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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the content of Russian teen magazines published in 2003 meant for a female audience. Given that glossy magazines for female teenagers did not appear in Russia until 1991, the long-term effect of the messages these magazines engender is yet to fully be seen in the generations coming of age in post-Soviet society. This thesis is a first attempt to speculate on the effect these magazines are having on Russian teen girls. By analyzing the strategies used in these magazines to promote fashion, cosmetics, skin care and body image, we can perceive the ways in which Western norms of feminine beauty have been successfully imported to Russia during the last 15 years. This study examines the ideal of the "beautiful" female body propagated throughout the Soviet era, and how this ideal changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Implications for further research are discussed.
INTRODUCTION

Based on observations during my visit to Moscow in the summer of 1999, as well as my encounters with Russians in America, it seems that most Russian women are very fashion and appearance conscious. As I wandered down the streets and rode the metro of Moscow, I was struck by the way that the young women dressed: they all looked like they were “dressed up” by everyday American standards. Most wore skirts and dresses, their makeup and hair was done up nicely, and almost all of them wore high-heeled shoes. And then there I was – in baggy jeans and a tank top, wearing only face powder and some lip gloss, my hair back in a loose ponytail, some old leather slip-ons on my feet. Looking around, I felt underdressed, “unfeminine,” and felt as if my appearance alone screamed “I’m an American.”

As I sat on the metro, I got a closer look at the feet of these beautifully dressed women: even though many of them wore high-heeled shoes, none of them wore pantyhose, but some, awkwardly, wore those little skin-colored nylon half-stockings that you find at shoe stores to try on shoes, and others wore no sort of stockings at all. That is when I noticed that many of these women’s feet had blisters, corns, bunions, large calluses and even hammertoes – all likely caused by wearing, or squeezing into, strappy high-heeled open-toed shoes (that may have been a size too small) all day long in a city where the population relies on public transportation, and lots of walking to get around. The image of these “tortured” feet reminds me of the digression about feet in Aleksandr Pushkin’s immortal novel-in-verse, Evgenii Onegin: the tale’s hero, Onegin, is
enamoured of women’s feet but laments that: “I love their feet – though I confess / that all of Russia can’t contribute / three pairs of handsome ones.” (1.30. 8-10). It seems that almost two centuries later these three handsome pairs are just as hard to find! Looking at these women’s feet while on the metro, the very thought of a woman wearing high-heeled shoes while trying to get around Moscow made my feet hurt! – I could barely comprehend why these women would put themselves through that torture. I recognized then, as I still do now, that most women around the world often “suffer” for the sake of fashion and “beauty,” all in an attempt to express our “femininity.” We will squeeze ourselves into tight clothing, or wear modern-day “shapewear” (aka: girdles) under that form-fitting clothing, wear impractical and uncomfortable high-heeled shoes, pluck or wax our eyebrows, and so forth. These Russian women I saw in high-heels are no different.

In direct contrast to this image of the “Russian Beauty” [russkaia krasavitsa] whom I saw walking around the crowded streets and sitting on the sardine-packed metro trains of Moscow, there was the image of the old woman, the babushka. There she was, looking exactly like she did during Soviet days: not trying to draw attention to herself, she dresses modestly in an old housedress, her headscarf always on to cover her head, and on her feet she wears practical, comfortable, brown or black shoes. Most often, she is a bit on the plump side and she wears not a hint of makeup.

Why this stark contrast between the young and old? If the young Russian woman feels that it is necessary to always put her “best face forward” when stepping out of the home, should we feel that the babushka has “given up” on her looks? Probably not – the
babushka's appearance is generally neat; but unlike the young woman, she obviously is not preoccupied with what to wear, or how to do her hair and makeup before she leaves the house to go out and attend to her daily business. I am sure that, if it were within her economic means, the babushka would love getting a new hairdo or lipstick, or enjoy being gifted with a fragrant body lotion, just as much as the young woman would — because one feature of indulging in self-beautification is that it reaffirms and expresses a woman's femininity, which to some extent, gives her a feeling of self-worth.

These two generations of Russian women — grandmothers and their granddaughters — experienced, and are experiencing, very different ideological contexts of feminine beauty. The generations of babushki and their daughters came of age in a completely different world than their grandchildren's generation are developing in today. During the Soviet era, the female body was a commodity that served the Communist Party's ideology. This notion is perhaps best illustrated in Soviet art. A Soviet woman fulfilling her traditional role as mother is classically captured in Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's reinterpretation of the Madonna and child in his painting, *1918 in Petrograd* (1920), and the image of motherhood is evoked for patriotic reasons in Sergei Gerasimov's *The Mother of a Partisan* (1943–1940s). A Soviet woman fulfilling her new role as worker is demonstrated in Aleksandr Deineka's painting, *Donbass* (1947), and is also monumentally expressed in Vera Mukhina's massive sculpture, *The Worker and the Collective Farm Girl* (1937). In the post-Soviet era, the female body is still a commodity, but today it is commercially exploited within the sphere of the market, as can be seen in Russian teen magazines and advertising. In this thesis I will examine the ideal of the
“beautiful” feminine body that was propagated throughout the Soviet era, as well as how this ideal of the “beautiful” body is presented today in Russia.

Unlike their mothers or grandmothers, today’s Russian teenage girls have glossy teen magazines marketed to them, such as Shtuchka, Oops!, COOL GIRL and Seventeen, which send a variety of textual and visual messages about feminine beauty. In fact, one of the most widely covered topics in these magazines concerns beauty. By the general term “beauty,” I am referring to topics such as: fashion and accessories, cosmetics, skin-care, hairstyles and body image.

As Naomi Wolf argues in her groundbreaking work, The Beauty Myth (1991), women’s magazines play a key role in perpetuating the “beauty myth”: “magazines transmit the beauty myth as the gospel of a new religion” (86). The same can be said of magazines meant for girls and young women. Cultural observers, such as Angela McRobbie, who have studied girls’ magazines have viewed them as “natural vehicles for the early socialization of girls into traditional sexual and appearance-based standards of femininity” (Duke and Kreshel 51). The flood of visual images and textual messages of “ideal” beauty, “feminine” beauty, in teen magazines provide girls with culturally-imposed standards against which to judge themselves and an ideal to strive for. The appearance of these teen magazines in Russia, along with the bombardment of advertising and the massive increase of newly available consumer beauty products and fashion aimed towards women, all serve as what Joan Brumberg calls, “cultural mirrors” (70) for Russian girls.
Natalia Zakharova, a Soviet social critic foresaw that: “Glasnost’ and perestroika ... seem likely to bring Soviet women contradictory freedoms. Glamour will be one of them” (qtd. in Wolf 80). Women’s magazines transmit the ideal of glamour, and teenage girls’ glossy magazines are merely junior-versions of the women’s publications; in many ways, girls’ teen magazines serve as training manuals in the lessons of femininity. Given that glossy magazines aimed at teenage girls do not have a well-established tradition in Russia – they first appeared around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 – their long-term effects on their readers is yet to be assessed. This thesis is an attempt to evaluate the messages these teen magazines are sending today, and to speculate as to the impact of these messages; in particular, messages pertaining to the notion of feminine beauty. Since most of the Russian teen magazines on the market are published by Western-based firms – even if some of the material is written by Russian journalists – we have to wonder about the impact on Russian girls these Western-imported ideas and images about women, beauty, and their bodies are having. I argue that Russian teen magazines support, in Susan Bordo’s words:

the pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity – a pursuit without terminus, requiring that women constantly attend to minute and often whimsical changes in fashion – female bodies become docile bodies – bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, ‘improvement.’ Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress ... [women] are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. (166)

It is within this context that we can begin to speculate on the “damage” being done to Russian teenage girls by these teen magazines, and how the “freedom” that “glamour”
gives them is actually making them “slaves” to their bodies and to the market. Above all, by examining Russian teen magazines we witness how the young female Russian body today is a site of both ideological and market forces. It is a body that is not only marketed to, but marketed in its own right; it is a body that is being trained in the lessons of the production of the beautiful feminine body; it is a body being commodified and consumed.
METHODOLOGY / PUBLICATION INFORMATION ON THE MAGAZINES

My method of content analysis of Russian magazines from 2003 aimed solely at a female teenage audience was a multi-leveled approach. I examined these magazines front to back: I analyzed the covers, the advertising, the images in the magazines, the articles and fictional stories, the letters from readers, and anything else that happened to show up in different issues. I coded all of the data and separated it into three general categories:

1. Fashion and Accessories
2. Cosmetics and Skin and Hair Care
3. Body Image

My goal was to deconstruct these publications in order to discover what messages they are sending to teenage girls in Russia, and what this implies about life today for Russian teenage girls. I analyzed the magazines to see which messages about the female body and beauty have changed, and which have remained static over the last eight decades. It should be noted here that notions about the body and what constitutes feminine beauty have undergone significant changes in the Soviet Union since 1917 depending on ideological platforms and party mandates. Since I was dealing with magazines from different publishing houses, I was also concerned with discerning the ways in which these magazines differed from, or were similar to, one another, and the significance, if any, of these differences.

My analyses of Russian teen magazines focused on a total of nine issues from four different magazine titles published in 2003. All of the magazines I examined were
purchased in Moscow. With that in mind, it should be stressed that in this thesis I am focusing on girls in urban, as opposed to rural Russia. I examined one issue of a monthly magazine called Shtuchka [Cutie] (May 2003), the only magazine I am dealing with that originates from a Russian-based publishing house – Rovesnik. Shtuchka was first published in Russia in 1996 (“O kompanii”). I also looked at a Russian version of the popular American-originated teen magazine, Seventeen (October 2003), which is published in Russia by SK Press. According to the SK Press website, the Russian version of Seventeen first appeared in 2001 (http://www.skpress.ru). I analyzed two issues of a magazine called Oops! (May and October 2003) which is published by Hubert Burda Media (“Burda”), a German based firm with European circulation. Lastly, I analyzed five issues of a magazine called COOL GIRL, which is also published by Burda publishing house. COOL GIRL is published bi-weekly, and I looked at the following issues from 2003: No.2 (Jan. 22); No. 8 (April 16); No. 13 (June 25); No. 14 (July 9); and No. 15 (July 23). I could not discern exactly when COOL GIRL or Oops! first appeared in Russia, but from what I can ascertain, COOL GIRL first appeared sometime in the 1990s and Oops! first appeared just a few years ago.

A breakdown of the background of the publication information of each magazine will give a better sense of how and where these journals fit in to the current Russian publishing media. Out of the four magazines I analyzed, Shtuchka, published by the Russian-originated firm Rovesnik, had the lowest circulation [tirazh] with 55,000 copies. Seventeen magazine had a circulation of 100,000 copies. The Burda publications had the highest circulation numbers: COOL GIRL (the only bi-weekly magazine of the
four) had a circulation varying between 280,000 and 500,000, and *Oops!* had a circulation of 300,000 copies.

The target age group of *COOL GIRL* is 15 to 20 years old, whereas *Oops!* is targeted to a slightly older age group that ranges from 16 to 20 (“Russia: Oops!: Portrait”; “Russia: Cool Girl: Portrait”). The publishers of *Shtuchka* say that their magazine is meant for young girls aged 14 to 21 ("O kompanii"). Although the age-span of *Shtuchka*’s target audience seems rather large, it should be noted that *Seventeen*’s demographic target is even larger according to the magazine’s primary publisher, Hearst Magazines International: *Seventeen* is meant for girls aged 12 to 24. However, according to Hearst, the magazine’s peak age group is actually 18 to 24 year olds (“Seventeen”). I could not find any background publication information on the Russian version of *Seventeen*, whereas I was able to research the other publisher’s websites for this information, including advertising rates.

The advertising rates for *Oops!* were the highest, with *COOL GIRL*’s rates not far behind: a one-page full-color ad in *Oops!* costs $6600 USD, and in *COOL GIRL* it costs $5600 USD. To compare, *Shtuchka*’s rate for a one-page ad is $2000 USD. A comparison of back cover advertising costs revealed that in *Oops!* it is $7700 USD, in *COOL GIRL* it is $6600 USD, and in *Shtuchka* it costs $2800 USD. Given that advertising in *Shtuchka* is much cheaper than in Burda magazines, it is surprising that in the issue of *Shtuchka* I looked at, the only advertising in this magazine was for the promotion of other Rovesnik publications. Perhaps advertisers feel that *Shtuchka*’s lower circulation rate is reason enough to not put much money into ads, so instead they put the bulk of their money into
the Burda publications. Or perhaps, the advertising director of Rovesnik is not able to compete with the massive Burda firm in order to make connections with the consumer industry's corporations on a global level. It should be noted that an overwhelming majority of ads in all the other magazines were for non-Russian based products – most of the products advertised were mainly of Western European or American origin.9

As I will show in this thesis, the role of beautification in Russian teen magazines is heavily laden with ideological messages. In this thesis I will analyze the external aspects of feminine beauty. In Chapter One, I will give a brief overview of how beauty was constructed during the Soviet era; in Chapter Two I will proceed to a discussion of how fashion is presented in contemporary Russian teen magazines. In Chapter Three I will refer to Russian teen magazines' presentation of cosmetics and skin-care; and in Chapter Four, I will describe how the magazines handle body image. By examining the strategies used in these magazines to promote fashion, cosmetics, skin care and body image, and by analyzing the messages they are sending to young Russian girls today, we can begin to understand the ways in which the beauty myth has been successfully imported to Russia during the post-Soviet era.
In the first decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Communist Party stressed the creation of the “new” Soviet man and woman; this was a particularly significant issue for women because the Bolsheviks advocated the need for gender equality as part of the revolutionary order. In order to create the new Soviet woman, the nature of gender roles and relations had to be reworked, and as a result, questions arose regarding beauty and femininity. Discussing this time period, Lynne Attwood points out that: “If women were to be seen as comrades and co-workers, traditional notions of female beauty would have to be amended” (Creating the New 66). Attwood examines the visual and textual messages in the official Party magazines for women, Rabotnitsa [The Woman Worker] and Krest'ianka [The Peasant Woman], and describes how during the early years after the revolution, these magazines sent women conflicting messages about what constituted feminine beauty. At the same time that these women’s magazines were promoting a modest appearance for women – practical work-clothes, headscarves, simple hairstyles and a face free of cosmetics – they still ran advertisements for makeup and included patterns for stylish dresses (67). Women were confused about whether wearing cosmetics and jewelry was acceptable or not under the new regime. Complicating this struggle against traditional notions of feminine beauty was the extravagant appearance of wealthy “Nepmen” and their wives, “Nepwomen.”
The Party’s struggle to fight against traditional ideas of beauty reminiscent of Russia’s bourgeois past continued into the late 1920s and early 1930s. However, by this time, women’s magazines, with the help of the Party, had developed a more solid argument against traditional concepts of feminine beauty. Basically, the message was that women wasted precious time and money on self-beautification by means of cosmetics, extravagant hairstyles, and fashion. A woman who spent time doing such things was deemed to be selfish, shallow, and therefore not putting the good of the collective above her personal desires. During the late 1920s, Stalin began a rapid program of industrialization that required the hard work of every citizen, and women were called upon by their leader to enter the workforce. This resulted in a situation where “beauty and the capacity to work were inextricably tied together” (71). Thus, the strong body was the beautiful body. One perfect example of this feminine body type being monumentally iconicized is seen in Vera Mukhina’s statue The Worker and the Collective Farm Girl. Beth Holmgren describes this statue and its “spartan female body of Stalinism,” stating that the collective farm girl [kolkhoznitsa] has a “stern face, strong physique, plain dress” (225). Although at times portrayed as “stern,” Soviet women’s faces were also said to be “organically” beautiful because the physical work they did naturally made their cheeks rosy and their lips red. Therefore, as the magazines argued, Soviet women did not need to wear “harmful” cosmetics to make themselves more beautiful, unlike women in capitalist nations who used makeup in order to mask their “white, unhealthy cheeks and lips” (Attwood, Creating the New 69).
The belief that makeup did not “belong” in the Soviet Union because it was an unhealthy and deceiving artifice created by the West remained the “unofficial” Party stance for most of the Soviet era. Since there were shortages of available cosmetics for the average consumer in the Soviet Union, this was a rather convenient position for the Party and magazines to take concerning cosmetics. For example, when shortages of imported cosmetics and perfume reached an all-time high during the 1970s “era of stagnation,” the Soviet press issued articles about the “harmfulness” of foreign cosmetics and the contrasting “healthy” qualities of Russian-made cosmetics (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 99). Most women saw through this propaganda and in response continued to wait in long lines at stores, sometimes doing so by leaving their workplace for the day under the pretext of illness, to purchase whatever foreign cosmetics they could (100). One other response in the Soviet media to consumer shortages of cosmetics and skin-care products was to print recipes for homemade beauty treatments for skin and hair. These concoctions consisted of food products, such as oatmeal, honey, eggs, milk, cottage cheese, and certain fruits and vegetables. These natural beauty treatments are still used today in Russia: some of the magazines I examined printed recipes for masks made with food (COOL GIRL No. 14: 15; Oops! May 89; Shtuchka May 46; Seventeen Oct. 66).

The outcry in the state media about the “evils” of cosmetics was met with opposition. During the 1920s, some readers of Rabotnitsa wrote in to the magazine, explaining that they did not understand why it was unacceptable for a Soviet woman to wear makeup. After all, “not all people are born beautiful...using make-up is not a crime” (qtd. in Attwood, Creating the New 70). Another reader commented that she did not think
using makeup and getting dressed-up was so wrong, because doing so and then going out to have some fun “after the terrible work-day routine” was enjoyable for her (70). The magazine’s editors rebuked both of these readers, but such comments do illustrate a resistance to the official Party line of the time.

During the late 1930s, there was a shift back to more traditional notions of feminine beauty in Russia. Whereas just a decade before, Soviet women were encouraged to define feminine beauty in terms of their capability to work hard – the result being that women took on more “masculine” traits such as short hair, a muscular body, and clothing that did not emphasize their womanly curves – in the late 1930s, women’s magazines and the Party line began to shift back to an emphasis on women’s traditional “‘natural’ desire to look attractive” (Attwood, Creating the New 130). Yet, it should be noted that the Soviet woman was still expected to keep a “modest” appearance in how she expressed her “femininity,” which meant no ostentatious clothing or jewelry, no complicated hairstyles, and only “natural” looking rosy lipstick (131). However, not unlike the dichotomy of Soviet women’s double burden [двоиная ноша] – working full-time and being the full-time homemaker, housewife, and mother – notions of feminine beauty in the late 1930s required women to “[take off] their overalls for bright red spring dresses” at the end of their work-shift (Рабочая qtd. in Attwood, Creating the New 131). Now the double burden was more complicated because women were expected to “combine heavy work with femininity” (131).

From the post-Stalin era (1953) to the beginning of the Gorbachev era (1985), the Soviet Union very cautiously opened itself up to the West, and Russian women began to
wear makeup more freely. Russian women began to emulate whatever images of beauty came to them from Western sources. These depictions of beauty came from media sources such as films or magazines, and were usually pictures of Western entertainment stars. Soviet women had to be careful though, because dressing up too much, especially at the workplace, would make them objects of criticism. A 1963 issue of Rabotnitsa touches on this, explaining that:

You happen to go into an office on business and among the modestly dressed women you can’t help but instantly notice someone in a revealing dress of patterned silk brocade, with earrings in her ears, glittering beads around her neck, and three bracelets on her wrists. Heavy makeup and a complicated formal hairstyle complete her getup. Such an outfit is out of place during working hours; it doesn’t correspond to the setting, and besides, it doesn’t inspire confidence in the efficiency of its wearer. (qtd. in Vainshtein 69, emphasis in original)

To complicate matters, the Russian-made makeup readily available during most of the post-Stalin era was of poor quality, and therefore tended to look garish when applied because it “lacked subtle tones” (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 104). Hence, the common images of Soviet women wearing bright blue eyeshadow, dazzling red lipstick, bright rouge, jet-black eyeliner, and to complete the look – hair dyed an unnatural shade of red.

Most Soviet woman who wanted quality cosmetics had to turn to the blackmarket. Some of the female teenagers Deborah Adelman spoke to in 1989, whose narratives appear in her book *The “Children of Perestroika,”* commented on this reality. One girl, Olya, explained that she could not find hair gel in any stores, so she had to spend a lot of money in order to buy it on the blackmarket. Olya elaborates on the consumer goods shortages, bemoaning that:
We buy makeup from blackmarket dealers, who buy everything from foreigners – almost all our cosmetics come that way. To get a set of Italian cosmetics we pay fifty, a hundred rubles! If there’s no makeup, we use regular pencil to outline our eyes.12 (Adelman 65)

If the world of cosmetics was an uncertain and expensive one for women, it was forbidden for school-aged Soviet teenagers. If they were caught wearing makeup to school, they would be humiliated in front of their classmates; for example, they would be forced by their teachers to scrub their faces clean in front of everyone. Although girls were not allowed to wear makeup to school, the same puritan attitude also required that they maintain their modest appearance at all social events as well – only “bad” girls wore makeup. As with anything that young people are forbidden from doing, this prohibition only heightened Soviet girls’ desire to wear makeup. During the 1960s and 1970s, Soviet girls formed “spontaneous collectives, to spend hours experimenting with various kinds of makeup … as they tried on first one face then another, in search of the ‘right self,’ uncompromised by official dictates” (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 99). This acquisition of and experimentation with cosmetics by the girls can be seen as a form of rebellion and protest.

The resulting freedoms and democratization that Gorbachev’s glasnost’ [openness] and the post-Soviet years introduced to Soviet society facilitated a major shift in what was considered the ideal of feminine beauty in Russian culture, largely a result of increased contact with the West. As Naomi Wolf points out, women’s outdated glossy fashion magazines as well as men’s pornographic magazines were imported to the Soviet Union from America beginning in 1990 (80). Even before this, in 1987, the German
publishing house Burda began publishing Russian-language women’s fashion magazines in the Soviet Union (Kozlov). These magazines, along with the beauty contests that first appeared in 1988, changed the way that Russian women saw and thought about themselves; they also changed Russian men’s perceptions of women. Due to these changing perceptions of women, I will show that it was inevitable that while Russia was transitioning to a market economy, the female body in Russia began to be considered a commercially exploitable and marketable commodity.
CHAPTER TWO
Fashion in Russia: Yesterday and Today

Of all the topics encompassing external "beauty," fashion appeared the most frequently in the Russian teen magazines from 2003 that I examined. Fashion is so important to teenagers because, as Paul Willis explains:

clothes, style and fashion have long been recognized as key elements in young people’s expression, exploration and making of their own individual and collective identities. They remain amongst the most visible forms of symbolic cultural creativity and informal artistry in people’s lives in our common culture. (qtd. in Markowitz 68)

For teens living in the Soviet Union, coming across fashionable clothing was often difficult. This was a result of chronic consumer goods shortages and a Soviet textile industry that produced poor quality fabric. Usually, when there were quality clothing or accessories available, they were reserved for the Party elite and their families, or if made available to the public, the supply did not match the demand and the items were simply too expensive for the average citizen to afford. With increasing contact with the West, the availability of consumer goods in the USSR gradually began to increase, giving urban teenagers more opportunities to experiment with fashion and style in order to express their identity.

The lack of consumer choices in clothing during the Soviet era was a problem that can be traced back to the early years of the Soviet Union. In the 1920s, women’s magazines such as Rabotnitsa and Krest’ianka encouraged women to wear simple, modest clothing that would not get in the way while they worked (Attwood, Creating the
New 71). Naturally, the sort of clothing being promoted in the magazines was made out of ordinary cotton, wool, or linen fabric, and patterns were even printed in the magazines so women could easily make their own clothing using readily available fabric.\textsuperscript{13} During the 1930s, shortages of affordable ready-made clothing continued, but this was also a time when the importance of women dressing beautifully, in order to express a sense of “culturedness” [being cultured, \textit{kul’turnost’}], received official approval from the Party (Attwood 132, 135). This concern for personal appearance and beauty in the 1930s contradicted the modesty of the 1920s when women were directed by the Party not to dress in a “flashy” manner. Although Soviet textile production came to an abrupt halt with Russia’s entry into World War II in 1941, Russian women’s magazines in the post-war era prominently featured stories about fashion. A 1948 issue of \textit{Rabotnitsa} reads: “The Soviet person has become more beautiful, both in mind and soul! His \textit{sic} clothes must also be beautiful!” (qtd. in Attwood 164). It is evident in this example that fashion served an ideological function in the Soviet Union in the creation of the new Soviet body.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, ready-made clothing priced for the average Soviet citizen was limited in variety, and so it became very common to come across people wearing identical outfits, sometimes within the same day. As Olga Vainshtein explains:

\begin{quote}
The panicky fear of meeting one’s double played a perceptible role in the psychology of purchasing clothes and selecting their style. Many women preferred to have their outfits sewn by tailors or to knit their own woolen items so as to avoid these dreaded duplications. (65)
\end{quote}
Expressing individuality through ready-made Soviet clothing was clearly difficult during most of the Soviet era. There were however a few solutions to this problem, which was acutely felt by teenagers in search of their identity. One solution was merely to supplement your wardrobe with whatever western imported fashion and accessories that you could find and afford in the underground “second economy” network. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, and increasingly in the 1980s, Soviet youth’s fascination with all things from the West turned into an “obsession”: teens tracked down and purchased items such as blue jeans, bell bottoms, and rock albums from the West that were status symbols. Such items gave Soviet teens a form of capital in both a literal sense – these items could be traded for other desirable items (Pilkington, “The Future” 371) – and a figurative sense; owning Western items gave someone “subcultural capital.”  

One other solution to Soviet youth’s problem of expressing individuality and identity by means of clothing was to focus on “style,” as opposed to “fashion” per se; since there were limited choices of clothing, a girl who wanted to express herself had to be very creative in how she put together outfits to create her personal style. This ultimately resulted in a style of *bricolage*: teens mixed old and new Russian-made clothing and accessories with handmade items, and a few Western items. This style strategy is an example of what Paul Willis calls “symbolic creativity,” referring to the way in which “individuals and groups seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning” by their choices in clothing, music, and dance (Willis 546-547). This was the approach to style adopted in the mid-1980s by Zhanna Aguzarova, lead singer of the 1950s-style revival rock band “Bravo.” “Bravo” helped to revive the *stiliagi* (“cool
dressers") subcultural style that had its origins in the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s.\textsuperscript{16} Zhanna Aguzarova put a female twist on the traditional stiliagi style: her style consisted of a man's black suit, worn oversized and loose, a white buttoned long-sleeved shirt, a narrow tie and patent leather men's-style shoes (Pilkington, Russia's Youth 228). This gender-bending style inspired Russian girls to experiment with finding their identity via style in a nation where uniformity and predictability were the norm.

Even during the late 1980s the Soviet Union still lagged far behind the West in terms of the quality and quantity of consumer goods. This fact was no secret to Soviet citizens: they dealt with shortages of consumer goods on a daily basis, and never left home without their net or string avos'ka (commonly referred to as a “hope bag”) in case they stumbled upon a store that had recently received a new shipment of something that had been in deficit [defitsinyi] for a long time. Similarly, this Soviet reality was no secret to Westerners: we all knew about the long lines for staples such as bread or sugar, as well as about the poor quality of consumer goods.\textsuperscript{17}

Young people in the Soviet Union commented on this grim reality when they spoke with Deborah Adelman, an American scholar, in 1989. Much of what the teens said about fashion in the Soviet Union confirms that teenagers were frustrated with the lack of consumer choice. One 17 year-old Muscovite, Olya, proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
Nobody here knows how to wear makeup, how to dress. They can't do anything. We have one designer, Zaitsev, only one good designer for the whole Soviet Union!! We grab like monkeys for everything we can from the West, from Italy, from France – cosmetics, fashion, stockings, music, heavy metal, rock. We ourselves aren't capable of inventing anything. It's even embarrassing. Don't tell me that people here are really so uninventive? (Adelman 64-65)
\end{quote}
Such self-deprecation on the part of Soviet teens speaking about their country in direct comparison to the West, was part of a larger *zeitgeist* that characterized the Gorbachev era (1985-1991). During this time, a radical “anti-isolationist” policy of westernization [*vesternizatsiia*] began in the USSR, the effects of which placed the West on a pedestal for the Soviets to worship, adore, and emulate as best they could. In turn, this uncritical attitude toward the West created what A.I. Utkin referred to as “masochistic self-criticism” among the Soviet citizenry (qtd. in Pilkington and Bliudina 7). Alexei, another teenager Adelman spoke with, exhibits this trait when he explained that:

Everyone I know wants to know about America ... And even though American young people are like us, we lag behind them a lot, even in clothing. We lag far behind in the level of our development, psychologically and socially. The way we dress ... we all look alike; what I like about America is that nobody looks like anybody else. Nobody wears a uniform like soldiers. Everyone [in America] wears his own clothes and doesn’t look like everyone else. There’s a choice; you wear what you like, but here there is no choice. (214-215)

Alexei goes on to describe what the typical young Muscovite’s “uniform” in 1989 looked like: “The guys are in sweatsuits, the girls in berets ... and they all have perms. That’s a must. They’re as alike as test-tube babies. They wear either jeans or boots from a cooperative, nothing more [*sic!*]” (215).

Besides consumer shortages, the fact that Soviet youth were forced to wear school uniforms further complicated their ability to express their identity via style. It is possible that compulsory school uniforms stifled their ability to seek out and express their identity in order to “stand out” in the crowd. As Fran Markowitz explains, Soviet teenagers’
“personal individualism was hidden by the infantile dresses and pinafores worn by girls and the ill-fitting suits for boys” (18). The monochromatic school uniforms and the red Pioneer ties reinforced the ideological importance of the collective [kollektiv] both physically and mentally; it made homogeneity of appearance the norm, and the red Pioneer tie was a physical reminder of one’s duty to the nation, expressed by discipline, diligence and patriotism. With the disbanding of the Pioneer organization in September 1991, a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union during the last months of that year, Soviet youth were overjoyed at being able to discard at first their red ties, and then their school uniforms. Finally, they could begin to express themselves via fashion and style at school; they could participate in “free-style” dressing. As Markowitz reveals in Coming of Age in Post-Soviet Russia, “this newly found channel for self-expression gave them a first, and perhaps only, public opportunity to break out of what they labeled the chustvo stada [herd mentality] that had pervaded their early years” (57).

One way in which privileged Soviet citizens tried to break away from the “herd mentality” was to dress in practically nothing but imported Western [firmennaia] clothing. Beginning in the 1980s, this translated into a “style of excess” among Soviet women who could afford to dress in a chic manner [odevat’ sia shikom]. Olga Vainshtein describes the fashionably “dressed up” Soviet woman of the 1980s:

Her image ... is that of a woman in [brightly colored] evening makeup, with gold jewelry, dressed vividly and richly, with a preference for fur, real leather, clothes from famous Western fashion houses with designer labels intended to catch the eye – in short she exhibits ‘conspicuous consumption’...” (71)
In the 1990s, and to a certain extent today, the “style of excess” remains among some Russian women who want to and can afford to “dress up”. In the post-Soviet era, the appearance of the “New Russians” [novye russkie], the nouveau riche, has continued the “style of excess,” the goal of which is to outwardly display one’s newly acquired wealth. As Vainshtein explains, the New Russians have “the financial means [to dress up], but no knowledge of the ideological language of fashion” (72). The result is excess, a “style of mismatch” as I call it, because clothing styles often clash. To the American eye, Russian’s outfits can sometimes appear to be garish and/or the slightest bit “off”: there is something about how individual clothing items and accessories, some or even most of which are Western imports identical to what we have in America, are put together to make an outfit that seems to be slightly “dissonant,” “incoherent,” and “different” to the American eye. I witnessed this firsthand during my trip to Moscow in the summer of 1999.

For example, one evening, a young Russian woman living in the same dorm as me prepared for a night out to a local dance club; she changed out of her tank top and loose-fitting shorts (her “lounge wear”) into some baggy Adidas nylon jogging pants paired with a tight-fitting long-sleeved blouse with a sweetheart neckline. Completing her outfit was a pair of ballet-slipper style flats. She asked me how she looked, and I politely commented that maybe her black skirt would look better with that blouse – her blouse was just too dressy to wear with jogging pants. She explained that she wanted to wear the pants out that night because they were stylish; then, she asked me “Adidas is cool in
America, isn’t it?” I smiled and nodded. I understood that she was wearing the pants not for the style, but because of the label; “Adidas” was prominently printed on the pants.

Despite the legacy of Soviet fashion, today’s teens in Russia have always been accustomed to “free-style” dressing. Given that the target age group for the magazines I examined ranges from 14 to 21, the vast majority of these readers are not old enough to have been in school during the Soviet era, and thus never had to wear school uniforms. However, the majority of individuals who create, edit and market Russian teen magazines, as well as many COOL GIRL readers, are old enough to remember what it was like to be a teenager in the Soviet Union. One wonders about what sort of outlook and opinions these older generations have regarding the new consumer market reinforced and promoted in these teen magazines.

Russian teens today, as well as all young Russians who came of age during post-Soviet years, have a wide assortment of consumer choices. For most of the young people Fran Markowitz spoke with, this expansion of consumer choice was equated with “freedom” (70). With this in mind, a majority of the teen magazines I looked at from 2003 unquestionably encourage consumption, specifically in connection with fashion and beauty. Given that there are few Russian-based companies producing consumer goods that can really compete with the imported products, it makes sense that these teen magazines feature a preponderance of Western-made goods. This is especially applicable when we examine the clothing lines that are promoted in these magazines.

Some of the Western clothing labels that regularly appear in most of the Russian teen magazines include: Naf-Naf (a French label), Sisley (Italian), Benetton (Italian),
Motivi (Italian), Esprit (American) and Nike (American). Based on the prices given in Seventeen magazine, these designer label items are not affordable for the average Russian. For example, a sampling of items and prices from the Naf-Naf label include: a women’s suit jacket with leather trim ($202 USD) and matching short skirt ($103 USD); a hooded sweatshirt ($83 USD); and a crocheted skull cap ($34 USD). Some items offered from the Benetton line include: a sleeveless v-neck with ribbon trim ($52 USD); a short velvet skirt ($48 USD); a matching scarf and mitten set ($40 USD). A Sisley pair of knit drawstring pants costs $50 USD, and a tie-dyed short sleeved Sisley top costs $198 USD. Given that the average wage in 2003 in Russia was, according to The Bank of Russia, around $184 USD (5,512 rubles) a month (“Social and Economic Situation in 2003”), these clothing lines are obviously meant for the wealthy “New Russians” concentrated in Moscow who have a larger expendable income rather than for the average Russian consumer. It should also be noted that according to a report on the Russian economy from the Bank of Finland’s Institute for Economies in Transition, in 2003, “Wages were lower than average in … service fields. In retail sales they were 60% of the average, in education 67% and in health care 73%” (Harell). Given that a majority of Russian women work in the service fields and that many Russian teens today commonly work in retail sales, it is highly unlikely that the average Russian young woman could afford the clothing being promoted in these magazines.

Seventeen magazine features some higher-end designer items unmistakably targeted at teenagers from wealthy “New Russian” families. Some of these designer labels and items include: Dolce and Gabbana’s (Italian) D&G label ($129 USD for a
screen-printed tank top); Calvin Klein’s (American) CK label jeans for $159 USD; Moschino (Italian) jeans for $320 USD, as well as a Moschino camisole for $126 USD and matching underwear for $78 USD; a Jill Stuart (American) mini-dress for $245 USD; and Ballin (Italian) leather stiletto heels for $283 USD, as well as a Ballin leather clutch handbag for $323 USD. Similarly, American teen magazines feature fashion from high-end designer labels that most readers cannot afford. The effect of this, as Alissa Quart explains in her book *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, is that “These [American teen] magazines construct an unaffordable but palpable world of yearning for girls ... They help to solidify feelings of economic and taste inadequacy in girls” (5). As a result, Quart shows how American marketers have capitalized on adolescents’ fears of inadequacy and their search for identity by encouraging them to express themselves via consumer goods; hence, teens “brand” themselves by wearing expensive labels, such as Tommy Hilfiger, Abercrombie and Fitch, and Calvin Klein, in an attempt to outwardly define who they are to the world. What is disheartening is that American teens’ focus on appearances and their “addiction” to brand names is a marker of “teen culture’s growing obsession with acquisition” (90).²⁵

Given this context, we might ask ourselves whether Russian teens are becoming obsessed with the acquisition of designer goods in an attempt to define “who” and “what” they are (or, at least who/what they want other people to think they are). It seems that this is already true for the “New Russians”: in 1997, Peter Rutland, a research analyst, commenting on the situation in Russia, explained that “increasingly, material possessions and ‘lifestyle’ are defining the new social elite” (Rutland). But regardless of economic
background, could the spread of Western-inspired glossy Russian teen magazines along with the expanding consumer market in Russia be creating new generations who are more receptive to superficial exteriors, rather than to looking inward [v dushe]? Will successive generations be “branded” by Russian marketers and advertisers who grew up reading today’s Western-inspired Russian teen magazines and who studied present-day American strategies in advertising to youth? A closer examination of Russian teen magazines from 2003 will help to assess this likelihood.

Every item of clothing featured in the magazines I examined is from a Western-based fashion label; the only exception I found was a dress by a Russian designer, Masha Tsigal (COOL GIRL No.14: 32). The lack of Russian fashion labels promoted in these teen magazines is not surprising, given the history of textile production in the Soviet Union, as well as the tradition among the younger generations to turn to Western labels and fashion, the possession of which served (and still serves) as a status symbol. As Moya Flynn and Elena Starkova point out, today there still exists no “established fashion industry in Russia”; and furthermore, although these magazines seem to express that Russians defer to the West as the source of “fashion ‘authority,’” the Russian market is dominated by “‘low quality, mass-produced’ clothing imported from Turkey and Poland” (57). However, even though the average Russian may have to rely on cheaper imported items primarily from Middle Eastern countries (“Clothing, Footwear & Fashion”), these magazines do not reflect that reality – instead, they feature clothing and accessories that are out of reach for the average Russian.
A spirit of free-enterprise, capitalism, and democratization is sweeping across post-Soviet Russia. In this context, what purpose does the promotion of fashion in teen magazines serve? In order to answer this question, we need to first turn to Marx. Clothing and accessories are commodities. Marx explains:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour ... The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use-value. (31)

We can all agree on the functional aspects of clothing and accessories - this is all, as Marx said, "easily understood." In *Capital*, Marx explains that capitalism fetishizes commodities: clothing is magically transformed into "fashion" because as a commodity it is fetishized.

With capitalism's focus on profit and consumption, the need to sell is critical and capitalists achieve this goal largely through the use of advertising. In addition to print-advertising, articles in magazines that textually or graphically feature brand name products are also a form of advertising since they promote the purchasing of specific commodities. In his essay "Advertising: the Magic System," Raymond Williams expands on Marx; by equating advertising with "magic," Williams suggests that modern-day advertising promotes more than simply the purchasing of a product -- it creates a process whereby consumers "buy" into a value system that advertisers strategically use to sell their products. Advertising's "magic" is the fantasy world that it creates; advertisers tell
consumers that by purchasing certain products, they too can “magically” be a part of that fantasy world. In turn, advertisers create false needs for us, and as a result, luxury items are promoted as necessities. Alissa Quart’s analysis of marketing to American teens draws on Raymond Williams’ beliefs, showing that many teens have wholeheartedly bought in to the magic system of advertising. As Williams describes:

You do not only buy an object: you buy social respect, discrimination, health, beauty, success, power to control your environment ... Many people will indeed look twice at you, upgrade you, upmarket you, respond to your displayed signals, if you have made the right purchases within a system of meanings to which you are all trained. Thus the fantasy seems to be validated, at a personal level ... (189)

Given the paucity of most Soviet-era quality consumer goods, in particular clothing and cosmetics, the fall of communism and burgeoning capitalism in Russia in 1991 established the ideal environment for Western-based firms to move in to Russia and, with the aid of advertising, capitalize on the situation. The political, social, and economic upheaval and chaos of the raspad [“dissolution”] of the USSR created what Moshe Lewin refers to as a “quicksand society.” By this he is referring to a time “characterized by flux, uncertainty, mobility, high turnover, and anomie” (22). Drawing on Lewin, Attwood argues that during such a chaotic time period, “people may have been more susceptible to the media’s message” (Creating the New 15). Raymond Williams suggests the broad reach of advertising in a “quicksand society”:

If the meanings and values generally operative in the society give no answers to, no means of negotiating, problems of death, loneliness, frustration, the need for identity and respect, then the magic al system [advertising] must come, mixing its charms and expedients with reality in easily available forms, and binding weakness to the condition which has
created it. Advertising is then no longer merely a way of selling goods. It is a true part of the culture of a confused society. (190-191)

Within this context, I will examine the ways in which teen magazines in Russia promote fashion, as well as cosmetics, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

All the magazines I examined, with the exception of Shtuchka, have fashion spread photo-shoots. As expected, these themed fashion spreads give information on the brand of clothing and accessories that the models are wearing. Seventeen magazine even lists the prices of the items being worn, and in the back of the magazine is a list of stores, with addresses and phone numbers where the items can be purchased. Similarly, COOL GIRL and Oops! list where one can buy the items featured in the photo-shoots. However, it should be noted that some of the clothing featured on the pages of the October issue of Seventeen is not available for purchase within Russia. Instead, while most of the items featured in the fashion spread entitled “Northern Wind” (94-101) have prices listed, a Russian buyer would have to go to the designer’s website in order to make the purchase, presumably with a credit card. There are even some items pictured in this fashion spread that have neither a featured website, nor a listed price. These are items that are thus symbolically and literally out of reach, perhaps not necessarily economically, but certainly geographically, for anyone reading this magazine within Russia.

The fashion spreads in the Burda publication COOL GIRL are the least sophisticated when compared to the photoshoots in the other magazines I examined. The poses of the COOL GIRL models are contrived: the photos clumsily attempt to make it seem as if the models have been “candidly” photographed while they were engaging in
some activity relevant to the photoshoot theme. For example, in a fashion spread titled “In the Book Kingdom” [V kniznom tsarstve], the location of the photoshoot is in a library (No. 13: 6-7). Three of the models are photographed “reading” books: actually, they are merely holding a book open in their hands, as they “look up” at the camera and smile. Everything about their positioning and the way they hold the books is awkward. In another picture in this spread, a girl is photographed while supposedly leafing through a card catalog drawer – but she obviously simply opened the drawer and placed her hand on the top of cards while she looks directly at the camera and smiles. These photospreads in COOL GIRL attempt to catch the “captured” moment within a certain context, or background, but they fall short of that goal. One result is that the viewer sees through these contrived, oftentimes ridiculous, poses, looking beyond the irrelevant “context” (setting) of the photos, and realizes that the model merely serves as a mannequin for the items of clothing. As Roland Barthes explained about fashion photography in The Fashion System, “everything which is not the garment, is exorcised, rid of all naturalism: nothing plausible remains but the garment” (303, emphasis in original). Furthermore, as Rosetta Brookes argues, contrived fashion shoots stamp “the image with the uniformity and monotony of a commodity” (17).

There is something else at work “behind the scenes” of these COOL GIRL fashion spreads: messages about attraction and femininity. In the previously mentioned fashion spread “In the Book Kingdom,” the introductory text block reads: “In the library during the summer? And why not? There are not only many interesting books here, but also nice guys to meet!” (No. 13: 6-7). The set-up of this photo-shoot’s context implies that only
“nerds” would think of spending their summer in the library. Here though, the girls photographed are cool, stylish, pretty girls. One of the photos in this two-page spread features a picture of a handsome, well-dressed, young man chivalrously escorting a girl down some stairs. This visual image of a girl meeting a boy at the library supports the magazine’s suggestion to the reader that she too can meet a good-looking boy at the library if she knows how to dress stylishly.

A similar theme appears in another fashion spread entitled “School Romance” [Shkol’naia romantika] (No. 2: 4-5). Its introduction states: “There are so many great, stylish, and handsome guys at school! You need to win their hearts as quickly as possible! Be an individual - don’t look like everyone else! Guys love that!” (4). The piece continues with descriptions and pictures of what styles of clothing are fashionable that will help you to win over the boys at school. These two fashion spreads enforce the notion that fashion, and therefore beauty, are tools a woman uses to get a man’s attention. To use Raymond Williams’ idea, these fashion spreads, a form of advertising in their own right, try to create a “magical system” wherein the readers will believe that the right outfit will help them get the boy of their dreams.

In both of these COOL GIRL fashion spreads, I would argue that the actual fashion aspect of these features is secondary to the overall ideological message conveyed by the text and reinforced by the photos. This is largely because the text frames the way the reader views and evaluates the photos of the models. Moreover, these photos are predicated on the stipulation that women function as objects of the male gaze. These
fashion spreads thus “subconsciously” instruct girls in the lesson that, in the words of John Berger:

> Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at ... The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (47)

In this way, girls who look at such fashion spreads view the female models in the way they think guys would look at and judge these models. In a cyclical manner then, the female models in these photoshoots know that by virtue of their gender and profession, they are objects of the male gaze, and thus smile and pose accordingly. As Rosalind Coward states: “The camera in contemporary media has been put to use as an extension of the male gaze at women on the streets” (33).

One other COOL GIRL fashion spread is noteworthy because it deals with gender roles and femininity. In a spread entitled “Pleasant Chores” [Priiatnye khlopoty], we see photos of smiling girls doing chores in the kitchen (No. 15: 6-7). One girl with brown hair stands barefoot on the kitchen floor, holding a sponge mop. Another girl with blond hair stands by the stovetop, stirring something in a pot. In another photo we see the same blond girl posing with a plate held up near her face - she is drying the plate with a dishtowel draped over her shoulder. Another girl holds a cookie sheet with cookies on it. Once again, the manufactured quality of these COOL GIRL photo shoots is blatant: apparently we are supposed to believe that the model has just taken these cookies out of the oven, since she is using dishtowels to “protect” her hands from the hot cookie sheet – but a closer look at this photo reveals that her thumb is actually gripping the side of the
“hot” cookie sheet. Then, taking a closer look at the cookie sheet, it is obvious that these cookies came directly out of a box: there are tiny crumbs scattered around the sheet, and crumbs stick to the red jam centers of the cookies – one of the cookies even has a bite taken out of it. Once again, the setting of the photoshoot is irrelevant to the clothing being displayed.

Whereas the fashion in this two-page spread is secondary to the ideological message propagated, the setting is relevant to the ideological message of this fashion spread. The introductory text of this spread is: “You can’t be having fun all the time, sometimes your parents need help. Make a tasty dinner, and that will make them happy!” This fashion spread instructs girls that as young teenagers, they have a responsibility to help their parents around the house. All of the chores that these girls are doing – washing dishes, mopping the kitchen floor, baking and cooking – are tasks traditionally performed by a Russian woman (wife/mother). In this photoshoot, situating the girls in a kitchen - a space clearly defined as female, along with the chores they are doing - reinforces traditional ideas about gender roles in Russian culture: the woman is the guardian of the hearth.

The photoshoots in Oops! magazine (also published by Burda) are more sophisticated and a tad less contrived than those in COOL GIRL. In these fashion spreads, which are seven pages each instead of the two-page spreads in COOL GIRL, the models generally do not smile, but instead wear serious, “moody,” or indifferent looks – something more like what you would expect to see on a high-fashion runway. More than half of the time the models are looking at the camera, engaging themselves with the
viewer. Overall, these photoshoots are more professional looking, as well as more artistically crafted and styled than the ones in *COOL GIRL*. Furthermore, these fashion spreads seem to focus more on inspiring girls to experiment with clothing to find their own unique style, rather than merely being a format to display and sell clothing, as in *COOL GIRL*. Perhaps this is because *COOL GIRL* is targeted at a younger audience of teenagers, whereas *Oops!* appears to be for older readers who are finishing or have finished their secondary education and are either embarking on a career, or going to a university. Younger teens are more concerned with direct instruction on “what to wear so I can be ‘cool,’” whereas older teens are more concerned with breaking out of the mold of “childhood” and becoming an independent adult with a distinct sense of individuality. Furthermore, unlike in *COOL GIRL*, there are no overt messages in *Oops!* about how dressing the right way will help a girl get a boy’s attention. In *Oops!* the focus is on presenting fashion and style in a creative way, as well as informatively reporting on the latest trends seen on the runways in the West.

One of the feature photoshoots in the May issue of *Oops!* is shot on a stylized set that consists primarily of a gray background and floor with Asian-inspired red-colored accent objects and symbols. The theme of this fashion spread, titled “Spring Call-up,” [*Vesennii prizyv*] focuses on military-style clothing with an Asian-inspired twist (62-68). In all but one of the photos, the models wear either camouflage-print pants or tops, or very austere gray military-inspired jackets and/or pants (or cargo-skirts) that are very similar to the ones which were worn by Stalin or Mao Tse-tung. Additionally, each model is wearing an item of clothing or an accessory that is Asian-inspired, such as a red
brocade or silk top with floral designs and a mandarin collar, blouses with dragon designs, and other items that are embellished with designs reminiscent of Chinese characters (ideograms).

One photo in this fashion spread is especially remarkable: a young woman with dark hair stands square to the camera, her hands are partially in the pockets of her dark charcoal-gray cargo-skirt; she is wearing a mandarin-collared, sleeveless red silk or satin fitted blouse with a delicate floral design, and on her head is a Red Army buděnnowka.\(^9\)

This photographic image recalls Rosetta Brookes’ words:

> Nostalgic attachment to the immediate past becomes an attachment to the process of turnover, a narcissistic identification with the alien qualities of one’s own past. That point of self-awareness at the junctures of the up-to-the-minute and the out-of-date becomes an identification with the very process of mediation that fashion represents. (23)

The only experience this young model may have had with the Soviet era was in her early childhood, since she obviously came of age during the post-Soviet era. Yet we see her on the pages of this teen magazine wearing a Red Army cap that evokes strong memories of a past that was born and cultivated in revolutionary ideals and bloodshed. This cap qualifies as an “alien quality” of the past, since this model’s generation is so far removed from what this cap represents. To see the model wearing the cap associated with the first Bolshevik army organized and led by Trotsky, while she stands with her hands in her pockets, a very “non-military”/non-disciplined stance, only adds to the overall contrast between signifier and signified that this image creates. Furthermore, the appearance of this cap is an example of how images can shift from the official realm into the realm of kitsch, no longer having the same symbolic meanings as they once had. Adding to the
dissonance this image creates, the model wears a blouse that is Asian-inspired. The blouse seems to represent the very nature of Russia: it is literally and figuratively caught between the West (Europe) and the East (Asia), but it is neither one nor the other.\(^3\) As one teenager from Samara said in the late 1990s: “Russia is like a third world: the West is one, the East is another, and Russia is a mixture but at the same time something of its own” (212 Pilkington and Omel’chenko).

To me, this photographic image evokes a visual representation of a Russia caught historically between western inclinations and the impact of Mongol eastern influences, as well as being caught between the recent past and the uncertain present. It stands for a Russia still seeking for its identity over a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia has a long history of turning to other cultures in the “search to reinvent itself,” from adopting Orthodox (Eastern) Christianity in 988 and the resulting ties with Byzantium and its culture, to Peter the Great’s massive westernization campaign in the early eighteenth century. Gorbachev’s reforms in the 1980s helped to begin a widespread revival of the Westernizer / Slavophile debate, which was only heightened through the Yeltsin years in the 1990s.\(^3\) Presently, under Putin, Russia is witnessing a growing backlash against westernization; there is a growing resurgence of the Orthodox Church and a push for a return to “traditional” Russian (Slavic) values. This photographic image in Oops! seems to capture the current debate, as well as a nostalgia for the Soviet past; and in many cases, as we see in this photograph, a “simulated” nostalgia for a past that today’s generation of Russian youth never even knew.
Evidence of Soviet nostalgia in Russian popular culture is not entirely new. According to an article in *The Times* (London) from 2002, “Soviet chic” began appearing in clothing items in Moscow: a Russian fashion designer, Denis Simachev, began designing shirts with Soviet symbols, emblems, and iconography. Furthermore, a communist-era pub, “Zhiguli,” was reopened in Autumn 2002 in Moscow, complete with a staff whose uniforms were designed by Simachev to evoke/recreate “memories” of a Soviet past – a past that Russia’s teenagers barely recall (Cecil). The “Soviet chic” fashion in this *Oops!* photo, as well as the fashion designed by Simachev, clearly serves as a mediation between the past and the future. As Holly Brubach, a well-known fashion columnist for *The New Yorker*, once said: “Fashion exists in that tension between the past and the future, the familiar and the undiscovered” (qtd. in Davis 130).

The manner in which the Russian version of *Seventeen* promotes fashion is very sophisticated, and very “global.” To begin with, the feature fashion spread in the October issue, “Northern Wind,” [*Vetor severnyi*] is all about a revival of the 1960s British/Mod style (94-101). This photoshoot appears to have been done in England in a variety of “real world” locations: in a field just outside of a town; on a pebbled seashore; on a street lined with houses and cars, on the sidewalks of a sea-side town. It appears that this fashion spread must have originally been done for a Western European, or even the American, edition of *Seventeen*, and was merely inserted in the Russian version. In nearly all of the photos, the models are not posed “mechanically” – the photographer appears to actually capture them in the midst of doing something besides knowingly posing for the camera. These models play the part of the “edgy,” “moody,” and “cool”
mod – in almost every photo, the models do not smile and they actually look “bored.”

The key message about style here is that it is all about “attitude” and looking as if you are not trying too hard.

Since the primary fashion shoot for this October issue of *Seventeen* draws on a British influence, it is not surprising to find another feature in the same issue that deals with the style of a fictional character in the recent American blockbuster “Legally Blonde” (and “Legally Blonde II”). This feature praises the main character in the “Legally Blonde” films, - Elle Woods, a young blonde, fashion-conscious lawyer – not only for her fashion sense, but also for her legal and business sense. *Seventeen’s* readers are advised by the film’s stylist in this piece that: “In principal, every girl can create her own image simply by carefully watching films and looking at glossy magazines” (41). This stylist’s advice, printed in a magazine produced for Russian consumers, is a striking example of what may be referred to as “cultural globalization”: the majority of “glossy” magazines in Russia are produced by western publishing houses, contain a preponderance of western consumer goods, and predominantly feature Western stars. As Pilkington discovered in her studies of Russian youth in the late-1990s, “it was in the sphere of style that young Russians drew most commonly on the Western or ‘global,’ in terms of their material and cultural consumption” ("Reconfiguring the West” 167) because of the poor quality and quantity of domestically produced clothing (166).

Whereas *COOL GIRL* promotes clothing styles that are clearly mainstream (i.e. not subcultural), and *Oops!* at times flirts with showing funkier styles, *Seventeen* has a few fashion features that promote alternative styles. One example is a page devoted to
the “hippy” subcultural [informal, “informal”] style (42). Most of the fashion and the overall style of the young women featured on this page does not correspond to the traditional 1960s San Francisco “hippy” style. Rather, it is a globally recognizable “alternative” style that gets its inspiration from mixing a wide variety of cultural styles, whether they be t-shirts portraying the kitsch of American pop-culture; African tribal-inspired jewelry, tattoos and piercings; or brightly colored shoulder bags inspired by Tibetan culture.

Another fashion feature in this copy of Seventeen promotes something called the “provincial look,” which is a style that seems clearly to be situated within a Western European context. This three-page feature is introduced with the following text:

Jogging pants and high-heeled shoes, mini skirts and rubber boots, bomber-jackets and buckskin breeches. Here [we see] a small hole, there a patch, [and] a broken zipper. World-wide, that’s approximately how provincial girls look when we see them half-asleep in the early morning at their provincial bus stops, however each night they dance to Queen* songs at regional-center [raitsevskii] discos. What do they know about fashion? Nothing. (35)

This article continues by explaining that nonetheless: “Provincial girls are becoming the muses of designers” (36). Essentially, the “provincial look” is something akin to the Seattle-based “grunge” style that was popular in the early 1990s, or like the “deconstructed” fashion style promoted by the early British punks in the 1970s. This Seventeen article explains that the “provincial style” is perhaps best summed up in the words, printed in English, of Andy Warhol: “Think rich, look poor” (37). The article warns that a girl wanting to adopt the “provincial look” needs to realize that “[your] mom will bawl, [your] boyfriend will yell, classmates will feel sorry for you, policemen will be
interested in [seeing your] residence permit [propiska], and passers-by, will naturally, stare at you” (37). Clearly, this “provincial look” is a sort of subcultural, or alternative, style.

However, it is interesting to speculate as to how well this “provincial style” applies to Russian girls’ sense of style, and whether or not this style will become popular. My feeling is that this look does not translate well into the Russian context, primarily because every Russian woman I have ever met enjoys feeling “feminine” – this “provincial look” is hardly “feminine,” if anything, it is more of a “unisex” style. As Rebecca Kay discovered in 1992, many young Russian women explained that “the most important characteristic for any woman is femininity” (81). With that in mind, Kay asserts that in the post-Soviet era, Russian women are embracing self-beautification and expressing their “femininity” because “it is seen as a way of regaining a correct gender identity, which communism is feared to have destroyed” (82). By this, she is referring to what has been considered the “masculinized” Russian women of the Soviet era, the “unfeminine creatures in oversized overalls” (81). Perhaps during the first two or three decades of the Soviet era this image was applicable, largely because many women began working in traditionally male “industrial” jobs, which was especially critical during World War II when so much of the male population was on the battlefield. Yet, as was pointed out earlier, by the late 1930s Rabotnitsa encouraged female “industrial” workers to change “their overalls for bright red spring-dresses” after their work-shift was completed (Attwood, Creating the New 131). During most of the Soviet era, it was acceptable for Russian women to take on masculine roles at the workplace, but they were
expected to look and act “feminine” when not at work – most notably, in their role as wife and mother at home.

Contrasting with this Soviet ideal, women at the post-Soviet workplace are increasingly expected to possess what Naomi Wolf calls the “professional beauty qualification.” By this phrase, Wolf refers to the pressure put on women in the workplace to look like models (professional “beauties”) (27). Furthermore, hiring, promotions, and sometimes firing increasingly depend on how young and beautiful women are, and how well they “maintain” that look of youth and beauty (31-33). As Bridger and Kay point out, there is a widespread “perception that [Russian] women are required only as decorative appendages to male ‘professionals’” (30). Given these gender-roles, it seems that most young Russian women would not want to dress in the “provincial style” because it tends to conceal their femininity. A girl who chooses to dress in the “provincial style” may do so as a form of resistance to traditional gender norms.

So just how applicable is the concept of the “provincial look” within a Russian context and what clothing options do the majority of girls from the Russian provinces have? The term “provincial” [provintsial’nyi] can be used to refer to practically any city, town, or village in Russia besides Moscow or St. Petersburg. Since Moscow is the center of fashion in Russia, provincial teens are at a disadvantage when it comes to dressing fashionably. According to Pilkington’s studies on youth in two provincial cities, Samara and Ul’ianovsk, in the late 1990s, many teens were frustrated with the lack of selection and quality of accessible clothing in their town’s markets and shops. They complained about the Turkish or Polish clothing sold by “shuttle traders,” explaining that it was
usually too expensive because of the markup the vendors tacked on for their transportation costs from Moscow, and that the clothing was not "fashionable" enough ("Reconfiguring the West" 170).

Pilkington spoke with both "normal" (mainstream) and "progressive" (alternative, subcultural, *neformaly*) teens in the provinces: her study shows that the "progressive youth" were very interested in trying to stand out with their sense of style, whereas the "normal youth" wanted to conform to the local "dictates" of dressing fashionably. Compared to Muscovite youth, the "progressive" teens in the provinces are forced to be even more creative with whatever clothing they can find to create their own individual style. Some "progressive" youth increasingly turned to second-hand clothing shops to find one-of-a-kind pieces to help them create their own distinct style ("Reconfiguring the West" 170-171). As one "normal" respondent explained, the "progressive" youth also engage in altering their clothing to make it appear "scruffy": "They [progressives] make them [their clothes] themselves. They get a jacket and cut off the arms ... get a jacket and put holes in it like tramps" (173). This statement seems to support the applicability of the *Seventeen* article about the "provincial style" in a Russian context. Additionally, these progressive youths' alterations, or "destruction," of new clothing illustrates Paul Willis' notion of "symbolic creativity" since these teens are consuming clothing in a manner inconsistent with the clothing producer's intention.

Furthermore, the act of buying new clothing only to "destroy" it would shock and perhaps even "offend" older generations of Russians who remember how hard it was to acquire quality clothing. Most Russians, particularly those old enough to have lived
during the Soviet era, appreciate and “respect” “quality” clothing, which can be defined as items made in the West, something sewn from an expensive fabric, or tailor-made clothing. During the Soviet era, purchasing a piece of quality clothing was considered an “investment”; one would take special care of the item, making sure that it lasted her a long time because she did not know when or if she would come across a similar item again. Therefore, older generations in Russia likely consider young people’s act of buying new clothing only to destroy it an insult to their sense of propriety.

Olga Vainshtein describes how women’s magazines of the Soviet era included “peculiar instructions on how to treat and wear [quality] clothes” (73). My first-hand experiences in Moscow revealed some of these “peculiarities.” For the young people I spoke with, Western-label clothing items were some of their most valued pieces, and so they took excellent care of them. They were careful not to wear them out by washing them too much, and they changed out of their “good” clothing as soon as they got home, hanging the clothing back up in the wardrobe if it was not too dirty. Then, they would change into house clothes.

However, even if there are “progressive” teens in Samara who rip up their brand-new clothing, there are three things that make the Seventeen feature on the “provincial style” dissonant with the Russian reality. Firstly, the “progressive” style-conscious youth that Pilkington speaks of are in the minority – most teens in Russia, like anywhere else, are more concerned with “fitting in” rather than “standing out” – especially when they live in small towns. Secondly, the article’s claim that famous fashion designers are inspired by the ways in which provincial girls dress does not really apply to the Russian
context because of the scarcity of Russian fashion designers. Lastly, there are areas of provincial Russia today that are still very far removed from what is considered "modern and developed" by Western standards and young people living in these areas have few, if any, venues in which to purchase fashionable clothing. As one teenager from Ul’ianovsk explained to Pilkington and Omel’chenko in the late-1990s: “It is characteristic of Russia to copy the West … But that is in the capitals. In the provinces everything has stayed just as it was two or three hundred years ago. The provinces have a life of their own” (209).

The inserted quote in this Seventeen article from Andy Warhol, “Think rich, look poor,” deserves attention. This is a foreign concept, given the Soviet past as well as the present situation in Russia. As discussed earlier, for much of the Soviet era, the traditional platform on personal appearance was that men and women should look modest and not draw attention to themselves by having a garish or pretentious appearance. They were not being told to “look poor” per se, but “thinking rich” was simply not in the lexicon of most people given the ideological belief that there were no class divisions in the Soviet Union. It could be argued then that the growing impact of anti-isolationism and openness to the West, beginning in 1953 and peaking under Gorbachev, with its increased access to information about the rest of the world as well as to Western cultural and consumer goods, helped to engender a new attitude among young Russians: “think rich, look rich.” This certainly applies to today’s “New Russians,” and those who aspire to be like, or just look like, them. However, the appearance of the “New Russians” and everything they aspire to – wealth, possessions, and “power” – represents a new form of “cultural capital” in Russia. Whereas during the Soviet era, most Russians aspired to
possess "cultural capital"38 – the knowledge and appreciation of cultural forms such as poetry, literature, ballet, and classical music – today’s materialistic “New Russians” have their own form and understanding of “cultural capital,” one that consists primarily of familiarity with and possession of Western goods and popular culture.

Perhaps on some level, the bohemian/vagabond “provincial style” featured in Seventeen, along with the usage of the Andy Warhol quote, “Think rich, look poor,” serves as an alternative to the “conspicuously consumptive” practices of the New Russians. Or perhaps not -- after all, fashion is fickle, and this style featured in the magazine seems to appear only because the “provincial look” was what was being shown on many of the high-fashion runways in Europe at the time.39 The “think rich, look rich” attitude may be relevant when we consider the ongoing economic uncertainty that has characterized the post-Soviet era. As a result of economic fluctuation, it seems that there is a belief in Russia stemming from the Gorbachev era that you should spend money when you have it – “live it up” – because you do not know when everything could come crashing down again.

As Pilkington’s study of youth in Samara and Ul’ianovsk shows, many Russian teens without access or means to purchase designer fashion from Western labels, turn to the concept of “style,” as opposed to merely focusing on “fashion.” One teen explained, “I have a bad attitude to the word ‘fashion’ … ‘fashionable’ is a broad word – but ‘style’ it is a narrow, and individual [thing]” (Pilkington, “Reconfiguring the West” 169). Given that most teenagers in Russia do not have the financial means to purchase the designer clothing featured in the majority of the magazines I examined, they may instead focus on
creating their own sense of style, as opposed to merely blindly consuming what the magazines tell them to buy.

Furthermore, because of the consumer revolution in Russia that began in the late 1980s, Russian marketplaces are flooded with cheap imitations of the Western designer fashion featured in teen magazines. Rosalind Williams explains that in a consumer situation such as this: “When everyone can afford an imitation or cheap Oriental rug, then people want a handsome tapestry. The genuine continues to signify wealth, and common people continue to suffer from the vision of unattainable merchandise” (102). This is painfully poignant within the Russian context because of the growing economic disparity between rich and poor. The glittering window-displays of shopping malls, such as in the Okhotnyi Riad mall in downtown Moscow, and glossy Russian teen magazines from foreign-based publishing houses represent the “vision of unattainable merchandise.” For this reason, it is significant that the indigenous publication Shtuchka does not feature either fashion spreads or any advertising for consumer goods. It seems that the editors of Shtuchka realize the reality of their average reader, which according to a study done in 2000, is a girl aged “14-19 years, a high school or college student, from a family with average or below average income, not particularly interested in the most recent fashion trends” (Terent’eva). Accordingly, Shtuchka’s editors may recognize that if they were to create a “dream world of mass consumption” (Rosalind Williams) by flooding the pages of their publication with advertisements and brand names, it could alienate their readership.
On the other hand, *Shtuchka* has the lowest circulation rate of all of the teen magazines I examined, and it was the most difficult teen magazine to find. According to a study done by Ol'ga Terent'eva in 2000 on magazines for young Russian women: “Although ‘Shtuchka’ is not the leader among popular publications for young women, it nonetheless has maintained its audience over the last few years [it was first published in 1996], and this tendency will likely remain in the near future.” Most Russian teenage girls may prefer journals like *Oops!*, *Seventeen*, or *COOL GIRL* to *Shtuchka* because they want something “different” – something more like the Western-based publications and the image they promote of the fashionable girl in tune with the latest Western trends and products. Reading the Russian edition of *Seventeen* or *Oops!* must make its Russian readers feel like they are part of a “global” community; *Shtuchka* is the most idiosyncratically “Russian” out of the four magazines.

*Shtuchka* runs features on the style of female entertainment “stars” – all of whom, at least in the issue I examined, were from America or England. The focus of the style features in *Shtuchka* is twofold: one, they highlight the personal style of a star, such as Gwen Stefani (34-35); and two, they show examples of what is fashionable by showing famous stars wearing a certain style of clothing, such as the military-inspired style (2-3). Only one piece in this issue of *Shtuchka* features an actual designer’s name: a short article on the shoes of Manolo Blahnik. Manolo Blahnik’s shoes are contextualized by briefly mentioning that Carrie, on the hit HBO show “Sex in the City,” “treats [her] depression with the help of Manolo Blahnik shoes” (28). The authors of the piece go on to state that:
Frankly, we have never tried treating [depression] with Blahnik's shoes (because they are too painfully expensive - they cost $500 USD or more), but one glance at his [Blahnik's] work and it becomes clear: you put on [such shoes]...and instantly you forget about depression, and about sex. (28)

Here, we see the Russian authors of this piece distancing themselves from the obsessive consumption patterns associated with the West in an attempt to reassure their readers that they too are Russian, and understand the reality of a rather low expendable income to spend on luxury items. The authors do not pretend to understand the world of people who can afford to wear Manolos. Rather than suggest to readers that they should go out and buy these shoes, this piece primarily serves to report on what is “hot” in fashion in the West.

Clearly, each of the Russian teen magazines takes a different approach to fashion and style. The coverage of fashion in Seventeen is nearly identical to what we see in the American version of this publication.41 Oops! also appears to try to imitate the way in which fashion is covered in more sophisticated Western glossies. Both of these publications focus on designer labels and create the image of a girl who is label-conscious – a girl who wants to “trade-up” from the sorts of clothing readily available to most teens her age. COOL GIRL seems to appeal to younger, less sophisticated and not exactly “high-fashion” readers. In contrast to these other magazines, Shtuchka does not present fashion in a consumer-oriented format; instead, it sees its audience as style-conscious – another way of saying that most Russians cannot afford brand name clothing. In this way, Shtuchka seems the most grounded in the fashion and style strategies employed by Russian women beginning in the post-Stalin Soviet era. Based on the
material in *Oops!*, and especially *Seventeen*, evidence suggests that Russian teenage girls are being instructed to "brand" themselves in order to be "cool," thereby defining who they are to the world. To what extent this is a reality could be assessed by sociological studies of teenage girls in Russia.
CHAPTER THREE

Cosmetics and Skin-Care: The New “Cult of the Body”

Cosmetics can be seen as having opposite objectives: they can make older women look younger, and younger women look older. Part of the power that cosmetics have is the power to transform. For adolescent girls, experimenting with makeup is a way to show the world that they are “grown-up”; using makeup is a way for them to express themselves. For years in America, young girls only just in first or second grade have had lightly-tinted lip gloss and sheer nail-polish marketed to them – one example is the Tinkerbell line of “play” cosmetics. These seemingly harmless products train girls at an early age in the lessons of applying makeup, a marker of femininity in American culture.

For the average school-aged child in Russia, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the rejection of school-uniforms and Pioneer red ties. Kids began wearing their own clothes to school, and as accessories, many girls began to wear jewelry and makeup to school (Markowitz 18). During the Soviet era, school-aged girls (up to 17-18 years of age) were not permitted to wear makeup to school (69). Furthermore, even girls’ hairstyles had to fit within the Soviet norms of “modesty” (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 99). Young teenage girls today in Russia probably take for granted their “right” to wear makeup, jewelry, and a variety of hairstyles to school, and because of their young age, they might not even be aware that there was a time not long ago when these were prohibited. That said, I am sure that the grandmothers [babushki] of today’s Russian teen girls have told their granddaughters that it is immodest and inappropriate for a young girl
to wear makeup or flashy jewelry. In Russian culture, grandmothers, more so than in the West, are the "guardians" of morality and culture, which include such things as manners and appearance. As Azhgikhina and Goscilo explain, Russian babushki were (and are) the "self-appointed but unchallenged guardians of ... morality" (116). Anyone who has ever had an encounter with a Russian babushka can affirm the fact that they are not shy about pointing out to a member of the younger generation that he or she has done or said something that does not align with the babushka’s sense of right and wrong – even if that “wrong” is simply that someone’s appearance is “inappropriate.”

In general, teenage girls’ freedom to express themselves through hairstyles and makeup can be seen as a way for them to break away from childhood. In this manner, beautification serves as a powerful means of expressing one’s self, both externally and internally. However, in the case of cosmetics, girls either on their own initiative or because of peer pressure, enter a realm in which they scrutinize every last detail of their faces on a daily basis. This is the uglier side to the fantasy world of cosmetics: although makeup holds the power (or magic) to alter/transform appearance (to make yourself over), the need for makeup is based on the premise that you are not as beautiful without it on as you are with it. This belief chips away at a woman’s self-esteem and sense of self-worth. The glossy magazines, along with the cosmetics industry, promote makeup as both a way to hide flaws and a way to enhance a woman’s natural beauty.

Self-beautification serves four primary objectives for women: transformation, self-indulgence, therapy, and creation of a commodity. First of all, self-beautification has the ability to help women physically transform themselves (beauty as transformation).
Secondly, it allows them to pamper themselves, to treat themselves to special time set-aside just for them to apply their makeup, do their hair, paint their nails, or even to splurge on a visit to a professional stylist (beauty as self-indulgence). Thirdly, in turn, this act of pampering themselves while making themselves more “beautiful” gives them, even if temporarily, increased self-confidence (beauty as therapy). The fourth objective is that by enhancing women’s natural beauty, self-beautification serves to help a women attract attention – be it the attention of her current lover, prospective lovers, friends and other peers, or even complete strangers (beauty as commodity). As I will show, Russian teen magazines utilize all four objectives of self-beautification to differing extents.

It is necessary to bear in mind the historical context of the relationship between women and beauty in Soviet Russia discussed earlier in Chapter One, for it enables us to better understand the relationship between Russian women and the expression and creation of beauty in Russian teen magazines. By examining the strategies used in these magazines to promote cosmetics and skin care products, and by analyzing the messages they are sending to young Russian teens, we can perceive the ways in which the “beauty myth” has been successfully imported to Russia during the post-Soviet years.

“Girls can’t live without cosmetics. We would go crazy pretty quick if we lost our collection of tubes and little bottles [of makeup]” (Seventeen Oct. 72). Although this statement from Seventeen is clearly an exaggeration, it does evoke certain widespread cultural beliefs about women – mainly, that they are obsessed with their appearance; to be without their cosmetics may have a negative emotional and psychological effect on their psyche. But why is this? Naomi Wolf holds that: “the quality called ‘beauty’
objectively and universally exists ... Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it” (12). This is just one of the “myths” about beauty that Wolf attempts to expose. She argues that “the beauty myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, aesthetics or God,” (13) but rather:

‘Beauty’ is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves. (12)

Thus, if cosmetics are women’s primary way of making themselves “more beautiful,” then by not having them, women may feel inadequate. There is evidence of this in Russian teen magazines. One article in COOL GIRL states: “What is makeup needed for? In order to become more stunning and, what’s more, in order to correct tiny flaws in [your] appearance” (No.15: 12). This article is promoted in the previous COOL GIRL issue (No. 14) with the following teaser: “[We’ll show you] the most fashionable colors and most stylish techniques – and you’ll be better than all [the other] girls!” (39). This article, and the way it is introduced in the preceding issue, reinforces one of the aspects of the “beauty myth.” As Wolf explains: “Competition between women has been made part of the myth so that women will be divided from one another” (14). If women are divided, certain gender stereotypes are reinforced, feminist awareness is deterred, and the possibility of organizing in the future is hindered. Furthermore, women’s competing on the basis of external, as opposed to internal, qualities reflects a break with the traditional Russian/Soviet belief that what is on the inside matters most.
The previous example from *COOL GIRL* illustrates how young women in Russia are being taught that makeup, and therefore self-beautification, holds a certain “magical” power – the power to transform. By using makeup to “become more stunning and ... to correct tiny flaws,” girls can be “better than” themselves without makeup on, and better than other girls. What underpins and reinforces these two promises about makeup is the assumption that many girls have low self-esteem. In truth, if girls do not possess low self-esteem already, then these magazines and particularly the cosmetics industry will help to develop it in them.

Whereas during the Soviet era school-aged teenage girls were not allowed to wear makeup, today, Russian teen magazines encourage them to do so. According to current statistics generated by Comcon-Pharma, “76% of all female Russians older than 10 use makeup” (Glasser). Since using makeup serves as a physical marker of the transition between childhood and womanhood, Russian adolescent girls’ ability to wear makeup to school marks a public acceptance of a “kids getting older, younger” phenomenon in Russia which we in the West are familiar with. Moreover, when girls are encouraged to – and begin to – use cosmetics at younger ages, the gap between whom their peers judge as “pretty” and “not-as-pretty” becomes more notable. This is because using makeup is also a way for girls to draw attention to their appearance, particularly to their “beauty.” In Russia then, school-aged teenage girls being allowed to wear makeup may, among many, actually increase feelings of inadequacy, which arguably, were not as intense during the Soviet era, at least not for the same reasons.
The transformative power of self-beautification is perhaps best expressed in the notion of the makeover. *COOL GIRL* frequently features makeovers of its readers. The “headlines” for two makeovers I read about sound like quotes taken directly from the girls who received the makeover: “Total ecstasy! I’m so stylish!” (No. 8: 14); “Now I am the most beautiful” (No. 14: 22, emphasis mine). The second headline, taken from the makeover of a 15 year-old girl, self-conscious about being a redhead, reiterates the low self-esteem and sense of competition that the “beauty myth” engenders in women.

A revealing advertisement for a cosmetic line called “Look” appears in issues of *Oops!* and *COOL GIRL*. The ad reads: “Do you want to be Stylish and Spectacular, Expressive and Captivatingly Feminine, [then] create your NEW STYLE together with [the help of] decorative cosmetics from LOOK!” (*Oops!* Oct. 33). Besides the obvious message this advertisement sends about feminine qualities being linked to the use of cosmetics, it is striking that the phrase “captivatingly feminine” [plenitel’no zhenstvennaia] – with its old-fashioned ring – is used to describe the contemporary woman. This ad also gets to the very nature of beauty in Russia: it is something that needs to be created with the aid of makeup. A recent Dove soap slogan reading, “You are beautiful the way you are,” was, according to a Russian market-research analyst, “a complete failure to Russian women. They don’t believe in beauty itself. Beauty should be made” (qtd. in Glasser).

There are several examples in these magazines instructing young women how to use their appearance, improved by means of cosmetics, to attract the attention of young men. One of the best examples of this instruction is the following:
Red lipstick is a fetish, the quintessential symbol of sexuality. Try Bourjois’s red lipstick and your smile will be transformed, becoming seductive and a hundred times more attractive. Not one young man will be able to remain indifferent [to you]! (Seventeen Oct. 60)

In many other examples in these magazines, a female’s lips are characterized as “the most attractive part of the [female] face for guys” (COOL GIRL “Are you a romantic girl or not?” No. 8: 30). Other features in COOL GIRL explain: “Seductive lips – it’s what every girl dreams about!” (No. 2: 10); a shiny new lip-gloss is introduced with the question “What’s new in the world of summer, flirtation, and kissing?” (No. 13: 18).

According to Russian teen magazines, besides her lips, there are other physical features a girl can use to attract a guy’s attention. An article in COOL GIRL suggests that a girl can use glittery makeup and gels on her face, hair and body, to be noticed (No. 8: 12). The recent popularity of sparkly and shiny makeup for women and girls alike – from lip gloss that creates a wet sheen, to nail-polish mixed with glitter, to glitter-speckled body and hair gels – brings to mind a notion Wolf discusses in The Beauty Myth. Emphasizing the objective of self-beautification as commodity, Wolf argues that, “women must make their beauty glitter because they are so hard for men to see. They glitter as a bid for attention that is otherwise grudgingly given ... What women look like is considered important because what we say is not (106). With this in mind, we can better contextualize the emphasis placed in these magazines on appearance, rather than on substance. Speaking of a young woman’s appearance in general, a COOL GIRL article explains beauty-tips for a girl’s skin and face that will help her to stun the guys in the summer, so that they “simply cannot take their eyes off you” (No. 13: 14). Alluding to
pedicures, a teaser for an upcoming issue of COOL GIRL reads: “Do you want your feet to drive the guys crazy?” (No. 8: 47). Here, the message is that “pretty” feet will get the guys' attention.\(^3\) The October issue of Oops! praises the power of a new perfume “Yujin Floa,” to “surprise your boyfriend” by making him more attracted to you night and day (14). Thus we see that when primary aspects of cosmetics and self-beautification are used to attract, beauty is used as commodity as much in Russia as in Europe and America.

Although Russian teen magazines are targeted towards a female audience aged 15 to 20, younger girls (and boys) read these magazines as well. Interestingly enough, mature women (and men) read these teen publications too.\(^4\) The high readership figures for adults reading COOL GIRL may be due to the fact that it is a bi-weekly publication with the highest circulation out of all of the teen magazines I examined; it is also the cheapest and smallest (with regard to page numbers) out of the Russian teen-girl magazines. With this in mind, so many older adult Muscovites may be reading COOL GIRL because it is readily available to buy at kiosks; they may simply want something entertaining and cheap that they can easily get to read on their daily commute to and from work. In every issue of COOL GIRL I examined, I saw reoccurring evidence of many girls, and even some boys, aged 10 to 14 writing in to the magazine looking for pen pals. If 10 year-old girls and boys are reading a magazine like COOL GIRL, one wonders what effect the messages in these magazines have on them. For example, when put in the context of Russian schoolgirls, some as young as 10 years old, already using makeup, what is the effect of the message that a female can enhance her “sex appeal” by using cosmetics; or, that a female can use her body and beauty as a commodity to “enchant
men”? Briefly put, these messages relegate Russian women to a position where it may seem that all they have to offer is their body, and both Russian boys and girls today are growing up with that perception.

The “crowning glory” of a woman – her hair – can also be used to express her sexuality. An article about hair in *Seventeen* is introduced with the following text: “It is easy to be sexual. You only need to create a good hairstyle for yourself” (Oct. 62). It goes on to explain that: “After all, it is the simplest and, most important, the most decent [prilichnyi] way to be sexual” (62). Besides reflecting conservative Russian gender norms, this text sends the message that it is improper, and indecent, for a woman to actually be sexual – but she can look sensuous and sexual since she is the object of a male gaze. In this context, a woman actually embracing her sexuality would be a threat to male power and domination. As Attwood explains: “Given the past emphasis on purity [during the Soviet era] as one of the principal traits of femininity, any evidence of female sexuality could be interpreted as a sign of depravity” (“Young People, Sex” 114-115). Furthermore, even a Russian publication that focuses on topics concerning sex, like *SPID-info [AIDs-info]*, which is geared toward youth, tends to create “the impression that the idea of female passion and sexual arousal is being used, like lesbianism, for the purpose of male titillation” (Attwood, “Young People, Sex” 118). Thus, Russian women “embracing” their sexuality is being promoted not as a form of feminine empowerment, but rather, as a “commodity” that serves a male gaze.

This view of female sexuality, as well as the belief that Russian women need to make themselves “glitter” today more than ever in order to be noticed and “heard” by
men, is substantiated by the current argument that a “masculinization” of Russian society is occurring. This “masculinization” is a direct response, or backlash, to what has been seen as the “feminization” of Russian society during the Soviet era. Attwood, referencing the work of two Russian psychologists, Iu. E. Aleshina and A. S. Volovich, describes that boys during the Soviet era were stifled from “being active, competitive, and showing aggression … all of which were typical masculine forms of behavior” (“Young People, Sex” 112). Furthermore, Aleshina and Volovich hold that “feminine traits” were pervasive in Soviet society; for example, “collective responsibility, implementation (of state decisions), and instrumental attitude towards work, [and] conservatism” (qtd. in Attwood 112). However, the new market economy of post-Soviet Russia gives Russian men the opportunity to develop and express their stunted “masculinity”; today, unlike in the old Soviet socialist economy, the Russian market economy prizes “masculine” traits such as “entrepreneurship, individual responsibility, activity, initiative, rationality, courage, [and] a willingness to take risks” (Attwood 112).

On the other side of the equation, young Russian girls are still being encouraged to fulfill their traditional domestic gender roles which hardly give them the skills they need to succeed in the new Russian market (Attwood, “Young People, Sex” 113). Women entering the workforce during the post-Soviet era are increasingly being relegated to the service sectors in which they serve in a subordinate role to men (Dmitrieva 89). Or, as some Russians have proposed, today Russian women should stay at home and be full-time housewives and let their man be the bread-winner, in order for the latter to better prove his “masculinity,” and for the former to fully demonstrate their
“femininity” (Kay 84-86; Bruno 43). In 1987, Gorbachev expressed this social “need” for women to return to the home. He explained that although Soviet women should be commended and praised for their ability to work alongside men,

women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home – housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems – in children’s and young people’s behavior, in our morals, culture and in production – are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitudes to family responsibilities … That is why we are now holding heated debates … about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission. (117)

Earlier this year (2004), President Putin’s March 8th speech celebrating International Women’s Day mirrored much of Gorbachev’s beliefs about the “purely womanly mission” that all Russian women must fulfill. In his speech, Putin supported traditional feminine characteristics, including the role of women in Russia as “guardians of the hearth.” At a special awards ceremony honoring sixteen Russian women, Putin said:

[Today] is a day of celebration of women, a celebration of kindness, wisdom, beauty and spiritual strength … There are many clever, professional and strong women in this country … Dear friends, it is of course the main privilege of women … to keep the home fires burning, bring up the children and suffuse the home with warmth and comfort. However, all of you [women being honored at the awards ceremony] are able to combine these qualities with successful employment and active public works. (“Putin celebrates”)

In this speech, Putin also explained that women are “highly successful in business” because of their “professionalism … their unique intuition, natural precision and their ability to avoid extremes, their tendency towards consensus and to fair compromise,” a statement which reaffirms traditional notions of “feminine” qualities like intuition and a
natural sense of fairness. Moreover, Putin declared in this speech that: “The women of our country are not inferior to men in anything, not in education, not in their active position in society. For example, women are ahead of men in middle management.” But the accuracy of these claims is questionable since in terms of earning potential, Russian women only make “60 percent of what their male counterparts are paid” (McGregor). Furthermore, “women make up only 10 percent of corporate Russia’s top management jobs” (McGregor). Tremayne Elson, a director for a British-based executive headhunter company, explains that “There does appear to be a glass ceiling for women in Russian companies unless they’re one of the founding entrepreneurs” (McGregor).

Many of the positions available to young Russian women entering the workforce during the post-Soviet era have been in the service fields (food industry, retail, etc.) as well as staff and administrative positions (secretaries, personal assistants, etc.). However, most of these positions require that the employee be young and beautiful; in fact, the want-ads frequently list age and physical requirements for secretaries. For example, a 1994 ad reads: “Secretary/personal assistant required with knowledge of English, pretty girl under 25” (qtd. in Bridger and Kay 30). Some ads even list height requirements: “Secretaries required: attractive girls with office experience, aged 18-22, at least 168cms [5’5”] tall” (qtd. in Bridger and Kay 30). Although ads like these are appearing less frequently today compared to a decade ago, they do still exist, even though, as Russian attorney Yulia Zabrodina explains “such discrimination on the basis of sex or age is prohibited by the Labor Code.” Zabrodina continues, explaining that this sort of discrimination exists in Russia because “there is no social disapproval and business
people often do not consider it incorrect … [and there is] no actual [legal] liability for such discrimination” (Kozuharov).

Throughout most of the Soviet era, a woman could secure a good job without worrying about how well she applied her makeup or what dress-size she wore; rather, her experience, education, and Party membership were, most often, the important factors. Discussing the new situation in post-Soviet Russia, Sue Bridger and Rebecca Kay declare that: “Where employers can afford to pick and choose, there is pressure on the overweight to be slim, on the slim to be well-groomed, and the well-groomed to be beautiful” (30-31). Young women in Russia are well aware of this reality, and as a result, this makes them more susceptible to images of the market’s ideal of female beauty.

For Russian women, the change in the labor market, as well as a growing pressure to focus on their traditional roles as “guardian of the family hearth,” sends a powerful message to girls that the teen magazines exploit in order to promote the “feminine duty” of self-beautification. As has already been shown in some of the seemingly “frivolous” and “neutral” features on fashion and beauty in Russian teen magazines, clearly these magazines are working at an ideological level, strengthening gender roles in post-Soviet Russian society. Wolf claims that the “beauty myth” promotes the belief that, “women’s identity must be premised upon our ‘beauty’ so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air” (14). In the late Soviet and post-Soviet economic context, there was, and still is, an added pressure on young women to look “beautiful” because “marketing” their beauty and their body oftentimes serves as an economic opportunity for them.
Living in a nation with an uncertain, shifting, economy, Russian women use their beauty not only to help secure a job, but also to find a man to take care of them financially. Moreover, for some Russian women, like the so-called “mail-order brides,” their beauty helps them secure a ticket abroad, where they are cast into the arms of a well-off foreigner who usually just wants a trophy wife who knows how to cook, clean, and obey.45

Playing on young women’s fears of growing old, wrinkled, “ugly” and “undesirable,” some of the Russian teen magazines promote the use of special skin-care creams and gels that keep girls’ faces looking younger longer. In Seventeen, young women learn that Vichy facial cream will promote “microcirculation” [mikrotsirkuliatsiia], which will make “dull” skin look more radiant (Oct. 4-5). Similarly, according to an Oops! promotion for Avon’s “Hydrofirming” day and night cream, the day cream protects and nourishes dry skin, and the night cream “protects against free radicals, and restores [your skin’s] elasticity and resilience” (May 14). How many teenage girls actually think about the “elasticity” of their skin? What exactly are “free radicals,” and what is “microcirculation” all about? Thanks to magazines and advertisements for these “holy oils” (Wolf 109), adolescent Russian girls are scrutinizing their faces more and more – looking for signs of aging that are not there. But, these girls are being trained in what to look for when they examine themselves in front of the mirror, and, they are being taught that it is somehow within their power, with the help from a bottle of some “miracle” cream, to prevent their skin from aging.
An article in *Seventeen* is devoted to how to care for the delicate skin around one’s eyes (Oct. 58-59). Although this piece opens up by stating that if you believe some ads, a girl will get her first wrinkle before she’s even twenty, it goes on to say that is not really true; instead, it says that most women get their first wrinkles around age thirty. However, the rest of the article is devoted to advocating the “need” for teenage girls up to age twenty-five to use special eye creams and gels to nourish and protect the delicate skin around their eyes to reduce puffiness and dark circles, as well as to make them less likely to have less wrinkles as they age. According to this piece, young women who are twenty-five and over should begin using anti-wrinkle cream (such as Chanel’s “Age Delay Eye” ($45 USD) or Estee Lauder’s “LightSource” Age-Resisting Eye Crème ($52 USD)).

Discussing the recent promotion by the skin-care industry for teenage girls to be “proactive” about aging and beginning a “lifetime” skin-care regime, Joan Brumberg asserts that “responsible adults should not encourage precocious primping, or the idea that a lifelong battle against the ‘ravages’ of age is a prerequisite of good womanhood” (93).

Whereas wrinkles and loss of “elasticity” are hardly real skin-care issues for teenage girls, issues of acne are. The coverage in Russian teen magazines for facial cleansers, toners, and creams meant to fight and prevent acne draw on, or generate, teens’ insecurities about having pimples and oily skin. One ad, for a line of products called *Litso bez problem* [A Face Without Problems], which is one the very few Russian-made products in all of the magazines I looked at, says: “You suffer a great deal because you
don’t know” (Oops! Oct. 47). These products are touted as being able to save teenagers from suffering with acne.

The pain of teens’ suffering from acne is captured in two promotions in COOL GIRL for a prescription acne cream called “Curiosin.” One of these promos, set up in a narrative format, explains how “one little pimple can spoil your entire day! But what do you do when pimples appear one after another? … ‘Curiosin’ makes it possible to avoid unpleasant surprises and makes skin healthy” (No.14: 29). Another “Curiosin” promo describes how acne ruined a girl’s love life. With the help of “Curiosin,” “today’s most perfect way to rapidly heal pimples,” her sad “story” could have been avoided (No.13, p 19). In order to purchase this cream, one needs a prescription, so these promos list a phone number to call to set up an appointment. Neither the price of the consultation, nor of the cream, is listed anywhere – but, this product, as well as visits to the dermatologist, are probably too expensive for the average Russian. Acne does not discriminate according to wealth; many Russian teens suffering from acne are not given the luxury of using prescription creams, and therefore clear skin remains a dream for some of them.

A promotion for Johnson & Johnson’s “Clean and Clear” facial skin-care line reads: “Do you dream about clear, healthy and beautiful skin? Isn’t it time to start to act?”; then below it lists “Three steps to beauty” and gives a detailed description of their facial cleanser, toner, and moisturizer (Oops! May 41). The promotion of using three different products establishes the idea of a skin-care regimen. The appearance in post-Soviet Russia of ads for anti-acne products introduces the notion of discipline into how Russian teens approach and take care of their skin. The slogan for this product line --
“Clean and Clear, and under control,” -- further reinforces ideas of discipline, as well as the concept that teens are “battling” with their “problem” skin.46

Even the visual images of anti-acne ads both create and reinforce negative self-imaging. One Garnier ad for their “Clear Skin” cleanser, which is promoted as a “New method for pore cleaning,” features a close-up photo of a woman holding a “stylish” clear handled, aqua-colored toilet plunger up in front of her face (Oops! May 58-59). From this, we get the idea that this cleanser will work to unclog pores just like a plunger unclogs the toilet. However, the comparison that this visual image brings to mind is rather disgusting, because when we think about what it is that a toilet plunger “unclogs” -- we then subconsciously make the same association with the stuff that is “polluting” our pores. Talk about a way to make teens feel even worse about their skin! Similarly, the ads for L’oréal’s “Pure Zone” feature the famous Russian model Natalia Vodianova with her fists up in a boxing-like pose – showing us that “Pure Zone” helps to “knock out” pimples.

The promotion of anti-acne products in Russian teen magazines begets the question, what did Russian teens do about their pimples before they had free access to countless cleansers, tonics, scrubs, masks, and “magical” creams? From my conversations with Russian young women old enough to have been teenagers during the Soviet era, there were plenty of home remedies used, and these home remedies are more than likely still used today by Russian teens. Acne is an issue that never appeared in any of the studies of Russian youth I read – so, was acne as much of a problem in the Soviet Union as it is now? Does a problem with acne among Russian teens today actually exist –
afterall, there is a wide availability of processed foods on post-Soviet markets’ shelves -- or, are the marketing companies and teen magazines simply “making a mountain out of a molehill” – i.e. making “acne” out of one or two pimples? Given that the only ad I found in these magazines for a Russian-made consumer product is for a line of anti-acne skin care products, Litso bez problem, it seems that there is beginning to be a recognized Russian market for treating acne. One thing is fairly certain though: the promotion of anti-acne products in Russian teen magazines is making Russian teens more self-conscious about their skin, and probably causing many of them to “make a mountain out of a molehill.”

Retreating from the “acne war zone,” there are features in Russian teen magazines that promote self-beautification as a way for a girl to pamper herself. Russian women during the post-Stalin Soviet era turned to self-beautification as an acceptable way to escape from the drudgery of their daily lives. This is wonderfully illustrated in I. Grekova’s short story “Ladies’ Hairdresser” [Damskii master] (1963) in which a middle-aged woman who is frustrated with her life turns to the beauty salon as a form of therapy – a way to get a new lease on life – saying to herself, “I’ll have a haircut and get down to business” (6). Similarly, self-beautification is promoted in Russian teen magazines today as a form of therapy and a way for girls to indulge themselves. A feature in Oops! describes how you can use an invigorating grapefruit scented shower gel so that you are able to start a wonderful and productive day; and at night, before bed, soak in an apricot scented bath foam to help calm and relax you (May 24). Likewise, a piece in Seventeen promotes that, “Aromatherapy, massages, masks and other cosmetic procedures” can be
used to “wash away this utterly worthless day” (October 80). Both of these magazine features imply that a modern-day Russian young woman’s life is stressful; aromatherapy in the bath can help her prepare for, or recover from, her day. Vladimir Nekrasov, the president of a chain of successful cosmetics stores in Moscow (Arbat Prestige) explained that: “Life is hard here [in Moscow], people are tired and they spend more money here than people in other countries on this [cosmetics]...[buying cosmetics] is a sip of oxygen for people in the conditions of this dirty and exhausting city” (qtd. in Glasser).

The notion that women should pamper their bodies in order to “cope” is found in articles premised on the idea that autumn is a time when Russian women deal with melancholic feelings. A fashion-spread in the October issue of Oops! titled “Pensive October” draws on this theme, explaining: “Autumnal days grow shorter, the nights longer, and we indulge in ruminations and lyrical moods” (62). Within the same issue, makeup is promoted as a way to help lift spirits and fight the autumn gloom (14). In a parallel manner, the October issue of Seventeen describes Lancôme’s “Juicy Tubes” lip gloss by saying that: “The cheerful colors and pleasant taste will lift [your] mood, even in the gloomiest weather” (60).

The promotion of cosmetics and skin care in these magazines instructs Russian girls that their appearance, specifically, their face, is in constant need of scrutiny. These girls are being trained to examine themselves in the mirror, looking for any ways in which their face deviates from the normalizing images of beauty on the pages of the magazines. As Bordo explains, through the “normalizing discipline” of self-
beautification, as women, “we continue to memorize on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, of insufficiency, of never being good enough” (166).

Even though previous generations of Russian young women were not officially encouraged by the state apparatus to primp and preen themselves, or to yearn for cosmetics and fancy skin creams, they still did so anyway, irrespective of official ideology. Today’s generation of Russian young women primp and preen themselves in an environment tolerant of such “narcissistic” behavior. It is generally acceptable for Russian women today to crave and buy cosmetics because they are living in a market economy, and spending money helps the economy to grow. As Susan Glasser, a Washington Post journalist, just recently reported, the cosmetics market is thriving in Russia:

At a time when at least a quarter of Russians live in poverty, the country manages to spend 1.3 percent of its gross domestic product on cosmetics – compared with an average of just 0.5 percent in Western Europe … Now ranking just behind France, Germany and Britain in total sales, Russia could soon become the European cosmetics capital.

It is also acceptable for women to spend their time preoccupied with self-beautification because today’s generation of Russian young women is focused more on the self, rather than the collective. This preoccupation is also customary today because Russian women are increasingly being told that their place is, ideally, in the private sphere of the home as opposed to the professional public arena. As Wolf explains, whereas women were earlier essentially designated as “the pure sex,” they were instructed by society to spend their time protecting that purity. “In the same way, women today are designated as the “beautiful” sex, which relegates them to a similarly useful preoccupation with protecting
that ‘beauty’” (91). The same stress on beauty seems to be functioning in Russia today, but Russian women are still responsible for maintaining their purity as well as their beauty. As many scholars, such as Lynne Attwood, have pointed out, maintaining morality in Russian culture is primarily considered to be a woman’s concern (“Young People, Sex” 114). The focus in Russian teen magazines on instructing girls to primp and preen themselves — i.e. to develop and maintain their beauty — in order to attract a boy is a lesson that is carried on when these girls reach adulthood, when they are engaged in acts of self-beautification in order to increase their chances of getting the boss’ attention and securing a job. In either case, women are seeking approval and validation from an outside source.
CHAPTER FOUR

Disciplining Practices: Body Image in Post-Soviet Russia

The messages Russian teen magazines are sending to young women about their bodies are very powerful. We have already seen the sorts of statements these magazines make about how to clothe and decorate the female body. If we think of teen magazines as a manual for girls' “body projects,” then the body itself is the physical structure that supports each of these “projects,” which include self-beautification, as well as diet and exercise. Therefore, underpinning the entire discussion of the role of beauty in the world of Russian teenage girls is the matter of body image. The discourse of female body image is associated with the normative functions of gender within which the rules of femininity are inscribed onto the body. Susan Bordo explains that “we learn the rules [of femininity] directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required” (170). These normative images of the body are widely dispersed and transmitted through popular culture, particularly through magazines.

The serious issue of eating disorders among young women is a problem that drew me to examining Russian teen magazines. I was curious if this problem was prevalent in Russia, and how teen magazines were dealing with it. In this chapter I will speculate on the existence of eating disorders among Russian girls. In the magazines I examined, eating disorders among Russian teenage girls were not specifically mentioned at all. I came across the only reference to what I assume is an eating disorder in a February issue
of Burda youth publication called *COOL* (No. 6): an advertisement promo for the February edition of *Oops!* had a cover story teaser that read, “How I almost starved myself to death” (33). The matter of someone willingly starving herself, actually denying herself food when she is surrounded by a bountiful food supply is striking given the context of Russian twentieth century history. During the Civil War (1918-1922), there were massive shortages of food and rationing was enacted. Additionally, during the disastrous years of collectivization and the war on the *kulaks* [rich peasants] (1929-1933), peasants were literally starved to death. Then, during World War II, many Soviets went hungry since the nation’s “bread basket,” Ukraine, was under German occupation. The 900-day siege of Leningrad during World War II cut the city and its citizens off from any food shipments, leaving many Leningraders to die of starvation. For the generations of Russians old enough to recall these times characterized by hunger and starvation, it must be insulting to learn that girls starve themselves on purpose. Moreover, in this instance, the whole question of collective memory comes to the fore; post-Soviet teens are living in the present, but they are living in a society whose collective memory recalls the past.

Beauty pageants are one example of popular culture relevant to the discussion of normative images of feminine beauty and the impact they have on girls’ bodies. The phenomenon of child and even toddler beauty pageants is widespread in America; have similar pageants been introduced in Russia? My research, including sources among the academic press, the press at-large, and the internet turned up very few answers. I came across a 1997 CNN report, “Girls Yearn to be Supermodels in the New Russia,” which featured information on Moscow modeling schools meant for young girls. The CNN
report included photos of these aspiring young models, some of whom look as young as six. In 1997, enrolling in one of these schools cost $60 USD a month, which at the time, was almost an entire average Russian’s monthly wage. A mother of a modeling school student said: “I simply have this hope that out of my little girl will come a top model” (O’Connor). One of the students told the reporter: “On the catwalk I feel like I’m such a big star, like everyone knows me” (O’Connor). This sort of quest for personal fame, fortune, and the narcissistic focus on the self that comes with modeling and beauty pageants was unheard of in Soviet Russia. Soviet ideology required all citizens to sacrifice personal needs and “‘frivolous’ desires” (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 116), such as those surrounding self-beautification, for the good of the collective. It is not surprising then that Russian beauty pageants are an imported Western phenomenon.

It was during the Gorbachev era that beauty pageants first appeared in the Soviet Union; the first beauty pageant was held in March 1988 in the republic of Lithuania. Several more beauty pageants were to follow, with the first Miss USSR being crowned in May 1989 in Moscow (Waters 117). Shortly after, Western modeling firms and fashion magazine moguls began to make connections within the Soviet Union, not only to sponsor beauty pageants and produce Russian language fashion magazines, but also to search for new models (119). Needless to say, the bottom line for Western companies was profit. However, these pageants and modeling contracts also served as a way for Russian women to similarly profit from their beauty.

One recent success story of a Russian model making it big is illustrated in the example of 22 year old Natalia Vodianova. Born in Nizhnii Novgorod, Natalia helped her
mother sell fruit to support the family when she was only 11; at age 15, she opened her own fruit stall; she enrolled in modeling classes, was scouted by a Parisian modeling firm and moved to Paris at age 17 to model. At age 19 she married a wealthy British real-estate heir, and shortly after gave birth to a son. Around the same time, she became the new “It” girl in the fashion world: from landing Vogue covers, cosmetics contracts with Gucci, countless runway shows with top designers, even film cameos, Natalia made it big (“Natalia Vodianova”). Today, besides being under an exclusive, lucrative contract to Calvin Klein, she and her husband, Justin Portman, “divide their time between many places, including Monte Carlo, London, Russia and New York” (Norwich 58). Natalia Vodianova’s rags-to-riches story serves as an inspiration for all Russian teenagers in their quest to see how their beauty can take them from living in the “backwards” provinces to a stylish New York City loft.

It is not surprising that beauty contests appeared in the USSR at the same time as the nation was embracing Western goods, images and ideas. What facilitated the debut of these pageants was the sexual revolution in the USSR, and simultaneously, a growing sex industry and the rise in prostitution. The links between all these activities are apparent: beauty contests were an imported Western phenomenon; the contests promoted the idea that the female body could be commodified; the flood of pornography and prostitution affirmed the fact that sex, especially when emoted or performed by a beautiful young woman, sells. Moreover, modeling careers as well as foreign-currency prostitution, which was glamorized in the book and blockbuster film of the late 1980s Interdevochka [International Girl], promised young Russian women a door to financial “success” during
a time of extreme economic uncertainty. Elizabeth Waters asserts that in the late 1980s, Soviet society was “growing accustomed to the female body on public display, to the female body as a recognised source of visual pleasure” (117). This attitude would only increase during the post-Soviet years, and it greatly affected the ways in which feminine beauty was defined, particularly in terms of body image, in Russia.

Discussing Soviet beauty contests, Waters explains that the Western ideal that beautiful women are slender was never questioned in Soviet pageants: they too expected their contestants to be slender. This is noteworthy because traditionally in the context of Russian agrarian culture: “A solidly built woman was popularly regarded as healthy, capable of childbearing and hard work, and attractive” (121). Furthermore, during the Stalin era, the beautiful female body was the strong, muscular body. Waters explains that the present belief in Russia that beauty = slenderness only began to proliferate in urban Russian society beginning in the 1970s (121). By the 1970s, Soviet society was not only extensively industrialized, therefore making agrarian/rural modes of thinking less widespread, but many Russians had left the villages and settled in the cities, and thereby adapted to urban norms of behavior and “civilized” ideals of a slender female body. Even today in Russia, plumpness is still associated with a “backwards” rural/peasant type, whereas slenderness is an indicator of a “civilized” urban lifestyle. Furthermore, increasing openness in the 1970s to the West and its normalizing, homogenizing, images of “beautiful,” slender women also impacted Russian thinking about the female body. Additionally, according to Vainshtein, it was during the 1970s that Soviet women’s magazines promoted popular fad diets, such as the “Hollywood” diet (83).
The appearance, and particularly the overabundance, of beauty contests in Russia over the last fifteen years has immensely intensified the firm hold that Western norms of feminine beauty have in Russia. Beauty contests and glossy magazines, both of which were originally Western imports, solidify the ideal of a beautiful slender body in young Russian women’s psyche. Moreover, the message that these contests and magazines spread - that the beautiful female body is an exploitable and marketable commodity – is perfectly expressed with the model search contests these magazines promote and perfectly timed with the exploitative nature of the burgeoning market economy. *Oops!* and *Seventeen* hold annual model searches, and *Shtuchka* even has its own form of a beauty competition to see who will be featured on its covers: the *Rovesnik* website explains that covers of *Shtuchka* only feature “faces of [its] readers, and for that reason every girl has the unique opportunity to see herself on the cover of the magazine” (“*O kompanii*”). By their very nature, these beauty contests/model searches help establish a mindset among girls that beauty is a competition, therefore, they begin to compare themselves with other girls they see. Looking at the cultural mirrors that surround them, they begin to ask themselves: “Am I pretty? How do I compare to the other girls at my school? How do I compare to the girls in these magazines? Am I pretty *enough*?”

However, events surrounding a recent beauty pageant earlier this year in Russia suggests that there is some resistance to the imported Western norms of beauty and body image in Russia. In March 2004, a Miss Universe pageant was announced, and people could vote online among a choice of contestants for a girl to represent Russia in the upcoming pageant held that summer in Ecuador. On a whim, Alëna Pisklova, a short,
plump ninth grader from a Moscow suburb entered her photo in the contest. To her and everyone else’s surprise, Alëna received 10,000 votes the first day; this trend continued as Alëna consistently received more and more votes every day. This was the start of an internet and media sensation – supporters of Alëna created a website called “Stop Barbie” (http://www.stopbarbie.org.ru) to promote worldwide support for Alëna as a Miss Universe contestant. The promoters of the contest were shocked by the support this girl who clearly did not fit within the “Barbie-doll” norms of body image was receiving, and as a result, by April 1, the website promoting the contest prevented any more votes to be cast for Alëna, who had a massive lead as it was. Subsequently, Alëna was disqualified from competing, because she was under the age of 18 and “did not match the regulations of the contest” (“Skazhi net ‘kuklam Barbi’”), but, she was awarded the “Viewer’s Choice Award” [priz zritel’skikh simpatii]. The promoters of the event awarded the opportunity to compete in the Miss Universe contest to 21 year old Kseniia Kustova, a girl who has the “Barbie-doll” body image.

The “Stop Barbie” website is still up and running and promoting the message worldwide that there is opposition in Russia to the Western imported norms of beauty and consumerism ironically represented by the Barbie doll. The imposed standards that this website rejects are:

Fake looking beauties, emotions and smiles; imposed standards 35”-23”-35” (in inches)/90-60-90 (in centimeters); mass-media standards and cults imposed on us; brands and trademarks which are made into cult objects; imposed consumer instinct; speculations on the human emotions; corporate manipulations on the human souls (sic) (“Skazhi net ‘kuklam Barbi’”)


Only time will tell how successful this sort of movement will become in Russia, but one thing is certain: overall, Russian teen magazines do not support this resistance movement for their raison d'etre is to nurture the very things the "Stop Barbie" movement rejects.

What follows is a summary of the images of the female body girls see and compare themselves to in Russian teen magazines. Not surprisingly, all of the young women pictured in these magazines are slender – none even border on being what could be called "plus-size" models. The models used for the magazines' fashion spreads and similar features rarely draw attention to their breasts by wearing low-cut necklines, however the tops they wear are usually tight-fitting, which emphasizes their curves. In general, it seems that most of the girls have small to medium sized breasts, which at least reflects the reality that most young women in their teens are still not yet fully-developed. I frequently saw models wearing tops that exposed their bare-midriffs. Of course, all of the girls have little to no fat on their mid-section, but I did not really see girls with well-defined abdominal muscles either. In fact, the models did not seem to have much of any muscle-tone at all. The models fit the quality that women should be "soft" around the edges, and look "feminine."

As opposed to the girls who model in these magazines, the female "stars" who are featured in these publications usually have a higher level of "sex appeal." The majority of female pop-stars, supermodels, and actresses pictured are either American or British. In my scanning of Russian magazines targeted at youth, the following pop-stars were the most frequently shown: Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez, Beyoncé Knowles, Britney Spears, and Shakira. All of these stars are famous for their curvaceous bodies (whether
all-natural or "surgically enhanced") and sex appeal. One other pop-star, Pink, who was pictured in most of the magazines I looked at, seems somewhat out of place with the other women listed above because Pink has a more muscular frame, small breasts, and is not "soft" and curvy like the other stars. Pink's lean, "hard" body is significant because "muscles have chiefly symbolized and continue to symbolize masculine power as physical strength" (Bordo 193). Also, her short-haired-tough-girl attitude and stance often make her seem more like one of the "boys." Pink's presence in most of the magazines I looked at offers Russian girls an alternative body image to the "womanly" curves of Britney Spears or Jennifer Lopez. However, Pink is one of the rare exceptions; most of the models and stars pictured in these magazines send girls the message that slender "soft" women are beautiful, and women with hour-glass figures are particularly sexy and desirable.

Since so many female stars today get plastic surgery to artificially mold their bodies into what is culturally dictated as the "perfect" body, it is unfair for women to judge themselves against the bodies of the rich and famous. Nevertheless, nearly every woman, even for one fleeting moment in her life, does judge her body against the surgically-enhanced bodies of the models and actresses she sees in the media. Many women focus on the size or shape of their breasts, since so much of what is "womanly," "maternal" and "sexual" in Western culture is defined by the image of breasts. Similarly, one of the Russian teen magazines I examined expressed the opinion that small breasts are something for women to be embarrassed about.
Three features in the May 2003 issue of *Shtuchka* focus on breasts, or the lack thereof. First, there is a short piece about how Brazilians are distraught because of a lack of silicone breast implants in their country (due to their economic crisis) and so many women there want to have breast augmentation surgery. The focus on the female body in Brazil, partially because of Carnivale, is said to be behind Brazilian women’s obsession with bigger and “better” breasts. On the same page is a feature on a new “smart bra” from Australia that is made of special fabric which can help to enhance what nature gave you (29). In a two-page spread highlighting the fashion stylings of American pop-star Gwen Stefani of the group “No Doubt,” the magazine comments that this “punk-diva” always seems to wear bras under every top, even if it is a tube top, in order to accentuate and make her small chest appear larger. Her visible bra straps (and whatever other parts of the bra show) serve as a fashion statement, but this article focuses on the bra as a ploy to enhance the singer’s bustline. More explicitly, the magazine states that, “Gwen’s small chest is one of her biggest headaches” (34). Girls reading this and the other two pieces on breasts in *Shtuchka* are being told that small breasts are a “defect” - something to be embarrassed about that can be “fixed” by wearing the right bra or by getting implants. Given that many girls who read these magazines are still at an age when they are developing, these messages can only make them more self-conscious of their breast size, small or large.

“Do you want to have a perky chest [vysokaia gnid’], slender thighs and a flat tummy?” Next to this text, taken from a teaser for the June issue of *Oops!* (May 106), is a picture of a nearly naked, slender girl. She is holding a towel up with her right arm to
hide her nudity and her left hand is pinching the “fat” on her exposed upper-thigh area. She looks at the camera, her left brow arched up in an almost “questioning” look. This text, along with the image of the girl, conveys the notion that Russian women should want to have that “perfect” body, the ideals of which have been imported from the West. Secondly, this feature in *Oops!* teaches Russian girls that they need to examine their bodies – looking for any “excess” fat that they may have. In this way, Russian girls learn to monitor their bodies carefully.

According to Russian teen magazines, female bodies are subject to the male gaze. A teaser on the cover of a June issue of *COOL GIRL* reads: “Finally you can get dressed up in tops and shorts! And [then] all the boys will notice how slender you are!” (No.13). What about the “plump” girls though? For them, summer signals a time when the body-camouflaging clothing of cold seasons is shed and their bodies’ “bulges” are "exposed" for all, especially the boys, to see. Since this text promotes a belief that being thin is associated with better chances of meeting boys (i.e. getting a boyfriend), it is implied that girls who are not particularly slender will not be meeting as many boys. A “boyless” future makes plump girls feel even worse about their bodies; this is especially true when we consider the previous *Oops!* promo about a girl needing to examine her body to ensure it fits within the norms of a beautiful body.

It seems that from the material presented in Russian teen magazines, a Russian girl who does not have “slender thighs and a flat tummy” is made to feel that something is “wrong” with her body. She may question whether she is overweight if her thighs, tummy, or other body parts do not meet the standards listed and pictured in the teen
magazines. One of the rare examples of Russian teen magazines promoting a healthy and realistic appraisal of body weight is in Shtuchka’s listing the formula for body mass index (BMI) (46). Shtuchka’s presentation of this should be commended because BMI, which takes height into consideration, is an indicator of whether or not someone is at a healthy weight. Young American girls, from what I have seen and experienced, often fall into the trap of judging their body by whether they can fit into a certain clothing size, or they become fixated on trying to lose pounds in order to be a certain weight (whether or not that weight is healthy for someone of their height and age). This preoccupation with what the scale or clothing label reads can lead to a distorted body image: a teenage girl thinks she is fat because she does not fit into a size 3. I do not know whether or not a similar phenomenon is at work yet in Russia, but it seems likely, given the demands these magazines are placing on girls’ bodies and the influence of Western body images these magazines propound.

Russian teen magazines address, or perhaps are creating, the desire for teen girls to lose weight and be slender. Two COOL GIRL covers list teasers that play on this desire. The cover of an April issue (No. 8) states “[Christina] Aguilera: Do you want to lose weight[?] - Ask me how.” A June issue (No. 13) reads: “Beyoncé Knowles: Go to the gym as often as possible – and you’ll always be in shape.”

The advice to go to the gym [sportzal] raises some class issues: namely, who can afford to go to a gym in Russia? According to one online Moscow directory, current annual gym memberships for adults range from around $1950 USD to $2995 USD; monthly passes, which sometimes only give the member an allotted number of visits,
range from $25 to $150 ("Health and Beauty/Fitness Clubs"). One gym in Moscow, “Fit and Fun,” even offers a special membership for youth aged 15-18; these rates are $720 USD for an annual pass, $480 for a 6-month pass, and $320 for a 3-month pass ("Klubnoe chlenstvo"). If we recall that just last year the average monthly wage in Russia was $184 USD, it is apparent that the overwhelming majority of Russians cannot afford to visit gyms, which are located primarily in Moscow and St. Petersburg, regularly.

Issues of *Oops!* regularly feature fitness as a topic listed under the general heading of “Cosmetics and Beauty.” In this magazine, the body is unmistakably linked to beauty, which only underscores the pressure being put on girls to have a “beautiful” body. Such fitness features emphasize that just like using cosmetics, exercise is another way to transform and improve your body. In the May issue, the fitness topic is kickboxing. The cover’s statement about this article says: “Kickboxing – a blow to weight.” Although the main purpose of this article is to give step-by-step illustrated instructions on four basic kickboxing moves, which provide an “excellent” way to lose some “extra” weight [*lishnii ves*], the way the piece is introduced gives this seemingly emotionally neutral fitness feature an added dimension of significance. The piece begins as follows:

> Even if you’re not a very vengeful girl, nevertheless, sometimes you want to take revenge on him [your boyfriend] for not calling you on time, or for forgetting to buy your mom flowers on March 8th [International Women’s Day] … [then take up kickboxing and] [t]hrow off negative emotions and it won’t be necessary to take revenge! (88)
Here then, exercise can be used to help lighten your mood by channeling your angry, negative emotions toward your boyfriend into positive results, like losing those extra pounds. In this way then, it is implied that a female needs male validation.

A short *Seventeen* mini-report on the physical benefits of playing basketball provides a welcome feminist twist. It explains that the sport improves reaction time and coordination, helps build muscles, and can also help you to burn 400-480 calories in one hour. What is noteworthy about this piece is that it is prefaced with the statement: “And who said that this is a game not meant for girls?” (27); it is introduced in the table of contents as, “Why girls are playing basketball” (6). Here, the act of girls playing basketball is given a feminist spin – girls can do what boys can – and the very act of girls playing basketball is a way of entering, or breaking through, the male-gendered realm of sports. Furthermore, by playing basketball, girls improve reaction time and coordination as well as build muscles – all of which cultural gender norms define as masculine characteristics.

In Russian teen magazines, the topic of dieting to lose weight is not covered in as much depth as exercising to help lose weight. Although most of the magazines I looked at had short pieces about the importance of eating healthy fruits and vegetables, one issue of *COOL GIRL* (No. 15) had a short feature on a Dannon yogurt-smoothie, “Dannissimo,” that highlighted the use of the product to help lose weight. It hooks the reader with: “Do you dream about becoming even thinner and more beautiful? But you can’t bear dieting and you adore feasting on [just about] anything?” (15). It then says that Dannon yogurt-smoothies are healthy and part of a “breakfast of beauty.” Exactly how or
why this product helps you lose weight, or be more beautiful, is not explained, but the assumption seems to be that drinking this smoothie in place of the usual hearty Russian breakfast will help you cut down on calories and total fat intake. In turn, this low calorie breakfast will help you achieve a thinner, more beautiful, body.

However, returning to the opening line of this piece for Dannon yogurt-smoothies, we begin to see that the words work on a much deeper level than just promoting a new product to help a woman lose weight. This piece draws upon the theme of food obsession; as Susan Bordo explains, advertisements often exploit “women’s eating problems while obscuring their dark realities” (105), which are the eating disorders of bulimia and anorexia. This Dannon promo could be construed as being directed at the compulsive eater, a characteristic of bulimia, who “dreams about being even thinner … but [who] can’t bear dieting,” and who “adores feasting on [just about] anything.” This Dannon product encourages Russian women to transcend their appetite and hunger (which happens to be a characteristic of anorexia) in order to lose weight and be “more beautiful.”

According to Vainshtein, some Russian women during the Soviet era neurotically hoarded food and even overate “just in case,” because food shortages were so common. Describing this phenomenon, Vainshtein explains that:

> The need to obtain and then use up these huge [food] reserves, the absence of a culture of healthy nutrition, the Russian tradition of endless tea drinking along with sweet things — all this drove women into the vicious cycle of a love/hate relationship to food. Hence the popular joke: ‘What are the Soviet woman’s two basic concerns?’ ‘How to get food and how to lose weight.’ (88)
Given the hoarding and overeating behavior among Russian women, along with the saturation in post-Soviet media of imported Western images of the ideal and “beautiful” slender body, the frequency of eating disorders among Russian girls must have increased since the Soviet era. Although my research turned up no hard data on the frequency of eating disorders in the USSR or Russia today, it would seem likely that the “importation” of Western images of the slender female body which began flooding the Russian market in the late 1980s, would have the same general effect on young Russian women as it had on young American women: many develop eating disorders in the never-ending quest for thinness and “beauty.” In the years to come, eating disorders among Russian girls will most likely increase, largely because of the prevalence of the messages in Russian teen magazines that instruct girls to control their weight and appetite – discipline their bodies – in order to “fit in” with the Western imported ideals of the beautiful feminine body.

A perusal of a website promoted in the October issue of Seventeen suggests that eating disorders exist in Russia. This site, an online forum called “Dieta foreva,” [“Diet forever”] which is also referred to as “Devki na diete” [“Girls on a diet”] (http://www.livejournal.com/community/devki_na_diete/), clearly shows that some Russian young women today see food as the enemy, are obsessive about what they eat, and are willing to “punish” and “discipline” their bodies by starving themselves. Some postings referred to the necessity of keeping a detailed diary of what you eat (portion size, calorie content, time of day eaten, etc.); others revealed an obsession with clothing sizes; and some other postings read like “confessions” of a dieter whose transgression is breaking her strict, restrictive, dietary regimen. Sections of this online forum
unmistakably express the growing online community of Russian women with the characteristics of someone with an eating disorder ("Dieta foreva").

Returning to the Dannon promo, I am reminded of Bordo’s argument that symbolically, female hunger is “a cultural metaphor for unleashed female power and desire” (116). Looking at the pictures of these “Dannissimo” drinks, we notice how small the containers are; the bottle being held in the model’s hand appears to be shorter than the length of her hand. How can that tiny yogurt-smoothie possibly satisfy anyone’s appetite? Again, Bordo provides insight into this, by explaining that the satisfaction and sensual pleasure that a woman gets from eating food, which metaphorically speaking is “erotic,” is usually represented in cultural forms as measured doses (112). Since female hunger equals female desire and sexuality, visual or textual representations of a woman devouring a large portion of food are rarely seen in patriarchal cultures because of the desire to control female power and sexuality (Bordo 68). Furthermore, instead of “eating” “Dannissimo,” women “drink” it, thus providing a visual reinforcement that denies cultural representations of women physically eating (chewing, devouring) food. Their desire for the sensual aspects of eating has therefore been “restricted” to the act of simply taking a modest sip to satisfy their hunger.

Additionally, regarding the cultural signification of women transcending hunger, Bordo argues that:

the symbolic and practical control of female hunger (read: desire), [is] continually constructed as a problem in patriarchal cultures (particularly in times when gender relations have become unsettled) and internalized in women’s shame over their own needs and appetites. (68)
This Dannon promo alludes to this shame Russian women should feel at their appetites. As discussed earlier, the debate that Soviet Russia had become “feminized,” whereas post-Soviet Russia is now being “masculinized,” marks a time of unsettled gender relations. Furthermore, since Russian women are given limited opportunities in the career world, and have been encouraged to “return” to the home to be full-time “guardians of the hearth” – as was articulated earlier by Gorbachev and more recently by Putin – the belief that women have a limited place in post-Soviet Russia is reinforced. As Bordo argues, anorexia, and in the Russian context, eating less, is symbolically a “recircumscription of woman’s limited ‘place’ in the world” (68).

One article in the October issue of Seventeen deals with the issue of girls learning to accept their body as it is. In an article about fighting the autumn-time blues [khandra], the magazine lists seventeen reasons/ways to feel good. Reason number seven deals with body image. It says: “Allow yourself to relax and forget about the size of [your] jeans and the number of calories in pasta or pizza. It’s scientifically proven that only our thoughts hinder us from being a queen in this life” (80). The use of the words “scientifically proven” and “queen” here are awkward and unwieldy, but the sentence suggests that self-esteem and confidence comes from within, and that by thinking positively and not putting oneself down, a woman can accomplish much in life. Elsewhere in this issue though, in contrast to this positive sense of body-image, is contradictory text that advocates the use of dieting and exercise to have a “beautiful little belly” [prekrasnyi zhivotik](29). Further, this text is introduced with the statement that: “All self-respecting girls go to the gym” (29). What are girls to think when on the one hand they are being told to accept their
body as it is and not worry about dieting, and then on the other hand they are being told that they do not respect themselves if they do not go to the gym to get rid of their “pooch”? The images in this magazine of slender, “perfect” young women who are usually wearing short tops that reveal their flat stomachs only add to this paradox.

Another pair of contradictory messages about body image are in evidence in the May issue of *Shtuchka* in a reference to “fattism,” which is discrimination against overweight people. The article actually begins with the topic of Yoko Ono fighting against ageism, and then it goes on to discuss Roseanne Barr speaking out against “fattism” in the American media. This piece points to media discrimination against female models and actresses on the basis of weight; the majority of these women have to be thin in order to make it in the business. The disappointing thing about this short *Shtuchka* article is that the editors of the magazine might have expanded on this topic, opening up the discussion of “fattism” in Russian media and culture, and what the impact is on young girls being constantly exposed to images of the “perfect” female body-type and beauty. Ironically, to make matters worse, overlapping part of this article’s visual background is a picture of supermodel Rachel Hunter (her love life is discussed in an adjacent article). Looking at the cover of this issue of *Shtuchka*, as well as the online catalog of other covers of the magazine from 2003 (“Zhurnal ‘Shtuchka’”), the publishers of this magazine seem only to put girls who are slender on the cover. Perhaps their publication too is guilty, even if unwittingly, of “fattism.” At the very least, this brief *Shtuchka* feature seems to locate “fattism” as an American “problem,” primarily since the
editors do not expand on Roseanne Barr’s comments in order to discuss the possibility of “fattism” existing in Russia.

As some of the previous examples show, teen magazines in Russia suggest that Russian girls are being sent messages, largely engendered by the West, that they need to conform to the slender body-type. Some girls may need to exercise or diet to shape and maintain a slender body. Certain attitudes emerging in Russia toward the female body, evidenced in the teen magazines I examined, seem to be laying the groundwork for the emergence and proliferation of eating disorders in Russia’s young women. In Russia today, store shelves are filled with a myriad of edible consumer goods, which represents a “land of plenty” compared to the food shortages of much of the Soviet era. For that reason, since Russians are surrounded by the “temptation” of a wide variety of food today, intentional weight loss brought on by refusing to eat and limiting food intake – characteristics of eating disorders – can be interpreted as a cultural statement, as well as a way of expressing self-determination and self-control.

Given a situation where Russian women today are having trouble finding the same professional and educational opportunities they had during the Soviet era, many women may feel as if they have no control or power over their lives. They may feel that they have nothing else to offer but their bodies; they decorate their bodies, they have babies, and some realize that they can profit from their bodies in the sex industry. The body projects – such as diet, exercise, and self-beautification – being promoted in Russian teen magazines offer these young women an opportunity to exert control and power over one part of their lives – their bodies. Bordo explains that:
for women, associated with the body and largely confined to a life centered on the body (both the beautification of one's own body and the reproduction, care and maintenance of the bodies of others), culture's grip on the body is a constant, intimate fact of everyday life. (17)

In many ways, Russian girls are being socially trained to be “docile bodies.” In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault describes that: “A body is docile that it may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (136). Applying this notion of the “docile body” to femininity, Bordo refers to how women have often been defined in terms of “delicacy and domesticity” (18). In the post-Soviet era, this is the definition of femininity being mapped out on Russian teenage girls’ bodies.
CONCLUSION

The focus in Russian teen magazines on the need for girls to attend to their looks is sending girls many messages about femininity, beauty, and the body. As was illustrated, the history and evolution of feminine beauty in Russia over the last 87 years is complex. Since the late 1980s, largely because of the media and a public “acceptance” of displaying the female body, both clothed and unclothed, a great deal of focus has been placed on Russian women’s physical appearance. Teenage girls acutely feel the pressure to continuously be aware of their bodies and appearance because their bodies, emotions, and hormones are in a perpetual state of transition. Today, teen magazines are telling Russian girls that their appearance is in constant need of surveillance.

Currently, the standards of beauty for women in Russia are not far removed from standards in America or any other Western country; it appears that the “beauty myth” has been imported and adapted quickly by Russian society. The difference in today’s Russia relative to the Soviet era is that women are being sent messages from media and society that so much of their self-worth is based on their physical appearance. Unlike their mother or grandmother’s generation, today’s teen girls in Russia have glossy magazines meant specifically for them. Teenage girls in Russia are taking their cues from what they see around them, from “cultural mirrors,” such as teen magazines like COOL GIRL, Oops!, Shtuchka and Seventeen.
In addition, Russian teenage girls are learning how to think about themselves and what it means to be “beautiful” and “feminine” from their mothers and other more mature female relatives for whom, during the Soviet era:

a preoccupation with enhancing their looks was virtually Russian women’s sole means of self-expression, a demonstration of their possible independence from the bleak deprivations of everyday life, an unsuccessful marriage, dissatisfaction with the job, politics, and much else. The possibility of altering their physical selves offered women a form of psychological self-defense and compensation. (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 107)

The situation in today’s Russia is less “bleak” and “dreary,” but Russian women still deal with a wide variety of hardships. Have the reasons why a Russian woman engages in self-beautification changed since the Soviet era? Does this project still allow her a pleasant escape from the hardships of her life, even if she is being sent messages from the media and society that she needs to fit within certain rigid norms of “beauty”? Or, does self-beautification today in Russia begin to be a woman’s duty? In the early 1990s, Rebecca Kay studied young Russian women and discovered that most of them considered that: “Every woman has a duty to look after herself and take care of her looks” (82). Roughly ten years later, based on what I see in Russian teen magazines, this belief has only been strengthened in Russian culture. In the near future, will Russian women, particularly the generation of young women coming of age today, go to the beauty salon, or buy a new lipstick or outfit, because they think they need to constantly keep improving their appearance? Are today’s Russian teenage girls becoming entangled in the “beauty myth,” or rather, the beauty trap, that is, made to feel as if their bodies need to be maintained and disciplined in order to fit within culturally imposed standards of feminine beauty? Socio-
cultural studies of Russian girls, particularly in regard to their responses to the teen magazines that target them, might produce the necessary answers to these sorts of questions about how the female body and beauty are perceived in Russian society today, nearly fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As Natalia Zakharova predicted, glasnost' and perestroika did bring Russian women the contradictory freedom of "glamour" (cited in Wolf 80). The flood of imported consumer goods, namely clothing and cosmetics, which appeared during the late Soviet and post-Soviet era, gave Russian women a variety of choices; but since most of these choices are often out of their price range, this consumer freedom is almost a cruel joke. When these sorts of expensive consumer goods are targeted at the teenage population, it seems even more cruel, since most Russian teenagers simply cannot afford a lipstick for $14 USD, or jeans for $150 USD. The world of consumption created in many of these magazines, especially Seventeen and Oops!, is a fantasy world; the "glamour" created in these magazines is a contradictory freedom.

The sudden availability of countless consumer goods immediately resulted in Russians becoming enveloped by a consumer-driven market and economy. For many Russians, particularly young people, this massive expansion in the availability of consumer goods was equated with "freedom" (Markowitz 70). The appearance of the "New Russians" in the post-Soviet era and their conspicuous consumptive practices clearly shows us that a portion of the country is being driven by consumption, but what about the rest of the nation with little expendable income? Are they any less the consumer, or any less driven by consumption? I do not believe so – because even if they
cannot afford to buy consumer goods as often as the “New Russians,” Russians are still consumers of ideas being marketed to them – such as we have seen in these teen magazines. This is not to say that every teenager who reads Russian teen magazines wholeheartedly accepts the messages being sent to them, but the images and messages in these magazines surely effects their readers. The application of reader response theories is beyond the parameters of this thesis: this is why further research in the form of sociological studies of Russian teenage girls needs to be done in order to get a better picture of how girls are processing the messages sent to them in teen magazines.

With regard to a socio-economic situation wherein notions of consumption are especially acute, Bordo refers to Robert Crawford’s belief that living in such an environment creates contradictions, because:

as producers of goods and services, we must sublimate, delay, repress desires for immediate gratification; we must cultivate the work ethic. On the other hand, as consumers we must display a boundless capacity to capitulate to desire and indulge in impulse ... The regulation of desire thus becomes an ongoing problem, as we find ourselves continually besieged by temptation, while socially condemned for overindulgence. (Of course, those who cannot afford to indulge their desires as consumers, teased and frustrated by the culture, face a much harsher dilemma.) (199)

In post-Soviet Russia the situation is similar, largely because women are being socially trained to be consumers, but many of them cannot afford to make many purchases. The glamorous “dream world of mass-consumption” that surrounds Russians in Moscow and St. Petersburg is reinforced with glossy magazines. On the other hand, notions that consumerism is an “evil” Western trait that should be avoided by Russians – a belief remaining from the Soviet era – still exists in Russia. But, can this belief win out in the
end – will Russia successfully resist the “temptations” of consumerism? Given that Russia has enthusiastically become a member of the global economy, it seems likely that the enticements of the free-market first established by Gorbachev and strengthened by Yeltsin and Putin will continue to breed consumerist attitudes.

The existence of the fledgling “Stop Barbie” “movement” in Russia show us that there is resistance to the consumer-oriented Western-based hegemonic practices at work in Russia. On the other hand, we have to wonder just how much support all of the messages on the “Stop Barbie” website really have among Russians. As a reminder, the “Stop Barbie” website is against:

Fake looking beauties, emotions and smiles; imposed standards 35”-23”-35” (in inches)/90-60-90 (in centimeters); mass-media standards and cults imposed on us; brands and trademarks which are made into cult objects; imposed consumer instinct; speculations on the human emotions; corporate manipulations on the human souls [sic]. (“Skazhi net ‘kuklam Barbi’”)

This site’s raising of awareness about the negative effects of consumerism are largely based on remnant Soviet beliefs about the rejection of capitalist consumerism, and therefore, probably resound well with many Russians. However, the feminist awareness this site tries to promote about the female body and beauty more than likely do not resound as deeply with an audience of Russians. There is evidence of this in Susan Glasser’s article, in which she reports that Russian women “refuse to embrace American-style feminism,” and that most Russian women define the ideal beauty as: “a woman in a dress, with long blond hair, elaborate makeup and hairdo, and high heels” – in other words, a Barbie doll look-alike. As Glasser explains, in Russia today, “makeup is still
about liberation, about affordable luxury and about what's required to get and keep a man.” It seems that when it comes to issues of beauty, Russian women today, just like many of their female sisters living in the first two decades after the Bolshevik Revolution, do not want to believe or accept that wearing makeup and other acts of self-beautification are ideological “transgressions.” Because Russian women were “forbidden” (for ideological reasons, as well as because of consumer goods shortages) from indulging in the world of cosmetics for almost 75 years, today they view using cosmetics, as well as being able to buy makeup from all around the world, as a “freedom” they were denied during the Soviet era. Yet, “glamour” for women, as we have witnessed in America, comes with a price: low self-esteem, constant self-scrutiny, eating disorders, plastic surgery, and a distorted sense of self-worth based on how we look.

“Glamour” as a contradictory freedom is additionally seen in Russian teen magazines in the way in which the “glamorous” young woman is promoted. If during the Soviet era women were not “officially” allowed to spend precious time fawning over their appearance or looking “glamorous” – since that was deemed bourgeois – during the post-Soviet era, they are exposed to the suggestion of a seductive “total” freedom to primp and preen themselves. In this context, glossy magazines serve a primary role in teaching women the “secrets” to looking beautiful and stylish. Teen magazines advise girls on what to wear and how to look in order to be more like the “cool girls” they see looking back at them on the pages of the magazines. The publications assume that every reader wants to emulate the stylish and beautiful young women in these magazines; but, in reality, most girls do not look like the models in these magazines.
Articles, images and advertisements in teen magazines are schooling Russian teenage girls in the lessons of beauty. The main lesson they teach is that a girl’s body and her appearance is a project that needs to be repeatedly updated and disciplined in order to be considered a success. In this way, Russian girls’ bodies are the sites of very sophisticated marketing techniques. One result of these marketing techniques is that Russian girls are constantly scrutinizing their bodies and appearance. Being taught at a young age that their self-worth is tied to their bodies, girls become figuratively imprisoned by their appearance. As Bordo explains:

Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress, we [women] are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. Through these disciplines, we continue to memorize on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, of insufficiency, of never being good enough. (166)

This is the “price” women pay to have the “glamorous” face and body promised to us by glossy magazines, advertisements, and the media at large. In turn, the female body becomes a “docile body.” This ideal of femininity is poignantly encapsulated in a quote from Mary Wollstonecraft, an early “feminist” living in late 18th and early 19th century Britain, who wrote in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman that: “Taught from their infancy that beauty is a woman’s scepter, the [female] mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison” (qtd. in Bordo 18).

Russian girls who accept the notion that they need to constantly improve their appearance, become slaves to the market. At the heart of this matter, the “freedom” of “glamour” imported from the West into post-Soviet Russia is a double-edged sword for
young women. Only time will tell to what extent generations of Russian girls coming of age in post-Soviet Russia internalize the messages propagated in teen magazines.
NOTES

1 “Люблю их ножки; только вряд / Найдете вы в России целой / Три пары стройных женских ног” (1.30. 8-10).

2 Russian words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system.

3 This painting was originally completed in 1943, but the face of the mother in the painting was touched up in the late 1940s in order to make her look less gaunt and more “feminine.”

4 The topic of boys and male/female relationships received the most coverage in these magazines. Coverage of beauty-related topics was the second most covered issue.

5 The licensing of Seventeen to this publisher is given through permission from Hearst Magazines International, USA.

6 In my list of Works Cited, these publications are listed as my primary sources. Since no actual MLA format exists for the citation of an entire magazine, and since these Russian teen publications are not collected and archived in libraries, I have included the ISSN number of each publication in my list of Works Cited. Readers interested in locating issues that I examined may also try contacting the publisher of each magazine (the websites for each publisher is listed in the Webography section of my Works Cited.

7 This was the figure given in the issue I looked at, but according to the Rovesnik website (“O kompanii”) as of February 2004, the circulation was 75,000.

8 Interestingly though, according to Burda Advertising Center’s readership statistics among Muscovites from December 2002-April 2003, on average, COOL GIRL is read by almost as many readers aged 25-44, as those aged 16-24. And in fact, there are more readers aged 35-44 reading COOL GIRL, as well as Oops!, than the readers aged 25-34. Even more surprising is that there are more COOL GIRL readers over 45 years old than the magazine’s readers aged 25-34 (http://www.bac.de/deutsch/html/media_kits/print_international/).

9 In fact, I only found one ad for a product made by a Russian company: facial care products for clearer skin called “A Face Without Problems” [Litso bez problem], made by a company called Floresan (Oops! Oct. 2003, p 47).

10 “Nepmen” refers to businessmen who were able to make considerable profits during the era of the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1921-1928), which allowed for self-ownership of small enterprises in Soviet Russia.
This was in contrast to the families of the Party elite who had access to special stores with exclusive products, such as imported cosmetics, perfume and fashion, not available to the general public (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 99).

An average monthly wage at that time was only around 120 rubles (Adelman 65).

Some designers, such as Lamanova and Mukhina, even created patterns for clothing that could be sewn from headscarves or even towels (Strizhenova 49, 61).

Sarah Thornton draws on Bourdieu's idea of “cultural capital” by coining the term “subcultural capital” - which refers to the amount of “hipness” a member of a subculture has because of her understanding of the subculture. The possession of Western clothing, and especially music gave Soviet youth an “insider” track to “hipness” (Thornton 11).


The stiliagi dressed in a manner similar to the “Teddy Boys” in England. They were inspired by American jazz and rock’n’roll musicians of the 1950s, whose music, because of the cultural thaw [ottepel’] of the Khrushchev era, was beginning to find its way into the USSR after decades of isolation from the West (Pilkington, Russia’s Youth and Culture 66).

Jokes about toilet paper shortages as well as the sandpaper quality of Soviet-made toilet paper were part of American popular culture in the 1980s.

A similar phenomenon occurred under Peter the Great, as well as in the immediate post-Stalin years. The difference in westernization under Gorbachev though, was that it received widespread official sanction.

The economic reforms of Gorbachev’s era allowed for the creation of these privately owned shops, called cooperatives, which were managed and organized by groups of people. Many resented these shops because their prices were high and the quality of products was usually low; however, the cooperatives usually had a higher supply of consumer goods compared to the state-run stores. (Adelman 18) Also, this was the era when street kiosks began to appear with similar quality goods.

The Pioneers were a Soviet youth organization for children aged 9 to 15.

Part of the ideological purpose of the collective is to suppress personal desires and concerns in order to promote the “good” of the group as a whole.

The term “conspicuous consumption” was coined by Thorstein Veblen, an American economist and sociologist, in The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899). Rosalind Williams
explains that this term refers to “a way of life where wasteful and ostentatious items ... are regarded as necessities” (107).

See note No. 8 for the COOL GIRL readership statistics (with regard to age of readers).

Prices were approximated, figuring an exchange rate of 30 rubles to 1 USD, which was the average exchange rate of 2003 (Antweiler).

Whereas cultural observers such as John Fiske and Paul Willis would argue that teens in America and Britain often reject the homogenization effect of products by ripping the labels off or tearing their brand name clothing – thereby “making a statement” and consuming in a way different than that producer intended – this approach to understanding consumptive practices may not be as applicable in the Russian context, especially in the provinces.

Discussing the Stalinist cultural revolution of the late 1920s and early 1930s in the USSR, Lewin explains that: “A series of furious economic, educational, and military undertakings shook up and restructured society, affected all its social classes, and thereby caused havoc in the system. Sudden changes of social position, occupation, status, and location operated on such a scale as to create a ‘quicksand society’ characterized by flux, uncertainty, mobility, high turnover, and anomie” (22).

This reminds me of the adage: "If you have to ask how much something costs, then you can't afford it" (J.P. Morgan). In fashion magazines in the West, the prices of high-end, especially couture, designer items are often omitted for this reason.

It is interesting to note that the text of this piece does not say “your mom needs help,” but rather, your “parents.” The typical and traditional Russian man would not be doing these chores to begin with; a female would do his cooking and cleaning. Also, given the context of the last sentence of the introductory text of this fashion spread, the young girl’s father would be “happy” because his daughter is “growing up,” into an adult Russian woman. Seeing that she knows how to cook and clean would make him proud.

A pointed cap (circa Civil War 1918-1922) with up-turned ear flaps – in the center of the cap, covering the forehead area, is a fabric red star with a smaller red-star pin with the hammer and sickle in the center of it.

The Soviet era only complicated this Russian search for “identity” since the USSR was a conglomeration of more than 100 different ethnic groups.

This debate has its beginnings in the eighteenth century, as a result of the opposition created by Peter the Great’s reforms. Westernizers were in favor of Russia’s adaptation and emulation of Western culture, while the Slavophiles were opposed to this, believing
that Russia needed only to draw upon its Slavic roots, its Orthodox religion and its people [narod].

32 My supposition is based on the information listed for this photoshoot: all the names of people involved are non-Russian, and are listed in English, not Russian.

33 See the fashion spread titled “Pensive October” [Zadumchivyi oktiabr] in the Oops! October issue (62-68). The model wears several layers of mismatched clothing, which gives an effect of a “hippy” chic sort of style.

34 The British rock group of the 1970s and 1980s led by Freddie Mercury.

35 Likewise, during World War II the United States promoted the iconic model of “Rosie the Riveter” – the symbol of women answering the call of duty and doing “men’s work.”

36 Similar complaints are voiced in far-eastern Russia because of the flood of cheap Chinese imported clothing.

37 Soviet citizens might have “thought rich” about their nation because, according to propaganda, it was the best on the planet, but few applied this attitude at the individual level.

38 See Bourdieu’s “Structures, Habitus, Power” for an explanation of “cultural capital” (181).

39 This article has runway pictures showing this “provincial look” from top Belgian designers, Dries Van Noten and Martin Margiela, as well as British “punk” designer Vivienne Westwood.

40 Similarly, issues of COOL GIRL featured Western stars’ style pages, and Oops! highlighted the style of some Russian stars.

41 As a source of comparison, I looked at a few copies of the American version of Seventeen from 2003 while doing my research.

42 A Soviet girl may have felt inadequate if she was not a straight-A-student [otlichnik], or if she was not a member of the Communist youth organization (Pioneers).

43 This comment about a man being enraptured, even obsessed, with women’s feet is mirrored in Aleksandr Pushkin’s timeless work, Evgenii Onegin (see Chapter 1, stanzas XXX-XIV). For example, see lines like: “Как я желаю тогда с волнами / Коснуться милых ног устами!” [“I longed, like every breaker hissing, / to smother her dear feet with kissing”] (1.33.5-6); “Держу я счастливое стремя... / И ножку чувствую в
IllpyKax;/ Опять кнппт воображенье…” [“I grasp a stirrup with affection, / I feel a small foot in my hand; / fancies once more are hotly bubbling…”] (1.34.3-5).

44 Refer to previously mentioned reader statistics given by the Burda Advertising Center website for middle-aged readers of these teen magazines in endnote No. 8.

45 After being married to an American for two years, many Russian “mail-order brides” divorce their husbands and are able to stay in the United States. “Mail-order brides” do not have any illusions of really finding love in these relationships, rather, as was stated, they see it as a way to get out of Russia and make a better life for themselves (and their children). Unfortunately, some of these women get caught in abusive (physical and/or sexual) relationships.

46 Both Garnier and L’oréal endorse the three-step method for clear skin in their ads in Russian teen magazines as well.

47 “Russian women today spend twice as much of their income on cosmetics as Western Europeans do — 12 percent of their entire paychecks on average, according to research firm Comcon-Pharma” (Glasser).

48 According to Paul Goldschmidt, the sexual revolution in post-Stalinist Russia began in 1987. At this time, because of a newly relaxed policy of censorship, mildly pornographic, or erotic, pictures and scenes began to appear in mainstream media forms (321). At the same time the media sensationalized their coverage of topics surrounding sex (such as prostitution) since talking about them had been taboo for so long in Russian culture.

49 Such as the Miss Hair, Miss Bust, Miss Legs, and Miss Erotic beauty contests (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 113).

50 Alëna’s height is 5’5”, her weight is 132 lbs., and her measurements are 35”-30”-39” (“Alëna Pisklova”)

51 Kseniia Kustova is 5’11” tall, weighs 121 lbs., and her measurements are 35”-24”-35” (“Kseniia Kustova”).

52 What makes this sort of distorted approach to weight and body image even more troubling is that women’s clothing sizes vary greatly from company to company, making them a very unreliable “method” by which to judge one’s weight. Conversely, this can be compared to the fact that although women are forced to buy clothing in often arbitrarily pre-made sizes, when a man buys a suit, he gets measured, and gets a suit tailor-made (or specially altered) for him. Furthermore, men’s ready-to-wear pants, shirts, and jackets are customarily sized by specific measurements, not by arbitrary size numbers like women’s clothing.
Seventeen reviews internet sites, one of which listed in the October issue is a featured site that deals with girls dieting (http://www.livejournal.com/community/devki_na_diete/). According to Seventeen, this site features information on how to count calories and other dieting tips, as well as useful advice from experienced dieters and “tragic stories from fat newcomers” [tolstikh novichkov] (29).

See Bordo for a summary of the socio-cultural explanations as to how media images are partially to blame for the frequency of eating disorders among women (45-47).

The use of the phrase “scientifically proven” is reminiscent of the Soviet era.

This is actually an old story in America, dating back to the late 1980s when Roseanne Barr starred in her sitcom “Roseanne.”
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