issues.

**Girlish Rapport—Verbal**

Although the logic applied to develop H1 also can be applied to verbal representations and scenic representations of girlish rapport, there is an even stronger rationale for expecting more such representations in Japanese ads. The verbal sign is approached from two specific perspectives, Talbot’s (1992) “text population” and the speech style of the Japanese language. According to Talbot (1992, p. 176-177), “...we can examine a text’s population by looking for traces of people addressing one another, traces of characters’ words or thoughts and traces of different kinds of conventional ‘voice’ used by a character.” Talbot’s three categories of “text population” are interactants, characters, and subject positions. Interactants are people who address one another, such as a reader and a writer; characters are people, whether real or invented, whose words or thoughts are represented in a text (or embedded in a text by being quoted, reported, or simply presupposed). Given the everyday usage and purpose of a magazine, at the most basic level the subject positions are information provider (writer) and information recipient (reader). At the more general level and in terms of the advertisements, subject positions in Seventeen magazine are those of the authorities on lipstick, cosmetics, clothing, health, and relations with boys, and those of the teenage girls who are seeking information about coming of age. Through the use of the editorial “we” and the familiar “you,” however, the advertisement’s inherent subject position as a “voice of authority” becomes a more intimate subject position as a friend.

Directness of “voice” plays an important role in the characterization of the advertisement’s tone. In terms of text population, the girlish rapport advertisement positions the spokesperson/model as a virtual interactant with the reader, as though the two were carrying on a conversation. The spokesperson’s headline, accordingly, reads as a line of dialogue expressed directly to the reader, indicative of two good friends who chat together, trade stories, or share secrets. Thus, the reader is encouraged to identify with the character in the advertisement as a person just like herself.

Verbal signs in girlish rapport advertisements have certain characteristics. In Japanese specific vocabulary words, use of particles, sentence structure, onomatopoeia, direct quotation, and exclamations characterize the speech style associated with adolescent “girl talk” (Horiuchi and Oomori 1994). In the following example we find the use of rhythmic onomatopoeia—sube, sube, kyuuh, kyuuh—functioning as adjectival phrases. According to Horiuchi and Oomori (1994), young girls favor onomatopoeic words. Here the lively rhythmical cadence further enhances positive, upbeat feelings associated with a new Shiseido body soap:

Sube sube, kyuuh kyuuh no bodii soopu ga detah!
Literal translation:
Smooth, squeaky clean body soap appeared!

Also noteworthy is the informal exclamatory form of the verb form detah! —a cartoonlike graphic representation of casual spoken style common among teenage girls—that adds to the impression that the spokesperson (a smiling “girl”) is directly addressing the reader as a friend. She announces the news just as she would to a group of girlfriends.

Unlike Japanese grammar in which gender differences are clearly marked, English grammar does not signify gender differences. Rapport building among U.S. teens of either sex, then, can be based on youthful colloquialisms such as “you know,” “gotta,” “like,” and so forth, as in the following headline from a Cover Girl Lip Balm ad:

“Blush your lips with natural color that cares like crazy!”
The headline is presented in what appears to be someone's handwriting and is enclosed in quotation marks. The handwritten form of the headline personalizes it, giving the message an informal, conversational tone. The reader may well receive the "blush your lips" command—a direct style of speech—as words from a good friend, almost as though the friend were sharing a secret. The exclamation mark also reflects colloquial "girlish" talk conveying a positive and lively mood.

The strongly marked "female" language for Japanese girls, as opposed to the weakly marked "female" language for American girls, led to a second prediction.

H2: The Japanese Seventeen issues contain more verbal girlish rapport ads than the American Seventeen issues. An advertisement can be visually and/or verbally girlish or a combination of the two. Together, H1 and H2 suggest a greater intensity of "girlishness" in the Japanese magazines than in the U.S. magazines.

H3: The Japanese Seventeen issues contain a higher degree of girlishness (combining visual and verbal rapport) than the American Seventeen issues.

Method

In our cross-cultural analysis, controlling for magazine, target audience, and issue (time) was essential to ensure equivalence of the samples (Miracle, Taylor, and Chang 1992). Accordingly, our data came from eight issues of Seventeen magazine, four from Japan and four matched issues from the United States (June 1995, July 1996, January 1997 and June 1997). Each pair had three important characteristics: identical titles, same target, and same year and month of publication. Despite the identical titles, however, the Japanese and U.S. Seventeen magazines are operated independently (i.e., are owned by different companies) and do not contain translated articles. The shared target is female adolescents. The American Seventeen, published monthly, has a circulation of about 1.4 million with a target age range of 12 to 20 years. The Japanese Seventeen, aimed at a comparable age group, is published semimonthly and has an audited circulation of about 550,000 (Zasuki Soo Katarogu 1994). The shared time of publication controlled for time-based effects (history) as a threat to validity (Campbell and Stanley 1963). As the purpose of the study was to examine portrayals of girlish rapport in advertising, only ads containing models were included in the sample. Excluding self-referential advertisements (ads for Seventeen itself), we found 104 advertisements with models in the four Japanese Seventeen issues and 159 such ads in the four American issues, summing up to a total of 263 ads (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that among products advertised in the eight Seventeen magazines, the most common were cosmetics (facial, body, and hair care products, fragrance, and deodorant) with a total of 40 ads (38.5%) in the Japanese and 105 ads (66%) in the American Seventeen. The next most common category for the Japanese Seventeen was audio/music, followed closely by food/beverage and then educational/recruitment. For the U.S. Seventeen, a distant second category was clothing. Table 2 shows that products associated with appearance and health are commonly advertised in both Seventeen magazines.

Two coders analyzed each ad. To avoid possible bias related to the cultural frame of reference, one coder was a native of Japan and the other a native of the United States. Both coders were bilingual and each had experience in both U.S. and Japanese cultural contexts, for the Japanese coder was a woman with a graduate degree from an American university and the American was a man who had done extensive work in Japan.

The two coders independently examined the ads and judged the presence and type of girlish rapport for each ad that featured a female model. To qualify as conveying visual girlish rapport an advertisement had to (1) feature a girl, approximately the same age as the target, (2) present the girl as the dominant focal point of the ad, (3) show the girl smiling, and (4) show the girl facing the camera. All advertisements were content-analyzed in terms of visual and verbal signs. Visual signs were judged first (whether the ad showed a dominant, smiling girl looking directly into the camera). Next, all of the headlines were judged as to whether the style or the content qualified as girlish. Intercoder reliability was high, exceeding the .85 standard for the percentage of agreement recommended by Kassarjian (1977): verbal girlish rapport 92.4, visual girlish rapport 95.2.

Results of Hypothesis Tests

H1, that girlish visual rapport is portrayed more frequently in Japanese Seventeen than in its U.S. counterpart, is supported. Table 3 shows that 70.2% of the Japanese ads and 40.2% of the U.S. ads conveyed girlish rapport in the visual component ($\chi^2=23.5, p<.001$). More than two thirds of the advertisements (70.2%) in the Japanese Seventeen issues featured a smiling teenage girl with a "girlish" countenance for the reader.

H2, that more ads contain verbal girlish rapport in the Japanese Seventeen than in the American Seventeen,
teen is also supported. The hypothesis predicts stronger rapport-building by means of intimate language in the Japanese ads. Verbal girlish rapport was found in 43.3% of the Japanese Seventeen ads and 24.5% of the American Seventeen ads ($\chi^2=10.1$, $p<.05$).

Chi-square measurements support H3. Tests were run to compare instances in which both verbal and visual girlish rapport was shown. We found significant differences in visual plus verbal occurrences between the American (19 or 9.3%) and the Japanese (31 or 21.8%) samples ($\chi^2=13.1$, $p<.001$).

**Reflections: Girlish Images and the Cultural Message**

Numerous American ads are associated with images of independence, determination, and even defiance. For example, in an ad for Musk perfume by Alyssa Ashley, a young woman wearing a short red dress and boots is depicted riding on the back of a motorbike (driven by a burly man) and staring defiantly at the camera with the headline reading, "Sometimes even good girls want to be bad." In contrast, numerous Japanese ads portray a happy playful childlike girlish image. A prototypical example is an ad for Haruta shoes in which a young Japanese woman wearing a pink blouse and pigtails indicates that the shoe is "just my type."

One explanation for the difference relates to the way each culture understands the self. American culture celebrates the individual self—a self apart, independent from and equal to others. Hence, the frequent use of rebellious or defiant poses and language may be acceptable and may even help in gaining cohort approval (by suggesting behaviors that are "cool"). However, Japanese culture inculcates a sense of self that is less independent of others. Miller's (1993) discussion of Japanese selfhood and "subjectivity" introduces the concept of "gender-independent co-subjectivity," which means that each Japanese person, regardless of gender, is constructed as a subject in a relationship between two subjects (co-subjectivity) rather than between subject and object. According to Miller (p. 482), in Japan subjectivity seems to co-exist with a genuine sense of shared identity, which yields co-subjectivity, "the formation of the subject through identification with a group or community." Hence, advertising aimed at building girlish rapport by encouraging young female readers to identify with the model and message in an ad is consistent with the societal value placed on shared identity in Japan.

Another aspect of culture that provides insight to the Japanese results is the general emphasis on youthful, nonchallenging innocence for Japanese girls in Japanese culture. Because Japanese culture reveres age, young Japanese are implicitly permitted to act in ways that are distinct from those of older people. Hence, in view of the traditional gender- and age-based role expectations of Japanese society, messages that build girlish rapport are likely to appeal to Japanese girls.

In summary, we found that the Japanese and American magazines tend to portray teenage girls in different ways and that the differences correspond to each country's central concepts of self and society. Our results, although based on just four issues of a magazine from each culture, suggest that the message delivered to American teenage girls is mixed. Some ads clearly depict a girlish image, but most do not. The girlish image portrayed to the American audience is predominantly visual. The Japanese ads, however, appear to depict a fairly consistent model of girlishness to Japanese teenage girls. Moreover, the degree of "girlishness" in the Japanese ads tends to be high in that the mirror held up to teenage girls strongly reflects a girlish look, speech, and environment. Although certainly not in every ad, Japanese Seventeen is more likely than not to represent a young woman in a nonthreatening, exaggerated, and affected manner.

Our study has several methodological implications for future research. First, microanalysis of a text can disentangle the intricacies of communication within an ad, providing insight on the way culture is reflected in communication. Second, an interdisciplinary approach combining analyses of visual and verbal signs can reveal aspects of the advertising text not ordinarily analyzed. Third, textual analysis of a specific segment of popular culture in Japan can shed additional light on the philosophical issues of a group/individual axis and cultural receptivity. Finally, and most significantly, microanalysis of a sample of a popular culture text can lead to an understanding of the way different cultures encourage their members to identify themselves within their society.

Whether our results will be stable over time in the face of changing advertising trends warrants further study. For example, several U.S. editors, such as Liz Tilberis of Harper's Bazaar, have made policy statements suggesting a need to emphasize more cheerful, wholesome ads that reflect traits such as delicacy, purity, and non-aggressiveness. Such statements are part of a backlash against the use of sullen, unsmiling models in ads targeted at young women, a phenomenon known as "heroin chic." To examine whether the calls for change actually result in ads with more girlish images as well as whether changes in Japanese society will lead to changes in advertisements, longitudinal studies are needed. An additional
suggestion for future research is to examine the way
global advertisers cope with variations across cul-
tures in the portrayal of girlish rapport. Do global
advertisers (e.g., Calvin Klein, Estee Lauder) tailor
their ads to reflect the idealized images of young
women in various cultures?

A final issue for additional research is the way
advertisers use images that match target audiences
consisting of other groups (such as young men, eld-
erly consumers, consumers of a certain ethnic group,
voters, and so forth). At a conceptual level, such re-
search can contribute to a deeper understanding of
the way advertisers communicate with a target audi-
ence. It can also have key implications for managers,
especially if alternative methodological approaches
such as experiments are used in addition to content
analysis. Thus, researchers may be able to identify
the specific types of images that tend to "match-up"
with the desires and expectations of various target
audiences. Conceptualizing and examining specific
types of girlish appeals and their effectiveness enable
advertisers to gain more information on how to reach
young women. As Taylor and Stern (1997) point out,
we need much more knowledge about the types of
advertising images and appeals that are effective in
the Asian-American market. Additional research on
specific target audiences can provide information on
ways to target those groups more effectively.

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### Table 1
**Distribution of Ads with Female Models in Japanese and American Seventeen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Japan (No.)</th>
<th>U.S. (No.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1995</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1996</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1997</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1997</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
**Japanese Seventeen Versus American Seventeen Advertising by Product Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Japan (N=104)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>U.S. (N=159)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics (facial, body care, hair, fragrance products, acne, deodorant)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaving-related</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical (feminine care, supplement)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/water (candy, soft drink, water)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact lens-related</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, army, model recruit</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/music</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing (outer wear, underwear)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3
**Frequency of Girlish Rapport Ads in Terms of Visual, Verbal and Scenic Features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seventeen Japanese (N=104)</th>
<th>Seventeen US (N=159)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual (person)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visual: $\chi^2=23.5$, p<.001.
Verbal: $\chi^2=10.1$, p<.005.

### Table 4
**Preponderance of Girlishness in Ads in Japanese and U.S. Seventeen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girlishness</th>
<th>Japanese (N=104)</th>
<th>U.S. (N=203)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual plus verbal</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>