

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SEX ARTICLES
IN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH MAGAZINES

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Missouri

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

by

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JULY 2012

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“50 WAYS TO SEDUCE A MAN” vs. “THE BETTER SEX DIET”:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SEX ARTICLES
IN WOMEN’S AND MEN’S LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH MAGAZINES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor and mentor, Professor Amanda Hinnant, for her continued support and encouragement of my research on magazines, sex, sexuality, and sexual health. Her patience with and confidence in my thesis gave me the motivation to pursue what at times was an arduous and complicated endeavor. I will continue to seek her expert guidance as I move forward with my academic career as a Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communication. No doubt my acceptance to Minnesota's program relied on Professor Hinnant's letters of recommendation and enthusiasm for me.

I must also express extreme gratitude to my other thesis committee members, Professors Jennifer Rowe, Cynthia Frisby, and Lissa Behm-Morawitz, and to academic advisor Martha Pickens, all of whose knowledge and gracious advice allowed my thesis to evolve into an acceptable piece of scholarly research. I am also eternally grateful to Gabriel Fried, visiting professor of English, who urged me to write poetry when I couldn't think about statistics a moment longer.

And lastly, I should express endless appreciation to University of Missouri undergraduates Krista Schmidt and Evan Kleekamp, who made this thesis possible by coding dozens and dozens of sex articles in this research sample. There is no way I would have met my deadlines without their careful attention to this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| LIST OF TABLES | iv |
| ABSTRACT | vi |
| Chapter | |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Purpose of the Study | |
| 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE | 5 |
| Empirical Research: Content and textual analyses of sex in magazines | |
| Theoretical Foundations: Framing and social constructs of sexuality | |
| Research Questions | |
| 3. METHOD | 20 |
| Research design | |
| Content Analysis | |
| 4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS | 30 |
| 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION | 51 |
| Implications | |
| Limitations | |
| Possibilities for Additional Research | |
| APPENDIX A: Circulation Information for Sampled Titles | 65 |
| APPENDIX B: Release Dates for Sampled Titles | 68 |
| APPENDIX C: Codebook | 70 |
| APPENDIX D: Intercoder Reliability Measure | 80 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 81 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Figure | Page |
|---|------|
| I(a): Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s and Men’s Health & Lifestyle Magazines | 32 |
| I(b): Comparative Percentage Frequencies of Sexual Topics Across Genre Types | 34 |
| II: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Lifestyle Magazines | 36 |
| III: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Lifestyle Magazines..... | 37 |
| IV: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Lifestyle Magazines..... | 38 |
| V: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s and Men’s Health Magazines | 39 |
| VI: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Health Magazines | 41 |
| VII: Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Health Magazines | 42 |

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| VIII: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Magazines | 43 |
| IX: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Lifestyle Magazines | 45 |
| X: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Health Magazines | 46 |
| XI: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Magazines | 47 |
| XII: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Lifestyle Magazines | 49 |
| XIII: | Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Health Magazines | 50 |

“50 WAYS TO SEDUCE A MAN” vs. “THE BETTER SEX DIET”:
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ABSTRACT

The present research attempted to build upon studies of sex content in popular magazines by analyzing how sex articles portray thematic aspects of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in women’s and men’s lifestyle and health magazines. The researcher conducted a quantitative content analysis of 134 sex articles presented in 53 individual issues of *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Redbook*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Maxim*, *Women’s Health*, *Self*, *Men’s Fitness*, and *Men’s Health*. Consistent with previous examinations of popular magazines’ sex content, women’s and men’s health and lifestyle titles gave more attention to entertaining aspects of sex than they did to information about sexual health or human sexuality. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests suggest there are significant differences in the way the magazines portray sex, sexuality, and sexual health based on the sampled titles’ statuses as health or lifestyle magazines and also based on the targeted gender of their readerships.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The April 2011 cover of *Cosmopolitan*, the largest-circulation American women's magazine, features up-and-coming actress Olivia Wilde clad in a scoop-neck magenta dress, her cleavage clearly as eye-catching as her flirtatious smile or the unpolished fingers she runs along her exposed inner thigh. The pose is purposefully suggestive. And so are the magazine's sell-lines. Just above Wilde's right shoulder is the cover's most dominant message: "50 Ways to Seduce a Man (in a minute or less)." Positioned just on the outside of the actress' coyly angled left elbow reads a similar tease: "Kinky Sex: 64% of You Secretly Want to Try This" (*Cosmopolitan*, 2011).

Perhaps such a cover is not inherently surprising: *Cosmopolitan* is reputed for its sex content, after all. But less lust-oriented titles reveal a similar pattern. The April 2011 cover of *Women's Health* features a line that reads: "Make Sex Sizzle: 26 pleasure boosters" (*Women's Health*, 2011). *Maxim* highlights the "Orgasm of the Month Club," and *Men's Health* urges its readers to check out the new "Better Sex Diet" and "2,137 new health, fitness, sex & nutrition tips" (*Maxim*, 2011; *Men's Health*, 2011). From general lifestyle magazines such as *Esquire* and *Glamour* to health-specific titles such as *Men's Fitness* and *Self*, myriad covers lure readers by promising ways to improve their sex lives, be it through adopting new techniques, making health and lifestyle changes, improving between-partner communication, or utilizing sexual health products and prescriptions, among countless other suggestions. It is undeniable: Sex constitutes a vital portion of contemporary magazines' best-selling editorial content.

Further, it is integral to note that consumers turn to magazines as a source of reliable information about sex and sexual health. In fact, magazines are a primary socializing agent for sexual understanding. Although no prominent peer-reviewed research has been conducted on where and how adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s receive information about sex, sexuality, and sexual health, empirical research has shown that adolescents rate media among the top three sources from which they learn information about sexual health and sexuality (Amonker, 1980; Andre, Frevert, & Schuchmann, 1989; Thornburg, 1981; Ward, 2003). Of teens that agree that they have learned about sex and sexuality from the media, 35% pointed to magazines as their leading source for information about sex (Hoff & Greene, 2000). A study published by the Commonwealth Fund found that high school students list magazines as a leading source for contraceptive and birth control information behind school-provided health classes and information materials, parents, and friends. The same study showed that high school females cite magazines as more influential to their understanding of contraceptive issues than their parents (Brown, Steele & Walsh-Childers, 2002). That is to say, magazines are high school students' preferred medium for sexual health information.

As was explained in the previous paragraph, the majority of research to date has been concerned predominantly with how young people obtain information about sex from the media. It is unclear – based on available data – how frequently or with what level of engagement adult readers choose magazines as a primary source for sexual information. However, one could assume – based on the prominence of sex articles in adult-targeted titles – that the trend of learning about sex from magazines continues from adolescence into adulthood.

Because sex content is so pervasive in the contemporary magazine market and because individuals are so affected by its presence, it is of particular relevance to examine exactly what messages magazines are relaying to their readers about sex, sexuality, and sexual health. This study provides a content analysis of leading American lifestyle and health magazines targeted to either women or men in order to determine how the titles frame issues related to sex, sexuality, and sexual health.

For the purpose of this thesis, “lifestyle magazine” refers to magazines whose primary content is tailored to men’s or women’s general interests and includes the women’s titles *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, and *Redbook* and the men’s titles *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Maxim*. The term “health magazine” refers specifically to magazines whose primary editorial focus is on health and healthy living and includes the women’s titles *Self*, *Shape* and *Women’s Health* and the men’s titles *Men’s Fitness* and *Men’s Health*. The term “magazine” is often interchanged with “mag,” “title,” or “glossy,” and the previous definitions for lifestyle and health magazines should hold regardless of the synonym that follows “lifestyle” or “health.”

Presented first in this study is a literature review of content analyses that examine portrayals of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in women’s and men’s lifestyle glossies, which is followed by a discussion of sex articles in health versus non-health titles. Framing theory and theories of social and mediated constructions of sexuality are then presented as theoretical building blocks for the researcher’s independent cross-genre content analysis. The content analysis’ findings are presented using chi-square analyses for the sampled whole as well as a genre-by-genre breakdown using chi-squares and simple descriptive statistics, and conclusions are formulated regarding those findings.

Finally, the researcher discusses the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for future inquiry into contemporary magazines' depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Analyzing Sex Frames in Contemporary Magazines

In *The Psychology of Women*, author and researcher Margaret Matlin begins her discussion of female sexuality with an observation regarding women's magazines' hypersexualized covers (Matlin, 2008):

“On the day I began editing this chapter about sexuality, I happened to walk past the magazine racks of a drug store,” writes Matlin. “The ‘women’s section’ oozed with sexual messages. A headline from *Self* proclaimed ‘The Best Sex Ever: Make it Happen.’ *Glamour* was even more alluring, with its claim, ‘The Sex Stuff Women Keep Secret: We’ve Got 3,000 X-Rated Confessions.’ However, *Cosmopolitan* won the contest. One headline shouted, ‘Naughty Sex: 8 Hot New Positions We’ve Never Published Before.’ Others on the same cover boasted ‘How to Keep Your Guy Totally Turned on by You,’ ‘The Sexiest Things to do After Sex,’ and ‘Four Facts Men Wish Their Girlfriends Knew.’”

Matlin's observation that sex content saturates women's magazine covers sheds light on how prevalent sexual messages are in the American magazine marketplace. This is not a trend that has passed unnoticed by the community of mass communications scholars. A simple Google Scholar search of the keywords “sex and magazines” retrieves more than 150,000 academic articles pertinent to the subject. Previous research on sex content in magazines has generally adopted content analysis as the primary method by which to analyze magazines' framing of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. Content

analysis of this content type and medium tends to encompass “the sexual imagery in the magazines’ editorial photographs and a discussion of the sexual themes in the magazines’ articles” (Krassas, Blauwkamp & Wesselink, 2003). Inquiry has trended toward analysis of men’s and women’s lifestyle magazines as well as teen-targeted titles, but few studies have examined sex content in health magazines, specifically. However, it should be noted that studies of men’s lifestyle magazines often include *Men’s Health* in the sample, as it is the highest-circulation men’s title on Earth (*Men’s Health*, 2011).

A majority of published content analyses have examined sex through the lens of gender framing and sex role framing in order to show how magazines portray women’s or men’s stereotyped positions in sexual relationships, though a number of content analyses have included aspects of sexual health in their coding protocols. This literature review generally suggests thematic similarity in popular glossies’ framing of sex and sexuality: It tends to reinforce traditional sex roles that champion male conquests, it urges females to cater to their male partners’ sexual appetites, and sex is typically described as an entertainment activity rather than as an avenue toward procreation. Sexual health articles have not been a primary contribution to the analyzed magazines’ editorial content.

Depictions of Sex in Women’s and Young Women’s Magazines

Empirical evidence suggests that women’s and teen girls’ lifestyle magazines such as *Glamour* and *Seventeen* have focused more editorial attention on sexual health issues in the past 20 years than they did in decades prior, but studies have also shown that the editorial and advertising content in these titles remains dedicated to teaching girls and women tactics for meeting and keeping men in their lives (Walsh-Childers, Gotthofer, & Lepre, 2002). A number of studies have similarly concluded that women’s magazines

perpetuate a male-centered view of female sexuality, but few have identified sexual health frames as a primary concern for content analysis.

A 2006 study published in *Sex Roles* analyzed sexualities as depicted in six issues each of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cleo* magazines (Farvid & Braun, 2006). The researchers identified two primary themes of male and female sex roles. The first was “men’s need for (great) sex,” in which men were described as being easily aroused and satisfied with sex, but in which women were portrayed as needing to develop their sexual repertoires to prevent their partners from cheating. The second theme regarded “pleasure, performance, and the male ego,” which described men as concerned with their own sexual performances and their partners’ pleasure, but also as significantly worried about their own sexual shortcomings.

Similar findings emerged in an analysis of five magazines aimed at young women and teenage girls: *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Teen*, *Seventeen*, and *YM* (Garner, Sterk & Adams, 1998). There were two predominant “characters” depicted in the magazines’ pages. The first – the “guy” or boyfriend – was characterized as a user or controller in the relationship. The second – the “girl” – was depicted as a negotiator of sex for personal benefit. In the surveyed titles, the researchers identified three thematic questions that dominated the magazines’ sexual rhetorics: “What are guys like? What do guys want from girls? [and] How should I behave around guys?” Not identified in either content analysis were themes of personal sexual fulfillment, sexual health, or the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ) lifestyle.

An article published in the January 2010 issue of the *Journal of Sex Research* employed textual analysis to enhance a quantitative historical content analysis of the

sexual themes portrayed by *Seventeen* magazine. The study showed that, over time, editors changed the frame of women's sexuality from one of victimization in the 1970s to one of sexual empowerment today. Further, the research showed magazines present young women today as more ambivalent about sexual interactions, as having more approving views of homosexuality and masturbation, and as possessing an increased awareness of fellatio. However, progressive themes were presented as substandard to established notions of sex and sexuality (Carpenter, 2010).

A second qualitative and quantitative study of historical presentations of sex in *Seventeen*'s pages aimed to show how advertisements' visual and verbal content affect the self-worth of the magazine's readership. The research revealed that the "seductive gaze" – in which the female character eyes the camera coyly or alluringly as if to say "come hither" – was most stably predominant throughout the sample timeline (from the 1970s through present) and that the images and visuals presented by the ads were increasingly sexual as years passed. The quantitative portion of the study analyzed how readers internalized the ads' sexual messages. The study revealed that young women who viewed ads with idealized body images in their visuals reported lower levels of self-worth than did their peers who viewed ads with realistic body images (Keener, 2003).

Depictions of Sex in Men's Magazines

Many of the same themes emerged in contemporary men's lifestyle magazines as did in women's and teen lifestyle glossies. A content analysis of photographic content in issues of *Maxim* and *Stuff* published in 2001 found, not surprisingly, that women are more likely than men to be depicted as sex objects in editorial photos (Krassas, Blauwkamp & Wesselink, 2003). Ten broad themes also emerged in the photos'

collective content, which included: The more sex and sexual partners a man has, the better; relationships are unnecessary; kinky sex is better than regular sex; and vulnerable women are easier targets. The researchers concluded that these themes reinforce a masculine-centric, heterosexual view of sexuality.

A 2005 study published in *Sex Roles* also found that although many articles highlight female satisfaction as essential to sex, the pervasive messages were consistent with stereotypical male sexualities that celebrate sexual variety (Taylor, 2005). In a sample of 91 articles drawn from 53 issues of *Maxim*, *FHM*, and *Stuff*, 41% of articles' main topics covered what women like in bed, but 52% also emphasized improving the reader's own sex life, and 43% highlighted unorthodox sexual behaviors. A single more sinister trend also emerged: 37% of articles focused on drugs' and alcohol's role in readers' sex lives. Although neither content analysis of men's magazines showed editorial emphasis of male orgasm as the primary goal of sex, they also failed to focus on female satisfaction as often as women's magazines focus on men's sexual fulfillment. Further, sexual health was underemphasized, and sex was portrayed primarily as a means for entertainment rather than for procreation or lovemaking.¹

A third study published in 2007 conducted a content analysis of cover lines and images on covers of *Maxim* magazine. The research found that 50% of *Maxim*'s cover lines from the year 2002 (12 issues) made mention of sex, though none of the cover lines made allusion to relationships or romance. Cover models were portrayed as sex objects 100% of the time, meaning they were scantily clad and posed suggestively. *Maxim* covers tended to reflect male expectations of easy, physically rewarding sex that required

¹ Taylor's coding protocol was the model for the codebook used in this thesis.

no emotional intimacy. The covers also perpetuated an unattainable standard for female physical attraction (Johnson, 2007).

Depictions of Sex in Health Titles

Compared with the breadth of study devoted to decoding the frames of sex, sexuality, sexual health, and sex roles in women's and men's lifestyle magazines, relatively little research has been conducted on depictions of sex within the pages of contemporary health titles. Of the limited studies that have examined sex in health magazines, the focus has been honed in on *Men's Health*. This is likely due to its high circulation and continued editorial role as a leading genre-spanning health *and* lifestyle magazine (though it should be noted that this study categorizes *Men's Health* specifically as a health magazine for its content analysis).

One European study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research how the Italian edition of *Men's Health* frames notions of masculinity. A quantitative discourse analysis of advertisements in issues of the 2010 Italian *Men's Health* revealed five primary themes (and their proportions in relation to each other) that exist in the magazine: Fitness, health and diet, sex and sexuality, travel, general advice, and style/fashion. Each specific category was analyzed in its own right, but the study focused on how *Men's Health* frames its beliefs about what it means to be a "man." The research showed that articles shun notions of feminized masculinity and androgyny, instead focusing on a powerful male sex role. The researcher argues the title also commodifies male bodies, presenting the ideal male as being fashionable, hygiene-oriented, and interested in vehicles, exercise equipment, and electronic devices. The qualitative portion of this study used focus groups to conduct a framing analysis of the magazines' content.

Essentially, readers identified an unattainable image of what it means to be a man, and recognized that this image is replicated over time and place, with the similarities in the magazine's cover being often identified by research subjects as repetitively constructing the same masculine archetype (Bone, 2003). "Once you have seen one issue, you have seen them all," said one participant.

A 2004 study of *Men's Health* published in *Men and Masculinities* did not focus specifically on how sex is depicted by the title, but it did analyze how it portrays notions of health and masculinity. The discourse analysis shows that *Men's Health* propagates a masculine-centric perspective of reality, whereby men are superior to females and where masculinity hinges on notions of power. The authors argue that the magazine openly promotes a traditionally masculine worldview. However, such hegemony has been linked to risk behaviors such as alcohol consumption and risky sexual practices. The study's goal was to identify traits that determined the "ideal man," and a primary theme that emerged was the ideal man as a sexual champion. Rather than discuss how the ideal man can improve his sex life through healthy lifestyle changes or through specific tips, the authors argue that *Men's Health* champions "tons of sex" — heterosexual sex — and that this contributes to heterosexist socialization, a learned norm (Stibbe, 2004).

No studies to date have analyzed depictions of sex, sexual health, sex roles, and/or sexuality in contemporary women's health glossies. This could be due to the perceived dearth of sex information relayed by such titles, or it could be based on the relative recency of the genre as a whole. Further, *Men's Health* has been the only men's health title analyzed at depth, though *Men's Fitness* and *Fitness RX for Men* typically include sex as a topic of editorial discussion.

Theoretical Perspectives Regarding Portrayals of Sexuality

To understand the sex content that appears in contemporary magazines, the researcher must draw from theoretical models to understand both why the media tends to propagate certain sexual themes and not others as well as how those particular depictions might impact readerships. Although the proposed research questions hinge on what themes exist within magazine sex content, it is of particular professional and scholarly importance to evaluate how such depictions might affect magazine readers' own sexualities. In this section, framing theory is used to show how the media sets a particular sexual discourse within contemporary culture. Social constructivism, objectification theory, and script theory are also used to explain how and why certain sexual themes might enter into magazines' sexual rhetorics.

Framing as a Model to Describe Content Themes

Hundreds of studies have examined depictions of gender, sex, and sexuality in the media. This research has particularly focused on how media tend to portray women and female sexuality differently than men and male sexuality in American consumer culture. In such, researchers have identified eight primary "stereotyped representations" that consistently exhibit themselves in the contemporary media market: women are relatively invisible, women are relatively inaudible, women are seldom shown working outside the home, women are shown doing housework, women and men are represented differently, women's bodies are used differently than men's bodies, women of color are underrepresented and are often particularly stereotyped, and lower-social-class women are underrepresented and particularly stereotyped (Matlin, 2008). Although the research

at hand is concerned primarily with specific depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in high-circulation health and lifestyle glossies, it is important to note that content analyses of sexual content in magazines have historically centered around the ways mass media frame women's sex roles.

Whereas gender psychologists identify and analyze the pervasive themes in mediated content, communications scholars refer specifically to framing theory in determining the importance of such themes. Framing “examines how the media make certain aspects of a story more salient than others (i.e., media frames), which in turn, can affect how individuals come to define a problem or story for themselves (i.e., individual frames)” (Darling, 2010). Framing theory examines content for the types of themes it displays, but it also considers how editors might intentionally package a specific issue, such as sex and sexuality. Be it conscious or not, editors create frames by directing readers' attention to specific aspects of a topic, such as the importance of male orgasm during a sexual encounter, while simultaneously downplaying another aspect, such as female orgasm during a sexual encounter (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996).

Researchers who engage with framing theory stress the mass media's power in framing specific news topics and shaping public perception of such topics (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Ganz, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Peng, 2008). Gitlin defines frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” and the framing process as “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters.” Both frames and frame selection in the media “specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness” and thus influence how the public understand and feel about a

specific issue (Gitlin, 1980). Beyond the media merely determining what topics and issues to emphasize, previous studies suggest that the media present views consistent with the status quo and do not represent fringe views (Gitlin, 1980; Iyenger and Kinder, 1987). Other research has focused on how sources impact the framing of an issue. Holsti suggests this model is often used to test “hypotheses of form”: “If the source has characteristic *A*, then messages containing elements *x* and *y* will be produced; if the source has characteristic *B*, then messages with elements *w* and *z* will be produced” (Holsti, 1969). Framing theory is particularly relevant to the study of the sexual themes presented in health and general interest magazines because it can help understand how editorial engagement with sex content funnels and shapes human sexual reality.

Previous research on magazines’ sex content suggests that there are two primary frames under which sex content is presented in contemporary magazines: Sex as part of a committed, romantic relationship and sex as a recreational, noncommittal activity (Taylor, 2008). In the first frame, women are instructed to be sexual for the sake of retaining their relationship status with their monogamous, heterosexual male partner (Durham, 1996; Prusank, Duran & DeLillo, 1993). In the second, sex is enjoyed for its intrinsic physiological enjoyment; the relationship context of sex is of little importance, and women are portrayed as seeking sexual satisfaction freely and aggressively (Durham, 1996). Because these two frames are often presented within a single magazine and sometimes even within one article, and because the media has such specific power in informing individual’s sexual identities, such dichotomous depictions of sex and sexuality might prove particularly confusing for women who use magazines as sources of sexual information and advice.

To better grasp how popular women's and men's lifestyle magazines and women's and men's health magazines frame sex, sexuality, and sexual health, the researcher proposes the following research questions for this study:

RQ1: What thematic aspects about sex, sexuality, and sexual health do sex articles in women's and men's health titles and women's and men's lifestyle titles discuss and with what frequency?

RQ2: How do the depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health vary between men's and women's lifestyle and health magazines?

Although framing was employed as the primary theoretical perspective in analyzing how health and general interest magazines portray sex and sexuality, a number of ancillary theoretical models attempt to describe why certain frames might continuously metastasize themselves in the media. These following theoretical models are of particular relevance to the discussion and conclusion section of this thesis, which uses each theory to expand upon findings from this study.

Mediated and Societal Constructs of Sexuality

Although it is indeed interesting that framed representations of sex, sexual health, and sex roles exist and are often consistent within mediated pop culture, it is equally important to evaluate why such themes recurrently and consistently present themselves. To better understand why media professionals (consciously or subconsciously) propagate specific sex frames, one must examine the nature of gender and sexuality in society.

On one hand, essentialist theorists argue that gender is a concrete reality based on biological sex and in such must be understood as black or white – as male or female and that all women's and men's psychologies are based on such (Maracek, 2004). It is

possible, based on that assumption, that the media merely represent sex and sexualities in ways that are consistent with biological, essentialist notions of femininity and masculinity. On the other hand, however, similarities perspective suggests that men and women are intrinsically socially and intellectually similar. Psychologists that study similarities perspective do agree that social forces might manifest themselves as observed differences between the sexes, but that there is no distinct separation between female and male cognitive capability (Matlin, 2008). To add power to the similarities argument, studies have shown that media and culture work in a natural symbiosis and inform one another insofar as they also impact one another – a model inconsistent with notions of essentialism (Schneider, 2004).

With that consideration in mind, media scholars might adopt a model of mediated depictions of sexuality based on social constructionism, which posits that individuals and cultures understand reality based on sets of interactions and experiences with others, the self, and culture as a whole (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Kimball, 2003; Lonner, 2003; Matlin, 2008; Maracek, 2004). A direct assumption drawn from social constructionism is that gender and sexuality are functions of the culture individuals exist in and that many factors, including the media, influence construction of personal identity. But conversely, personal identity also informs the way culture and in turn media perceive and display gender and sexual normalcy. Social constructionism of gender and sexuality should be adopted as a means by which media scholars can understand why certain themes arise in sex content – ,they should be aware that frames do not exist in a mediated vacuum.

Further perspectives to consider when discussing how and why sex roles are determined are script theory and objectification theory, which build upon social

constructionism by outlining the specific ways in which culture influences understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality. Script theory is perhaps most easily understood by comparing it to its dramatic namesake: Whereas a script for a dramatic exhibition determines the lines the actors read, sexual scripts determine the way in which individuals act upon and describe their sexualities. More specifically, sexual scripts are the sexual social norms we learn from living and developing in a culture (Bowleg, Lucas & Tschann, 2004; DeLamater & Hyde, 2004; Matlin, 2008). In America, women's and men's sexual scripts differ, and women are traditionally encouraged to exemplify feminine ideals such as passivity, domesticity, and beauty whereas men might be told to be masculine through aggression, sexuality, and rugged individualism. If scholars can agree that media professionals indeed have grown up in a scripted culture – which they have – then it is no conceptual disjoint to assume they will purvey the same scripts through their content as they consumed during their own sexual development.

Objectification theory adds validity to this claim. The theory posits that women who live in a culture that objectifies women tend to self-objectify. That is, women describe themselves based on external characteristics such as beauty rather than internal ones such as intellect (Aubrey, 2010). Researchers note that many factors, including social, biological, and cultural variables, might influence self-objectification, but mass media is inarguably a central structure by which self-objectification is cultivated. This is easily observed in editorial and advertising pages, where “sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Previous scholarship on mass media, objectification, and health messages published by University of Missouri communications researcher Jennifer Aubrey argues that American media are indeed objectifying and that consumers' consumption of such content could socialize them to self-objectify (Aubrey, 2006). Fredrickson and Roberts suggest that this phenomenon is observed first through visual depictions of women as sex objects and second through verbal representation of women as sex objects. Based on objectification theory, the media likely represent and re-represent women in an objectified manner because society as a whole has media-makers to both objectify themselves and to objectify others.

Call for Research

Although consumer magazines' presentation of sex topics has been analyzed extensively as has the relationship between the media and cultural understanding of sex and sexuality, this literature review shows that few studies have inquired into sex content provided by a growing subset of the magazine market: health magazines. Statistics from Rodale, a leading publisher of health titles, show this specific market's relevance. Recent Rodale press releases indicate that its highest-grossing title, *Men's Health*, has been listed as a Cappel's Circulation Report top-ten performer for each year during the first decade in this mellenium (Rodale, 2010a). According to Rodale's digital media kit for *Women's Health*, *Men's Health's* sister title, "*Women's Health* is ranked #4 on *Adweek Media's* 'Hot List' and #2 on *Advertising Age's* annual 'A-List', both of which recognize magazines for outstanding performance in circulation, advertising, and overall buzz within the industry" (Rodale, 2010b). Despite health content's growing market presence, limited research has been conducted to date to determine if messages about sex and

sexuality differ between health and general interest titles. Tangentially, no studies have looked into differences between men's health magazines' and women's health magazines' depictions of sex.

It is paramount here to identify the areas of inquiry central to this research. Of primary concern are portrayals of sex, sexuality, and sexual health across four disparate but *not* mutually exclusive content types: magazines whose primary target audience is men, magazines whose primary target audience is women, magazines whose editorial focus is health, and magazines whose editorial focus is on men's or women's lifestyle but *not* healthy living. That is to say, all of the magazines sampled in this study fall into two of the aforementioned content types: *Women's Health*, for instance, is both a magazine targeted to women and a magazine whose editorial focus is health; *Esquire*, on the other hand, is a magazine targeted to men and a magazine whose editorial focus is on lifestyle but not healthy living. A full description of the sampled magazines' and their relevance to this research is described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Content analysis, as a method, is particularly suited to analyze depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health as well as the frames that determine them because it objectively quantifies the frequency of particular themes as they appear within a medium and also allows the researcher to make generalizations about the content. By definition, content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication” (Berelson, 1952). For the purposes of this study, content analysis is superior to its qualitative counterpart – textual analysis – because it shows the objective frequency of specific sexual representations without requiring the researcher to make subjective assumptions about the meanings or purposes of such representations. Rather, the researcher determines the content to analyze, identifies themes within the text’s pages, tests the validity and reliability of those themes through a series of statistical tests for intercoder reliability, quantifies those themes by determining their relative frequencies to one another within a text, then categorically compares the differences in frequency of themes between texts using a chi-square analysis.

According to Klaus Krippendorff, the namesake of a content analysis statistic for intercoder reliability: the Krippendorff alpha, there are six steps to completing a content analysis of communicated messages. The researcher must unitize – or distinguish – the apparent themes of a medium, sample the frequency of such themes, record and code the data from the texts, reduce the data into manageable patterns through statistical tests,

infer what these patterns mean in the context of the media analyzed, and narrate the meaning of those patterns as they relate to the research questions (Krippendorff, 2004).

Although content analysis' purposes are diverse, the method may be particularly helpful to the study of sexual rhetorics and thematic representations of sex, sexuality, and sexual health by examining the following of Berelson's 17 proposed content analysis objectives: to describe trends in communication content, to compare media or levels of communication, to audit communication content against (editorial) objectives, to identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators, and to reflect attitudes, interests, and values of specific population groups (Berelson, 1952).

Research Design

Sample

Eleven magazines were selected for analysis in order to compare the framing of sex content in health and general interest consumer magazines. The researcher examined the editorial content of the three highest-circulation magazines of each respective genre whose demographics encompass relatively young men and women (primary readership <50 years old) and whose content includes sex articles. Health magazines targeted to men will be the exception to the three-title rule, as there are only two high-circulation health glossies with sex content that are targeted to men, with the remainder of the market dedicated to muscle and fitness titles. A second exception is also made to the circulation-for-selection rule in the category of men's lifestyle magazines. Although *Men's Journal* is the third most-read men's lifestyle magazine on the market with more than 724,000 subscriptions, *Esquire* was selected for analysis due to its higher frequency of sex content, based on the researcher's scan of cover lines on past issues of each magazine.

Circulation was the overall sample determinant for two reasons: 1) The researcher is concerned with the most widely propagated frames of sex, sexuality, and sexual health because – based on framing theory and theories of mediated and social constructions of sexuality – mass-circulated titles likely reflect the sexual values of the general public rather than fringe populations, and 2) previous research has provided a foundation for study of sex frames in a number of the examined titles, as is exemplified through the presented literature review.

Age of reader demographic was a secondary selection tool because the study aims to analyze frames for magazines whose readers are likely sexually active and who turn to the magazines for sex advice (thus this study excludes audiences whose primary readers older than 50 years old). Women’s titles were also limited to magazines that include sex as a primary area of editorial coverage, as the researcher is not concerned with fashion magazines, such as *Vogue* and *InStyle*, which do not typically include sex content as a primary editorial focus.

Further, gender breakdowns for each readership’s demographics are provided in APPENDIX A to show the duplicitous nature of magazine demographics: Messages about sex are not limited solely to the magazines’ target audiences and often do reach secondary readerships although messages about sex are tailored for primary readerships.

Content Analysis

To determine how high-circulation women’s and men’s health and lifestyle magazines frame sex and sexuality, the researcher conducted a content analysis of sex articles presented in issues of the eleven aforementioned titles. For the purpose of this content analysis, the researcher borrowed a definition of “sex article” from Taylor’s 2005

study on sex depictions in consumer magazines. A *sex article* is an article that is primarily about a sexual topic. An *article* is any body of text described under the magazine's table of contents as an autonomous piece of content – that is, it is not an unlisted front-of-book or back-of-book short. Further, “(a)rticles determined to be about a sexual topic included those for which the primary topic discussed in the article's prose content dealt with sexual behaviors or relationships, their antecedents, or their consequences. Articles that consisted primarily of pictorials of women described in terms of sex appeal were not included” (Taylor, 2005). A *sex article* does *not* comprise any piece of editorial information that merely mentions the word “sex,” its euphemisms or any of its derivatives.

Sampling Method

Because the research is concerned not with the historical presentation of sexuality in magazines but rather with a broad comparative analysis of sex frames in contemporary health and lifestyle magazines, the researcher used a purposive sample to reduce the population to magazine issues published in the 2010 editorial cycle. The number of individual articles content analyzed from each magazine varied depending on prevalence of sex content in each issue.

The researcher first limited the sample to those magazines published in the 2010 editorial cycle, then selected five issues of each title based on their placement within the editorial cycle and also on their availability through back-issue web ordering services. That is, the researcher aimed to select issues of each magazine throughout the editorial calendar so as not to over-represent issues in one season but throughout the 2010 year as

certain seasons (such as winter issues close to Valentine's Day) might represent sex more often than issues published in other seasons.

The researcher also borrowed from Taylor's coding protocol to determine a criterion for sex article selection. This method states "all articles primarily about a sexual topic in the magazines were included in the sample. The determination of which articles would be included was made primarily by examining the table of contents. An article was defined as a body of editorial content described under a single heading in the table of contents" (Taylor, 2005).

After consulting with editorial services from each publisher and with non-affiliated back-issue ordering sites, the researcher limited the sample to 134 sex articles from 53 issues of the 11 magazines published in the 2010 year. Of the sample, 76 articles appeared in women's lifestyle magazines, 17 articles appeared in men's lifestyle magazine's, 16 articles appeared in women's health magazines, and 25 appeared in men's health magazines. It should be noted once more that the distribution of articles within each magazine reflects how each title treats sex content and that the genres varied widely in how prominent sex content was in their magazines. There should be no assumption of uniformity in sex articles' presence across genres. The issues in this sample are listed in APPENDIX B with the number of sex articles in each magazine listed in parentheses following the specific issue name.

Coding Protocol

Although Taylor utilized an interpretation of the initial sexual coding scheme first employed by Bielay and Herold in their 1995 study of magazines as a source of sexual information for female university students, the research at hand is broader in spectrum

than either aforementioned study. For the purpose of this thesis, the researcher adopted a general coding framework based on Taylor's research and the Bielay and Herold study. Potential themes based on such include improving one's sex life, what your partner likes, sexual satisfaction, unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions, unorthodox sexual locations, drugs and alcohol, and relationship states (Bielay and Herold, 1995; Taylor, 2008). The researcher devised a coding sheet that employs and expands on these proposed themes. This method of establishing content categories is called emergent coding. "Emergent coding establishes categories after a preliminary examination of the data. The resulting category system is constructed based on common factors or themes that emerge from the data themselves" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). New topics and definitions for coding were based upon the researcher's initial breakdown of sexual content themes in July 2011 issues of *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Redbook*, *Maxim*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Women's Health*, and *Men's Health*.

The codes for this study's sample initially included seven "primary" themes and 15 "secondary" themes. The primary themes were designed to determine what the article's most obvious topical foci was, and these themes include: sex and sex acts, sexualities, physical sexual health, psychological sexual health, sex articles not explicitly about sex, sex Q&As, and "other" sex articles. The primary themes were mutually exclusive and exhaustive; only one primary theme for each article could be selected. The secondary themes were designed to describe the widely apparent yet more nuanced sexual frames presented in the magazines, and include: improving one's sex life, what your partner likes, sexual satisfaction, sex research, unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions, unorthodox sexual locations, drugs and/or alcohol, relationship states, personal

genital health, safe sex practices / birth control methods, reproductive health problems, male/female dominance, seduction techniques, LGBT issues, and cheating. Coders could select as many secondary themes for each article as seemed appropriate. Definitions for each code were supplied to the coders in an expanded coding protocol, which can be found in APPENDIX C.

Coding Method

Two undergraduate students served as third-party coders. One received one independent study credit for conducting research, and the second volunteered his time because the University's prerequisite requirements would not allow him to enroll in an independent study for research purposes. Each received eight hours of coding training during a series of weekly meetings. The researcher and the undergraduate coders met for two hours for four Wednesday evening sessions to discuss the coding definitions and apply their meanings to non-sampled magazines. The coders then conducted test runs of sex articles chosen from six magazine issues from 2011 to establish intercoder reliability, all of which were magazine issues not used for the actual research sample. The codes from these six magazines were chosen in order to meet Neuendorf's recommendation to test intercoder reliability for the equivalent of at least 10% of the total sample (Neuendorf, 2002). The total sample in the actual study is 53 magazines.

After the undergraduate coders finished coding the test sample using nominal measurements – marking either 1 for “present” themes or 0 for “non-present” – the researcher tested the data's intercoder reliability using ReCal, an open-source reliability calculation tool, for Cohen's Kappa and Scott's Pi values (Freelon, 2010). The two initial coding runs were unsuccessful as they established many themes' intercoder

reliability at less than .7, the lowest acceptable reliability for exploratory studies, as recommended by Neuendorf (Neuendorf, 2002). After two subsequent training sessions, adequate Pi and Kappa values were established for all codes aside from the sexual satisfaction variable (variable 10), which consistently proved too ambiguous despite being borrowed directly from Bielay and Herold's coding protocol. It was thrown out of the coding protocol for this study, and 14 secondary themes remained. The final output chart for intercoder reliability can be found in APPENDIX D.

After establishing intercoder reliability in the non-sampled data, the two coders continued to code the research sample throughout the Fall 2011 academic semester. Each coder was assigned the task of coding roughly half of the sex articles for each magazine category (women's health, men's health, women's lifestyle, and men's lifestyle) in two-to-three week chunks based on the number of articles to be coded. That is, each coder submitted his or her codes for half of the sex articles in women's health magazines during the first research quarter, then subsequently submitted the codes for men's health, women's lifestyle, and men's lifestyle magazines at similar times throughout the following research quarters. The aim of this model was to break the data into manageable chunks so as not to overwhelm the coders as they also completed work on their bachelor's of journalism degrees and so as to also maintain consistency in the type of discussions the researcher and coders had during Wednesday evening research meetings. The coders completed and submitted all data coding prior to the week of December 12, 2011. The for-credit coder received a grade of "A" in her independent research coursework, and the volunteer coder received resume help and career counseling as compensation for his assistance.

Determining Significance of Differences

Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were run to determine if there were significant differences between the ways men's and women's health and lifestyle magazines portrayed sex, sexuality, and sexual health. The tests for the overall sample were conducted in two individual parts: A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was run for primary themes and a second test was run for secondary themes. This approach was taken because the primary themes were mutually exclusive whereas the secondary themes were not, and the prevalence of all codes were much more frequent within secondary themes for this reason. The idea was to compare apples to apples rather than apples to oranges, to adopt a cliché for clarity's purpose.

The first pair of tests for the total sample considered the magazine genres not to be mutually exclusive and aimed to analyze differences in portrayals of sex, sexuality, and sexual health between lifestyle magazines, health magazines, women's magazines, and men's magazines. That is, for the first paired chi-squares, each magazine fit into two categories: *Women's Health's* codes were integrated into totals for both women's magazines and health magazines, *Esquire's* codes were integrated into totals for both men's magazines and lifestyle magazines.

The second pair of tests for the total sample analyzed the differences in portrayals of sex, sexuality, and sexual health across genres, and considered men's health magazines, men's lifestyle magazines, women's health magazines, and women's lifestyle magazines to be independent of one another. The mutually exclusive tests were purely exploratory and were conducted using the same data sets as the previous tests, but each magazine's data was organized into codes for one genre only.

Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were also run for codes between sub-genres of the magazines sampled. That is, chi-squares were run to determine potential significant differences between lifestyle magazines (women's lifestyle vs. men's lifestyle titles), health magazines (women's health vs. men's health titles), women's magazines (women's lifestyle vs. women's health), and men's magazines (men's lifestyle vs. men's health). These chi-squares analyzed the eight most prominent themes within lifestyle magazines, health magazines, women's magazines, and men's magazines. That is, these chi-squares tested differences between the four most prevalent primary themes and the four most prevalent secondary themes for each genre. The researcher chose to limit the number of coded themes for analysis in these chi-squares to prominent themes in order to meet requirements (such as expected cell values) for the chi-square test.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Results

As described in the sampling method, the researcher analyzed thematic depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in a total of 134 sex articles published in 53 individual magazine issues. Of the sex articles in the sample, 76 (or 57%) appeared in the 14 women's lifestyle magazines, 17 (or 13%) appeared in the 15 men's lifestyle magazines, 16 (or 12%) appeared in the 15 women's health magazines² and 25 (or 19%) appeared in nine men's health magazines.³

Chi-square Tests of the Sampled Whole

Two pairs of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were run on the sampled whole to determine if statistical representations of themes in sex articles differed significantly between genres.

The first tests, which compared frequencies of primary and secondary themes between men's titles, women's titles, health titles, and lifestyle titles using a non-mutually exclusive genre typology (i.e. *Women's Health* codes were included in frequencies for both women's magazines and health magazines), were significant.⁴ Information regarding the primary themes of sex and sex acts, sexualities, psychological sexual health, physical sexual health, and sex question and answers was not equally distributed between men's magazines, women's magazines, health magazines, and

² Despite sampling *Shape*, no sex articles were found within the five issues.

³ Percentages in the findings section have been rounded to the nearest tenth percent.

⁴ The code for "other" sex articles was removed from the test to ensure less than 20% of cells had expected values less than five.

lifestyle magazines ($\chi^2(18) = 28.181, p = .02$). Secondary themes were also examined, and differences between them were also significant ($\chi^2(39) = 59.533, p < .02$).

The second chi-square tests, which were exploratory in nature and compared frequencies of primary and secondary themes between the mutually exclusive genres of men's health titles, women's health titles, men's lifestyle titles, and women's lifestyle titles were inconclusive. Although a chi-square goodness-of-fit test for primary themes appeared significant ($\chi^2(18) = 31.967, p < .03$), 71% of cells in the cells had expected values of less than five and thus did not meet the requirements for chi-square testing. The second test for secondary themes for mutually exclusive genres, on the other hand, appeared insignificant ($\chi^2(39) = 49.071, p > .05$) and also failed to meet the requirements for chi-square goodness-of-fit testing. Almost 59% of the cells had expected counts of less than five. The tests for mutually exclusive genres failed to meet the minimum requirements for expected cell frequencies because – by limiting the codes for each magazine to only one genre – the total sample is essentially halved, leading to low Ns for all genres other than women's lifestyle magazines.

Of the primary themes found in the total sample, the most prominent was that of sex acts (40%). Following in total frequency was sex articles not explicitly about sex (19%), sex Q&A (16%), physical sexual health (14%), and psychological sexual health (8%). Only two total articles (roughly 1% of the sample) appeared explicitly about sexuality, and another two (1%) were found not to fit in the primary themes and were therefore categorized as “other.”

Improving one's sex life was the most prominent secondary theme (43%), followed closely by relationship states (40%), what your partner likes at (36%) and sex

research (30%). The remaining themes were referenced in between five and 15% of the sample, with the exception of LGBT issues (2%), which was almost never mentioned. A breakdown of frequencies for all articles coded in the sample can be found in Table I(a).

Table I(a). Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s and Men’s Health & Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Total Articles |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 54 | 40% |
| Sexualities | 2 | 1% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 11 | 8% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 19 | 14% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 25 | 19% |
| Sex Q&As | 21 | 16% |
| Other | 2 | 1% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 58 | 43% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 48 | 36% |
| Sex Research | 40 | 30% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 22 | 16% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 16 | 12% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 8 | 6% |
| Relationship States | 54 | 40% |
| Personal Genital Health | 22 | 16% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 13 | 10% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 11 | 8% |
| Male or Female Dominance | 10 | 7% |
| Seduction Techniques | 20 | 15% |
| LGBT Issues | 3 | 1% |
| Cheating | 11 | 8% |

Comparative Breakdown of All Sampled Genres

Many similarities and disparities exist between depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in the men’s and women’s health and lifestyle magazines represented in this sample. Of particular importance to the researcher are a number of outstanding factors. For primary themes, these include the overwhelming presence of sex and sex acts as a topic in sex articles, the lack of coverage regarding sexualities, and the relatively minimal coverage regarding psychological sexual health across genres. For secondary themes, the

researcher was interested but not particularly surprised to see that improving one's sex life, relationship states and what your partner likes also appear prominently in all genres. There was also relatively little coverage (10% or less) of male or female dominance and safe sex practices / birth control methods, and there was almost no coverage (< 3%) of LGBTQ issues.

A number of anomalous depictions did, however, occur between genre types. When codes were totaled in the non-mutually exclusive categories of lifestyle magazines, health magazines, women's magazines, and men's magazines, lifestyle magazines covered sex research less often than did the other genres. Health titles covered sex research in more than 20% more articles than did any other genre, and they also provided more articles about safe sex practices / birth control methods as well as sex articles not explicitly about sex. Women's magazines were most representative of the sampled whole. And men's magazines were more attentive to unorthodox sexual locations and unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions than were the other sampled genre. They also published more articles about cheating. A full genre-based breakdown of percentages of published sex articles can be found in Table I(b).

Table I(b). Comparative Percentage Frequencies of Sexual Topics Across Sampled Genre Types

| Primary Themes: | Mean | Lifestyle | Health | Women's | Men's |
|--|-------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Sex and Sex Acts | 40% | 42% | 37% | 42% | 36% |
| Sexualities | 1% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 5% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 8% | 6% | 12% | 7% | 12% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 14% | 14% | 15% | 18% | 5% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 19% | 15% | 27% | 18% | 19% |
| Sex Q&As | 16% | 18% | 10% | 14% | 19% |
| Other | 1% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 2% |
| Secondary Themes: | | | | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 43% | 41% | 49% | 46% | 38% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 36% | 32% | 44% | 35% | 38% |
| Sex Research | 30% | 18% | 56% | 28% | 33% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 16% | 19% | 10% | 13% | 24% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 12% | 12% | 12% | 8% | 21% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 6% | 3% | 12% | 3% | 12% |
| Relationship States | 40% | 35% | 51% | 40% | 43% |
| Personal Genital Health | 16% | 15% | 20% | 20% | 10% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 10% | 8% | 15% | 11% | 7% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 8% | 10% | 5% | 10% | 5% |
| Male or Female Dominance | 7% | 8% | 7% | 9% | 5% |
| Seduction Techniques | 15% | 14% | 17% | 15% | 14% |
| LGBT Issues | 1% | 3% | 0% | 2% | 2% |
| Cheating | 8% | 8% | 10% | 5% | 14% |

In the following subsections, genre-based depictions will be discussed, with special attention given to how each sub-variable (targeted gender for lifestyle and health titles and health vs. lifestyle as the primary editorial emphasis for women's or men's titles) affects the overall percentage breakdown for genre types. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests are also provided to analyze differences between these sub-genres.

Lifestyle Magazines

The researcher analyzed 93 sex articles in lifestyle magazines. Of those, 76 (82%) appeared in women's lifestyle titles, and 17 (18%) were in men's lifestyle titles.

Many of the trends that arose in the lifestyle magazines sample were quite similar to those found in the overall sample. This is due to women's lifestyle magazines

representing more than half (57%) of the sampled whole. However, a few categories in lifestyle magazines deviated notably from the statistics detailed in Table I(a). For the primary themes, sex articles not explicitly about sex appeared less often in lifestyle magazines (15%) than in the total sample (19%). For secondary themes, the lifestyle sample included sex research articles less (18%) than did the total sample (30%). Seduction techniques were much more prominent in lifestyle magazines (14%) than in the total sample (7%). A full run-down of the coded frequencies from lifestyle magazines can be seen in Table II.

Table II. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Lifestyle Articles |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 39 | 42% |
| Sexualities | 2 | 2% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 6 | 6% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 13 | 14% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 14 | 15% |
| Sex Q&As | 17 | 18% |
| Other | 2 | 2% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 38 | 41% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 30 | 32% |
| Sex Research | 17 | 18% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 18 | 19% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 11 | 12% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 3 | 3% |
| Relationship States | 33 | 35% |
| Personal Genital Health | 14 | 15% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 7 | 8% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 9 | 10% |
| Male or Female Dominance | 7 | 8% |
| Seduction Techniques | 13 | 14% |
| LGBT Issues | 3 | 3% |
| Cheating | 7 | 8% |

Women's and Men's Lifestyle Magazines

Despite the lifestyle magazines' relative similarities to the total magazine sample, many disparities arose between women's and men's lifestyle titles. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was run to determine if those differences were significant. The researcher limited this test to the top four primary and top four secondary themes present in lifestyle magazines so the tests would meet cell value requirements for the statistic. The themes analyzed were: sex and sex acts, sex Q&As, sex articles not explicitly about sex and physical sexual health for primary themes; and improving one's sex life, relationship states, what your partner likes and unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions for secondary themes. The test showed significant variation between men's and women's lifestyle magazines' depictions of those themes ($\chi^2(7) = 40.898, p < .01$).

Whereas sex and sex acts comprised the majority of the primary themes (42% for women's lifestyle and 41% for men's lifestyle), articles about physical sexual health, sex Q&As, and sex articles not specifically about sex were more common in the women's lifestyle titles and articles about sexualities were present in 12% of men's lifestyle articles, though they were not present at all in women's. Articles about secondary themes such as improving one's sex life, what your partner likes, sex research, and seduction techniques were more widely present in women's lifestyle magazines. Articles about unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions and unorthodox sexual locations received much more attention in men's magazines, as did articles about cheating. Most notably, men's lifestyle magazines made no mention of personal genital health, safe sex practices / birth control methods or female / male dominance. LGBT issues received relatively little

coverage (less than 10%) in both men’s and women’s lifestyle titles. See Tables III and IV for numerical and percentage breakdowns.

Table III. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Women’s Lifestyle Articles |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 32 | 42% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 5 | 7% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 13 | 17% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 13 | 17% |
| Sex Q&As | 13 | 17% |
| Other | 1 | 1% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 32 | 42% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 26 | 34% |
| Sex Research | 15 | 20% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 11 | 14% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 6 | 8% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 2 | 3% |
| Relationship States | 27 | 36% |
| Personal Genital Health | 14 | 18% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 7 | 9% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 8 | 11% |
| Male or Female Dominance | 7 | 9% |
| Seduction Techniques | 12 | 16% |
| LGBT Issues | 2 | 3% |
| Cheating | 4 | 5% |

Table IV. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men's Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Men's Lifestyle Articles |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 7 | 41% |
| Sexualities | 2 | 12% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 1 | 6% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 0 | 0% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 1 | 6% |
| Sex Q&As | 5 | 29% |
| Other | 1 | 6% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 6 | 35% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 4 | 24% |
| Sex Research | 2 | 12% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 7 | 41% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 5 | 29% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 1 | 6% |
| Relationship States | 6 | 35% |
| Personal Genital Health | 0 | 0% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 0 | 0% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 6% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 0 | 0% |
| Seduction Techniques | 1 | 6% |
| LGBT Issues | 1 | 6% |
| Cheating | 3 | 18% |

Health Magazines

The researcher evaluated 41 sex articles in health magazines. Of those, 16 (39%) appeared in women's health titles and 25 (61%) appeared in men's health titles.

Like the total sample and lifestyle magazines, the majority of articles in women's and men's health magazines fit the primary code for sex and sex acts (37%). However, sex articles not specifically about sex and psychological sexual health were featured more prominently than in the total sample, and sex Q&As were 6% less common in health magazines than in the total sample. Of secondary themes, sex research was more common in health magazines (56%) compared with the total sample (30%), and safe sex practices were mentioned more often in health titles (15%) compared with the collective

whole (10%). However, what your partner likes and relationship states were also significantly more common in health magazines than in the total sample. Table V provides a complete breakdown of topical depictions in the health titles.

Table V. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s and Men’s Health Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Health Magazine Articles |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 15 | 37% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 5 | 12% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 6 | 15% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 11 | 27% |
| Sex Q&As | 4 | 10% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 20 | 49% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 18 | 44% |
| Sex Research | 23 | 56% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 4 | 10% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 5 | 12% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 5 | 12% |
| Relationship States | 21 | 51% |
| Personal Genital Health | 8 | 20% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 6 | 15% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 2 | 5% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 3 | 7% |
| Seduction Techniques | 7 | 17% |
| LGBT Issues | 0 | 0% |
| Cheating | 4 | 10% |

Women’s and Men’s Health Magazines

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was run to determine if differences between frequencies for themes in women’s and men’s health magazines were significant. The researcher limited this test to the top four primary and top four secondary themes present in health magazines so the tests would meet cell value requirements for the statistic. The themes analyzed were: sex and sex acts, sex articles not explicitly about sex, physical sexual health and psychological sexual health for primary themes; and sex research,

relationship states, improving one's sex life and what your partner likes for secondary themes. The test showed significant variation between men's and women's health magazines' depictions of those themes ($\chi^2 (7) = 20.584, p < .01$).

Although women's health magazines discussed sex and sex acts as a primary theme in almost half of articles (44%), it was the focus of men's health magazine articles less often (32%). Psychological sexual health appeared as the primary theme more often in the men's health magazine articles (16%) than in the women's health articles (6%). Physical sexual health, on the other hand, appeared in a quarter of women's health articles (25%) and in less than one-tenth of men's (8%). While neither women's nor men's health magazines made mention of sexualities nor "other" categories, it should be noted that men's health magazines include sex Q&A articles relatively often (16%), though they were not the primary code for any of the women's health articles. As far as secondary themes were concerned, women's health magazines included articles about improving one's sex life and sex research in more than 20% more sex articles each. Men's magazines, alternately, provided more coverage of seduction techniques, what your partner likes, unorthodox sexual locations and drugs and/or alcohol. Tables VI and VII show the number and percentage of topics presented in women's and men's health magazines.

Table VI. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women's Health Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Women's Health Magazine Articles |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 7 | 44% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 1 | 6% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 4 | 25% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 4 | 25% |
| Sex Q&As | 0 | 0% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 10 | 63% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 6 | 38% |
| Sex Research | 11 | 69% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 1 | 6% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 1 | 6% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 1 | 6% |
| Relationship States | 9 | 56% |
| Personal Genital Health | 4 | 25% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 3 | 19% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 6% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 1 | 6% |
| Seduction Techniques | 2 | 13% |
| LGBT Issues | 0 | 0% |
| Cheating | 1 | 6% |

Table VII. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Health Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Men’s Health Magazine Articles |
|--|---|--|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 8 | 32% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 4 | 16% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 2 | 8% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 7 | 28% |
| Sex Q&As | 4 | 16% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 10 | 40% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 12 | 48% |
| Sex Research | 12 | 48% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 3 | 12% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 4 | 16% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 4 | 16% |
| Relationship States | 12 | 48% |
| Personal Genital Health | 4 | 16% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 3 | 12% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 4% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 2 | 8% |
| Seduction Techniques | 5 | 20% |
| LGBT Issues | 0 | 0% |
| Cheating | 3 | 12% |

Women’s Magazines

The researcher evaluated 92 sex articles in women’s magazines. Of those, 76 (83%) appeared in women’s lifestyle magazines, and 16 (17%) appeared in women’s health magazines.

Due to their high proportion within the sampled whole, women’s magazines’ depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health in sex articles were very statistically similar to the sample as a whole, as women’s lifestyle and women’s health titles accounted for 69% of the total coded articles. None of the primary themes coded for women’s magazines deviated from the mean more than 4%, and all but the code for physical sexual health were within 2% of the mean scores for primary codes. The same

holds relatively true for secondary codes, with only codes for unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions, unorthodox sexual locations, drugs and/or alcohol and cheating falling slightly (< 4%) below the mean. Notably, safe sex practices / birth control methods were highlighted more often in women’s magazines than in men’s magazines or in general lifestyle magazines. Table VIII provides a complete breakdown of topical depictions in the women’s magazine titles.

Table VIII. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women’s Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Women’s Magazine Articles |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 39 | 42% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 6 | 7% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 17 | 18% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 17 | 18% |
| Sex Q&As | 13 | 14% |
| Other | 1 | 1% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 42 | 46% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 32 | 35% |
| Sex Research | 26 | 28% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 12 | 13% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 7 | 8% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 3 | 3% |
| Relationship States | 36 | 40% |
| Personal Genital Health | 18 | 20% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 10 | 11% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 9 | 10% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 8 | 9% |
| Seduction Techniques | 14 | 15% |
| LGBT Issues | 2 | 2% |
| Cheating | 5 | 5% |

Women’s Lifestyle and Women’s Health Magazines

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was run to determine if differences between frequencies for themes in women’s health and women’s lifestyle magazines were significant. The researcher limited this test to the top four primary and top four

secondary themes present in women's magazines in the sample so the tests would meet cell value requirements for the statistic. The themes analyzed were: sex and sex acts, sex articles not explicitly about sex, physical sexual health and sex Q&As for primary themes; and improving one's sex life, relationship states, what your partner likes and sex research for secondary themes. The test showed significant variation between women's lifestyle magazines' and women's health magazines' depictions of those themes ($\chi^2(7) = 43.069, p < .01$).

Of the primary themes, the most notable differences occurred within the psychological sexual health, physical sexual health, and sex Q&As categories. Women's lifestyle titles included sex Q&As in almost one-quarter of their content (17%), whereas women's health titles didn't appear to use that article format at all. Codes for psychological sexual health and physical sexual health, however, were each more common in women's health titles than in women's lifestyle titles. The greatest disparities in secondary themes appeared within a handful of categories. Most notably, sex research appeared almost 50% more often in women's health magazines than it did in women's lifestyle magazines. Women's health magazine articles were also more frequently about improving one's sex life, relationship states and safe sex practices / birth control methods than were those presented in women's lifestyle magazines. Women's lifestyle magazines, on the other hand, mentioned unorthodox positions or behaviors 8% more often. Tables IX and X detail the numerical and percentage breakdowns of themes in women's lifestyle and women's health magazines.

Table IX. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women's Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Women's Lifestyle Articles |
|--|---|--|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 32 | 42% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 5 | 7% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 13 | 17% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 13 | 17% |
| Sex Q&As | 13 | 17% |
| Other | 1 | 1% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 32 | 42% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 26 | 34% |
| Sex Research | 15 | 20% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 11 | 14% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 6 | 8% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 2 | 3% |
| Relationship States | 27 | 36% |
| Personal Genital Health | 14 | 18% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 7 | 9% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 8 | 11% |
| Male or Female Dominance | 7 | 9% |
| Seduction Techniques | 12 | 16% |
| LGBT Issues | 2 | 3% |
| Cheating | 4 | 5% |

Table X. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Women's Health Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Women's Health Magazine Articles |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 7 | 44% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 1 | 6% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 4 | 25% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 4 | 25% |
| Sex Q&As | 0 | 0% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 10 | 63% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 6 | 38% |
| Sex Research | 11 | 69% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 1 | 6% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 1 | 6% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 1 | 6% |
| Relationship States | 9 | 56% |
| Personal Genital Health | 4 | 25% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 3 | 19% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 6% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 1 | 6% |
| Seduction Techniques | 2 | 13% |
| LGBT Issues | 0 | 0% |
| Cheating | 1 | 6% |

Men's Magazines

The researcher evaluated 42 total sex articles in men's magazines. Of those, 25 (or 60%) appeared in men's health magazines, and 17 (or 40%) appeared in men's lifestyle titles.

Men's magazines' sex articles were coded positively for the primary theme of sex and sex acts less than any other genre (36%). Men's mags were also coded for sex Q&As as a primary theme more often than other genres (19%) and for physical sexual health at least 9% less than any other genre (5%). The sexualities theme was also coded more often in men's titles (5%). Men's magazines were also more attentive to the unorthodox sexual locations and unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions themes than were the other

genres, and they mentioned personal genital health less often. Four secondary themes occurred more than 30% of the time in men’s magazines’ articles: Relationship states (43%), what your partner likes (38%) and improving one’s sex life (38%), and sex research (33%). Unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions (24%) and unorthodox sexual locations (21%) appeared next often, respectively.

Table XI. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Men’s Magazine Articles |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 15 | 36% |
| Sexualities | 2 | 5% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 5 | 12% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 2 | 5% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 8 | 19% |
| Sex Q&As | 8 | 19% |
| Other | 1 | 2% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 16 | 38% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 16 | 38% |
| Sex Research | 14 | 33% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 10 | 24% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 9 | 21% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 5 | 12% |
| Relationship States | 18 | 43% |
| Personal Genital Health | 4 | 10% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 3 | 7% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 2 | 5% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 2 | 5% |
| Seduction Techniques | 6 | 14% |
| LGBT Issues | 1 | 2% |
| Cheating | 6 | 14% |

Men's Lifestyle and Men's Health Magazines

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was run to determine if differences between frequencies for themes in men's lifestyle and men's health magazines were significant. The researcher limited this test to the top four primary and top four secondary themes present in men's magazines so the tests would meet cell value requirements for the statistic. The themes analyzed were: sex and sex acts, sex Q&As, sex articles not explicitly about sex and psychological sexual health for primary themes; and relationship states, improving one's sex life, what your partner likes and sex research for secondary themes. The test showed significant variation between men's health and men's lifestyle magazines' depictions of those themes ($\chi^2 (7) = 40.378, p < .01$).

There were also many notable differences between the men's magazines' depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. Men's health magazines included sex articles not explicitly about sex in their content roughly 20% more than did men's lifestyle titles. Psychological sexual health and physical sexual health were also mentioned more often in men's health articles about sex. However, sex Q&As appeared much more often in men's lifestyle titles. And whereas no other magazine sub-genre, including men's health, made explicit mention of sexualities, men's lifestyle titles did in 12% of their articles. Men's health magazines, much like women's health magazines, were also much more attentive to sex research and relationship states than were the men's lifestyle titles. The men's lifestyle articles were much more heavily predominated by unorthodox sexual locations and unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions – by almost 30% for the latter – than were their health-oriented counterparts. Seduction techniques were detailed more often in health titles as were drugs and/or alcohol. Full numerical and

percentile descriptions of the codes in men’s lifestyle and men’s health magazines can be found in Tables XII and XIII.

Table XII. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men’s Lifestyle Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Men’s Lifestyle Articles |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 7 | 41% |
| Sexualities | 2 | 12% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 1 | 6% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 0 | 0% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 1 | 6% |
| Sex Q&As | 5 | 29% |
| Other | 1 | 6% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One’s Sex Life | 6 | 35% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 4 | 24% |
| Sex Research | 2 | 12% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 7 | 41% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 5 | 29% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 1 | 6% |
| Relationship States | 6 | 35% |
| Personal Genital Health | 0 | 0% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 0 | 0% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 6% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 0 | 0% |
| Seduction Techniques | 1 | 6% |
| LGBT Issues | 1 | 6% |
| Cheating | 3 | 18% |

Table XIII. Frequencies of Articles about Sexual Topics in Men's Health Magazines

| Theme | Number of Articles Coded for Theme | % of Men's Health Magazine Articles |
|--|---|--|
| Primary Themes: | | |
| Sex and Sex Acts | 8 | 32% |
| Sexualities | 0 | 0% |
| Psychological Sexual Health | 4 | 16% |
| Physical Sexual Health | 2 | 8% |
| Sex Articles Not Explicitly About Sex | 7 | 28% |
| Sex Q&As | 4 | 16% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary Themes: | | |
| Improving One's Sex Life | 10 | 40% |
| What Your Partner Likes | 12 | 48% |
| Sex Research | 12 | 48% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Behaviors or Positions | 3 | 12% |
| Unorthodox Sexual Locations | 4 | 16% |
| Drugs and/or Alcohol | 4 | 16% |
| Relationship States | 12 | 48% |
| Personal Genital Health | 4 | 16% |
| Safe Sex Practices / Birth Control Methods | 3 | 12% |
| Reproductive Health Problems | 1 | 4% |
| Female or Male Dominance | 2 | 8% |
| Seduction Techniques | 5 | 20% |
| LGBT Issues | 0 | 0% |
| Cheating | 3 | 12% |

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was primarily to measure and compare the relative frequencies of messages about sex, sexuality, and sexual health that are published in men's and women's lifestyle and health magazines. Secondly, this research aimed to add information regarding health magazines' thematic depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health to the field of mass communications research, as few studies to date have attempted to content analyze sex articles in health titles. It also sought to advance existing data regarding sex content published in women's and men's lifestyle titles. Although many of the findings in this study were consistent with the researcher's expectations based on the literature review – such as the overall sample's emphasis on sex and sex acts and the relative dearth of information concerning LGBTQ lifestyle – a number of trends were surprising.

It should be noted first that women's magazines were most representative of the mean percentages in this sample – due most certainly to the percentage of the sample drawn from such titles. With that consideration, it is perhaps most notable that the sample made very little mention of safe sex practices / birth control methods. Although this theme was logically highlighted more often in women's magazines than in men's magazines, it is discouraging that only one of every ten articles in women's magazines discusses the topic. The researcher cannot identify a confounding variable that might have masked discussions of safe sex / birth control options. One potential explanation is that magazines simply ignore discussions of birth control and safe sex because it is “un-sexy”

That is, though the notion of a passionate, spur-of-the-moment hookup with a stranger might be a turn-on to many readers, discussing condom and spermicidal lubricant use during that moment is not. Editors at the sampled magazines might be appealing to readers' sexual aesthetics and fantasies rather than teaching them how to introduce barrier methods or hormonal birth control into their lifestyles.

Men's magazines were more attentive to unorthodox sexual locations and unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions than were the other sampled genres, and they also published more articles about cheating. The sexualities theme was also coded more often in men's titles (5%), which is likely a result of men's magazines' emphasis on the American "macho man" archetype, as any article focused on the state of identifying with any finite sexuality – including that of a straight male – was positively coded for the sexuality theme.

Further, the sample made nearly no mention of sexualities or LGBT issues, which indicates a heterosexist worldview that is neither representative of the American population (and presumably of reader demographics) nor proactive in the discussion of alternative sexualities. This finding indicates an ambivalence to LGBTQ issues on the part of magazine staffs. The two instances of LGBTQ issues that occurred within the sample were published in lifestyle magazines and in post-hoc analysis were found to be brief mentions of girl-on-girl action as a turn-on for men. No LGBTQ-relevant articles were published in the sampled health magazines.

As far as the health magazines are concerned, themes for what your partner likes and relationship states were also actually more common in health magazines than in the total sample. Perhaps this is due to health magazines' consideration that 'healthy' sex should occur within the context of a monogamous relationship rather than with a number of non-committed partners. Drugs and/or alcohol were also equally prevalent in health magazines as in men's magazines, though the coders were instructed to code for drugs and/or alcohol any time they were mentioned in a sex article, not only when they were used to manipulate a woman into a sex acts. It is possible the health magazines discussed drugs and alcohol as something to avoid during sexual activities rather than as a social lubricant or a tactic to lower a partner's inhibitions.

Psychological sexual health appeared as the primary theme more often in the men's health magazine articles (16%) than in the women's health articles (6%). This is possibly due to magazines' perceptions that men should be psychologically in tune in order to communicate well with women. Physical sexual health, on the other hand, appeared in a quarter of women's health articles (25%) and in less than one-tenth of men's (8%). This might be because women are considered sexual health gatekeepers – they receive annual gynecological exams, keep active track of their menstrual cycles, and are perhaps more inclined to visit doctors when something's 'up' down there, whereas men's genitals require less maintenance.

A range of statistical differences emerged between the sampled women's lifestyle and women's health magazines. For instance more sex Q&As appeared in lifestyle titles,

and more articles associated with sexual health (such as sex research and safe sex practices / birth control methods) appeared in health titles. Unorthodox positions and behaviors also received more mention in women's lifestyle titles. This is perhaps because consumer perceptions and editorial objectives vary between lifestyle glossies *Cosmo*, *Redbook*, and *Glamour* and health titles *Women's Health*, *Self*, and *Shape*.⁵ While both genres focus on service content, the former three emphasize beauty, fashion and entertainment, whereas the latter three highlight exercise, diet and healthy living.

The theoretical implications of these findings and others are discussed in further detail in the following section.

Implications

Comparisons to previous content analyses.

The literature reviewed for this study suggested a number of themes would emerge in the coding of sex articles in women's and men's lifestyle and health magazines. Specifically, studies have suggested that women's magazines encourage young women to use their sexualities in ways that will keep their male lovers interested (Walsh-Childers, Gotthofer, & Lepre, 2002) and that the men's sexual satisfaction drives women's sexuality (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Likewise, studies found although women's magazines are no longer victimizing female readers' sexualities (Carpenter, 2010), men are still depicted as controlling sexual relationships and women are shown as using their sexuality to manipulate relationships (Garner, Sterk & Adams, 1998). Content analyses of men's magazines suggest similar findings. Researchers have concluded that men's

⁵ It should be noted, however, that no sex articles were presented in the sampled *Shape* issues.

magazines reinforce a masculine-centric, heterosexual view of sexuality (Krassas, Blauwkamp & Wesselink, 2003), minimize relationships (Johnson, 2007) and celebrate sexual variety (Taylor, 2005). Though minimal research has been conducted on health titles' depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health, analyses of frames presented in *Men's Health* magazine have found that the title glorifies a powerful male sex role (Boni, 2002) and encourages the "ideal man" to have "tons of sex" (Stibbe, 2004).

Because this study aimed to code the thematic content of sex articles rather than the "voice" presented within them, many of the previous studies' determinations regarding masculinity and femininity and their functions within magazines' representations of human sexuality remain relatively isolated from the research at hand. However, it is important to note that this study did consider gender (for targeted audience) as a primary tool for analysis, and there were many variations between magazines' depictions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health based on gender of the assumed reader alone. Many of those disparities are discussed within the findings sections of this study under the gender-based subheads for lifestyle and health magazines.

This study supports previous findings that men's magazines celebrate sexual variety and sex outside of the context of a relationship. Men's magazines in this sample discussed unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions and unorthodox sexual locations as well as cheating more often than did women's. However, this study also combats some of the previous research about magazines' depictions of male and female sexuality. For instance, this study found that men's magazines discussed relationship states almost often than women's magazines (within 3%), men's magazines were more concerned with

psychological sexual health, and there was little variation between women's and men's magazines' (3%) interest in what (a) partner likes.

Further, few previous studies have attempted to articulate how sexual health – rather than sex itself or sexuality – is presented within the context of women's and men's lifestyle and health magazines. Studies conducted on sex content in consumer magazines, however, have indicated that sexual health is an underrepresented topic in contemporary glossies. This study validates those findings in that even health magazines discuss physical and psychological health less in less than 15% of the sampled sex articles. Safe sex practices / birth control methods only appeared in about one of every 10 articles across the sample, which indicates a continued ambivalence to discussing safe sex practices within magazine pages. Indeed, the topic is not necessarily “sexy,” but it is of course crucial, especially as readers turn to magazines for advice about sex.

Consistent with previous findings, the researcher is also dismayed by the overall lack of coverage of sexualities in the primary themes, which suggests a dearth of editorial attention to non-traditional sex roles, to men's and women's perceived personal sexualities, and to alternative notions of womanhood and masculinity. Likewise, as was discussed in the conclusion of the literature review, sex is typically described as an entertainment activity rather than as an avenue toward procreation or as an emotional dialogue. This might explain the low percentage of psychological sexual health articles in this sample. It appears that magazines view sex, sexuality, and sexual health as purely physical manifestations of human sexual urges rather than considering the nuanced and intricate ways sex might affect an individual's self-perception, perception of others, and

general emotional wellbeing. Men's magazines also all but ignored physical sexual health in their coverage – an alarming conclusion, indeed.

Trends that emerged in the secondary themes were also informative about the nature of each magazine genre's editorial formulas. Of particular interest is men's magazines' focus on unorthodox sexual behaviors and positions and unorthodox sexual locations, which was discussed in previous paragraphs. Although not unexpected, the prevalence of these themes in men's titles confirm previous studies' findings that men's magazines place emphasis on unusual or "kinky" sexual experiences. The findings also suggest that men's magazines do not urge men to address their personal genital health, despite the risk for sexually transmitted infection and sexual dysfunction in all sexually active adults. Men's magazines also mention cheating more than other titles, which in itself is a risky sexual behavior (especially if condoms are not being used). However, the coding protocol for this study did not distinguish between merely considering cheating, actually cheating, or dealing with another person cheating on you. The overall lack of articles that make mention of safe sex practices / birth control methods (<10%) in all but the health genre also shows that women's and men's lifestyle magazines are ambivalent to potential pregnancies and sexual health threats that could be prevented by condom and birth control use. And of course, the sampled magazines' denial of LGBT readerships and LGBT lifestyles is antiquated and unrealistic.

However, not all findings were negative in nature. The researcher was impressed to note that the primary theme for physical sexual health was covered almost as often (<14%) as Sex Q&As in all but men's titles. And although sex and sex acts received much more coverage than did any other primary topic, the researcher is encouraged that

the discussion of *actual* sex occurs more often than do sex articles not explicitly about sex – those that masquerade as sex articles but which sidestep talking about sex altogether. Many of the statistics that emerged from the secondary themes were also encouraging. Namely, the researcher was intrigued but not surprised to see that improving one's sex life, relationship states, and what your partner likes appear prominently in all genres. This shows that all magazines in the sample emphasize sex as a two-person activity and that sex is not all about one individual's sexual satisfaction. Indeed, contemporary men's and women's health and lifestyle titles agree that women and men both deserve to be part of the discussion regarding sexual beliefs and behaviors. That women's magazines and health magazines each discuss personal genital health in one-quarter of articles is also incredibly reassuring. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it validates health magazines' missions to see that they are covering sex research in more than half of all articles and more than 25% more than sampled mean. This finding concludes that health magazines are fulfilling their roles as purveyors of the latest academic and independent sex, sexuality, and sexual health research.

Comparisons to theoretical models.

A number of theoretical models were discussed in this study's literature review in order to explain reasons why certain themes might or might not emerge within content analyses of magazines' sex articles. Specific attention was given to framing theory as well as to additional theories that address mediated and societal reasons for development of sexual norms in American culture, including mass media.

Taylor's research on sex frames in magazines suggests that two primary frames would emerge specifically in the magazines' sex articles. The first frame is that sex as

part of a committed, romantic relationship. The second theme is that sex is a recreational, noncommittal activity (Taylor, 2008). In the first frame, female sexuality is instrumental to maintaining relationships with a monogamous, heterosexual male partner (Durham, 1996; Prusank, Duran & DeLillo, 1993). In the second, the context of sex is varied, and women are portrayed as seeking sexual satisfaction as a recreational activity. No pretenses of monogamy are made.

The findings of this study were consistent with the first frame in that relationship states were integral to 40% of all sampled sex articles – more than all other secondary themes aside from improving one’s sex life, the code for which does not rely on a specific type of partner (monogamous or otherwise). Further, the code for what your partner likes appeared in 36% of all articles, third most often of the secondary themes. This would suggest that pleasing a partner is important to magazines’ sexual rhetorics. The second proposed frame, in which sex is viewed as recreation, was also common in this sample, though less so than frames that suggested consistent sexual partners. Unorthodox sexual behaviors or positions, seduction techniques, and unorthodox sexual locations appeared in 16%, 15%, and 12% of all articles, respectively. These codes certainly allude to sex as a “fun” activity and do not require monogamy or a consistent relationship within their definitions.

The review of theoretical literature also proposed two specific theories for how media and society construct sexualities within culture. Maracek (2004) suggested the first model, essentialism, was most common to mediated depictions of sex and sexuality. That is, magazines acknowledge the specific biological factors separating men from women, and gender is inherent to biological sex. The needs of the readers, then, are

assumed to reflect the needs of their individual genders. Contrastingly, Matlin (2008) posits that there is no real measurable intellectual or cognitive difference between females and males, although social forces might result in perceived differences between the sexes. Schneider (2004) indicates that studies show that media and culture work inform and impact one another, which might lead to increased differences in perception of the sexes when there are actually limited real differences between them. Although this study indicates many observable differences between sex articles targeted to male or female readers, it also highlights many similarities. Men's magazines discussed psychological sexual health more often than women's, and women's magazines discussed physical sexual health more often than men's, but the other primary themes were relatively consistent between men's and women's titles. And with the exception of unorthodox behaviors, positions, and locations, cheating, drugs and alcohol, and personal genital health, the frequencies of secondary themes were relatively similar within women's and men's magazines in this sample. It is unclear, then, whether this study lends itself to an essentialist or similarities model of sexuality.

Three other non-biological models were also proposed in the literature review. Social constructionism essentially argues that people learn about their normative roles based on interactions with their own ideas, other peoples, and the culture that exists around them. Magazines likely model learned roles based on the perceptions the editorial teams have about gender and sexual normalcy. They are not immune to constructions of sexuality or gender. Script theory similarly argues that humans learn about sex roles from culture. Women's and men's sexual scripts differ in American pop culture, and women adhere to traditionally feminine ideals, such as being passive and vain, whereas

men adhere to be masculine ideals, such as interest in sex and individualism. Finally, objectification theory posits that because American culture objectifies women, women objectify themselves, as do the media. Because this research reflects trends that were observed in previous studies' findings, the researcher posits magazines do interact with culture in that they construct meanings based on cultural norms and replicate scripts published in previous issues and in other magazines. Although the research at hand did not attempt to analyze women's passivity or vanity, it did show men's interest in non-conventional sex. And because psychological sexual health was mentioned so little across the board, it is also possible this means magazines are objectifying women (and men) – a notion consistent with objectification theory.

The chi-square tests run for this study suggest that there are significant differences between portrayals of sex, sexuality, and sexual health between genres – including women's and men's titles – and that in such, magazines actively engage with gendered depictions of reality: certain topics appear more often in women's magazines than in men's, and vice versa. Whether this is due to a biological or societal model of sex differences, however, is unclear.

Limitations

As is true of any research method, this content analysis of sex articles presented in men's and women's health and lifestyle magazines is limited by a number of factors. First, because this study encompassed only magazines published in the 2010 editorial cycle, it is not able to shed light on historical or more wide-spanning contemporary presentations of sex, sexuality, and sexual health by the media. Because the researcher only sampled four or five issues of each title in the 2010 cycle, it is also possible that the

findings are skewed in their representation of issues chosen for the sample and that they do not represent depictions of sex throughout the entire editorial year.

It is also worth noting that sex content from health titles was dominated by two Rodale titles – *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* – from which a majority of health magazines' codes were pulled. Because this study was concerned with high circulation magazines that published sex content targeted at relatively young individuals, Rodale and its editorial perspectives might have had a substantial impact on the statistics in a way that other publishers' magazines might not have. Further, Rodale's editorial models are very similar for *Men's Health* and for *Women's Health* with targeted gender being the primary distinguishing factor between the two, and both of these magazines have editorial boards comprised of advising physicians, which might have impacted the amount of sex research covered in the articles sampled from these titles.

This content analysis is also limited by the scope of the content it covered. More comprehensive analysis could have been achieved had the researcher coded for advertising and photographic/graphic content as well as for sex articles published independently on the websites of the magazines in the sample. Further, it is possible the coding scheme developed by the researcher is not entirely comprehensive. It is certainly feasible to conceive hundreds of themes that would potentially occur within magazines' sex articles, but as the frame of this research was limited in both time and financial resources, the codes that were developed reflected the amount of attention the researcher and her coders could give to the texts.

Finally, this research is limited by its methodological approach as a quantitative study of content thematics. That is to say, this study only attempted to analyze the

frequencies at which certain themes occurred within the texts in order to make generalizations about the content. It did not allow for the in-depth textual analysis or subjective interpretation so valued by qualitative or mixed-method approaches.

Possibilities for Additional Research

There are myriad research areas that this study failed to analyze for theoretical and methodological reasons.

Because this study only dealt with the treatment of the texts within the sampled magazines, it failed to analyze how the messages within these texts affect magazine readers. It would be instrumental to conduct a survey-based study of readers' perceptions of sex, sexuality, and sexual health with these findings in mind.

It would be ideal to expand the coding of the same magazines' sex content with more specific content themes in mind based on these findings. That is to say, this research shows that the sampled magazines discuss sex and sex acts quite often, but it does not detail exactly what types of sex and sex acts are being discussed; it shows that sex research appears relatively often in all titles and very often in health titles, but it does not detail what aspects of sex, sexuality, and sexual health this research covers nor does it shed light on the sources of this research.

It would also be telling to conduct a production analysis in the sampled magazines' editorial offices as it could shed light on why certain topics receive so much more attention than others. For instance, the editors of these titles might have very explicit reasons for leaving out certain content themes and expanding so often on others: The sexualities and LGBTQ variables are of specific relevance to the production analysis.

Further, a qualitative textual analysis of the sampled sex articles would provide more in-depth understanding of what the magazines are saying to their readers about the coded content themes. The researcher could critically examine the existing sample to add textual information to each theme as it arose within the content analysis. This method could also aid in further explication of this study's codes' definitions.

And finally, despite existing scholarship on teen magazines' sex content, little research has been conducted on how adult magazines' content affects teen readerships. An experiment, survey, or focus group could shed light on how content presented in this study (and similar adult-targeted articles) impacts young people who find themselves engaged with sex articles written with sexually active adults in mind.

APPENDIX A: Circulation Information for Sampled Titles

Women's Titles

Cosmopolitan (*Cosmopolitan*, 2011).

Circulation: 3,046,000

Age Demographic: Mean: 30.7

Gender Breakdown: 84% female

Glamour (*Glamour*, 2011)

Circulation: 2,320,325

Age Demographic: Median: 35

Gender Breakdown: 93% female

Redbook (*Redbook*, 2011)

Circulation: 2,232,476

Age Demographic: Primary: 30 - 49

Gender Breakdown: 92% female

Men's Titles

Maxim (*Maxim*, 2011)

Circulation: 2,549,893

Age Demographic: Median: 30.2

Gender Breakdown: 76% male

GQ (*GQ*, 2011)

Circulation: 748,329

Age Demographic: Median: 33.4

Gender Breakdown: 72% male

Men's Journal (*Men's Journal*, 2011) *

Circulation: 724,023

Age Demographic: 38.6

Gender Breakdown: 87% male

Esquire (*Esquire*, 2012)

Circulation: 719,029

Age Demographic: 44

Gender Breakdown: 62% male

* Men's Journal was not selected for the sample, despite having the third-highest circulation for the men's magazines category, because its content is not sexually oriented.

Women's Health Titles

Shape (*Shape*, 2011)

Circulation: 1,672,667

Age Demographic: Median: 36.8

Gender Breakdown: Not Available

Women's Health (*Women's Health*, 2011)

Circulation: 1,582,575

Age Demographic: Median: 43.1

Gender Breakdown: 92% female

Self (*Self*, 2011)

Circulation: 1,519,016

Age Demographic: Median: 38.9

Gender Breakdown: 93% female

Men's Health Titles

Men's Health (Men's Health, 2011)

Circulation: 1,396,514

Age Demographic: Median: 37.7

Gender Breakdown: 83% male

Men's Fitness (Men's Fitness, 2011)

Circulation: 706,483

Age Demographic: Median: 36.4

Gender Breakdown: 88% male

APPENDIX B: Release Dates for Sampled Titles

Women's Lifestyle Titles

Cosmopolitan: January 2010 (7), April 2010 (9), June 2010 (11), September 2010 (6), and November 2010 (8).

Glamour: January 2010 (3), March 2010 (5), June 2010 (4), September 2010 (6), and November 2010 (4)

Redbook: January 2010 (1), April 2010 (5), June 2010 (4), and September 2010 (4).

Men's Lifestyle Titles

Maxim: January 2010 (1), April 2010 (1), June 2010 (1), September 2010 (0), and November 2010 (1).

GQ: February 2010 (1), April 2010 (0), June 2010 (4), September 2010 (0), and November 2010 (1).

Esquire: February 2010 (1), April 2010 (2), June / July 2010 (1), September 2010 (1), and November 2010 (1).

Women's Health Titles

Shape: February 2010 (0), April 2010 (0), July 2010 (0), October 2010 (0), and December 2010 (0).

Women's Health: January 2010 (3), April 2010 (1), June 2010 (1), October 2010 (2), and November 2010 (3).

Self: January 2010 (1), April 2010 (1), June 2010 (1), September 2010 (2), and November 2010 (1).

Men's Health Titles

Men's Health: January 2010 (5), April 2010 (4), June 2010 (4), September 2010 (4), and November 2010 (3).

Men's Fitness: March 2010 (2), September 2010 (2), October 2010 (1), and December 2010 (0).⁶

⁶ A fifth copy of *Men's Fitness* was ordered but not delivered by an independent back-issue delivery service. Inquiries regarding this issue were not responded to by the service. A fifth issue of *Redbook* was unavailable for order through Hearst's ordering service.

APPENDIX C: Codebook for Data Collection on Sex Articles Published in Women’s and Men’s Lifestyle and Health Magazines

The content analysis will analyze all sex articles published in the selected magazines, excluding blurbs and fictional content. The sampled magazines are from varying months in the 2010 publishing cycle, with careful attention given to season-spanning content. That is, no sampled magazine should over-represent one time of year over any other.

Initially, the primary research will track the magazine title and issue date in the coding sheet (an Excel file). The magazine title should be listed as text next to the MAGAZINE field. The issue date should be listed as a single month (i.e. “January”) next to the ISSUE field.

There are four categories under which the researcher may initially code content based solely on the magazines’ titles. This will be a numerical value listed as 1, 2, 3 or 4 under the MAG TYPE field.

- 1) Women’s (*Cosmo, Glamour, Redbook*)
- 2) Men’s (*Esquire, GQ, Maxim*)
- 3) Women’s Health (*Self, Shape, Women’s Health*)
- 4) Men’s Health (*Men’s Fitness, Men’s Health*)

Here begins the article-specific portion of the coding process.

Based on a 2005 content analysis of sex content in lad mags, this content analysis will limit its definition of “sex articles” to prose content that encompasses “sexual behaviors or relationships, their antecedents, or their consequences.”

The primary researcher will determine which articles within each issue are considered “sex articles” based on a preliminary review of the tables of contents and flip-throughs of

each book. This may be supplemented by a brief review of full articles that are determined to be ambiguous in their function as “sex articles.” The researcher should be careful not to include fashion or trend articles that merely make mention of “sexy” styles or actions. Pictorial celebrity or personality profiles will not be included in this content analysis. The researcher will track each sex article in the magazine’s T.O.C. with a small sticky note.

The researcher will then quantify the number of sex articles listed in the table of contents in each issue title compared with the total number of articles listed in the table of contents. This ratio (written as SEX ARTICLES / TOTAL ARTICLES) will be listed under ARTICLE RATIO.

Once the researcher has determined which articles are considered sex articles and she has tracked the ARTICLE RATIO, she will enter all sex article titles and page numbers in ARTICLE and PAGE NUMBER cells as text fields in the Excel file for code tracking. When necessary, the researcher will also delineate separate articles that fall within one page by naming them with self-referential acronyms. This will aid the student coders in tracking sex content within individual magazines.

The researcher will then copy and paste all CODING FIELDS (listed below) under each ARTICLE and PAGE NUMBER for student coders’ use.

The primary researcher now passes each coding sheet (as an Excel document) and the copy of the respective magazine on to one of two undergraduate researchers so he or she may analyze the articles.

UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The initial coding protocol was developed using definitions adapted from Bielay and Herald's research on sex content in women's magazines (Bielay & Herold, 1995) and Taylor's subsequent study on sex content in lad mags (Taylor, 2005). It was expanded upon following a preliminary review of articles published in 2011 issues of a portion of the sampled titles.

Because the researcher is interested, first, in the statistical representation of six primary sex-related themes – 1) sex and sex acts 2) sexualities 3) physical sexual health and 4) psychological sexual health 5) “sex articles” not about sex 6) sex Q&As – the coders should first identify which is the primary theme of each article. A seventh coding option – 7 – is reserved for “other” topics that do not conform to notions of sex and sex acts, sexualities and sex roles, and/or physical sexual health.

PRIMARY THEMES

1) **SEX AND SEX ACTS**: Merriam-Webster defines a sex act as “an act performed with another for sexual gratification.”⁷ For the purpose of this study, the Merriam-Webster definition is expanded upon with the following:

An article's primary theme is **SEX AND SEX ACTS** if its content is particularly focused on the details surrounding sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, petting, mutual masturbation, or any other physical interaction between two or more peoples for sexual gratification when the article's focus does not appear to primarily describe a relationship's power dynamic, individual sexual identity (LGBTQ, etc.) or sexual health.

⁷ (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sex%20act>).

2) SEXUALITIES: Merriam-Webster defines sexuality is: “the quality or state of being sexual: *a*: the condition of having sex.” For the purpose of this study, this definition is expanded upon with the following:

An article’s primary theme is SEXUALITY if it focused on the state of being straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, asexual, or other states of personal sexual identity and its antecedents. That is, the notion of sexual identity is primary to the message of the article and is not merely secondary to sex acts, sex roles or sexual health. SEXUALITIES includes articles about coming out, about becoming aware of female sexual identity, about what it means to be a straight man, etc.

3) SEXUAL HEALTH: The World Health Organization describes sexual health as “a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”⁸ For the purpose of this study, we will break this definition into two parts:

4) PHYSICAL SEXUAL HEALTH concerns the physical aspects of sexual health, including, but not limited to STD prevention, pregnancy prevention, gynecological and erectile function, sexual health maintenance (through pharmaceuticals, exercises or dietary habits, etc.) and reproductive health. Articles coded under this category should not be service articles or tip-based in nature, but should rather include clinically based information about physical sexual function.

5) PSYCHOLOGICAL SEXUAL HEALTH concerns the emotional aspects of sexual health, including, but not limited to the emotional processing of rape, understanding feelings of closeness, emotional manifestations of what it means to be female or male, objectification, and other emotions related to sex. This category is most concerned with

⁸ (<http://www.cdc.gov/sexualhealth/>)

the cognitive processing of sexual situations, not about sex merely as part of a relationship. However, articles that discuss how mental health, communication, and a healthy view toward sex can improve sexual relationship would fall under this category.

6) “SEX ARTICLES”NOT EXPLICITLY ABOUT SEX is a theme developed to encompass articles that the magazine editors market as sex articles – they are in a “sex” section, or have a headline or dek that somehow references sex – but actually include information about non-sexual practices. Many articles on dating advice and non-sexual seduction fall into this category.

7) SEX Q&As: This is a relatively self-explanatory theme. That is, it refers to all articles that focus on many sex topics relevant to readers based on specific questions they send to an editor at the magazine. Often, this will be a sex column or sidebar.

8) OTHER: The OTHER category is reserved for articles that you do not feel represent the four aforementioned and defined categories: SEX AND SEX ACTS, SEXUALITIES, or SEXUAL HEALTH.

The Researcher is concerned, secondarily with seven themes directly adopted from Bielay and Herold’s 1995 research on sex in women’s magazines and Taylor’s 2008 study on sex in lad mags. The researcher has also expanded upon the previous studies’ definitions with six more secondary themes in order to encompass a larger scope of sexual topics. There are 15 themes total, including those in bold, which were edited from the aforementioned previous research on this subject to include gender-neutral language that applies to both women’s and men’s magazines: 1) **Improving one’s sex life**, 2) **what your partner likes**, 3) **sexual satisfaction**, 4) sex research, 5) **(unorthodox) sexual behaviors or positions**, 6) **(unorthodox) sexual locations**, 7) **drugs and/or alcohol**, 8) **relationship states**, 9) personal genital health, 10) safe sex practices / birth control methods, 11) reproductive health issues, 12) women’s and men’s sex roles, 13) seduction techniques, 14) LGBT issues, and 15) cheating.

One or more of each secondary theme should be applied to each article, and the coders may utilize as many secondary themes as accurately reflects an articles topic area. However, the secondary theme should be a present idea throughout the article, and not merely a one-time mention of a specific topic.

Coders, please remember that the article must make **explicit** mention of a theme in order for it to receive a positive code for it. Don't assume that an article is about a topic unless it refers to it in the text. That is, do not read into subtext.

1) IMPROVING ONE'S SEX LIFE: Content that discusses betterment of one's sex life in general, such as suggesting strategies for getting more sex, better sex, or sex more consistent with the reader's desires and interests.

** Coders should be careful to look for specific language directed toward a more positive sex life, such as words like "better," "more," "longer," "easier," etc.

2) WHAT YOUR PARTNER LIKES: Describes women's or men's preferences, likes, and dislikes relative to sex or sexual relationships. Possible content could include descriptions of sexual techniques women or men endorse or personality or physical traits women or men find appealing in potential sex partners.

** Coders should note that this refers to the partner's pleasure first and foremost, and not to asserting power through a specific action or seducing someone explicitly. The idea is that the reader will better know what his or her potential mate wants after reading this type of article.

3) SEXUAL SATISFACTION: Discusses the nature of sexual satisfaction, or being contented or pleased with one's sexual experiences or sex life, or offers a definition of what constitutes sexual satisfaction. This is distinct from improving sex life in that sexual satisfaction does not presume current dissatisfaction or necessarily recommend change. An article that suggests that the key to sexual satisfaction is to moderate one's

expectations, for example, would really not focus on improving one's sex life, but on being satisfied with the sex life one has.

** Coders should be careful to eliminate the two above categories as options before moving on to this category.

4) **SEX RESEARCH:** Primarily discusses a past, recent, or upcoming study that has repercussions for men's or women's sexual health. Often this research will be used to tout or discourage a specific physical or emotional activity in sexual relationships, increase awareness of drug dangers and benefits, or suggest specific exercises for sex improvement. Though coders will not specify which of the following the SEX RESEARCH article falls under, the content should include explicit, specific statistics based on the following:

a) **Journal Articles and Published Studies:** This subcategory comprises articles that specifically refer to research published in peer-reviewed journals such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* or the *New England Journal of Medicine*, though any cited journal certainly counts. This category also includes quotes from expert sources that *specifically* refer to a published study.

b) **Research Cited by Professionals:** Refers to quotes from sources/studies that make mention of a link between sex and some other variable.

c) **Research Conducted by the Magazine:** This is a catchall category for surveys the magazine staff conducts on its readership or other individuals to gather data on sex habits. This research has not been published in medical journals nor has a professional research team conducted it.

5) **UNORTHODOX SEXUAL BEHAVIORS OR POSITIONS:** Descriptions of sexual behaviors other than "normal" coital behaviors such as kissing and petting, genital intercourse, and oral-genital intercourse, or specific methods of the same that were deemed unusual or extreme. Examples include group sex, anal sex, and bondage not described as "playful" or "light." This category also includes descriptions of sexual

positions that seemed complicated, contorted, or acrobatic in nature.

6) UNORTHODOX SEXUAL LOCATIONS: Descriptions of sexual encounters in places other than a place of residence such as a home, apartment, or hotel, or those that, although in a place of residence, occurred in unexpected locations or atop unusual items of furniture. Sex in bed, on a chair or couch, or on the floor was not considered to occur in an unusual location.

7) DRUGS AND / OR ALCOHOL: This category strictly refers to content in which drugs or alcohol was connected in some way to sexual behaviors, gratifications, or outcomes. Articles about beer would not fit this category; articles that discussed bars where alcohol is served as places to recruit sexual partners, however, would.

8) RELATIONSHIP STATES: This refers to articles about any state in a relationship that may lead to or has led to a sexual encounter. Seven relationship states were coded in Bielay and Herold's study: strangers, first date, casually dating, seriously dating, engaged, married, and nonromantic acquaintance. However, because this study is specifically concerned with sexual health, the coders limit their coding to the discussion of relationships in general. Articles included in this category include those on how to begin a relationship, how to maintain a relationship, and how to end a relationship, though most sex articles will be about the former two. Specific language to look for includes "boyfriend," "girlfriend," "hookup," "fuck buddy," "friend with benefits," etc. when used in conjunction with sexual achievement or relationship building.

9) PERSONAL GENITAL HEALTH: An article is about personal genital if it discusses the transmittal, epidemiology or treatment of sexually transmitted infections or if it refers to non-sexually transmitted ailments of the genitals or reproductive organs. The story must reference at least one specific infection, disease, or ailment and its antecedents or symptoms. An article about increasing HIV rates in American women would qualify as an article about STIs; however, an article about condom use alone would not.

Coders: Remember, this includes common STDs such as HIV, HPV, Chlamydia, etc., but it also includes yeast infections, smegma build-up, foreskin maintenance, and urinary tract infections.

10) SAFE SEX PRACTICES / BIRTH CONTROL METHODS: This category refers to articles that strictly discuss tactics people can use to prevent pregnancy and disease transmission. The article must reference condoms or other prophylactics (such as cervical caps), spermicides, birth control pills and shots, intra-uterine devices, abstinence and other specific medical tactics to prevent pregnancy or STI transmittal.

An article that makes mention of condom use but is primarily about HIV/AIDS is not considered to be about safe sex practices / birth control methods, whereas a story about teen pregnancy rates that centrally highlights how young women can use birth control to avoid becoming young mothers is.

11) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROBLEMS: An article is about reproductive health issues if it discusses specific an individual's physical health issues related to physical challenges to genital function, achievement of (male) orgasm or reproduction. It also includes stories about pregnancy, infertility, in-vitro fertilization, vasectomies, erectile dysfunction, fertility drugs, menopause and abortion. This category does not include articles about tips to achieve orgasm with a partner or understanding the partner's bodily functions, but rather is geared toward more serious threats to sexual health.

12) MALE / FEMALE DOMINANCE: This category is concerned with which partner is the dominant party in a heterosexual sexual relationship. That is, does the article reference the male or female being in charge of the sexual encounter, somehow guiding the experience through their sexual prowess, or specifically manipulating their partner into pleasing them (rather than pleasuring themselves)?

This does not refer specifically to BDSM-type relationship, but rather concerns

who, if anyone, gains control of the relationship through sexual tactics. If the article references same-sex sexual behavior, please refer to the final category, LGBT ISSUES.

** Coders, remember that this article must be about who is in charge or about ways to achieve power over a partner or in a relationship.

13) SEDUCTION TECHNIQUES: This is a catch-all term for many of the story topics that discuss ways a woman or man can convince a partner to go to bed with her or him. Rather than the above topic, which describes sexual power dynamics, this category regards the specific tools and tips an article might give to men and women in order to seduce someone. Such tools include lap dances, strip teases, hair or makeup tips, and lingerie. It also includes tips for hitting on potential partners and scoring dates.

** Coders, make sure you only code for this article when the text specifically references the word “seduction” or refers to ways in which the reader should surprise their partner or otherwise go out of their way to get them in bed. If the article only mentions what type of underwear guys like, for instance, then that’s “what your partner likes.” If the article mentions how you can tie a guy up with lace underwear and blindfold him to turn him on, that’s seduction technique.

14) LGBT ISSUES: If an article makes mention of any same-sex sexual relationship that its readers or readers’ partners might engage in, then it is about LGBT issues. That includes female-on-female “hookups” for male viewing pleasure, as this is an increasing trend in marketing of sexual culture. This category also encompasses gender issues related to being transgender or transsexual.

15) CHEATING: An article is about cheating if it discusses relationships (sexual or otherwise) that occur outside of the context of a monogamous relationship. However, if the relationship of the subjects is polyamorous, then having more than one sexual partner does not constitute cheating.

APPENDIX D: Intercoder Reliability Measure

ReCal 0.1 Alpha for 2 Coders
results for file "ISTA&EVANFINISHEDWEEK1.csv"

File size: 2099 bytes
N columns: 42
N variables: 21
N coders per variable: 2

| | Percent Agreement | Scott's Pi | Cohen's Kappa | Krippendorff's Alpha (nominal) | N Agreements | N Disagreements | N Cases | N Decisions |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------|-------------|
| Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4) | 100% | undefined* | undefined* | undefined* | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 3 (cols 5 & 6) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 4 (cols 7 & 8) | 96% | 0.905 | 0.905 | 0.907 | 24 | 1 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 5 (cols 9 & 10) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 6 (cols 11 & 12) | 96% | 0.778 | 0.779 | 0.782 | 24 | 1 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 7 (cols 13 & 14) | 100% | undefined* | undefined* | undefined* | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 8 (cols 15 & 16) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 9 (cols 17 & 18) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 10 (cols 19 & 20) | 76% | -0.136 | -0.071 | -0.114 | 19 | 6 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 11 (cols 21 & 22) | 96% | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.922 | 24 | 1 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 12 (cols 23 & 24) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 13 (cols 25 & 26) | 100% | undefined* | undefined* | undefined* | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 14 (cols 27 & 28) | 100% | undefined* | undefined* | undefined* | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 15 (cols 29 & 30) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 16 (cols 31 & 32) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 17 (cols 33 & 34) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 18 (cols 35 & 36) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 19 (cols 37 & 38) | 96% | 0.834 | 0.834 | 0.837 | 24 | 1 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 20 (cols 39 & 40) | 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |
| Variable 21 (cols 41 & 42) | 100% | undefined* | undefined* | undefined* | 25 | 0 | 25 | 50 |

*Scott's pi, Cohen's kappa, and Krippendorff's Alpha are undefined for this variable due to [invariant values](#).

* Variable 22, "Cheating," was added after this coding sheet was first run. It had a 100% percent agreement and Pi and Kappa values of 1.

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