THE VULVODYNIA MONOLOGUES:

A LOOK AT AGENDA-SETTING AND THE EFFECTS OF WOMEN’S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG AMERICAN WOMEN IN PRINT MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the rhetoric of women’s reproductive health across The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times and attempts to answer the following questions:

Q1: Do national newspapers write about vulvodynia and other women’s reproductive health concerns?

Q2: If they do, what kind of discourse do they create among their audience?

Q3: If they do not, what causes the gap between medical research and media dissemination of information for women?

Q4: How does the media close the gap that may exist?

Using rhetorical criticism with a feminist approach and Glaser and Strauss’s constant comparative method, I analyzed online newspaper articles, blog posts, and reader comments in order to identify the way the media writes about women’s reproductive health and the public response it receives.

The results of this study show that there are five major areas of discourse on women’s reproductive health: medical discourse, economics and politics in conjunction with women’s reproductive health, verbiage, choice and empowerment, and the sharing of personal stories. Each contained a tone of negativity towards the topic, yet there has been an increase in the quantity of discourse since 2008.