

# Sexuality & Body Building – The Message Behind the Muscle

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## Motivation for Study

Body building magazines serve to legitimize the difference in treatment between male and females, increase the reproduction of gender/sex stereotypes, and influence the ways in which men and women outside the body building world understand sexualities of body builders as the “abject. By critically engaging relevant theoretical discourses, empirical evidence, and scholarly research, this study analyzes how struggles of muscularity and power are mediated by main-stream society. I also seek to explore which theoretical frameworks of race, class, and gender are utilized in body building magazines such as social constructionist or feminist theories.

## Methodology

An in-depth content analysis of visuals and text of 3 main-stream body building magazines over a period of 4 years from Jan 2005 – Dec 2008 (144 magazines in total)

- 1) Track the layout changes in magazines chronologically
- 2) Examine how discourses of muscular masculinity circulate through visuals and text
- 3) Address connections, and inconsistencies in how magazines depict males and females.

## Literature Review

- Muscles are not only class-coded in the modern day context of fitness and body building but they are deeply gendered as well.
- “Breast implants continue to play an important role...women don’t make it in body building competitions without something soft to fill out their suits.” (Schipper, 2007)
- The reposition of women’s sexuality in magazines to be ‘heterosexually desirable’...the ‘real & natural’ side is illustrated through “soft porn photos with women posing naked or semi-naked.” (Choi, 2003)
- Representation of hyper-masculine and hyper-muscular male bodies is a result of ideological gender differences, patriarchal societal power, and offers resistance to alternative masculinities or sexual identities by promoting the heterosexual notion of masculinity (Denham, 2008; Richardson, 2008)
- The IFBB selectively draws attention to the supposed gender characteristics of the 2 categories (male & female) hence discriminating against individuals who do not fit neatly into either category. (Grogan et al., 2004)

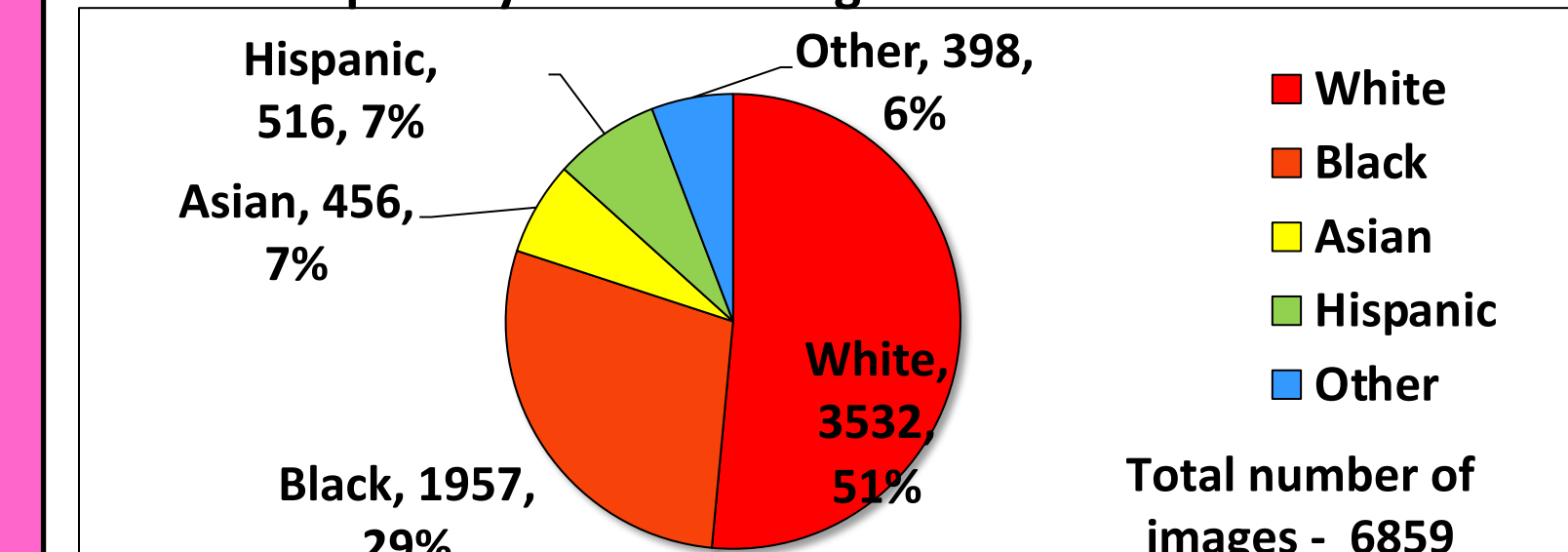


## Acknowledgements

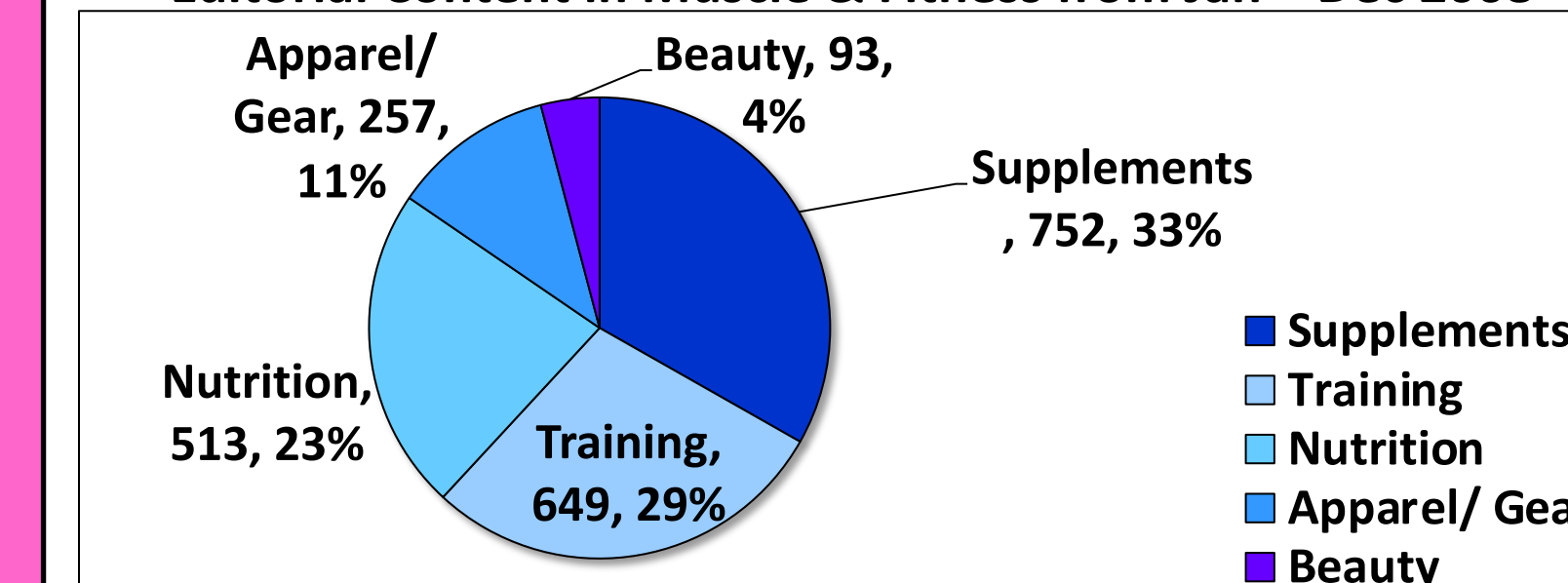
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## Findings

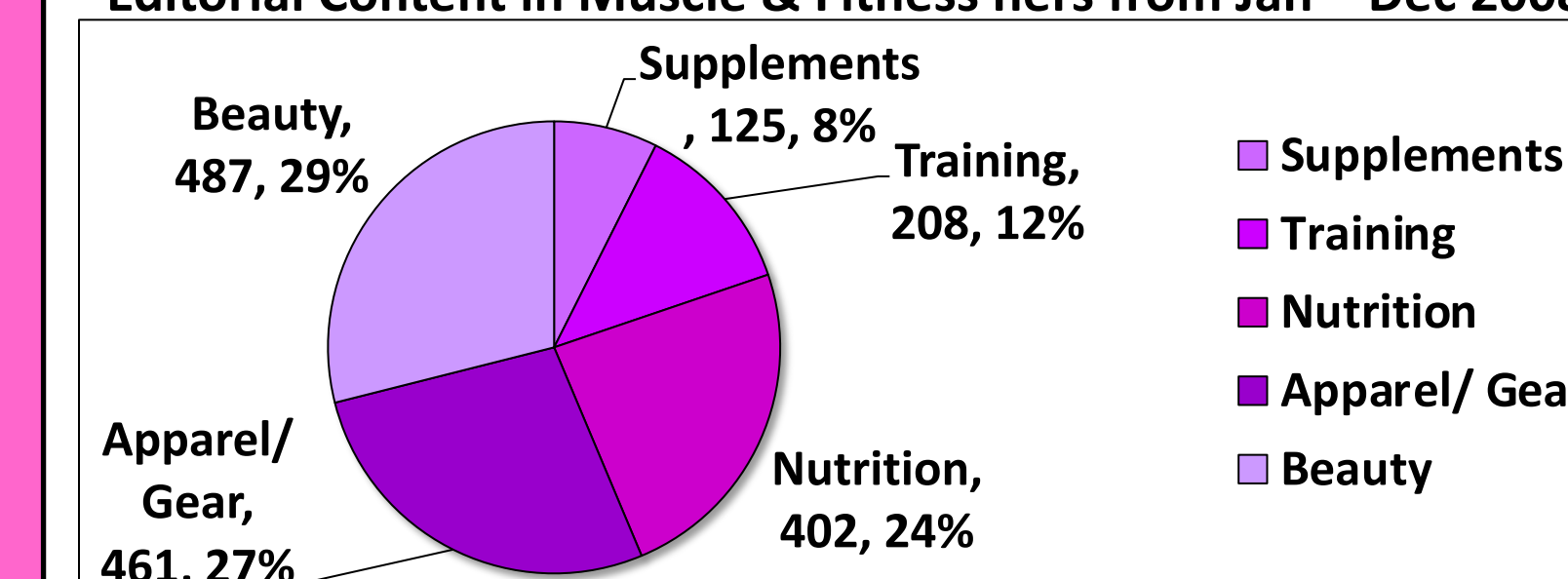
Ethnicities portrayed in Flex Magazine from Jan 2005 – Dec 2008



Editorial Content in Muscle & Fitness from Jan – Dec 2008



Editorial Content in Muscle & Fitness hers from Jan – Dec 2008



## Future Research

- Conducting visuals and text analysis of online female body building magazines, such as GeneXMagazine.com
- Continue studies of body building magazines in different countries and examine if the effects of gender, class, and race hold true across cross-cultural contexts
- Examine new trends in film and magazines since the transition of Arnold Schwarzenegger from the silver screen to politics.

## References

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