



**A Critical Analysis of Media Images
Depicting the New Athletic Body Ideal and
One Woman's Experience with Them**

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The Realization Moment

- ❖ **Inspiration:** The power of observation and self-reflection.
- ❖ **Purpose:** Explore, describe, and explain the new athletic-ideal.
- ❖ **Leading Questions:**
 - What are the patterns present?
 - What characteristics define the fit-ideal?
 - What messages does the text convey?
 - What are the effects of these messages?
- ❖ **The importance of education and activism.**

The Fit-Ideal and the Thin-Ideal

Ultra-Thin Tall Beautiful
Perfect Models
Dieting **The Thin-Ideal**
Eating Disorder Skinny Anorexia Nervosa
White Obsession Desirable
Sexualized Harmful Pain Perfect
Drive Confident Happy
Dedicated Toned **The Fit-Ideal** Muscular
Ultra-Lean Obsession Beautiful Strong
“Firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin.” Defined

Methods

- ❖ Sample: 30 images obtained from 6 different Google searches:
 - “Workout Inspiration”
 - “Motivational Fitness Posters”
 - “Fitness Inspiration”
 - “Fitspiration”
 - “Tumbler Fitness”
 - “Gym Motivation Women”

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 - “Gym Motivation Women”
- ❖ **Critique and Reaction:**
 - Observations on appearance
 - Identification of surface and subliminal messages using a feminist perspective and sociological principles
 - Reaction and elicited feelings
- ❖ **Analyzed using a grounded theory approach.**

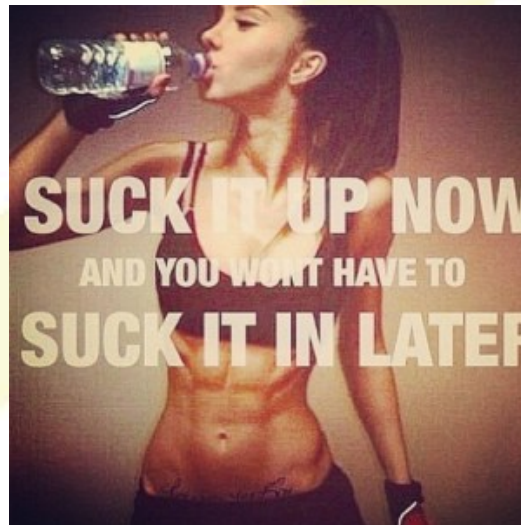
Results

- ❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:

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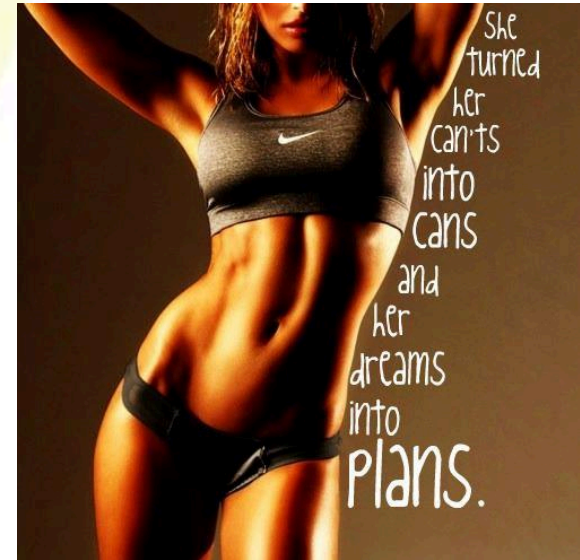
❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:

1. Presence of the fit- and thin-ideal- The depiction of a woman as ultra-thin and lean, as well as very defined and muscular.
 - Prevalence: 93% or 28 of the 30 images



Results

- ❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:
 2. Sexualization- Fully or nearly nude women posed in a seductive or sexual manor.
 - Prevalence: 93% or 28 of the 30 images

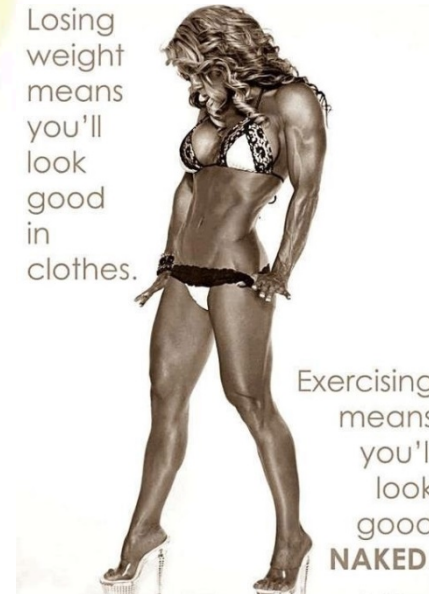
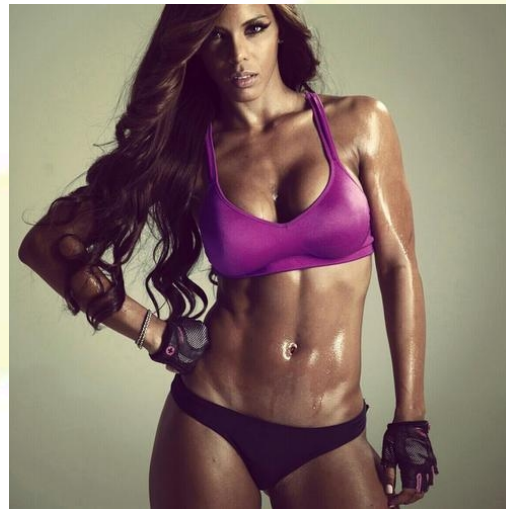


Results

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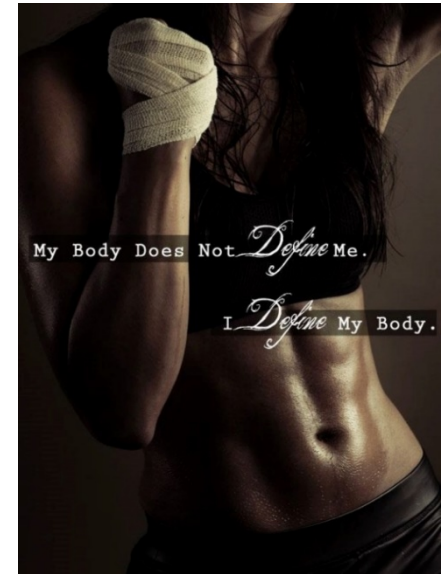
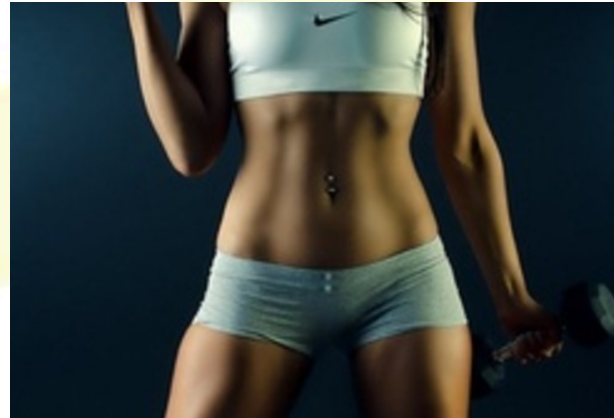
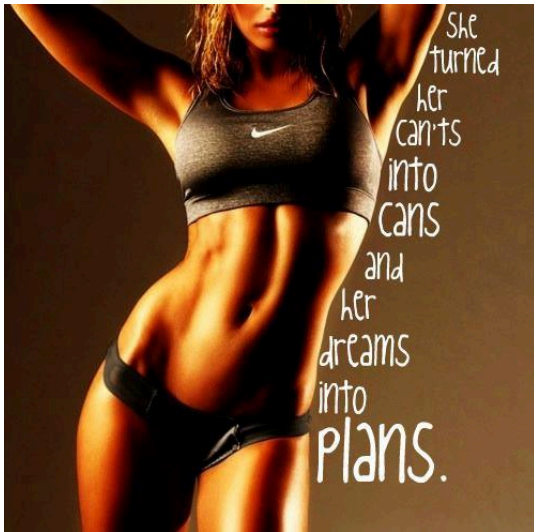
3. Beautification of Fitness- The beautified images associated with working out, often depicting sweat-free women with perfect hair, make-up, and other qualities.

- Prevalence: 93% or 28 of the 30 images



Results

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 4. Photographic Enhancement- The obvious usage of lighting effects, shading, and strategic placement to make women appear more narrow and defined.
 - Prevalence: 83% or 25 of the 30 images

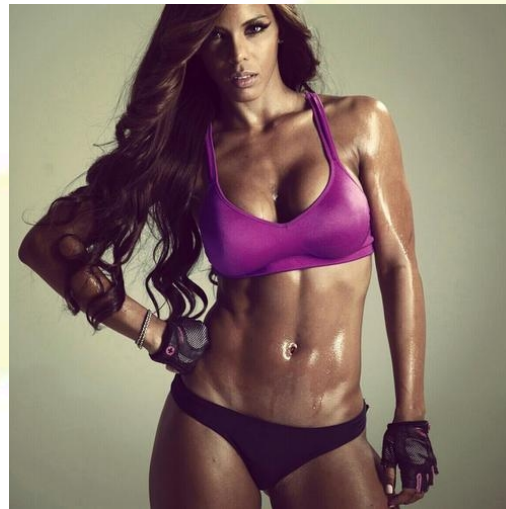
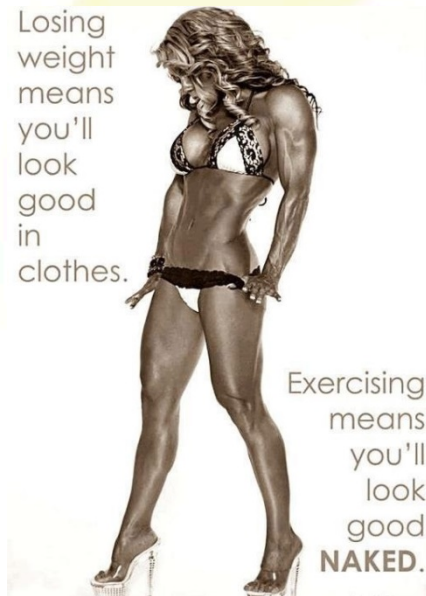


Results

❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:

5. Disproportionate Physiques- Characterized primarily by unnaturally and inappropriately large breasts compared to the degree of body fat.

- Prevalence: 67% or 20 of the 30 images



Results

- ❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:
 6. Messages of Empowerment- Images where the woman appeared strong, determined, confident, and/or driven.
 - Prevalence: 67% or 20 of the 30 images

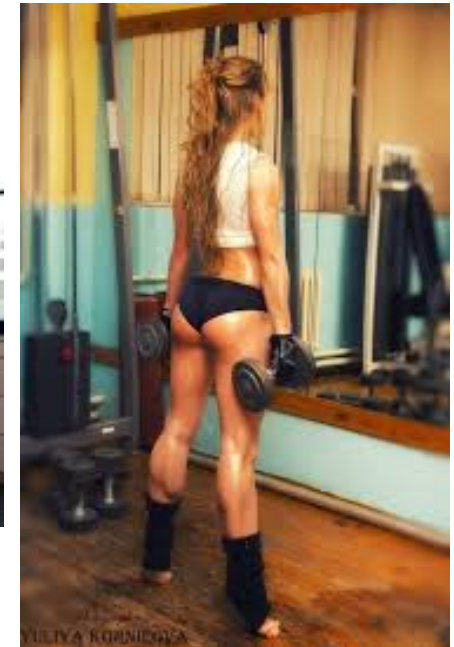


Results

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7. Submissive Poses- Images where the woman was looking down or away from the camera, or posed so her face is not shown.

- Prevalence: 53% or 16 of the 30 images

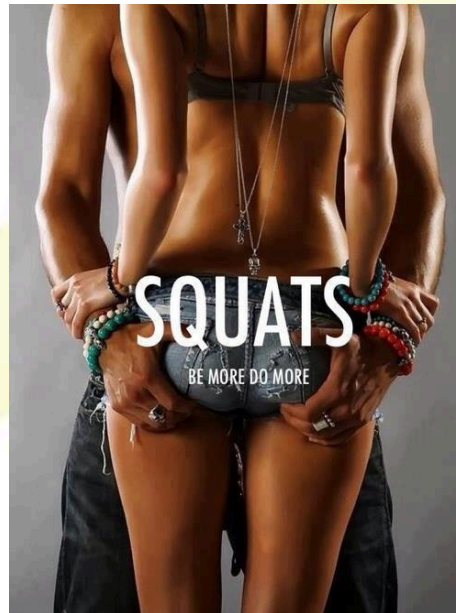
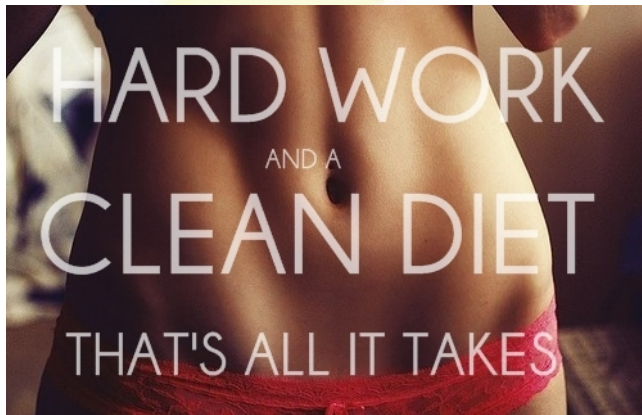


Results

❖ 13 total conceptualized patterns:

8. Objectification- The reduction of a woman's body to one or a few parts, thus equating her worth with a part of the body.

- Prevalence: 63% or 19 of the 30 images

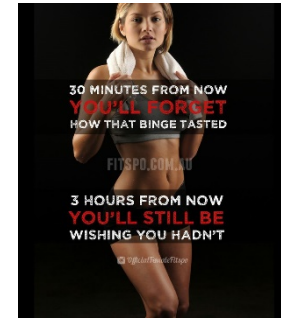


Results

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Additional Patterns:

- Unnatural poses
- Image/Text Contradiction
- Direct Elicitation of Shame/Guilt
- Encouragement of Physical/
Psychological Harm
- Simplification of Obtaining the
Fit-Ideal



The Story So Far...

- ❖ What or who is the fit woman?
 - Biologically impossible
 - Lean, yet muscular
 - Strong, physically and mentally
 - Dedicated
 - Perfect and beautiful
 - Happy, confident, and capable
 - Hypersexual
- ❖ The results of saturation:
 - Saturation → Acceptance/Internalization → Body as a Project and Problem → Harm and Negative Affect.
 - Serves as a distraction and a tool of disempowerment.

A Call for Education and Action

- ❖ **Belief:** Images depicting the fit-ideal are thought to be obtainable, positive, empowering, and motivational.
- ❖ **Reality:** Images depicting the fit-ideal are damaging socially, politically, and individually.
- ❖ **Education and action** are required for the physical and psychological protection of women and girls.
- ❖ **Suggestions for further research.**



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