

GENDER, DISCOURSE, IDEOLOGY AND POWER: A CRITICAL READING OF  
(SEX)TEXT IN *COSMOPOLITAN*, *MAXIM*, *MEN'S HEALTH*, AND *WOMEN'S HEALTH*

By

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To my family and friends, who have given me their invaluable support throughout this process

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Men's and women's lifestyle magazines are fundamental elements amongst a matrix of other mass media forms that influence gendered relational, social and attitudinal behaviors. Additionally, health-based lifestyle magazines have grown increasingly popular in recent years. Past research indicates that these publications are able to tap into the niche market created by monthly women's lifestyle magazines for example, by discussing a similar array of topics from a point of view which claims to be authoritative. Previous studies on the content of lifestyle magazines have examined advertisements, editorial photographs and the text itself, using quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method approaches. This study seeks to elaborate upon and update past research by conducting a comparative, multi-tiered Critical Discourse Analysis of four mainstream *and* health-based men's and women's lifestyle magazines from 2009.

This study focuses on the text in *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health*, and *Women's Health* specifically pertaining to sex, love and relationships. This type of content has been selected because it is the material the magazines openly and overtly advertise and promote to their readers pertaining to gender norms, attitudes, behaviors and opinions. Four issues from each of the four magazines were selected for this study,

from which particular exemplars of gendered messages were selected. Multi-tiered comparative Critical Discourse Analysis, the methodology employed in this study, involved several comparative stages or tiers of examination of the magazines used in this study. Initial discursive reading determined which articles were selected, and additional analysis of discursive and semiotic elements, (re)productions and constructions within each selection revealed exemplars warranting further analysis. The text and surrounding multimodal semiotic elements contained in the exemplars from each magazine are discussed within the socio-cultural context in which they were produced, and past research on men's and women's lifestyle magazines. Finally, the texts and their semiotic elements were compared against each other to determine whether there were any substantive differences in signification in the four magazines.

The analysis showed several aesthetic and stylistic differences between each of the magazines. However, none of these differences presented any true counter-narratives to gendered, hierarchal and sexualized co-constructions. Therefore, neither *Men's Health* nor *Women's Health* could be considered any more progressive than *Cosmopolitan* or *Maxim*.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Popular magazines provide introduction to and instructions about appropriate sex roles, gendered behavior, and male/female sexuality. These messages are present in many forms, including editorial content, photos and advertisements. Specifically, they prescribe instructions dictating which male/female physical appearances are ideal, which partners are appropriate, and which types of relational behaviors are acceptable (Chow, 2004; Gauntlett, 2002; Krassas, Blauwkamp & Wesselink, 2001; Krassas et al., 2003; Gadsden, 2000; Ménard & Kleinplatz, 2008; Taylor, 2005; Tuchman, 1978). Buss (1967) observed that magazine-reading is a deliberate information-gathering technique, as it is less regular than the consumption of other forms of media. Furthermore, because magazines appeal to special interests their content is typically regarded as high quality and respectfully by their readers while establishing a “foundation of understanding” readers may use in their evaluation of information from other sources (Hinnant, 2009, p. 61; Singer, 1980). Magazines additionally provide a venue for service-style journalism, the subject matter and style of which Johnson and Prijatel (2000) maintained was created during the developing years of women’s magazines. Hinnant (2009) categorized service journalism as “individual-oriented” and pertaining to information “within the realm of everyday life...upon which readers can act” (p. 61).

Magazine readers rely on service journalism provided by lifestyle magazines to inform them about a variety of sexual topics including sexual skills/techniques, reproductive issues, sexual health, how men and women should behave with regard to sex, and alternative sexualities (Krassas et al., 2003; Taylor, 2005). Consequently, magazines are among the preferred independent reading materials selected as primary

sources of information about sexual relations, sexuality and dating, by both adult and adolescent men and women (Chow, 2004; Garner, Sterk & Adams, 1998; Giles & Close, 2008; Strasburger, 1995; Taylor, 2005). While lifestyle magazines may only be one element in a matrix of other influences, the fact that they provide ready access to constructions of femininity and masculinity within a meta-discourse on sexual practice and sexuality warrants investigating the nature of their content.

A number of studies analyzing editorial, photographic and advertising content in lifestyle magazines have been conducted already. Most of these studies are comparative, and deal with either different magazines in the same genre, the same magazine over a period of time (anywhere from a few years to multiple decades, depending on the range of publication), or both variables. Almost all of the studies on magazines to date have used a mixed methods approach to conduct their analysis, where a coding sheet for themes in articles or elements in photos/advertisements was used to categorize various articles or photographs/advertisements in conjunction with some form of qualitative analysis to decode messages communicated by featured content within the magazines selected (Davis, 2005; Krassas et al. 2003; Ménard & Kleinplatz, 2008; Taylor, 2005). For example, studies have examined photographic content and visual imagery in magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy*, finding that the two magazines portray women through the same male-dominant lens (Krassas et al., 2001). *Maxim*, the leading men's lifestyle magazine, has been scrutinized for its contemptuous portrayal of women both in visual representations as sex objects and in its interview content (Davis, 2005).

Though the work that has been done on analyzing male/female sexuality, gender stereotyping, and the portrayal of sex roles in lifestyle magazines so far is both significant and thorough in its own right, there is certainly room to update and expand upon this work. For example, some of the magazines previously studied are no longer in print (Taylor, 2005); while others that were studied were not printed in the United States (Davis, 2005; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Giles & Close, 2008). There are also more studies dealing with photographic content (in editorial or advertising) than text (Krassas et al., 2001; Krassas et al., 2003). Most importantly, there have been some gradual changes to how frequently and how well women and women's issues are covered in digital news content (Yun, Postelnicu, Ramoutar & Kaid, 2007). It may be that gender and sex role-related discourse in magazine content are also changing, given the new social and cultural climate influenced by third-wave feminism<sup>1</sup> and the recent success of health-based lifestyle magazines<sup>2</sup>.

The methodological approach to this study will be Critical Discourse Analysis, an analytical framework used to examine the relationship between language, ideology and power (Fairclough, 1995). van Dijk (1987) stated that "discourse is not just a form of language use but is also a cognitive and social accomplishment within a communicative

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<sup>1</sup> A shift in the feminist movement, moving away from second-wave feminism into third-wave feminism took place in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Third-wave feminism takes the effects of globalization and redistribution of power into account as threats to feminist theory and politics, and advocates that individuals have the right to construct their own identities irrespective of medical and cultural norms (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Though some criticism exists on use of the waves model of feminism (McRobbie, 2009b), the waves model is used by this study in so much as the term(s) are used self-descriptively, particularly by third-wavers.

<sup>2</sup> In 2009 Women's Health, which has been in publication since 2006, increased circulation by 23%, including a 28% increase in subscriptions and a 3% increase in newsstand sales (Women's Health Media Kit, 2009). Men's Health readers paid \$2.37 more per copy on the average subscription price than GQ, Maxim, and Esquire readers in 2009, \$9 more annually than the next competitor, Men's Journal, "for a premium product" (Men's Health Media Kit, 2009).

context” (p. 22). In other words, language not only creates meaning but also reflects and gives rise to the social order in which it exists. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be defined as a methodology which “sees discourse – the use of language in speech and writing – as social practice”, that is, a practice by which meaning is created (Wodak, 1996, p. 17). Language is *constitutive* (i.e. both socially shaped and shaping) and its use “is always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relations and (iii) systems of knowledge and belief - though with different degrees of salience in different cases” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 131). In line with this conception of the role and function of language, social representations are considered “collective frames of perception” that are socially shared and establish relationships between the macro-social system and the micro-individual cognitive system in order to perform the “translation, homogenization and co-ordination between external requirements and subjective experience,” which are sustained by communication (Durkheim, 1933; Meyer, 2001, p. 21; Moscovici, 1981).

Fairclough (1995) stipulated that any discourse interweaves ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ meanings. In this study, I will be primarily concerned with two sub-functions of interpersonal meaning: the ‘identity’ function, i.e., the role of text in the constitution of personal and social identities; and the ‘relational’ function, i.e., the role of discourse in the constitution of relationships (p. 133). These functions of interpersonal meaning pertain to how constructions of social identities and relations are both manifested and contested in discourse (Fairclough, 1993). Interpersonal meaning is significant for this study because social identities influence the construction of ‘the self’ or ‘selves’ in discourse, and as Fairclough illustrates, also emphasize the manner

in which “discourse contributes to the processes of cultural change, in which the social identities or ‘selves’ associated with specific domains and institutions are redefined and reconstituted” (p. 137).

The purpose of examining discourse and discursive enactments in various semiotic forms through this study is to assess the ways in which internalized gender norms are (re)produced and (re)constructed in this particular medium. This type of analysis is important because lifestyle magazines are a regularly and widely consumed discursive medium. Magazines are utilized by readers intentionally in information gathering and evaluation, and magazines are viewed by readers as relevant and respectable sources of information because they cater to special interests (Buss, 1967; Hinnant, 2009; Singer, 1980). Therefore the manifestations of messages, attitudes and behaviors suggested to readers in the gendered, sexual and relational discourse(s) within these lifestyle magazines are likely to be detrimental to configuring evaluative context models (van Dijk, 2001) which influence individuals’ own perception of, participation, and interaction in gender relations and their own proliferation of gendered power structure(s). Messages, attitudes and behaviors suggested and recommended in gendered, sexual and relational discourse(s) are additionally important as discourse is utilized by individuals, institutions and organizations in order to create collective socio-cultural frames of reference which are used to hail audience members so that they may validate their membership to a social group, identity or position. In turn, membership is validated in ways which are specific to and recognizable by these social identities, groups, and positions because they are outlined in the collective frames of reference made available through discourse.

Thus, this study focuses on the editorial content categorized by the magazines themselves as pertaining to sex, love and relationships because these articles are ones that openly and overtly advocate particular gendered behaviors, attitudes and opinions. Four specific lifestyle magazines were chosen for this study, *Cosmopolitan*, *Maxim*, *Men's Health*, and *Women's Health*, in order to answer the question of whether health-based lifestyle magazines are more *progressive* than mainstream publications in their discursive treatments of these topics. These four magazines also explicitly claim to offer access to the 'secrets' of the opposite sex, along with advice and sexual 'decoding' strategies.

*Maxim* and *Cosmopolitan* are both relatively high-selling magazines (both sell over 2.5 million copies each month) while *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* are both younger and less widely circulated publications that claim to cover some of the same topics from a different point of view. *Cosmopolitan* and *Maxim* have not been examined in-depth to-date comparatively, even though both magazines are industry leaders in the 18-34 demographic. *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* are lifestyle magazines that focus on physical fitness as well as a more holistic sense of emotional fitness and well-being for their readers. As a final stage of this study, the two men's and two women's magazines will be compared, to determine whether their distinctive marketing styles are actually reflected in their sexual discourses.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

As discourse analysts we are concerned by media discourses, among other discourses, that attest to relations of struggle and conflict, however overt or subtle. In order to understand the context within which this study is located, to grasp these relations of struggle and conflict taking place within the discourse we propose to examine, we must also accept that discourse is both “historically produced and interpreted” and begin our investigation from this perspective (Wodak, 2001, p. 3). As such, this literature review offers a brief political and cultural snapshot; an examination of mass media theory and influence; an examination of past and present gendered stereotypes and portrayals in the mass media; and a review of the literature on the construction of meaning, all of which serve to highlight the historical dimensions that will contextualize our ultimate discussion and analysis.

### **A Political and Cultural Snapshot**

First-wave feminism existed within the context of industrial society and liberalism, mingled with other progressive reform movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as temperance, abolitionism and working-class labor movements. Value was placed on access and equal opportunities. Some argued that women and men should be considered inherently different, where women are naturally predisposed to maternal instinct and domesticity. Others embraced “difference feminism,” arguing that women were morally superior, and where “patriarchy was understood as a fiasco that was both nonrational and nonprofitable and thereby illegitimate” (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006, p. 5). While biological differences were acknowledged as the root of

socialized gendered roles, they were not viewed as “theoretically or politically valid reasons for discrimination” (p. 6).

Second-wave feminism is traditionally associated with the rising New Left, and growing LGBT, civil rights, anti-war, and Black power movements. The oppression of women was a focal point, the differences between men and women were treated as more fundamental than class or racial differences, and women were regarded in a “class and economy of their own, based on unpaid work in the home, the productivity of motherhood, and their function as a workforce reserve” (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006, p. 9). In the 1980s criticism of Black, working-class and lesbian feminists gave rise to ‘identity politics’ which was critical of “White, middle-class, and heterosexual feminist agenda” and more concerned by the differences amongst women along the intersections of race/ethnicity, class and sexuality (pp. 12-3).

A shift in the feminist movement, moving away from second-wave feminism into third-wave feminism took place in the late 1980s and the 1990s. The movement has been categorized as diverse and energetic, due to changing conditions for feminists in increased opportunities and less sexism. Third-wave feminism views the effects of globalization and redistribution of power as threats to feminist theory and politics, and advocates that individuals have the right to construct their own identities irrespective of medical and cultural norms. The movement toward third-wave is known as the as a shift toward a “performance turn” in feminist theory and politics. This performance turn marks a breaking point from “thinking and acting in terms of systems, structures, fixed power relations” in order to emphasize “complexities, contingencies, and challenges of power and the diverse means and goals of agency” (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006, p. 21).

It is important however, to consider that the waves model of feminism can limit historical considerations and understanding of feminism and movements in feminist thought by restricting focus to a linear narrative which tends to exclude thorough examination of the rich genealogy of divergent and simultaneous feminisms (McRobbie, 2009a; McRobbie, 2009b). As such, each feminist “wave” is referred to by this study merely as a general point of reference to round out a soft timeline demarcating broad shifts and radical changes in commonly understood feminist thought. Use of the term “third wave” feminism/feminist can be problematic at times, and is used referentially by this study in so much as it is also used self-descriptively by third-wavers themselves in “web-based activism and writing” (McRobbie, 2009b, p. 126). There are also alternative theoretical branches of feminism that critique the post-feminist, gender mainstreaming and female agency positions advocated by the third wave, such as affirmative feminist theory (see Braidotti, 2006; McRobbie, 2009a). McRobbie (2009b) described feminism today as more mature than some facets of its “rowdy and activist” past, writing “It has embraced human rights discourse, and human rights discourse has fully incorporated women’s demands for equality, not just in the individualist sense but also to include women’s collective economic and social rights” (p. 123).

Another product of this new socio-cultural climate warranting the examination proposed by this study is the rise and growth of health-based lifestyle magazines while many other popular print media forms (i.e. newspapers) are experiencing a detrimental decline in circulation and revenue. For health-based lifestyle magazine readers the perception of auto-beneficial utility creates a lucrative segue between established mainstream women’s magazines (lifestyle, fashion, beauty-focused) and health

magazines. Newman (2007) argued that health magazines successfully “tempt” their audiences away from established lifestyle magazines by “representing health magazine content as natural, practical, and generally ‘good for you’” (p. 157). Bunton (1997) found that this utilitarian ethos focused on the “acquisition of techniques for fabricating the healthy self” (pp. 238-9). Health magazines are also able to capitalize on the established frames and formats popularized by women’s magazines by using similar layouts for their presentation of health-related content (Bonner & McKay, 2003; Newman, 2007). This is strategic, and successful, because audiences are already familiar with these topics and layouts, providing health-based publications with a built-in mainstream market in addition to their special interest constituency.

Additionally, while some print media publications and formats may be rendered obsolete shortly, scholars and industry captains suggest that magazines will not be among them. For example, Tolles (2008) predicted that magazines will endure the ongoing print media crisis, writing “glossy magazines with pretty pictures of things you want...will be fine”. Cathie Black, Chairwoman of Hearst Magazines, agreed, saying in one interview,

People will go to Web sites for information, entertainment, inspiration. We've already seen that as an established model [...] But I actually believe the experience that one has reading a magazine, sitting on a couch, in bed, on an airplane, wherever you choose to read, is a very different experience than just going online, finding out "I need to know x or y or z." I don't think print is dead at all (Forbes, 2010, ¶3).

In light of the continued popularity of lifestyle magazines and the recent success of health-based lifestyle publications this is a socially and culturally important time to conduct a study which looks at how gendered sexual identities are portrayed in men’s and women’s lifestyle magazines. The purpose of this study is to examine these

portrayals within the context of a new socio-cultural climate that has both allowed increasing opportunities for women, as well as provided ready access to self-identified progressive alternatives to mainstream publications.

### **Theory and Influence of the Mass Media**

Attitudes, behaviors and values are reinforced by, if not generated from cues proliferated by a matrix of messages within the mass media (i.e. radio, print, television, Internet) on a daily basis (Chow, 2004; Chung, 2007; Cunningham, Sagas, Sartore, Amsden & Schellhase, 2004; Ivy & Backlund, 2004; Koivula, 1999; Tuchman, 1978). Consequently, exposure to popular media is among the dominant means by which norms, values and beliefs are acquired and behaviors or social characteristics are marked to indicate they are approved of (Chung, 2007; Jäger, 2001; Moore, Raymond, Mittelstaedt & Tanner, 2002; Tuchman, 1978). As Chuck Klosterman, author of *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs*, observed,

We don't need to worry about people unconsciously "absorbing" archaic secret messages when they're six years old; we need to worry about all the entertaining messages people are consciously accepting when they're twenty-six. They're the ones that get us, because they're the ones we try to turn into life (pp. 9-10).

Koivula (1999) described media production as a "complex process of negotiation, processing, and reconstruction," that not only highlights something for the audience to see but also shapes how they see it, which creates shared perceptual modes (p. 589). Thus, what the mass media opts not to emphasize is equally as significant as what is represented (Armstrong, 2004). Media framing has been defined as selecting certain aspects of a story, event, topic or particular characteristics and making them more salient in a text to encourage a specific definition, interpretation, evaluation, attitude or behavior (Armstrong, 2004; Cunningham et al., 2004; Entman, 1993; Scharrer, 2002).

Farvid and Braun (2006) found that the media in Western culture is a key site where the discourse on sex and sexuality is articulated and reproduced in an environment that is essentially pro-(hetero)sex and places equal pressure on both men and women to be skilled, normal and active sexual beings. According to Gauntlett (2002), "The media clearly suggests that, in order to be fulfilled and happy, you should: understand your own sexuality, have sex often, seek help for sexual problems, [and] have a satisfactory sexual partner – or get a new one." (pp. 122-123). Over the last 30 years in particular, the mass media has become much more overt in doing so, where "the photos and advertisements are more explicit, and the message appears to be gaining popularity" and "magazines that were once hidden under mattresses are now proudly displayed on coffee tables" (Krassas et al., 2003, p. 99).

### **Gender Stereotypes and Portrayals in the Mass Media**

Tuchman (1978) offered that "sex-role stereotypes are set portrayals of sex-appropriate appearance, interests, skills, behaviors, and self-perceptions. They are more stringent than guidelines in suggesting persons *not* confining to the specified way of appearing, feeling, and behaving are *inadequate* as males or females" (p. 5). Gender stereotypes are salient themes in all media forms, and have existed since the early days of the mass media (Kitch, 2001; Yun et al., 2007).

Patriarchal culture in the United States typically engenders violence and aggressive behavior as masculine (Katz, 2003). This is particularly evident in magazine advertising, which Katz (2003) argued normalizes male violence through its use of hegemonic constructions of masculinity. Katz found that violence is commonly viewed as a "genetically programmed male behavior" which is to say that advertisers rely upon the image of violent male icons to sell 'masculine' products/services because this

“associate[s] the product with manly needs and pursuits that have presumably existed from time immemorial” (p. 353-4). Similarly, imagery of the military and sports is used to enhance both the “masculine identification” with and appeal of products. For example, military advertising, which is displayed extremely disproportionately during sporting events and in men’s magazines, portrays the military as an icon of leadership, service, pride, etc. and also generates the perceived opportunity for all men (irrespective of class and background) to weigh themselves against an objective masculinity formed by violence, adventure and aggression, a “standard of ‘real manhood’” against which they can be judged (p. 355).

The association of physical prowess with idealized manhood reinforces masculine archetypes. Men typically have an advantage over women in physical size and idealized images of muscular men in advertising reinforce the existing power structure by using size, strength and violence to represent masculinity (Katz, 2003). Katz argued that the relationship between heroic and violent masculinity is a product of the images of masculinity constructed and legitimized by advertising. Hollywood films only perpetuate this cycle by glamorizing and stylizing violent masculinity. Katz and Jhally (1999) criticized discursive constructions of violent masculinity, such that they are positioned and commonly regarded as cultural norms, writing “from rock and rap music and videos, Hollywood action films, professional and college sports, the culture produces a stream of images of violent, abusive men and promotes characteristics such as dominance, power and control as means of establishing or maintaining manhood” (p. E1).

Reichert, Lambiase, Morgan, Castarphen, and Zavonia (1999) indicated that sexually oriented appeals in magazine advertising were “widespread, commonplace, and increasing” (p. 7). In the same way that advertisers have relied upon women’s bodies to sell a wide variety of products and services, Reichert et al. contended that capitalist consumption has also begun to devour increasingly sexually explicit masculine images. According to Reichert et al., images of the male body have become more “masculinized” and “gendered”, similar to the feminization of images of women’s bodies, and as such have also become more “stereotyped” so that they can be “colonized” for capitalist, consumerist gains (p. 15). Giles and Close (2008) additionally posited that increasing ‘objectification’ of masculine images, and progression toward a muscular ideal in Western culture has aided advertisers in marketing cosmetic and enhancement products for men.

Boni (2002) viewed masculinity and male bodies as social and historical constructions, according to what he termed a newly developed, and developing, ‘sociology of masculinity’. Boni found that masculinities and male bodies are ‘socially constructed and imagined’, and argued that the media generally, and men’s lifestyle magazines specifically, are the ‘primary factors’ enabling these constructions. Boni also discussed what he described as the ‘new man’ concept, which is a trend “towards men’s changing gender relations and bodily and self-identities” (p. 466). Boni related this concept to the emergence of an ‘embodied masculine lifestyle’ which is concerned and defined by health, beauty and fitness issues. Boni also suggested that the tension between the private sphere (“domesticity” and the “feminine realm”) and the public sphere (“dominated by men’s working lives”), coupled with the “continuous scrutiny” of

masculinity and the male body, which he argued is being “objectified, exploited and monitored”, has resulted in a ‘crisis of masculinity’ evident in a variety of changes taking place in “all the traditional spheres which have defined and regulated masculinities and male bodies” (pp. 466-467).

Connell (2000) also addressed the issue of changing masculinity, using the term ‘multiple masculinities’ to explain that different societies and historical periods have unique constructions of masculinity, the male body, and masculine ideals. Connell also argued that the ‘new feminism’ of the 1970s “not only gave voice to women’s concerns, it challenged all assumptions about the gender system and raised a series of problems about men” (p. 3). Connell argued that variant masculinities cannot be considered without their “definite social relations”, particularly those of hierarchy and hegemony, which make some masculinities dominant, and others subordinate or marginalized. Connell found that these representations are extensively evident in media representations in Western culture, and cautioned that hegemonic masculinity may not be “the most common form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable”, suggesting instead that many men live in “a state of tension or distance” from hegemonic masculinity within their given culture or community, while exemplars, such as ‘sporting heroes’ are forced to uphold this image at a ‘severe’ cost that often includes health problems or injuries, for example (pp. 10-11).

Despite the efforts made by the women’s movement the mass media has enhanced female stereotypes and this is a trend that has not changed very much throughout the years (Friedman, 2005; Lindner, 2004; Yun et al., 2007). Bridge (1995) found that coverage of women and women’s issues is often the first to be dropped when

an important national issue comes up, in both print and broadcast news. Bridge also found that women were victims of sexual crimes in more than half of all news coverage of women, and there was a much greater focus in news coverage of women of inferior social status rather than women in leadership or powerful positions. News coverage of violent crimes against women often portrays these crimes as a consequence of individual pathology, while neglecting the social conditions which permit the violence, reinforcing stereotypes that blame women, and attesting to male supremacy (Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Myers, 1994).

In political news coverage female candidates are typically considered to have more traditionally feminine traits (i.e. more liberal, Democratic, feminist), and are more suited to handle “compassion issues” like healthcare, education, and women’s rights (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008, p. 239). In contrast, male candidates are typically positioned in accordance with masculine traits (i.e. conservative) and more suited for foreign policy and crime-type issues, as well as considered more electable overall (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008). This type of gendered lens in news coverage creates bias in favor of male candidates whose priorities and leadership skills are portrayed as more electorally viable and competent (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008; Bystrom, Banwart & Robertson, 2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Kahn, 1996). Additionally, public opinion has a tendency to reflect this type of bias. For example, one public opinion survey found that American voters consider women to be “less qualified to serve as president” (Bystrom, Robertson, Banwart & Kaid, 2004, p. 3).

Koivula (1999) noted that women and female athletes are depicted in sports reporting pejoratively, often “marginalized, made invisible, trivialized, infantile, and

reduced to sex objects,” because references tend to focus away from sport skill to prioritize femininity and grace, or lack thereof (p. 591). This positioning also presents female athletes in accordance with cultural stereotypes which denote femininity to mean weak, dependent, emotional and submissive, as well as in traditional female roles such as girlfriends, wives or mothers. The media provides role models for young girls and women, and when female athletes are depicted pejoratively the necessary exemplars are absent for viewers (Cunningham et al., 2004; Rintala & Birrell, 1994). The disparate portrayal of male and female athletes has negative impacts on the social construction of gender/gender difference, gender stratification of society, and has served to strengthen “the myth of female passivity and frailty” (Koivula, 1999, p. 590).

In a 2007 content analysis study Yun et al. compared online news magazines across the world in order to determine how or if coverage of women in the news has changed during the digital era (most gatekeeping studies indicate that the most frequent reason for excluding newsworthy stories by editors is lack of space, which is not a problem in online publications). Yun et al. (2007) found that women were depicted more positively (slightly) than men, and articles about men tended to be more critical than articles about women, noting that female reporters seemed to cover female issues with greater understanding and empathy than male reporters. However, Yun et al. concluded that women are still less likely to be topics than men, “women are less likely to be interviewed on the news than men, and negative coverage of women outweighs positive coverage”, and news stories that focused on women tend to be personal features (p. 932).

These studies show that women have been portrayed and commodified stereotypically in domestic and sexualized roles throughout the mass media, regardless of their profession and station. Some of the latest research gives hope however, that this is *slowly* changing.

### **Past Constructions of Meaning: Women's Magazines**

As the role of women has changed socially and historically, lifestyle magazines have come under both heavy criticism and high praise for the socializing function they fill by acculturating women, perpetuating cultural identity myths, positioning a feminine sense of self within culture, and reproducing a narrow, homogenous discourse on sex and sexuality (Garner et al., 1998; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Ménard & Kleinplatz, 2008). Famed *Cosmopolitan* editor Helen Gurley Brown for example, has been credited with revolutionizing one of the oldest mass circulation magazines still in print, single-handedly creating the modern image of the working single girl, as well as purveying only half of a feminist message to its audience (McMahon, 1990).

Women's popular lifestyle magazines are designed to appeal to all women en masse, with their fashion spreads and helpful hints about life and love. However, this picture tends to be incomplete and overly simplified. For example, these mainstream publications (i.e. *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Self*) view heterosexuality as the norm, and portray a world to their readers where the main concern is polarization based on gender, a homogenous sense of what and who is attractive (i.e. white, thin) is prioritized, and differences based on social class, political orientation and race are nonexistent (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Despite the dubious nature of this 'helpful' content, women's popular lifestyle magazines have some of the highest circulations of many

mainstream publications. As such, there have been several studies that have focused on the content, effect, and goals of these magazines already, which I will discuss here.

McMahon (1990) conducted an analysis of 38 issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine (from 1976 to 1988) to discuss how gender and class differences were coded within the text of sexual fantasy in the magazine, using six themes to categorize the articles: (1) relationships with men (77 articles); (2) the lives of celebrities (51 articles); (3) articles explicitly offering advice about sex (49 articles); (4) beauty, diet and health (34 articles); (5) psychological problems and advice (30 articles); and (6) work and money (23 articles). McMahon (1990) contended that the strategy of the text was not to offer solutions to conflicts and contradictions posed by the polarity between public and private spheres, false impressions of gender and social class mobility, class inequalities, and the desire to build respectful intimate relationships, but rather to maintain and emphasize these differences and offer fantasy as a temporary alternative. McMahon described *Cosmopolitan* during this era as “a modern mix of the Cinderella myth and a Horatio Alger story for working-class women” (p. 394).

Farvid and Braun (2006) used six consecutive issues of *Cleo*, an Australian publication, and *Cosmopolitan* to analyze socio-cultural messages about gender, sex and sexuality presented and to examine how male and female sexuality were constructed throughout both texts. Despite unilateral pressure placed on men and women to be sexually active, Farvid and Braun found clear distinctions between how male and female sexuality were portrayed. Women are not thought of to be as “naturally” sexual as men and female sexuality has traditionally been defined in

response to male sexuality, considered to be very passive, and tied greatly to reproductive instincts (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Jackson, 1984).

'Sexual liberation' has had an impact on these distinctions, where the resulting construction of female (hetero)sexuality has grown to include "intimacy, agency, and mutual pleasure for both partners in sexual encounters" (Farvid & Braun, 2006, p. 298). On the one hand young women were considered to be both independent and sexually active. However, on the other hand, women were also encouraged to seek male partnership and companionship, and were found to be overwhelmingly represented as wanting/needing men in this way (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

Their results revealed two main accounts for male and female sexuality: (1) "men's need for (great) sex"; and (2) "pleasure, performance, and the male ego" (Farvid & Braun, 2006, p. 295). As far as the "need for (great) sex" men were often depicted as being "raring to go anytime, anyplace, anywhere" and sex was regarded of the utmost importance to men (p. 301). Farvid and Braun found that this framed sexuality as work for women, in line with the idea that women are not viewed as 'naturally' sexual as men.

With regard to "pleasure, performance, and the male ego" Farvid and Braun (2006) found that an "orgasmic imperative" was used to reinforce traditional conceptions of masculine sexuality, the idea of a masculine ego was used to explain male tendencies or sexual behaviors, and also found that the masculine ego was described as "fragile" when it comes to any inadequacy (real or suggested) regarding their sexual performance (p. 304). Women are positioned paradoxically with the power to upset the delicate balance between masculinity and the male ego and despite the suggestion of such power popular magazines routinely discouraged this type of sexual

communication, prioritizing tact and subtlety instead. In this way, the woman's role shifts from that of an agent in her own pleasure to a supportive and reassuring secondary participant, reflective of traditional feminine passivity.

Gadsden (2000) argued that the presence of the male voice in women's magazines is a reflection of the "empowered group" continually policing the sexual behavior of women. In a ten-year textual analysis of *New Woman* and *Essence* magazines Gadsden determined that the sexual double standard and requirement that female sexuality be expressed in a heterosexual and monogamous relationship are elements of patriarchy still clearly evident in magazine content. As father-figure types and experts on men/male behavior Gadsden found that male authors in popular women's magazines still play a pivotal role in defining gender roles and female sexuality, even in social space women have "claimed" for themselves. Within the women's magazines studied Gadsden found that "males have the right and the privilege to define notions of femininity ... [and] allowed to exist as authority figures, reinforcing stereotypical gender ideologies" (p. 56).

### **Past Constructions of Meaning: Men's Magazines**

Men's magazines are consistently very popular among men ages 16-49, and well-known for their "overtly sexual content" and "bawdy humor" (Taylor, 2005, p. 153). Crewe (2003) argued that the 'debt' men's lifestyle magazines owe to the success of monthly women's lifestyle and style publications is noteworthy. Crewe also argued that *Cosmopolitan* was "evidently the model for *Maxim*", and that "women's glossies" provided "inspiration" as models for mass-market publication (p. 62). Crewe further noted that these women's market magazine models "legitimized the use of sex" that has been so central to the editorial composition of men's lifestyle magazines (p. 62). For

men, the popular lifestyle magazine is a much younger genre, and as such, most research pertaining to the content is relatively new. I will discuss a few studies relevant to this examination here.

Taylor (2005) conducted a content analysis of 91 articles from 53 different issues of *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM (For Him Magazine)* to explore these magazines' discourse on sex as well as their constructions of male and female sexuality. Taylor observed that men were generally expected to be sexually assertive and to value both a frequency and variety of partners, where women were positioned as 'sexual gatekeepers', recipients of sexual attention, and only valuing sex as part of a committed romantic relationship. Taylor's results also indicated that of the 91 articles, 71 presumed a single relationship state to be the context for male sexual activity. In terms of the images accompanying the articles selected, Taylor found that each article (irrespective of content) was accompanied by at least one sexualized image of a woman, which he argued could influence the meaning readers ascribe to the article, may also function to reinforce stereotypes about women as sexual objects, and ultimately influence how readers understand what they read.

Davis (2005) noted that the photographic content of *Maxim* is masked as evidence that the editors and readers adore women while commodifying the images of powerful, financially and professionally successful women to demonstrate that for the right price, they can be bought and enjoyed by anyone wishing to own them. Davis argued that the status of women typically featured by the magazine makes taming them in photographs especially valuable, particularly because in the text these women are made to claim

their image as “available prey” as a realistic depiction of themselves in their “natural, preferred private lives” (p. 1016).

Another aspect of the gender dynamics constructed by *Maxim* Davis (2005) discussed was the assertion that women generally desire rough and aggressive men most often comes from articles written by female authors. The “Says Her” column is disguised as peek into the psyches of “real” women where female authors essentially outline steps for men to overturn insincere female resistance to their approach. Davis described *Maxim* as a social space where contempt for women, feminists, “sensitive” men and gays is overt and rampant.

Krassas et al. (2003) conducted a quantitative analysis of the sexual rhetoric found in the editorial photographs of six 2001 issues of *Maxim* and *Stuff* magazines, contending that they depict a limited view of sexuality, sexual attractiveness and sexual practice that reinforces the objectification of women in the male gaze and privileges white heterosexuality. Krassas et al. designed their coding scheme based on the scheme created by Goffman (1979) in his landmark study *Gender Advertisements*. Krassas et al. compare *Maxim* and *Stuff* magazines to pornography, in that their content can be regarded as a similar form of “gendered speech,” produced by men for men, and serves to validate a hegemonic masculine communication system.

The women in the editorial photos selected were clearly presented as the focus of the male gaze, portrayed as sexual objects, posed physically to indicate sexual availability, and nudity was used to invite ogling and possession by the male viewer (Krassas et al., 2003). In the content of the articles Krassas et al. noted that women were considered important as sexual objects of desire and conquest, their sexual

pleasure was positioned as secondary to that of their partner and only considered of relative importance in so much as female sexual pleasure more or less guarantees a steady supply of sex for the male partner. Krassas et al. also found that both *Maxim* and *Stuff* depicted feminism as having a negative impact on sexuality.

Readers and editors continually claim however, that the magazine content has no political significance whatsoever and is meant to be taken lightly, falling back on the “irony” defense. Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (2001) explained, “irony is used as an ideological defense against external attack (only the most humorless do not get the joke) and an internal defense against more ambivalent feelings that render masculine experience less omnipotent and less certain than it is represented here” (p. 104). British studies of audience perceptions of these magazines did not find that readers actually view the content ironically. In focus groups Jackson et al. (2001) concluded that readers often argue that they read the magazines because they are funny as a convenient tactic to deny the greater political significance of the content.

Gauntlett (2002) alternatively suggested that the “existence and popularity” of men’s magazines demonstrates a variety of insecurities that cause men to seek information on “trying to find their place in the modern world, seeking help regarding how to behave in relationships, and advice on how to earn the attention, love and respect of women and the friendship of other men” (p. 180). Boni (2002) also suggested that the recent and growing success of health-based lifestyle magazines, like the Italian edition *Men’s Health*, is a “reflection of men’s changing gender relations and identities” (p. 465).

### **Past Constructions of Meaning: Combined Studies**

The research comparing the two genres of popular lifestyle magazines until now has been fairly limited. However, there are two studies that have investigated the types of messages communicated to men and women by specific types of content that should be mentioned. Krassas et al. (2001) compared the sexual rhetoric depicted by editorial photographs in four pairs of issues of *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines selected from the middle year of each decade the magazines were published (1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995), where every editorial photo was coded (p. 754). As in their previously mentioned study, the coding scheme used was adapted from Goffman's (1979) study on gender images in advertisements to determine similarities between the construction of sexuality in sources directed toward women and sources directed toward men.

Krassas et al. (2001) focused on how the use of particular photographs cued male and female readers about sexuality, sexual attractiveness, sexual relationships, and what types of changes occurred regarding the photographic content of both magazines over time. Krassas et al. found both magazines offered a singular and paradoxical view of female sexuality. The editorial photographs in both magazines reflected the male gaze indisputably and promoted both the idea that women should be primarily concerned with sexually attracting and satisfying their male partners, as well as look upon female models as a man would, and in turn evaluate their own bodies according to those standards.

Ménard and Kleinplatz (2008) used both quantitative and qualitative analysis from a phenomenological perspective to examine the components of "great sex" highlighted by *Maxim*, *Men's Health*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, and *Glamour* magazines. The articles selected fell into five major content categories: technical/mechanical/physical

factors, variety, relationship factors, personal factors and pre-sex preparation (Ménard & Kleinplatz, 2008). A large percentage of this type of advice (42.21%) was found in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and 73.36% of the “tips” were found in the women’s magazines. Both genres were explicit in their prescriptions for “great sex” and the advice presented reinforced sexual and gender-role stereotypes, promoted narrow sexual scripts and presented readers with contradictory and conflicting messages about sex and sexuality.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis is an interpretive, critical methodology primarily concerned with the performative social aspects of language within the socio-semiotic system (Elliott, Jones, Benfield & Barlow, 1995; Elliott, 1996; Hodge & Kress, 1988). Locke (2004) contended that CDA focuses “on ways in which texts reflect larger patterns of social practice – ways of identifying, ways of thinking, ways of being in the world” and “on ways in which texts operate in the world, including how they are made, disseminated and read” (pp. 8-9). CDA departs from positivist assumptions that people have singular attitudes that can be represented through mutually exclusive response categories (Elliot, 1996; Wetherall, Stiven & Potter, 1987).

van Dijk (2001) offered a psycho-social perspective to suggest certain ‘mental constructs’ as specific types of models which are stored within our episodic memory as a part of our long-term memory and storage of personal experiences. van Dijk used the concept of ‘context models,’ which are understood to be “representations of the structures of the communicative situation that are discursively relevant for a participant,” more specifically to argue that context models substantiate the pragmatic part of discourse (p. 98). CDA can be viewed non-cognitively as well, in that discourse may not

assumed to reflect individual attitudes or dispositions and the analytical focus instead is on discourse itself, its construction, the purpose for which it is constructed, and the consequences that arise from these certain discursive constructions (Elliot, 1996; Potter & Wetherall, 1987).

CDA is filled with intersubjective constitutions, unconcerned by what is 'correct' so much as the interrelationships between constructions of meaning, power, knowledge and social practice (Foucault, 1980). We are interested in how meanings are "socially constructed" such that they make sense to readers through particular texts (Burr, 1995; Parker, 1999). Game (1991) refers to this idea as the 'how of meaning', which is to say that in CDA we are concerned with not only *what* is meant by a particular text, but also *how* it is meant (p. 5).

Shaped by the post-structuralist conception of language and discourse as sites of struggle and constructions of "contradiction, paradox, and contest" CDA is an intrinsically critical methodology, concerned with the political dimensions of areas where social groups compete for power, fundamentally assuming that "language is a medium oriented towards action and function, and that people use language intentionally to construct accounts or versions of the social world" (Elliot, 1996, p. 65). Fairclough (1995) described CDA as:

[aiming] to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (p. 132).

In CDA Morgan (1992) noted that “it is necessary to go further than simply uncovering meanings...it is necessary to understand how meanings are constituted and...how power is implicated in that process” (p. 147).

However, CDA does not necessarily view power relations in society as imposed on individuals, but rather as the “*effect* of a way particular discursive configurations or arrangements privilege the status of some people over others” (Locke, 2004, pp. 1-2). Locke further stated that dominant and hegemonic statuses are often viewed benignly due to their ability to stabilize and naturalize conventions, such that “the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning are obscured and acquire stable and natural forms: they are taken as “given”” (p. 32). Consent to subordination is achieved through discursive (re)production, practices, structures and re-enactments such that subordinates consider their disparate social status to be natural, inevitable or even necessary (Gramsci, 1971; Lazar, 2005; Locke, 2004; Wodak, 2001). Lazar (2005) noted that “the taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of such knowledge is what mystifies or obscures the power differential and inequality at work” (p. 7).

CDA is both political and critical, always aiming to eradicate social injustice by highlighting the underpinnings of hierarchical relations within the social order so that they can be transformed or removed (Lazar, 2005; van Dijk, 2001). As such, CDA takes the opinions and experiences of dominated groups seriously, and wherever possible, attacks social problems and the role discourse plays in perpetuating them from position that accounts for the best interest of dominated groups (van Dijk, 2001). For this reason it is particularly important for CDA to remain *accessible*, in that it should be designed to be taught and comprehended so that it too can be criticized and learned from,

especially by members of dominated groups (p. 97). In addition to being politically and socially conscious, CDA is also self-aware in that it does not deny its own biases or sociopolitical position (van Dijk, 2001).

### **Discourse, Text and Messages**

As a result of theoretical developments merging semiotics, poststructuralism and departing from positivism the term *discourse* is widely used throughout research in communications and the social sciences. For the purpose of this paper we will look at multiple conceptions of *discourse* provided by different scholars in order to better understand how language is viewed by CDA and the purpose of this type of analysis.

Gee (1996) defined *Discourse* as a way of “talking, listening...acting, interacting, believing, valuing and using tools and objects, in particular settings at specific times, so as to display and recognize a particular social identity” (p. 128). Discourse(s) allow for social positions and perspectives to exist, creating a socio-cultural frame of reference from which audiences are ‘hailed’ or ‘summoned’ to articulate and validate their membership through “certain characteristic, historically recognizable ways, combined with their own individual styles and creativity” (Gee, 1996, p. 128; Leiss, Kline & Jhally, 1990). Gee also observed that “it is in and through Discourses that we make clear to ourselves and others *who* we are and *what* we are doing at a given time and place” (p. 129). Gee (1996) addressed the influence of discourse with his concept of *acquisition*, which he described as a process by which something (trait, attitude, behavior) is acquired “subconsciously” through “exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching” (p. 38). Gee further specified that acquisition occurs in natural settings where “acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to so

function” (p. 38). Once these traits, attitudes and behaviors are *acquired*, individuals take part in collective identities and shared representations amongst members of a social group where Wagner (1994) argued that these discourses then become part of the core of an individual’s social identity.

Locke (2004) echoed this sentiment, reminding us that CDA considers human subjectivity to be a product of, at least in part, discourse, and views manifestations of discourse(s) in the multiplicity of ways people *act* and *enact* themselves (p. 2).

Fairclough (1992) defined *discourse* as “a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning,” echoing Foucault’s (1969, 1972) conception of discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 64; p. 49). Fairclough (1995) further explained his concept of *discourse* as an abstract and countable noun, calling the first “language use conceived as social practice” and the second “[a] way of signifying experience from a particular perspective” (p. 135).

Fiske (1987) considered *discourse* to be “a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area.” Parker (1990) defined discourse as a system of statements that constructs an object, supports institutions, reproduces power relations and has ideological effects (pp. 189-204). Link (1983) defined discourse as an “institutionally consolidated concept of speech inasmuch as it determines and consolidates action and thus already exercises power” (p. 60).

Hodge and Kress (1988) defined *messages*, *texts*, and *discourse(s)* distinctly, calling a message “a source and a goal, a social context and purpose” (the smallest

semiotic form), a text as “a structure of messages or message traces which has a socially ascribed unity,” and discourse(s) as “the social process in which texts are embedded” (pp. 5-6). Hodge and Kress considered the realm of texts within a socio-semiotic system to be dynamic, arguing that “texts are both the material realization of systems of signs, and also *the site where change continually takes place*” (pp. 5-6). This understanding of text is particularly important for a study like mine, which is concerned with specific text(s) and how or if they might reflect changes evident in other social forms.

### **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis**

CDA itself as a research perspective (van Dijk, 1994) or research programme (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) is openly political, oriented toward exposing and ultimately eradicating social inequity and injustice (Lazar, 2005). As CDA is most concerned with how social injustice, disparity and hierarchy are discursively produced, reproduced, reinforced, disseminated and questioned, there is much overlap with and acknowledgement of feminist approaches and women’s studies in the field, particularly since the 1980s. Despite the common ground shared between CDA and feminist research orientation however, a clear distinction of *feminist* CDA from CDA as a whole is necessary for the following reasons: (1) to establish visibility and solidarity amongst researchers; (2) to establish a “feminist politics of articulation” (Wetherell, 1995, p. 141); and (3) to further the social emancipatory goals of feminist research in discourse and language studies (Lazar, 2005).

Cameron (1998) noted that “[CDA] is one of those broadly progressive projects whose founders and dominant figures are nevertheless all straight white men...” (p. 969). Lazar (2005) argued that this is not necessarily problematic, given that these

founders are also sympathetic to feminist perspectives, and argues that the *feminist* label is necessary not to distinguish from the work done by the men Cameron made reference to, but more so to include and unite the diversity of women (geographic, racial, sexual orientation) conducting feminist research in CDA. Resulting from what Lazar termed as the “absence of self-naming” scholars conducting feminist critical discourse analysis all over the world have been unable organize and make use of a shared forum in the past (p. 3). Additionally, feminist scholars across disciplines have questioned the “scholarly objective bias of linguistics...to show how assumptions and practices of linguistics are implicated in patriarchal ideology and oppression”, and have objected to and desired to change male-dominated perspectives in the humanities, social sciences and sciences (Cameron, 1992, p. 16; Lazar, 2005). Thus, the issues of visibility and solidarity carry great political significance, especially as CDA continues to transition from marginality to mainstream orthodoxy. It is necessary then to collectively explicitly make use of the *feminist* label in our work, even if individual scholars do not use the term “overtly” (Lazar, 2005, p. 3).

Lazar (2005) defined Wetherell’s (1995) term “feminist politics of articulation” as the “need to theorize and analyze the particularly insidious and oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in most social practices” (p. 141; p. 3). Though gender intersects with other systems of oppression and identity, such as sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic class, geography and race, its manifestations are growing more subtle and complex, making gender and patriarchy distinct from these. Eckert (1989) specified:

Whereas the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominated and subordinated classes and ethnic groups, the day to

day context in which these power relations are played out is quite different. It is not a cultural norm for each working class individual to be paired up for life with a member of the middle class or for every black person to be so paired up for life with a white person. However, our traditional gender ideology dictates just this kind of relationship between men and women (pp. 253-4).

As a result of third-wave feminist and post-structuralist theorization, the more subtle and complex tenets of gender as a social structure and a system of oppression have been exposed and thoroughly examined, yielding among other insights, a more diverse treatment/use of the terms 'women' and 'men'. Second-wave feminists found that the term 'man' could not encompass all humankind and similarly third-wave feminists took issue with the fact that the same could be said of prior conceptions of 'woman', which they found to be lacking "generic status" or universal standing for all women. Lazar (2005) specified:

Even though women are subordinated to men structurally in the patriarchal gender order, the overlap of the gender structure with other relations of power based on race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, culture and geography means that gender oppression is neither materially experienced nor discursively enacted in the same way for women everywhere (p. 10).

Thus, feminist CDA considers itself a comparativist humanist research perspective, rather than universalizing, and conscious of the social discursive constitutions that unite AND divide groups of women. Butler (2004) and McRobbie (2009b) stressed that any consideration of 'economic and material inequities' is inextricably linked to questions of race, class, ethnicity and gender-based inequities as well. Additionally, speaking as a woman and speaking as a feminist are two distinct perspectives (Lazar, 2005). Grant (1993) noted "to know as a woman *means* to know from the perspective of the structure of gender. In contrast, a feminist perspective means that one has a critical distance on gender and on oneself" (p. 181).

Finally, although feminist CDA spans many disciplines, it can generally be considered a gendered political perspective in research concerned with “demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse” (Lazar, 2005, p. 5). CDA’s research orientation is radical, emancipatory and based on a dialectical conception of the relationship between theory and practice (what Lather (1986) termed ‘praxis-oriented research’). Kress (1990) noted that this orientation makes “linguistics itself more accountable, more responsible, and more responsive to questions of social equity” (p. 88).

As a social science CDA is committed to achieving social justice by critiquing discursive strategies which enable social oppression in various systems (gender, race, class, sexual orientation). Feminist CDA examines those discursive strategies which support patriarchal constructions within the social order, i.e. systems of oppression which advantage men and exclude or disempower women, in order to demonstrate how social practices are gendered so that they can be transformed. The post-structuralist view considers discourse to be a site of struggle, of “social (re)production and contestation”, where analysis therein becomes a “critique for action” (Lazar, 2005, pp. 4-5). Fortunately, feminist CDA already operates within the political and critical framework of discourse analysis, also concerned with the relationship between discourse(s) and social structures that sustain hierarchical relationships. Ultimately, what is learned through feminist analysis of discourse informs strategies for social change, what van Dijk (1991) termed “analytical resistance”, challenges the status quo and contributes to the ongoing struggle for social justice desired by feminist research in discourse and language studies.

## **Gender, Power, Ideology and Discourse**

Ideology operates within a normative thought process, promoting adherence to ideals, social practices and actions where conformity already exists. From a critical perspective, the purpose ideology and ideological structures serve is to maintain disparate hierarchical relations in order to guarantee power remains in the hands of the dominant group. Gender is constructed as an ideological structure, dividing all humans into two categories, men and women, and differentiating them by a hegemonic relationship which categorizes each as dominant and subjugated respectively. Connell (1995) used the term 'patriarchal dividend' to describe the privileged social position men hold in relation to women, which grants them differential access to "symbolic, social, political and economic capital."

Physiological sex-based differences among men and women allow for the gender structure to culture and mandate a paradigm-dependent "social dichotomy of labor and human traits" (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). Because the male-female binary is rooted in biological difference it is considered natural, necessary even. Woman defined in contrast to man, and man in contrast to woman, are viewed as a complementary pair where each is designed for x and y functions and roles respectively. Grant (1993) further criticized these definitions by arguing, "it is true that the structure of gender acts through and is inscribed on sexed bodies, but the whole idea of two sexes only has meaning because those meanings are required by the gender structure in the first place" (p. 185). This is true across many cultures, and may explain how the gendered status quo retains its appeal despite that their given disparate status disempowers women (Cameron, 1996).

Individual men and women may break from the socially inscribed, archetypal masculine and feminine molds of their given community. However, when these singular

deviations occur they are also deviations from the gendered ideological structure defining normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which exist as elements of widely accepted patriarchy. Patriarchy is a gendered ideological structure, which is to say that while it may or may not be reflected by individual pathology, it also constructed, reproduced and reinforced by social practices and institutions. For example, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) used the term “communities of practice” to describe how men and women reproduce and reinforce gender inequalities through their habitual and differential participation in institutions and through social practices. Thus, while oppressors are also frequently individuals, disproportionate gender relations cannot be explained or examined solely on this level (Weedon, 1997).

Fairclough (1992; 1995) considered the relationship between discourse and society to be constitutive and dialectical. From this perspective discourse “constitutes and is constituted by, social situations, institutions and structures” (Lazar, 2005, p. 11). In this way, each use of all semiotic forms (i.e. written and spoken language, visual imagery, gestures) in meaning-making effectively “contributes to the reproduction and maintenance of the social order, and also in the sense of resisting and transforming that order” (p.11). Fairclough (1992) posited that societal discursive constitution can be analyzed in three domains: representations, relationships and identities. In this study, and from the feminist and critical discourse analytic perspective, ‘gender relationality’ underscores the examination of these three domains (Lazar, 2005).

Lazar’s (2005) construction of gender relationality emphasized two distinct types of relations between genders. The first is that of discursive co-constructions, ways of acting and enacting *woman* and *man* within certain communities of practice, where the

greatest concern is not women in and of themselves, but in relation to men within a given gender order. The emphasis on these types of relations between men and women also brings variant textual representations of men, and how men talk, into the scope of analysis. The second area of emphasis is on divergent constructions of masculinity and on the dynamic elements of their composition, with the specific purpose of examining how they function hierarchically to maintain systems of oppression affecting women.

This study is primarily concerned with discursive enactment(s) of institutionalized gender inequality. In particular, it focuses on those enactments in the instructions given for successful interaction with the opposite sex, as represented in four popular gendered magazines. The study attempts to reveal the various semiotic modalities which, though unrecognized, naturalize, legitimate and reify generally accepted norms and practices for gender interaction. The study asks two questions:

Research Question 1: What are the differences, if any, in the ways in which men's, women's, and health-based lifestyle magazines construct, (re)produce, enact, and frame gendered sexual discourses?; and

Research Question 2: Is any one genre more *progressive*, in terms of reflecting changes brought on by dynamic cultural and political elements (i.e. third-wave feminism and the popularity of health-based lifestyle publications)?

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Parker (1999) advocated that “any retreat to set methods” would be too restrictive, limiting “our understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of meaning” CDA ultimately seeks to illuminate (p. 2). As an alternative to a “discourse analytic machine” used to “shred all varieties of text” Parker recommended adaptable ‘ways of reading’ particular texts that can be modified and cross-applied as needed. As an interdisciplinary framework and theoretical perspective Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is rarely typified by a singular method so much as informed by a series of suppositions and differing approaches which are not considered problematic but complementary and necessary (Jäger, 2001; Locke, 2004; Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 2001).

This study, like many others conducted using CDA, presumes that there is no ‘right’ way to carry out CDA, nor a more or less accurate reading of a given text. Parker (1999) for example argued that when we read a particular text we produce something different than the text, a *translation* of sorts, which we then subject to our own discursive critique and analysis (p. 4). The analytic structure used in this investigation is based on a multi-phase methodology advanced by Pearce (1999) advocating (a) description; (b) exploration of connotation; (c) identification of discourse; (d) definition of subjectification; (e) search for similar discourses in other texts; (f) appreciation of historical dimensions; and (g) summary of overall structures of meaning” (p. 80). This study also includes a multimodal analysis of the texts.

In order to clarify the use of these phrases in this study, some of these terms require further definition.

Discourse, as defined by this study, is a social process in which texts and messages are embedded; discourse also creates socio-cultural frames of reference which hail audience members to act and enact themselves in commonly recognizable ways in order to validate their 'membership' (Gee, 1996; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Leiss, Kline & Jhally, 1990; Locke, 2004).

Identification of discourse entails a discussion of the ways in which each article signifies itself as a part of an ongoing discourse on sex, love and relationships, and as a part of a meta-discourse on gendered roles and expectations.

Description refers to a brief summary of the individual article(s), including reference to salient themes, note of male/female authors, details regarding various multimodal elements, and discussion of the presence of testimonies or expert opinions.

Exploration of connotation is based on the widely accepted view of connotation as 'secondary signification' (see Tagg, 1979, 1982 and 1991). In his semiotic analysis of popular culture Barthes (1957) found secondary signification to be the basis of cultural myth production, in that secondary signification replaces reality in language with ideology in order to (re)produce myths and norms which reflect the ideological values of those who control the means of production. In the articles pertaining to love, sex and relationships in *Cosmopolitan*, *Maxim*, *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, connotation is relied upon to underscore the necessity and validity of various prescriptive behavioral and relational instructions given to both men and women.

Subjectification is defined by Traugott (1997) as a "historical pragmatic-semantic process whereby meanings become increasingly based in the speaker's subject belief state or attitude toward what is said," and is integral in meaning-making and discursive

(re)production (p. 185). Subjectification is the point, or point(s), at which informative or topical treatments of sex, love and relationship issues become prescriptive or instructive, the point at which editorial content reflects a recommended or suggested behavior or attitude. In this study however, I will use a slight variation of Pearce's methodology, in that I found the term *identification* of subjectification more useful than *definition*, particularly while examining the articles individually, as subjectification is an analytical element which is *identified* and discussed in a microscopic examination of each article, rather than singularly *defined*.

Similarities with discourse(s) produced by other texts refer to the examination of gendered stereotypes in other media. This is accomplished by comparing discourses in the sampled magazine texts with discourses on love, sex and relationships and gender stereotyping identified in the literature review.

Appreciation of historical dimensions considers how the text relates to other narratives on the subject that preceded it in time.

Summary of overall structures of meaning presented in the selected texts is presented at the end of the Analytical section.

Multimodal analysis refers to analyzing various forms of data, including textual and visual or compositional data. In feminist and critical discourse analysis data is a body of contextualized instances of the use of various forms of semiosis (i.e. spoken and written language, as well as layouts, gestures, actions, visual imagery) in meaning-making. While data analysis often highlights overt meaning(s), I hope to pay special attention to more subtle meaning(s) that uphold increasingly complex and invisible exhibitions of ideological structures and hegemony. Though this study focuses on the text of certain

articles, it is necessary to acknowledge the complement a multimodal approach serves in a thorough examination of the messages proliferated by these articles. Lazar (2005) posited that an examination of various semiotic modalities (i.e. visual imagery, layouts, gestures, sounds) in conjunction with language use lends insight to CDA; particularly with regard to the “discursive constructions of gender,” as well as a feminist critique therein (p. 5). Thus, semiotic modalities such as layout and visual imagery accompanying the articles selected for this study will also be examined and discussed.

### **Variability and Consistency**

Potter and Wetherall (1987) proposed a two-phase analytic approach to pattern identification and hypothesizing functions and effects within CDA. Their methodology relies upon two core patterns, *variability*, or “differences in either the content or form of accounts”, and *consistency*, “the identification of features shared by accounts” (p. 67). Once these patterns have been identified, the texts are then examined for contextual influences, as well as examined to determine what function each text or account serves in the discursive context. Barthes (1957) also recommended examining contradictions and similarities between distinct significations as distinct constructions of the world, in order to illuminate dominant meanings underscoring cultural myths and ideology. These kinds of assessments are incorporated throughout this analysis..

### **The Magazines and Their Demographics**

The magazines selected for this study were chosen based on the availability of desired content, positioning in their respective demographics and industries, as well as relationship(s) to each other. *Maxim* magazine describes itself as a “monthly men’s lifestyle magazine for the young, social and active man. Through lifestyle and service editorial, we cover travel, style, gear, technology and women – all with vibrant

photography and an irreverent and humorous tone” (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2008, p. 1). *Maxim* also “arms guys with the tools to live a better life, and have more fun doing it” (*Maxim* Media Kit). In 2009 *Maxim* magazine’s average monthly paid and verified circulation amounted to 2,537,130. 66.6% of *Maxim* readers fall between the ages of 18–34, 92% fall between 18-49, 64.2% fall between the ages of 25-49; the median age of a *Maxim* reader is 29.6 years old. The median household income of a *Maxim* reader is \$71,954, 62.6% of readers are employed full-time, 13.9% of readers are currently college or university students, and 60.3% of readers have attended or graduated college+. 62% of readers are single (not married), and 22.2% of *Maxim* readers are women.

*Men’s Health* describes itself as “a magazine for active, successful, professional men who want greater control over their physical, mental and emotional lives” (*Men’s Health* Media Kit), and claims to be the world’s largest men’s magazine with 38 editions worldwide. The magazine’s total paid and verified circulation is 1,859,643, 42% of readers fall between the ages of 18-34, and 58% are 35+ (Spring MRI, 2009). The median household income of a *Men’s Health* reader is \$84,208, 50% of readers are single, and 50% are married (Spring MRI, 2009). 36.5% of readers have graduate college or further, 64.8% are employed full-time, and 68.5% of readers are also homeowners. According to the *Men’s Health* psychographic analysis of readership, readers self-identify as “tech savvy-tech mobile men”, “natural leaders”, “adventure seekers, risk takers, explorers”, “driven and ambitious”, and “trendsetters-style conscious” (*Men’s Health* Media Kit). According to the 2009 Spring MRI, 15% of *Men’s Health* readers are women.

*Cosmopolitan* is the self-proclaimed “lifestylist for millions of fun fearless females who want to be the best they can be in every area of their lives,” where the “Cosmo edit inspires with information on relationships and romance, the best in fashion and beauty, the latest on women’s health and well-being, as well as what is happening in pop culture and entertainment...and just about everything else fun fearless females want to know about” (*Cosmopolitan* Media Kit). *Cosmopolitan* also claims to be the best-selling magazine in its category, is published in 34 languages, has 58 international editions and is distributed in 100 countries. As of June 2009 *Cosmopolitan*’s total paid and verified circulation is 2,907,000. The magazine also out delivers top television shows like American Idol Wednesday, Grey’s Anatomy, Desperate Housewives, House and The Office in percent coverage for the women 18-34 and women 18-49 demographics, with 26.6 % and 19.1% coverage respectively. The median age of a female *Cosmopolitan* reader is 30.3 years, the median household income \$57,298, and 51.3% of readers are employed full-time. 45.2% of readers are single, 38.4% are married, 16.3% are divorced, widowed or separated, 54.4% are women with children, and 37.5% of readers are working women with children, 63.4% of *Cosmopolitan* readers have attended/graduated college+.

*Women’s Health* describes its audience as the “woman who sees being healthy – physically and emotionally – as her edge” and claims to speak to women “exactly how they speak to each other – with a tone and look that’s smart, positive, energizing, provocative, fashionable, surprising and humorous” (*Women’s Health* Media Kit). Of the four magazines *Women’s Health* is the youngest, created in 2006. As of 2009 *Women’s Health*’s total paid and verified circulation was 1,454,545, which was a 28% increase in

subscriptions and a 3% increase in newsstand sales (*Women's Health* Media Kit). The median age of a *Women's Health* reader is 43.4 and the median household income of a *Women's Health* reader is \$63,422. Of the countable *Women's Health* readers' population 92% are women and 8% are men, 57% are married and 48% have children in their household. 60% of *Women's Health* readers have attended some level of college, 48% are employed full time, and 67% of readers own their own homes.

### **Sample Size and Selection**

Within the 2009 publications of all four magazines, one issue of each magazine from each quarter of the year (February, May, July, and November)<sup>1</sup> was selected for specific analysis. Editorial content categorized by the magazines themselves as pertaining to sex, love and relationships within the four issues selected from each magazine was selected for as the unit of analysis because these articles openly and overtly advocate particular gendered behaviors, attitudes and opinions. Articles categorized by these themes are present in each issue of all four magazines.

Each issue was initially examined qualitatively to select the articles expressing the themes of sex, love and relationships. For the purpose of making a relevant comparison all of the selected articles were full-length articles. This distinction was not based on word count or the number of paragraphs, but the overall length and depth of the text. Each of the articles selected for this study was at least one full, featured magazine page, if not longer, inclusive of related editorial photos, visual imagery, charts, diagrams, etc. This distinction was made to prevent sidebar articles, most common in *Cosmopolitan* for example, from being considered equally alongside full-length articles.

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of *Men's Health* - the February and July issues used were January/February and July/August publications.

In data pre-screening *Cosmopolitan* magazine was found to contain an overwhelmingly higher number of assorted texts pertaining to sex, love or relationships. However, much of this material also served as a complement to a “main” featured article. Re-grouping related texts allowed for a more thorough treatment of the discursive elements within *Cosmopolitan* while also a more balanced reading.

Once this analysis was completed, the sample was re-examined to determine emergent themes and messages. The purpose of this additional examination was to reveal exemplars of particular messages, determined by salience of editorial focus and particular messages within a selected magazine article. The end result is a multi-tiered comparative Critical Discourse Analysis. In summary, *Cosmopolitan* and *Women’s Health* are compared as women’s lifestyle magazines, while *Maxim* and *Men’s Health* are compared as men’s lifestyle magazines, to explicate **observable** differences in signification on sex and relationships within and between these magazines genres. The goal of the study is to observe and analyze *some* of the messages proliferated by *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Men’s Health* and *Women’s Health* in relation to the social, cultural and political context in which they are produced; in relation to each other; and in relation to past analyses of gendered editorial content within men’s and women’s lifestyle magazines. Such an analysis will shed light on the characteristics of contemporary popular discourse on these topics and the possible impact of these discourses on gender relations in contemporary society.

## CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

From each magazine, two articles were selected for in-depth analysis below. The following elements of Pearcian analysis are applied in this chapter: description, identification of discourse, exploration of connotation, identification of subjectification, and a summary of the overall structures of meaning evident in these texts. Two phases of the Pearcian methodology, the appreciation of historical dimensions, and examining the similarities with discourse(s) produced by other texts, are not examined here. Additionally, similarities with discourse(s) produced by other texts are examined in the multi-tiered comparative CDA comparing these texts to each other.

The CDA of each article includes a description of the discursive elements present within the text and an examination of its multimodal features, such as photos (in terms of nudity, composition, size, models), headlines, subheadings and captions; whether the author is male, female, or a composition made by multiple authors; and how many and what kinds of 'expert' opinions and testimonies are present in the article. The articles discussed below are organized by the month in which they were published, so that the content of each of the four magazines may be read side-by-side as part of the desired comparative, multi-tiered reading. Each article is referenced by the magazine, month of publication, and article title.

### ***Cosmopolitan*, February 2009: "Why More Chicks Are Now Cheating"**

**Description.** This article falls under the relationship-related "Cosmo News" section of the February 2009 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. "Why More Chicks Are Now Cheating" was written by female author Holly Eagleson, and focused on explaining findings that suggested 15 percent of women younger than 35 have cheated on their

spouse, according to a study conducted by David Atkins, Ph.D., at the University of Washington. The article framed the threat of infidelity to the success of and desire for monogamy as urgent and alarming, emphasizing that because women tend to “underreport affairs in face-to-face studies” the actual percentage of women who have cheated on their spouse in the given age range could very well be more than three times higher. Eagleson focused on three primary causes for rampant infidelity: a shift in women’s view of sex, “a whole new world of enticement”, and a sense of entitlement to stray produced by the “current culture”. The article featured the expert opinions of two Ph.D.s, and one author.

The photograph featured with this article is approximately one-third of a page in size, and contains no nudity. The photo depicts white male and female models on what appears to be a date of some kind (models are featured in some kind of bar or restaurant with drinks and candles). The male figure is in the foreground while the female figure is in the background but the male figure is blurred, and the focus is on the facial expression of the female figure. Her expression seems to imply that while she looks at him directly she is clearly thinking of something else, and readers may continue reading the article to determine what that something else is. The female model also holds what looks to be an apple up against the left side of her face. The supplementary text accompanying the photo reads, “Even the most loyal women struggle with infidelity urges.” The photo, especially the supplementary text, reinforces the argument that infidelity is a wide-scale, prominent issue, requiring immediate repair.

In addition to the title, the following is featured in enlarged text, “If you’re itching to step out on your man, you’re one of many. Here’s what’s driving temptation these days

and how to resist it.” Also, “Studies show that if you feel you can do better, you feel more entitled to stray,” is featured in bolded enlarged text.

**Identification of discourse.** In “Why More Chicks Are Now Cheating” the article took most of its direction from the expert opinions on infidelity, its causes, and how to resist temptation, as well as Eagleson’s recommendations. For example, M. Gary Neuman, author of *The Truth About Cheating*, argued that infidelity is a partial result of women feeling entitled to pleasure, and feeling less taboo about venturing outside of monogamous constraints when their [sexual] needs are not met. Atkins also further explained that the so-called “license to cheat” taken on by the modern woman is inspired by a “whole new world of enticement” filled with opportunities to cheat and technologies to help do so.

Eagleson focused on two aspects of the “current culture” responsible for female infidelity: first that women may feel as though they are “settling” with their partners, because there is an increasing disparity between the number of female college graduates and eligible male college graduates, and women are consequently dating or marrying less educated men; second, that “hookup culture” may leave women in monogamous relationships feeling they have missed something by sacrificing the “variety and freedom” of their former single lives. Atkins further cautioned that it is harder to stay loyal to “even a great guy” with this combination. Gary Lewandowski, Ph.D., added that “studies show if you feel you can do better, you feel more entitled to stray”.

This article is featured in ‘Relationships’ section of the magazine. The article hails readers in relationships, or interested in ‘news’ about relationships, signifying itself as a

relevant part of sexual and relational discourse. The article also presupposes readers will identify themselves with the text and messages within this communicative event by parlaying the urge to cheat as a natural inclination, shared by “many” women, which *should* be stifled. This article is also a part of a meta-discourse on gendered expectations and roles because its expectation is that women will read the article, come to understand their pathology, and “resist” the temptation of infidelity. This expectation also suggests that readers can validate their membership to a group of women who are *successful* in maintaining monogamous relationships by achieving it.

**Identification of subjectification.** Subjectification is the point, or point(s), at which informative or topical treatments of sex, love and relationship issues become prescriptive or instructive, the point at which editorial content reflects a recommended or suggested behavior or attitude. Subjectification in this article enables the author to take a complex behavioral ‘phenomenon’, such as infidelity, and sum it up neatly as essentially the product of greater opportunities for women, and a greater sense of entitlement fueled by their increasing success. According to this one-dimensional assessment, subjectification allows Eagleson to intimate that once identified, urges to cheat are also easily remedied. For example, Eagleson recommended stifling the growing adulterous urge by making an “effort to actively build your bond” with your spouse or partner by “doing new things” so that “you’ll ignore temptation” and making “sure you and your man keep logging plenty of hours in bed too. The more sex you have, the more you’ll actually crave it – from him and *only* him”. These instructions tell readers they should identify their urges to cheat, and henceforth willfully stifle them by inundating themselves in the relationship/spouse/partner they wish to stray from.

The infidelity phenomenon does not seem to require any additional opinions or solutions. From an economic perspective as a magazine that profits from sex, relationship and love advice, it is surprising that the author/experts do not explore other solutions to infidelity – a prominent and problematic relationship issue. It is surprising that the author doesn't acknowledge alternatives, such as relationship counseling, or even ending dissatisfying relationships. Instead, the article connotes that if a woman is in a relationship where there is infidelity, factors external to the relationship (i.e. temptations) are to blame for her desire to stray, and can only be dealt with by drugging herself with more, different and better monogamous sex with her partner.

**Exploration of connotation.** This article connoted the notion of committed, long-term monogamy as unattainable and idealized, and faulted the modern woman's access to and successful harnessing of sexual desire, technology, career opportunities and education as its most frequent assailants. Many of the circumstances under which the experts hypothesized that women would most likely cheat are related to or because of access to these opportunities. However, the necessity of these opportunities or access is never contested in the article. Eagleson does not argue at any point for example, that women should not have access to technology or greater freedom within the 'hookup culture'. These elements are implied to be freestanding feminist gains, which we are to take as a given, in reading the article. Thus, Eagleson's article subtly villainizes feminism, which in much of our cultural products is deemed responsible for many of the new and unconventional options women enjoy.

The threats to monogamy, which are narrowly discussed as 'news' in this article, create an aura of crisis that surrounds the institution of intimate monogamy, under

siege, and calls for a rejection of feminist gains by women in relationships who feel tempted to stray, for a variety of reasons. McRobbie (2009b) refers to this as a “polemic of affirmation,” the argument that “young women have more or less gained all the freedom they need.” The prescriptive recommendations of the experts and the author seem to benignly advise readers to *reject* those gains/opportunities and instead combat their malaise/pathology by “logging plenty of hours in bed” instead of searching Facebook for “the guy who got away”.

Instead of interrogating and problematizing the circumstances which enable and encourage cheating or addressing the factors that may cause women to seek attention outside of the relationship, Eagleson recommends that women ‘resist’ the temptation of cheating, and focus their energy on making dissatisfying relationships work, and on being happy or happier with these relationships. This survivalist mentality implies that monogamy *should* be prioritized as a superior desired end-goal, and in the event that it is achieved, it should be maintained. The depth of this connotation is evident throughout the article, but particularly striking in the instances where women are thought to be cheating because they felt they were “settling for men with less education”. Readers are not instructed to seek more adept partners, or given advice about how to seek, obtain and sustain happier relationships or lifestyles, but instead are instructed and encouraged to find happiness within the confines of monogamy.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The multimodal features of the article hail readers to the article based on the two main arguments Eagleson made, first that maintaining monogamy is of the utmost importance, and second, while success and opportunity may seem entitling, they are to blame for infidelity. For example, the

supplemental text which reads, “If you’re itching to step out on your man, you’re one of many. Here’s what’s driving temptation these days...and how to resist it,” interacts with many messages throughout the text of the article by framing infidelity urges as common and widespread, while also easily minimized (by reading the article). The bolded text, which reads “Studies show that if you feel you can do better, you feel more entitled to stray” clandestinely attacks the reasons Eagleson supposes ‘most women’ feel an urge to cheat on their partners. In this quotation selected for the article the words ‘feel’ and ‘entitled’ are used to imply that the urge to cheat is both a subjective *feeling* which can be subdued or changed without addressing it directly, and that the urge to cheat is also the result of an undeserved sense of entitlement.

In the photograph accompanying the article the text and the female model provide the richest suggestions to the readers. The facial expression of the female model clearly indicates that the male model she sits across from is not the sole occupant of her thoughts. Additionally, she coyly holds an apple up to her face, an allegorical reference to the ‘forbidden fruit.’ The article does not discuss the potential religious significance of this allegory, but rather focuses on the crisis of temptation readers may feel, similar in some way to Eve’s temptation to taste the fruit, which she lacked the foresight, wisdom, impulse control, etc., to resist and which irreparably changed her relationship with Adam. This reference is made without impugning the character of readers, and consequently can be read and read into more palatably. The text accompanying the article, which says “Even the most loyal women struggle with infidelity urges,” underscores the reference to the temptation of ‘forbidden fruit’ made semiotically in the

photograph, and also ties the photograph to the messages in the text which portray infidelity as a widespread, common urge, which can be resisted without peril.

These multimodal elements echo the textual elements within the article by hailing readers to the article, and honing in on the urgency and necessity of dealing with infidelity. By presenting infidelity as frequent and wide-scale on face the multimodal elements essentially provide readers with a key for decoding the textual elements within the article. The multimodal elements used in the composition of this article emphasize and abbreviate the desired interpretation of subjectification and connotation within the Pearcian model of analysis, in an 'all roads lead to Rome' sort of sense, reinforcing the article's two main arguments, that monogamy is the supreme desired end goal and that 'success', as defined by financial status/independence and career opportunities, is at the root of infidelity.

***Women's Health*, February 2009: "Is Being an Alpha Wife Ruining Your Life?"**

**Description.** Author Nicole Blades began the article with a description of the "Alpha Wife", viewed as what 'average' women would consider 'perfect', writing,

You've seen her at the grocery store, gracefully navigating the aisles in some fabulous four-inch heels as she closes a deal on her Blackberry Pearl. And there she is again, dropping the kids off at school, buff biceps flexing under a jumbo tray of homemade cupcakes while she updates her hubby on the kitchen reno. She's an Alpha Wife: a powerful, perfectly put-together multitasking machine who thrives on being at the top of her game at every moment.

A 2008 Pew Research Center study supports Blades' observation that this 'description' shouldn't be surprising as the number of Alpha Wives is increasing, finding that more women are making final decisions in their households, and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Statistics additionally showed that more women (25 percent in 2007) are out-earning their partners. Scott Haltzman, M.D., a clinical assistant professor at Brown

University, also observed “The rates of women entering and graduating from college exceed those of men. The women I see in my office are often the primary breadwinners, and surely these numbers will rise as women’s education levels continue to surpass men’s”. After constructing an image for *WH* readers of the power dynamics in the ‘typical’ work-life balance for most women, Blades began her assault on the “overachieving” Alpha Wife writing,

Security. Control. Decision-making power. Who wouldn’t want those things in a relationship? But they can come at a high price. For many women, heading up the household and leading the charge at the office leaves them overwhelmed, overextended, and completely spent emotionally and physically.

This article is an exemplar of the subtlety with which discursive constructions are used to (re)produce and reinforce conventional and restrictive gender norms. Blades described the Alpha Wife, a successful modern women, as ‘perfect’ in many senses, and then proceeds to examine all of the ways she is unhappy and unsatisfied in her domestic life and intimate relationship with her husband, additionally how her husband and children may be unhappy with her. The article text featured the opinions and advice of seven experts (Ph.D.s, authors and consultants). The article text also included three testimonies from self-proclaimed “alpha wives” or “do-it-all divas” and a poll of 1,000 *MH* and *WH* readers.

The third page features a poll graphic with enlarged bolded text saying “What makes a stellar spouse?” And the bolded text “You’ve seen her at the grocery store”, and the enlarged text, “LOSE YOUR FEAR OF LETTING GO”. The fourth page features another full-page, dismal portrait of the modern family, featuring the same models. The female model still totes the crying infant, whom she appears to be ignoring while checking messages/emails on her Blackberry Pearl, as well as the newspaper

underneath her other arm; she appears stressed, and the bolded text “Women with that nonstop make-it-happen drive” (featured in yellow text), and “can experience from general uneasiness and fatigue to persistent aches and pains and compromised immune systems” (featured in white text) accompany this portrayal.

The fifth page features a half-page photo of the couple in their bedroom. Both models are dressed in sleepwear, the husband sits on one side of the bed looking discontentedly at his wife, while she continues to check her Blackberry, with a notepad and pen in her lap, also sitting with open books or files on the bed, and an open file-storage box on the floor. The second child totes a blanket in his pajamas and also stares expectantly at his mother. The photo features the bolded text, “Your husband can be the single greatest asset in achieving a balanced household” (in white text), and “if you’re willing to trust his judgment” (in yellow text). The article text also contains bolded and enlarged text reading “TAP INTO MAN POWER”. The final page of the article features a supplementary box graphic entitled in bold and enlarged text, “When in doubt, farm it out” offering readers suggestions “why it pays to hire someone else to do your laundry, clean your bathroom and walk your dog”. The article text on this page shows bolded and enlarged text reading, “THROW UP A WHITE FLAG”.

**Identification of discourse.** This article signifies itself as a part of a relational discourse, specifically a marital discourse, and as a part of a greater discourse on gendered roles and expectations, as its main focus is on how women successfully breaking down barriers to professional success has made them too ‘overachieving’ and unsuccessful in their personal/relational lives. The article is a featured story, tagged as “Success without stress! Discover your happiest, healthiest self” in the table of contents

and on the cover of the magazine, hailing readers with an innocuous pretext rather than the doomsday-title “Is Being an Alpha Wife Ruining Your Life?”

**Identification of subjectification.** The testimonies of three ‘alpha wives’, “Jasmine”, “Jennifer”, and “Cynthia”, regarding the issues their careers and compulsive, overbearing personalities have caused in their marriages enable subjectification in this article. Each of their testimonies provides an instance or problem which necessitates an informative or prescriptive response from the author and/or experts. For example, “Jasmine” and “Jennifer” shared their personal experience with anxiety over not being able to “just let go” because of feelings that if they don’t take control “things won’t get done”. Blades faults this attitude for sending a “counterproductive message”, writing, “It says pretty clearly that you doubt he’ll follow through – on the laundry, on dinner, on making the appointment with the accountant. And if that’s the case, why should he bother trying at all?” Haltzman suggests that because men have been “influenced by a different set of factors” regarding domestic standards, it is not fair to hold a man to the same standard you, as a woman, have in mind, writing, “You’ve got to let him do things *his way.*”

“Cynthia”, who spends a lot of time traveling for her job, said “It’s not about the power struggles between us or the fact that I make more money than he does. The issue is my not having anything – emotionally or physically – left for him when I get home.” Haltzman writes that while it is easy to consider your husband “busy in his own right” or an adult, it is important to remember “he needs to know that you’re still a team and that you have affection for him.” While Haltzman specifies that this extra effort doesn’t need to include “the feather boa and kinky handcuffs after a long, loaded day”,

he does say that “knowing you have a solid foundation in your relationship will make you feel more grounded at home and at work”. Blades offers that you can “get creative about making these connections” by setting reminders in your phone to send you “miss-you missive[s]”, but Haltzman cautioned that women should not use these communications to discuss to-do lists or checking up on the kids. Blades added that the “payoff” will be “a man who feels loved and appreciated – and more motivated to make *you* happy”.

“Cynthia” also advised that women “surrender early and ask for help from [their] husband and friends”. Susan Newman, Ph.D., advised Alpha Wives to “put aside what others say makes a functional family” and “adopt whatever setup works for your family”. Blades agreed, advising that “everyday responsibilities” be distributed evenly, and Newman adds that “viewing income as “ours” rather than yours or his, regardless of the source, [is] a way to curb squabbles or resentment”. Haltzman suggests lastly that Alpha Wives schedule relaxing activities to help turn off the “warrior persona” at home that makes them “successful at work” before beginning their ‘second shift’ “as a wife and mom”.

Despite Blades’ vague feminist affirmations, women are still charged with engineering a domestic life to ensure the happiness and inclusion of their husband and children. While your husband may be your “biggest asset”, none of the forward-thinking recommendations suggest that he will be undertaking any such artful negotiation. Ironically, Blades and the experts also recommended shrugging off normalized conceptions of what others consider to be “functional” in terms of your family/domestic life and relationship with your partner, when the article asserts that the series of

problems discussed here exist and inevitably result from a tenuous, at times unsuccessful feminine work-life balance, and discussed all solutions as necessities, presenting readers with a homogenized idea of what the working woman is like, and how her family and relationships suffer as a result.

**Exploration of connotation.** The use of connotation as a suggestive tool begins even in the title of this article, “Is Being an Alpha Wife Ruining Your Life?” According to the descriptions of an ‘alpha wife’ as viewed by the author, this kind of woman is successful at a number of things in many aspects of her presumed life. However, the implication made by the title is that these numerous successes are not as important as her likely failures, nor as impactful, given that these successes may actually be “ruining” her “life”, as if the supposed domestic failures constitute more of her existence. The struggle to achieve the work-life balance is described according to statistics used to frame the ‘status quo’ as common, based on some innate drive possessed by working women to “do-it-all”, become primary breadwinners, and cease to rely upon their husbands in ways that make him feel “appreciated” and needed. The fault for the shift in domestic responsibilities, from traditionally being solely burdened upon the woman as the primary caregiver and domestic laborer, and the apparent resulting emotional and stressful upheaval it causes is not explained by general trends affecting the gender politics of an evolving workforce/workplace, but instead is explained individually and pathologically by isolating the Alpha Wife and accusing her of trying to “do-it-all” and failing. The (unattainable, idealized) work-life balance is used here as McRobbie (2009b) would suggest, to “reinstate the hierarchal norms of the heterosexual household” (p. 125).

Blades and the experts never suggest that the Alpha Wife should compromise her career goals, in line with what McRobbie (2009b) termed a 'polemic about affirmation', the idea or connotation in this instance, that the achievement of feminist gains has been thorough, and remains immutable as such, (i.e. "women have more or less gained all the freedom they need") (p. 127). On top of the "overwhelming" workload Blades knowingly accepts women must take on to succeed professionally, the solution offered is that women *should* do more work to make sure their husbands and families are happy, to make sure that they are happy, which is supposed to result in a less burdensome domestic, emotional, and professional workload. The myth wrapped up in Blades' recommendations is that it *will* be less taxing and more rewarding work. However, the individual and pathological blame placed on the woman makes both the 'problem' and the 'problem-solving' work administered by the woman, and the solution is for the "overachieving" Alpha Wife to take on *even more*, furthering her isolation. This emotional audit of the Alpha Wife and all of her shortcomings, while it may include recommendations on self-improvement, enters into her figurative space of presumed empowerment (professional success, framed as long sought after by women) and fills it with failures in femininity that only constrain her further.

Additionally, Blades and the experts make ready use of the reward-incentive imperative. The experts discuss each form of feminine, control-based compulsion, as 'needing' to be altered to make men feel included, appreciated and necessary in their partners' life. For example, despite that male primary breadwinner status has been used in the past as a justification for and explanation of patriarchal hierarchy in heterosexual households, Blades cautioned that "no guy wants to feel like a kept man", and Newman

recommended that even if the woman makes more money, that she include her partner in financial decisions and even consider using a joint credit card to make large payments so it feels less like *your* money and more like *ours*. The “payoff”? What Blades described as “a man who feels loved and appreciated – and more motivated to make *you* happy.” This imperative links relationship ‘work’ to individual rewards, which in turn devalues the intrinsic value and importance of the work itself, which is also framed as necessary, connoting the ‘making’ of the relationship work as obligatory.

Blades provided simple solutions for how the Alpha Wife can add domesticity and marital bliss back to the list of her numerous successes and made an effort in doing so to analyze and explain the male perspective in relation to what she believes the Alpha Wife or *WH* reader may be thinking. However, the work the woman is coached to take on in fixing the domestic troubles caused by her professional success also hides the depth of entrenched, dominant-subordinate male-female sex-roles. The Alpha Wife is advised to take on all of this emotional ‘work’ to solve the domestic life and intimate relationship problems which are caused by her professional success. The professional success, by virtue of the fact that it is both possible (opportunity to achieve it exists) and evident, serves as an affirmation of sorts that feminist gains have been achieved, and that a return to femininity is required by the failures this new modern working woman is bound to make as she continues to divide her time. However, true gendered domestic and professional equality within the heterosexual household should mean equal partnership and sharing in domestic labor/identity would not be the result of an artful and complex negotiation made by the working wife, but something intrinsic and organic to achieving a work-life balance as a unit.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The multimodal elements in this article play a direct role in how readers are encouraged to interpret the text itself. The editorial photos make up more than half of the article, serving as a visual narrative of the unhappy life an 'alpha wife' leads, surrounded by her neglected children, and her estranged husband. In addition to relationship between the photo portrayals of the pitfalls discussed in the article, there is also a close conceptual relationship between the featured graphics, bolded text within the article text, and text accompanying the photos themselves. For example, the first text page features the bolded text "LOSE YOUR FEAR OF LETTING GO", and the accompanying photo features the text, "Women with that nonstop-make-it-happen drive can experience everything from general uneasiness and fatigue to persistent aches and pains and compromised immune systems." These concepts deal with what partners expect from each other, and attempt to explain some of the reluctance 'alpha wives' may feel toward 'letting go'. The poll featured between these pages asks 1,000 *MH* and *WH* readers "What makes a stellar spouse?" The results show that "the hubby women crave is: (1) loyal, (2) a good provider, (3) attractive, (4) cool under pressure, and (5) forgiving," and that "the wife men want is: (1) financially savvy, (2) independent, (3) intelligent, (4) loyal, (5) sexually adventurous".

Similarly, another page features the enlarged text "TAP INTO MAN POWER", with the bolded text alongside a photo of the unhappy couple saying, "Your husband can be the single greatest asset in achieving a balanced household if you're willing to trust his judgment." The final page of the article includes the enlarged text, "THROW UP A WHITE FLAG" and the box graphic, "When in doubt, farm it out", filled with suggestions on how to save time including, "go prefab", "get pet-smart", "hire an assistant" and "fill

an electronic grocery cart” each in offered in bolded text, along with recommendations of several websites or companies providing these services.

These multimodal elements reinforce the message that being ‘successful’ or an ‘accomplished’ woman threatens domestic bliss and the health of intimate relationships, while also condemning ‘alpha’ women to take responsibility for minimizing and eradicating this threat.

### ***Maxim*, July 2009: “Riding Out the Recession”**

**Description.** Author Holly Eagleson theorizes that economic downturn means that “women are horny as hell”, and offers advice to readers on how to capitalize on this opportunity. The article featured three expert opinions and nine testimonies.

Helen Fisher, Ph.D., corroborates this theory explaining, “Fear elevates dopamine levels. For some people, going through a traumatic experience can actually stimulate their sex drives.” According to Eagleson statistics indicate that condom sales and online sex ads increased during fall of 2008, showing that postings for “casual encounters” on Craigslist spiked from 1.4 million in October 2007 to 3.1 million in October 2008. “Trina”, whose number of sexual partners increased by March to more than she claimed it would have been in a regular 12-month span, speculates this is because “All this depressing news just makes you want a human connection – and sex is definitely the easiest way to get it.”

The title of the article, “Riding Out the Recession” is featured in enlarged text, above the subtitle, also in enlarged text, “The market may have gone bust, but your sex life is about to go boom.” The article contains two photos featuring the same white, female model, and a “Sex Slang or Finance Term?” graphic matching phrases and definitions.

On the second page of the article the “Sex Slang or Finance Term?” the graphic includes a subtitle (enlarged text), “Test your recession-era language skills with our vocab quiz”. Readers are asked to pair the following phrases: “sushi roll”, “backstroke roulette”, “Saturday night special”, “spider-man”, “channel stuffing”, “Biffin’s bridge”, “Gaylord Perry”, and “wildcatting”, with their respective definitions: “an SEC review of an industry after an instance of fraud has been uncovered”, “a surprise takeover attempt”, “when a man throws a handful of his own baby batter”, “area of flesh between the bumhole and the genitals”, “a slang term for male masturbation”, “sending retailers more products than they can sell to inflate sales figures”, “type of analysis used to try to predict market tops and bottoms”, and “use spit as a sexual lubricant”. The graphic also includes small photos of a spider, wildcat, and sushi roll, each corresponding with the respective phrase.

**Identification of discourse.** Eagleson prescribes that those who are “moping around” and “licking their wounds” after losing their jobs “take note” and recognize that “It’s time to get out of the breadline and get back in the game. The sex of your life could be right around the corner.” Under three topics, (labeled in bolded text), “Misery Loves Company”, “Paupers over Princes”, and “Into the Wild,” Eagleson shares interviews she conducted with women cross-country. Eagleson finds that “dozens of women...report relying on sexual healing more than ever these days”, which according to Stuart Brody, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of The West of Scotland, could be explained by the fact that “people experience less tension and better moods for a full 24 hours after intercourse”.

Eagleson's article is featured as a part of *Maxim's* "Sex" segment, and exclusively deals with just that. The article signifies itself as part of an ongoing sexual discourse, and does not focus on any other relational discourse, status, or context.

**Identification of subjectification.** Descriptive elements, or information about incidents, situations, relationships and experiences within lifestyle magazine articles that are framed descriptively in order to seem firsthand, familiar and inevitable are used to normalize prescriptive and instructive content which enables subjectification and constrains sexualized gender roles and expectations. These elements can include, but are not limited to, testimonies or firsthand accounts given by readers or quotations used in articles, as well as the use of expert opinions. Eagleson's article features sexually explicit vignettes about the recent sexual exploits of nine women whose testimonies were included in the article, enabling the subjectification.

Eagleson's article parlays a seemingly 'insightful' glance into 'real' women's sexual thoughts, desires and preferences by making use of the graphic testimonies of the various interviewees. For example, in "Paupers over Princes" Eagleson explains that "a side effect of all this horniness" is that "many women are sleeping with men they wouldn't have looked twice at before". "Diana" approached her ex on LinkedIn to look for work, and a "part-time hookup arrangement" resulted. "Taryn" had sexual intercourse with a "guy she'd previously kicked to the friend zone", and "Liz" (a model) decided she'd rather "just be with someone [she] click[s] with physically and mentally" rather than someone who made more than \$200,000 a year, according to her previous standards. "Julia" believes that "out-of-work" men are better in bed because

“unemployment seems to refocus a man’s priorities – no longer the big winner at the sales conference? Might as well be on in the bedroom.”

In “Into the Wild” Eagleson enthusiastically reports that economic recessions not only result in women wanting “*more*” sex, but also “*crazier*” sex. Among the women Eagleson interviewed she claims “threesomes, S&M-lite, and sex with strangers” all “topped the list” of “now or never” acts they had “boldly initiated in recent months”. Amy Levine, sex educator, attributed this to the fact that people are now realizing they “have to live in the moment” and women are consequently “asking to be more experimental in bed”. Eagleson concludes the article by asking readers to remember, “There’s still plenty of good stuff going on; it’s just happening behind closed doors. It’s up to you to make sure yours is one of them.” In Eagleson’s article, these ‘interviews’ lend credibility to her assertions about women’s sexual preferences, as well as convince male readers that they will probably “get laid” because women are desiring and having more sex.

**Exploration of connotation.** The sexually explicit content of the article connotes that readers are either exclusively interested in sex, or that they *should* be. Eagleson repeatedly encouraged men to pursue more sexual encounters because more and more women are accepting men they would otherwise reject, having increased sexual partners, having increased desire and amounts of sex, having sex with more strangers, and having ‘kinkier’ sex. Eagleson basically offered up sex, sex, and more sex, all around, for any man who gets “back in the game”.

Eagleson’s portrayal of both male and female identities and acceptable behaviors is narrow, restrictive, and overly sexualized. Men are viewed prescriptively as constantly seeking the acquisition of sex, interested in “experimental”, “wild” sex, and ‘turned on’

by commonly accepted elements of fantasy like “threesomes, S&M-lite, and sex with strangers”. In this portrayal, the connotation is that women are very sexually available, eager and men are viewed either as innately responding enthusiastically to this, or severely encouraged to do so. The portrayal of women as sexual objects, especially by the photos accompanying this article, implicitly instructs men to view and approach women assuming that to be true. The sexually explicit descriptive elements incorporate women into this misogyny by using their testimonies to legitimize that they are sexual objects, that they enjoy being sexual objects, and will respond willingly to being approached as sexual objects. The voyeuristic tales of various sexual exploits throughout the article allowed Eagleson to connote to readers that women *want* to be viewed this way, in relation to their ‘wild’ sexual repertoire(s).

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The first photo is a half-page spread of a mostly nude white female model, staring in a sexually solicitous expression, clad only in a small black undergarment and white bed sheet, pulled up to her chest as she nibbles on one of her fingers. Only the bed, headboard and nightstand in what is presumably a bedroom, are featured with the model, as well as the text, “Up for reenacting what AIG did to tax payers?” The second photo is a smaller photo of the model, lying on her back looking to the side directly at the camera with her mouth partially open and her arms above her face, still clad in the white bed sheet covering her partially exposed breasts. The photo featured the text, “Inside the sexiest coffin ever”, at the top right of the page.

Women are portrayed throughout the article as sexual objects, but this is especially true in the editorial photographs. The photos clearly and exclusively focus on sex, sexual acquisition and sexual connotation, without accompanying any specific

content of the text article. In both photos the model poses looking directly at the camera in a provocative, sexually solicitous stare, invitingly even, as if to suggest that she *wants* to be viewed as a sex object. The text shown with each photo is also sexually suggestive. Prescriptively speaking, these photos serve as indicators of appropriate sexual attitudes for male readers, dictating what they *should* find attractive. These depictions provide a highly sexualized portrayal of women that encourages male readers to view them through this narrow, commodified and overly sexual lens.

### ***Men's Health, July/August 2009: "She's Out There"***

**Description.** Author Kyle Western begins his assessment of where to meet your next potential girlfriend by criticizing the commonly obsessed-over "myth of the pickup", writing, "The saddest thing you will ever see in a bar is the lights on at closing time. It's the moment you realize that although you've been bankrolling her martinis since midnight, she won't be going home with you." David Grazian, Ph.D. and associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania argues that men mistakenly believe the bar and club nightlife scene is "teeming with anonymous females who are dying to have sex with any guy who is confident enough to talk to them." Western arguea to the contrary however, that "less than 6 percent of women report having had sex with their partners within 2 days or less of meeting them, and less than 20 percent of adults say they first met their most recent sexual partner in a bar." As a counter-solution Western offers three new "rules of attraction" to help *MH* readers with the odds: (1) "build your romantic network"; (2) "let chaos be your wingman"; and (3) "use spare time as showtime". In addition to several citations of statistics and scientific research, this article also contained six 'expert' opinions (Ph.D.s).

The main photo for this article is a full two-page spread, which also served as the title page. The photo showed a close shot of a white female model from the waist up, dressed in what appears to be business casual clothing holding a to-go coffee cup looking to her left in front of a fruit stand. The model is positioned in the foreground, and the background is dimmed and includes other figures, male and female, all fully dressed, featuring text, "Will you meet her? In times of economic distress, women seek emotional safe havens. Here are 13 places – and reasons – *she's* looking for you." The first page of the article contained a photo approximately one half of a page in size, also showing a white female model from the waist up in the foreground wearing sunglasses, dressed casually on a street. The second page features a photo one half of a page in size, of a side profile shot of a non-white model, wearing business casual dress.

The third page of the article contained three vertical photos on the right side of the page. The first photo includes a headless white female model in a tube dress standing on a street corner holding a clutch purse, with various other male/female models in the background. The second photo was a shot from the waist up of a non-white female model on a crowded street wearing a blazer and shirt looking to her left, wearing business casual dress. The third photo was taken of the back of a white female model, wearing a tube dress and carrying a shoulder tote. This page features the following in bolded and enlarged text, "In the stock market, diversification is critical to reducing risk. In dating, the same rule applies." The final page of the article contains a photo approximately one half of a page in size, of a white female model wearing a dress with elbow-length sleeves, pictured alone sitting at a café/restaurant table, looking over a menu.

**Identification of discourse.** This article is a featured cover story, included as a part of the magazine's regular segment on 'sex and relationships'. The title, "She's Out There," refers to the search for the elusive "one", and seeks to answer the age-old question, "Will you meet her?" The article targets single heterosexual men, presuming that they are ultimately seeking to be in a relationship. Western's article signifies itself as part of a relational discourse, but also as part of greater discourse on gendered expectations in two ways. First, it is assumed that the target audience, single, heterosexual men, is actually searching for a mate, or partner. As part of a relational discourse, this indicates that the editorial perspective on relationship status is monogamy-driven, in that being in a relationship is *ideal*. Second, as part of an expectative gendered meta-discourse, the article assumes that "she's out there" and single men have simply not been looking in the right places. While Western does suggest revamping your approach to meeting women, he still maintains a conventional view of men as aggressors, seeking out women who are already 'waiting' in any of these ideal 13 places to meet women, and of women as passive participants.

**Identification of subjectification.** Western heavily relies upon statistics, Ph.D. opinions, and academic research to show *MH* readers the 13 greatest "weak-tie strongholds", "chaos corners", and "showtime showcases" according to *science*. Western views the single guys problem as one of apathy and ineptitude, writing, "on any given day, more women attend or host social events, volunteer, join religious functions, practice hobbies, or go shopping, while the average single guy is home, pathetically alone."

Each of Western's three "rules" assesses what single men are already doing *wrong*, offers them sociology and compelling statistics to explain why, and finally makes recommendations on potential locales suitable for meeting women, so that readers can "find the equivalents in [their] town, and the potential mates who gather there." For example, rule 1 is introduced by the statistic "you're 227 percent more likely to meet a potential girlfriend through a friend or family member rather than in a bar, at the gym, or on the street". Malcolm Parks, Ph.D., is quoted saying the secret to meeting women is not to meet women, but to meet people instead. Parks' communication research at the University of Washington reveals what he terms the "social proximity effect," "which holds that the probability of two people meeting is directly proportional to the number of contacts they share." According to Western, the more friends you have, the more likely you are to be introduced to their female friends and acquaintances, what social network theorists call "the strength of weak ties." Western suggests that the "greater number of unique casual connections you have, the better positioned you are to benefit."

Subjectification in this article is interesting in that while the content is almost entirely prescriptive and instructive, it is also synthesized with a credible blend of academic and statistical research. Western's theories seem less like his personal opinion, and more like observations based on the research and readers' slumping sex life.

**Exploration of connotation.** Throughout the "She's Out There" article Western connotes to reader that women are available, single men just aren't approaching them strategically. Western suggests that "you simply need to be with people, wherever they may gather" to meet women. Paul Dobranksy, M.D., a psychiatrist, observes that the

lack of dating success *MH* readers may be experiencing could be due to their “hyperfocused approach” which he categorized as blocking off time, like weekend nights, for dating. Dobranksy additionally comments that men “see meeting women as something that is done rather than something that naturally happens, which is the way women view it.”

The need for Western’s article was considered to be the “starving” sex life of numerous single men/*MH* readers. However, despite the fact that sex is mentioned a few times throughout the article as what men are seeking and/or missing, the sought-after woman is referred to as a potential “girlfriend” or “mate”. This connotes that *MH* authors and editors consider being in a dating relationship is preferable to being single, either organically, or because that is what they believe readers already prefer and thus respond better when approached from this perspective. This was also evident by the use of a singular “she” in the title, “She’s out there”.

The *MH* reader is encouraged not necessarily to be aggressive, but to be proactive and strategic in their pursuit and approach of women. The “weak-tie stronghold”, “chaos corner” and “showtime showcase” locales are where men are told go, under the assumption that the single woman or women they are searching for will simply be there, and be open to be approached. While Western never provides a guarantee of sex or a successful encounter with any woman, the whole article is aimed toward improving the odds of both, positioning men as the active participants, and subtly framing women as the passive participants. Though the article does include a variety of sociological and psychological experts to help explain various male and female dating perspectives, frameworks and conceptual relationships based on well-

researched academic theories, statistics, and findings from several peer-reviewed academic journal studies and highly respected research centers (i.e. the U.S. Census Bureau, The Pew Research Center), Western still reproduces a fairly conservative framing of base-level socio-sexual positioning of men and women that is in line with conventional and restrictive gendered constructions.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The photographs accompanying this article depicted women in what editors and photographers perceive to be their “natural” dress, location and behavior. The photos are stylized, fashion-forward, and without explicit nudity. Several photos do not show the models’ faces or heads, and in the ones that do, the models do not make eye contact with the camera/viewer. This is discursively significant in two ways. First, the headless/faceless models could be any “she”, without any particularly distinguishing characteristics, you could be passing her by, waiting to cross the street, or eating alone in café, or passing in front of you in a crowd, etc. This feminine identity is both collective and anonymous; it could be anyone, and yet it is no one. This presents a somewhat vacant view of the role the woman herself actually plays in this phase of the ‘relationship’, and even in general as far as her construction within gendered hierarchy. Second, the models’ whose faces you *can* see are photographed without eye contact, so that you feel like they can’t see you. These photos depict various women, in ‘natural’ poses/environments, standing passively almost as if waiting for the right man to pass by and snap their view into focus.

These multimodal semiotic elements interact closely with the discursive messages evident in the text by emphasizing the article’s key concepts. Western focuses on the desire to be in a relationship, and then how/where to meet women who are also

interested in being in a relationship. Western sincerely attempts to revamp the lay man's thinking about how, where, and for what purpose to approach women. However, his observations and recommendations ultimately uphold the conventional portrayal of women in these photographs; women are willingly and eagerly seeking monogamy, all around you, and you as a man must simply *seek* them differently. These models are faceless any-women, and passive passersby, but in either case, just as in the article, they are a given.

***Cosmopolitan*, May 2009: "What Guys Know About Sex That You Don't"**

**Description.** *Cosmopolitan* author Bethany Heitman offered six lessons to readers that would help them emulate male sexual style and preferences, which she argued would help women achieve more satisfying sex lives. Each lesson featured an additional bolded sentence or two of "real" testimonies from males offering feedback about the tips. The lessons were: (1) "you're always doable"; (2) "little things are big turn-ons"; (3) "your crotch is awesome"; (4) "practice makes perfect"; (5) "sex is better at full mast"; and (6) "it's all about focus". The article featured three 'expert' opinions (PhDs), one poll, and six testimonies.

**Identification of discourse.** May 2009 was *Cosmopolitan's* "Sexy Issue", and "What Guys Know About Sex That You Don't" was featured as a part of the 'Love & Lust' segment. Heitman's premise in the article is that despite that women wouldn't want to be men per se, ("It would mean talking to your friends in monosyllables, having feet that smell like French Onion Soup, and looking *worse* with big boobs"), that "doesn't mean they have nothing to teach [women]." The article hails readers with a provocative full-page photo opposite the title page, featuring a male model lying in bed, only wearing an undergarment, and the accompanying statistic saying, "Step it up girls, 83 percent of

men say that they enjoy sex a great deal, but only 58 percent of women are able to say the same.”

The article signifies itself as part of a discourse on accepted gendered sexual behavior and expectations by analyzing the various ways in which women can borrow from the more successful “male mentality” towards sex, and debunking several “natural” elements of the (less successful) female mentality towards sex.

**Identification of subjectification.** The structure and composition of this article lend themselves to discussing the role of subjectification in the text. The article is structured around six “lessons” women can learn by adopting more masculine sexual traits. Each lesson focuses on a masculine sexual trait, evidence from one of the experts supporting the benefit of adopting the highlighted trait, advice from Heitman, and the testimony of one male reader which demonstrates the masculine trait in effect.

For example, in lesson one, women learn from Cynthia Gentry, author of *What Men Really Want in Bed*, that “females have this notion that they don’t deserve sex unless they look and feel absolutely perfect, but that’s total bunk.” Heitman encouraged women to be open to sex all the time, regardless of whether they experience physical discomfort (i.e. bloating, feeling full after eating a large portion) or general insecurity about how they look because even when men experience these things they “still want sex when [they get] home”. Patricia Taylor, PhD, author of *Expanded Orgasm: Soar to Ecstasy at Your Lover’s Every Touch*, advised that women be more direct and aggressive when initiating sex by reaching over and touching their (male) partner’s penis to communicate their desire so that “when you see how aroused he gets, you’ll

realize there's no point in worry about all that other stuff". "John" is quoted saying, "Even if I have a cold, I still want to hook up. I figure it'll make me feel better."

Using this model readers are told by at least one expert, the testimony of a purported 'average' guy, and Heitman that learning the six highlighted lessons is necessary for readers to have a more fulfilling sex life that they can truly enjoy. This model allows Heitman to use subjectification to encourage women to "stop envying men in bed and start stealing their secrets." Heitman's instructions provide the bulk of content between expert opinions and 'average guy' testimonies. In lesson two, "little things are big turn-ons" for example, Heitman offers these recommendations,

Take a page from his playbook and open yourself up to the possibility of arousal at any time. When you're flipping through a magazine, check out and linger on any hot male models, dissecting every body part, from their chiseled abs to their steamy gaze. And look at real guys too – hey, it's not cheating if you're just looking! Next time you're at a crowded bar with your girls, pay special attention to how good a guy smells as he passes you, or pick a treadmill at the gym that gives you a prime view of dudes working out.

Heitman and the experts also attack the focus of women during sex by acknowledging on one hand that multitasking may be a life skill that enables women to succeed in other arenas, and simultaneously criticize whatever women might be thinking or worrying about during sex, despite that these thoughts are "not unusual". Men are also discussed as having some of these same concerns, but are considered to be more adept at handling them, as it is assumed that all they think about during sex is sex, which enables them to enjoy the sexual experience more.

Heitman's prescriptive and instructive content demonstrates to readers the multitude of ways they are not channeling their sexuality regularly, and informs women that their inabilities are negatively affecting their sex lives. Heitman's advice revolves

around the idea that women are too stressed and anxious to enjoy or understand sex and their own sexuality.

**Exploration of connotation.** Heitman's article serves as a clear and direct affront to female sexuality, connoting it as unnatural and inferior to male sexuality and sexual drive, which is repeatedly referenced as "open" and "easier". The article instructs women to let go of their innate perceptions of themselves, sexuality and sexual intercourse in order to more closely mimic the expert and biological masculine sex drive and sexual skill set. For example, one of the "problems" Heitman addresses is that "women...typically don't have the same kind of self-love" that men have, because they don't grow up worshipping and protecting their genitalia.

Heitman, Kerner and Fulbright want women to believe their "crotch is awesome" because it will enhance their sex lives to have the same level of appreciation and more importantly knowledge of their genitalia that men evidently spend years developing and cultivating naturally. While Kerner also recommended that female masturbation is "a great way to experiment and see what works for you" the goal of the lesson on "practice makes perfect" is to encourage women to masturbate to boost their libido so that it will be more comparable to a man's, which is framed as superior, because his desire for sex is greater and more frequent. Heitman's article also emphasized what Farvid and Braun (2006) termed the "orgasmic imperative", which places the utmost importance on achieving elusive orgasms in all forms of sexual encounters. In lessons three, four, and five, a woman's natural lack of familiarity with her genitalia and innate disinclination to masturbate or stimulate self-arousal is positioned as an obstacle to achieving an

orgasm, and a detriment to having a positive and successful sexual experience for both participants.

Heitman connotes a single conception of what *the*, not *a*, natural perception a woman has of sex, male/female genitalia, sexual desire, etc, is. For example, Ian Kerner, PhD and author of *Passionista: The Empowered Woman's Guide to Pleasuring a Man*, suggests that "men tend to act on their instincts more, especially when it comes to sex...they do what feels good without overthinking it." Heitman expands by arguing that women should take note from the male sexual playbook for a "long list of perks" which includes "a higher libido and climaxing more often". The connotation here is that a more active sex drive and greater number of orgasms mean that one's sex life is more fulfilling, that this fulfillment is important to reader's happiness, and finally, that men have already achieved these feats. Overall, the article provides instructions on how to ditch your natural female sexual inclinations, perceptions, insecurities and machinations to be more like a man, which are connoted beneath a more innocuously framed self-help guide.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The main feature photograph is one full page, and opposite the title page, showing a white male model, clad only in a white undergarment and posed lying in bed. The photo featured the results of an ABC News Survey saying, "Step it up girls, 83 percent of men say that they enjoy sex a great deal, but only 58 percent of women are able to say the same." The article featured a second photo, approximately one-fifth of a page in size, featuring two white models, male and female, both appeared to be nude and gazing into each other's eyes in a close embrace and smiling. The photograph featured the text, "Can we go over how awesome my

crotch is again?” Each photo relies upon nudity extensively and both photos depict men as carefree and happy in a sexual context. Both the photos and the text accompanying the photos also emphasize the importance of male/female interaction in sexual contexts.

The end of the article also featured a segment, included in a pink box approximately one-third of the size of the full page, entitled “...and some things they get totally wrong,” discussing six things “almost every woman” has heard from a guy she previously dated. Although this segment does provide a few male misconceptions about sex (i.e. “foreplay is best when saved for special occasions” and “in bed, women should use Jenna Jameson<sup>1</sup> as their inspiration. Guys should use a jackhammer as theirs.”), these seemingly trivial and humorous observations don’t do much to mitigate the attack waged on female sexuality and sexual identity throughout the text of the full article itself.

In this article, more than the photos, the bolded and emphatic text have the most suggestive impact. Each of the six lessons detailed in the article includes a testimonial-style quote from an ‘average guy’ related to the lesson being discussed. For example, in lesson six, “It’s All About Focus”, “Chris” says, “During sex, I’m thinking about exactly one thing: how incredible it feels.” Six average guys, “John”, “Andrew”, “Eric”, “Troy” and “Chris” demonstrate that men easily and naturally uphold each of the six lessons regularly in their sex life. These testimonies are used to supplement the advice given throughout the article by Heitman and the experts to demonstrate how “right” the selected lessons are from the ‘average’ guy’s perspective. However, because this article focuses so heavily on the ways in which female sexuality is less natural than

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<sup>1</sup> A well-known and very successful porn star.

male sexuality, and praises how men identify with and celebrate their sexuality, these testimonies also provide evidence of and support for the these claims.

The multimodal semiotic elements employed throughout this article emphasize the importance of having successful, satisfying sexual encounters in heterosexual relationships, as well as the importance, for women in particular, of working on their sexuality, sexual tendencies and sexual identities. These elements also play a role in the larger discourse of the article by explicating messages evident in the text to show that sex is less work, more natural, and more pleasurable for men.

***Women's Health*, May 2009: "Sex and Relationships: Love and Sex Version 2.0"**

**Description.** According to author Jill Waldbieser, "Your relationship behavior may need an upgrade." Waldbieser likened following "love rules" that have "expired" to sporting an outdated haircut, or using a "dinosaur of a cellphone". Pepper Schwartz, PhD, and chief relationship expert at Perfectmatch.com said "The realities of dating change all the time, so there's a lot of folk wisdom about relationships that doesn't hold true anymore." Waldbieser offers four "new" rules to debunk four commonly held pieces of "conventional wisdom", and features the advice of four (Ph.D., Psy.D.) experts.

**Identification of discourse.** This article was featured in a *WH* segment entitled "Sex and Relationships", and the presumed relationship status of the audience is in a relationship/dating. Waldbieser's article hails readers by offering sex and relationship advice, as well as with the full-page photo title page. "Love & Sex Version2.0" signifies itself as a part of a relational discourse, as well as a discourse on gendered expectations and roles.

The articles charged *WH* readers with the responsibility of keeping their relationships "fresh" by adopting "new rules" for love and offered a very narrow definition

of acceptable relational behaviors. The status of being in a relationship was held as the high standard, and readers were discouraged from doing things which may compromise or threaten this dating status (see new rule “Honesty is not always the best policy”).

**Identification of subjectification.** Similar to the *Cosmopolitan* article “What Guys Know About Sex That You Don’t” (May 2009), the structure and composition of Waldbieser’s article highlight the role of subjectification in the text. “Love and Sex Version 2.0” aims to “tweak” four “traditional pieces of advice” and each section of the article focuses on one piece of “conventional wisdom” followed by a “new rule”, both featured in bolded, capitalized and enlarged text. Each section also includes the advice of one of the article’s four experts.

For example, one piece of conventional wisdom Waldbieser reviews is, “If you cheat, you should confess”, which is replaced with the new rule, “Honesty is not always the best policy”. Waldbieser says “cheating on your guy is almost always a selfish act – and so is telling him about it.” Waldbieser argues that while confessing may assuage guilt, it can also “shatter your man’s trust in you and make him feel inadequate and insecure”. Robi Ludwig, Psy.D, a psychotherapist, added that “If you’re at a point where you can stop cheating and are ready to deal with the dissatisfaction in your relationship that likely caused you to stray, you may not need to burden your partner with your impulsive, regrettable choices.” While advice about cheating did not say, on the one hand, that women *should* be faithful, on the other hand, the supplementary box filled with time-tested adages about love was filled with a strong emphasis on monogamy, suggesting not to focus too heavily on greener grass in other people’s relationships, and

that sex with the same person results in “familiarity” and “deeper intimacy”, which will “keep you both extremely satisfied for years to come”.

This structure is used to discuss all four topics within the article. Waldbieser’s article views select pieces of “conventional wisdom” as restrictive and damaging, and replaces these pieces of wisdom with “new rules” that Waldbieser and the experts use to instructively privilege these pieces of dating and sexual behavioral recommendations over their predecessors. Waldbieser uses subjectification to demonstrate the irrelevance of “conventional wisdom”, and to directly recommend specific behaviors that have suggested, and positively reinforced outcomes to readers.

**Exploration of connotation.** Waldbieser uses connotation throughout the article to suggest that readers’ sex lives and relationships are suffering based on the premise that they are needlessly holding on to age-old advice that doesn’t hold true anymore. These “new rules” assume that readers are unhappy, and frequently blundering and unintentionally hurtful in their sexual relationships, as well as generally unaware of the consequences and interpretations of these supposed blunders. Despite that there is some authorship suggesting that women are “relational beings to their core” (see *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman’s Soul* by John and Stasi Eldredge), Waldbieser’s article seems to connote quite the opposite by assuming female readers have blindly upheld these pieces of “conventional wisdom” and suggesting they are unaware of the potential consequences of following that advice.

Waldbieser’s article also conveyed conceptions about masculine ego and its relationship to sexual performance common in other women’s magazines, by arguing that women should protect their partner’s ego by avoiding “complicated” conversations

about lackluster sexual performances. Waldbieser perpetuated a version of the 'orgasmic imperative' discussed in previous studies (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Although Waldbieser writes that it is acceptable to fake an orgasm if you won't be making it to "O-Town" during that particular intimate session, she also cautions against regularly faking orgasms that encourage your partner to keep doing whatever he is doing "wrong". The connotation here is that the sexual intercourse which satisfies the orgasmic imperative is *better sex*.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The title page of this article has a full page black-and-white photo, featuring a white couple provocatively positioned - the man above the woman. What is shown of the female model's body is scantily clad, in a sheer camisole and undergarments, exposing her midriff, arms, neck, cleavage and upper thigh. Almost nothing is seen of the male model, outside of his head, which is positioned above and close to the female model's face as she lies on the bed or sofa where they lay, as well as his left hand, which is shown touching the female model's exposed upper thigh. The photo features a fuchsia-colored circle containing the following white text, "Get fresh with him." The photo also features the title of the article in bolded and enlarged text, "Love & Sex Version 2.0", and subtext as follows, "Your relationship behavior may need an upgrade. Here, hot new advice to follow."

This photo depicts male and female models in a sexual context. Given that the presumed relationship status of readers is that they are in a relationship, the photograph portrays the sexual or physical aspect of the relationship as very significant. The text accompanying the photo and article title also hails readers to the article, assuming that they are in need of "hot new advice to follow".

Alongside the main text of the article three bolded and enlarged statistics were featured from an International Communications research survey, iVillage/msnbc.com, and a *Reader's Digest*/gallup survey. The first was that “66% of women say their desire for sex suffers after a stressful day”, the second was that “75% of Americans say “I love you” daily”, and the third was that “30% of cheaters regret it”. The article also contains a supplementary box with the bolded and enlarged title text, “Love wisdom that still applies” and the bolded subtext, “These adages have stuck over time for good reason: They actually work.” The adages listed are, “Don’t live together before you’re married”, “The grass always looks greener on the other side”, “Don’t sleep with him on the first date”, and “The sex gets better over time”. Each of these four adages that “works” also includes the advice of one of the article’s four experts.

Each statistic pertains to a relationship issue discussed under one of the four topics addressed by Waldbieser’s article. These statistics are provided by well-known public polling groups and websites, and lend credibility to the assessments and critiques of Waldbieser and the experts consulted by the article. When these statistics are read side-by-side with the text of the article, they also support Waldbieser’s premise that each of the pieces of “conventional wisdom” should be replaced by the “new rules” offered by the article.

### ***Maxim*, November 2009: “Have Condom, Will Travel”**

**Description.** In “Have Condom, Will Travel” author Gillian Telling tells *Maxim* readers about the allure, and rise, of “crazy” sex travelers have on vacation. Telling’s article dealt with three topics, “The Perfect Getaway”, “Going the Distance”, and “Into the Wild”. The article featured 12 testimonies from ‘friends’ of Telling’s, as well as some of her own anecdotes, and the expert opinion of Ian Kerner, PhD. Telling compares “sex

at home” to “eating at home”, and compares the bland, regular sex life of readers to eating a “delicious” tuna melt at home, versus being ‘wowed’ by eating the Tuna Supreme with Cheese at a restaurant. To elevate your sex life out of the doldrums Telling advises, “if you want to get the most out of your sex life, sometimes you have to pack it up, take it away, and bust it out in a totally new setting. Go south (or west, or east – anywhere), young man, and you’ll strike sexual gold.”

**Identification of discourse.** “Have Condom, Will Travel” was featured in *Maxim’s* “Sex” segment, and deals with the physical aspects of sexual intercourse, and scenarios most likely to result in sexual acquisition. Readers are hailed to the article by the bolded and enlarged text reading “sex”, and “Have Condom, Will Travel”, as well as the photograph on the title page.

Though Telling describes some of the hypothetical benefits/rewards of traveling, the text of the article at large has little to do with traveling or taking vacations as far as making recommendations, trip planning, ideal destinations, etc. Instead, Telling’s article makes convincing use of descriptive elements, particularly the testimonial stories provided by her ‘friends’ for the interview. The article only contained one reference to an ‘expert’ opinion, and Telling focuses on making her article credible by including interviews with women readers assume she knows.

Despite that the article focused generally on advising everyone to have more sex, and more experimental sex, the article did not really presume readers were single/dating/in a relationship in particular. Most of the testimonies were noticeably from women in relationships, sharing stories about their risqué acts of sexual deviance with their husbands and boyfriends while on vacation.

**Identification of subjectification.** The use of subjectification allows a person who creates content, in this case author Gillian Telling, to influence readers or consumers of said content to adopt suggested behaviors or attitudes. In articles such as “What Guys Know About Sex That You Don’t” (*Cosmopolitan*, May 2009) that focus on advice or articles that provide checklists, such as “Couples: Feels Like the First Time” (*Men’s Health*, November 2009), the role and use of subjectification are more clear than in articles like “Have Condom, Will Travel”. Telling’s article differs from other articles about love, sex and relationships in that it does not openly give *advice*. Telling’s article doesn’t follow the problem-solution structure of other articles composed that way, and as such, subjectification is more subtle in her article. Telling’s premise is that the information and instructions provided by “Have Condom, Will Travel” are necessary, despite that there is no obvious indication that is the case. Telling does not refer to any interviews she has conducted with women who are unsatisfied with their “sex at home”, or cite any statistics indicating that “vacation sex” is a necessary improvement upon sex in a relationship. Instead, Telling uses interviews with her ‘friends’ to suggest to readers that all women want to have wilder, more experimental sex, with their partners, when the context is ideal (i.e. on vacation).

For example, in “Into the Wild” (featured in bolded text), Telling discusses the “natural evolution of all this horniness”, introducing topics like couples swinging, orgies, bisexual experimentation, and “resorts designed specifically for partner-swapping orgiastic sex” (i.e. Hedonism in Jamaica). “Piper” shared that she and her boyfriend have “swung” twice, both times while vacationing. “Piper” said that while the sex was “crazy and hot”, it was “not something [they’d] ever do in the town [they] live in”.

Telling also offers her own opinions on the allure of “vacation sex” to illustrate to readers that these views and behaviors are true of many women, and to engineer her own credibility as a trusted authority on the opposite sex. For example, Telling asks, “What is it about a vacation that makes a woman so horny? Let’s start with the obvious: She’s not working, running errands, or taking care of anyone but herself.” Under the topic of “The Perfect Getaway” (featured in bolded text), Telling also discusses “location, location, location” as a factor for vacation sex, saying, “...I always have more sex when I’m vacationing – but especially if I’m in a tropical climate.” Telling explains, “Something about being nearly naked in a bikini, all hot, sweaty, and oiled up, makes me much more ready to go for it than having to remove eight layers of clothing and a pair of slush-covered boots.”

Telling’s use of subjectification does not recommend specific behaviors, but instead, seeks to influence attitudes of readers. Telling does not directly suggest that readers do anything in particular, at any point in the article. However, Telling does imply that the readers’ sex lives are drab if they do not contain the exploits of “vacation sex” as she details it, and also assumes these exploits are scenarios readers should and do find appealing/attractive. By incorporating the opinions of numerous female ‘friends’ Telling uses her position as an ‘insider’ to the female viewpoint to further suggest to readers an attitude which expects that women want to be viewed in relation to these sexual vignettes and that these scenarios are common/typical.

**Exploration of connotation.** Telling’s article is premised upon the fact that readers are having boring “sex at home”, instead of wild, exotic “vacation sex”. The connotation throughout the article is that if readers are not having the wild “vacation

sex” described by Telling’s numerous interviewees, their sex lives are lacking and unsatisfying. The article is written from a woman’s perspective, and only includes interviews with female “friends” of the author. Telling uses these interviews to connote that if readers do go on vacation, they will enjoy wilder sex simply by going on vacation with their partners, who plan extensively for having wild sex on these excursions.

For example, Telling describes one friend’s routine, “Melody”, which includes “a ton of prep work ahead of time”. “Melody” “makes sure to get a Brazilian wax and buys a sexy new pair of panties for each night she and her boyfriend will be gone”. “Melody” also says, “We live together, and it’s easy to get lazy about things like grooming and lingerie. But when we go away, I know we’re going to be boning every night, so I need to make sure I look hot for him.” Interviews like this one suggest to readers that Telling’s description of the female psyche and sexual arousal are accurate, and that the acquisition of sex requires little effort from the male partner.

The use of testimonial descriptive elements makes the experiences shared seem more sincere, and the text of the article was also very sexually explicit. The article hailed men as being exclusively interested in sex, and parlays a seemingly ‘insightful’ glance into ‘real’ women’s sexual thoughts, desires and preferences by making use of the graphic testimonies of Telling’s numerous ‘friends’. The voyeuristic tales of various sexual exploits throughout the article also allowed Telling to connote to readers that women *want* to be viewed this way, and in relation to their ‘wild’ sexual repertoire(s).

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The article includes two photos, about one-half and one-third of a page in size respectively, each containing the same two, female models (non-white and white). The first photo shared the title page and featured both

models in bikini swimwear, with their arms wrapped around each other. The non-white model is standing upright, while the other female model is posed directly opposite her, with her head tilted back, and one leg straddling the standing model's hip. The non-white model's eyes are almost fully closed, and she is posed with her lips apart, close to the throat of the other model suggestively. The second photo features one model topless (her bikini top is on the ledge of the bathtub) in the "spoon" position with the other female model in a hot tub without water, though both models appear wet. The topless model has her eyes closed, both arms around the other female model, while the second model looks directly at the camera with an overtly sexual gaze.

Telling's article also included a sidebar on the second page of the article entitled "Know Your Vacation Sex", featured in bolded and enlarged text with the subtitle, "What kind of banging are you in for? Depends where you're going". The sidebar included descriptions of "Thailand sex" (i.e. "Your coke-fueled orgy with three horny ladies turns into a gang initiation for three boy-ninjas, who beat you with bamboo and steal everything but your socks."), "dirty motel sex", "staying-with-your-parents sex", "Vegas sex", "cruise ship sex", "Euro sex" (i.e. "You search everywhere for a store that sells condoms, but everything closes at 3 p.m. The next morning you have to be for the morning after pill using hand gestures."), "B&B sex", and "staycation sex" (i.e. "Missionary as usual, but you roll over and go back to sleep after finishing prematurely, instead of pretending it happened because you're late for work."). This section featured a small photo of a 'do not disturb' door hanger, two red die, and a porcelain doll.

The bulk of the article has little to do with taking vacations themselves, travel recommendations, etc. The photos even, have almost nothing at all to do with traveling,

with the exception of wardrobe selections for the models (swimwear). Even then, they also clearly and nearly exclusively focus on sex, sexual acquisition and sexual connotation. The photos also suggest these connotations to readers while reading and interpreting the text of the article.

The photos allude to an element of homoerotic lesbianism, a reflection of a widely accepted conception of male fantasy that is also present in the text. While the article discussed some instances of bisexual experimentation, as well as having orgies, or sexual intercourse with multiple partners, the photos do not necessarily accompany any specific content of the text article. Prescriptively speaking however, these photos serve as suggestive indicators of appropriate sexual attitudes for male readers, dictating what they *should* find attractive. The photos merely provide a highly sexualized portrayal of young women that encourages male readers to view them through this narrow, commodified and overly sexual lens.

***Men's Health*, November 2009: "Couples: Feels Like the First Time"**

**Description.** "Feels Like the First Time" is *MH* author Samantha Cleaver's advice on the keys to marital success for couples. Cleaver observed that U.S. divorce rates have gone down during the recession because it's not as affordable to split up as it is to stay together. Cleaver recommends making a play for falling "*back in love*", which the Institute of American Values assures readers is possible. Cleaver highlights five common "marriage stressors": (1) "Your nerves are frayed"; (2) "You're misreading each other"; (3) "You're on the wrong side of the libido gap"; (4) "You're seeing too much of each other"; and (5) "You're ignoring the little things". Cleaver provided a "Your fix" suggestion to alleviate each marriage stressor, and made use of nine 'expert' opinions (Ph.D.s).

**Identification of discourse.** Cleaver's article is presented under the "Couples" segment title, and dispenses marital advice, not general relationship advice. As such, the presumed relationship status of the intended reader is married. Cleaver's article signifies itself as part of a relational discourse that deals with social, gendered and sexual expectations of heterosexual marriage. Cleaver's recommendations are premised upon predictive divorce statistics, and she limits her discussion of rampant marital dissatisfaction to five "marriage stressors" that are the "types of strains [which] challenge couples the most" in order to "make *happily last ever after*".

Cleaver's contribution to relational discourse on the expectations and outcomes of heterosexual marriage is narrow and restrictive. The article focuses on marital dissatisfaction because it is statistically likely, and on the "stressors" which are most likely the source of said dissatisfaction. The article focuses the fact that it is "normal" and "usual" to have marital stress, and on what is "usually" or "normally" the root of this stress. Cleaver uses this more subtle form of check-listing to build limiting constructs of both marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction under normative pretexts.

**Identification of subjectification.** Cleaver's article is an elongated list of issues that are most likely causing stress to readers' marriages, each of which is paired with a "fix". Cleaver uses the advice of nine experts to demonstrate to readers that each of the five most likely "marriage stressors" is the result of research on marital stress and dissatisfaction, as well as to frame each "fix" as the ideal solution to these problems.

For example, in "marriage stressor #1" Gian Gonzaga, PhD, a senior research scientist at eHarmony Labs and an affiliate faculty member at UCLA, argues that stress damages relationships. Eli Finkel, PhD, a professor of psychology at Northwestern

University, also said that “self-control functions like a muscle. If you’ve been implementing a lot of self-control in other domains, you’ll have less left over for your relationship.” To reduce this stressor, Cleaver recommends that couples eat late, so both partners can “unwind” after work by doing something they each do independently to relax, before sitting down to dinner. Lisa Neff, PhD, an assistant professor of human development and family studies at the University of Texas at Austin, says this is important because “husbands of stressed-out wives are especially unhappy”.

Cleaver uses subjectification as a partner to the checklist of “marital stressors” by providing her own “fixes” to these problems. Each “fix” appears in bolded text, and provides a tailor-made solution to the problems that “most” couples are “usually” having. Cleaver provides readers with clear suggestions on how their attitudes and behavior can have negative consequences, and encouraged readers to take personal responsibility and make changes to “fix” these problems.

Cleaver’s use of subjectification also reinforces the premise that the sexual/physical aspect of a relationship suffers as a result of issues or “stressors” that may be more emotional, and further instructs that repairing the sexual/physical aspects of the relationship is paramount to repairing the relationship itself. For example, marriage stressor #3 reflects on how marital tension adversely affects “your sex drive while hers remains revved up (yes, guys, it can happen)”. Michele Weiner-Davis, M.S.W., author of *The Sex-Starved Wife*, observes that the partner with the lower libido typically regulates the “frequency of sex”, which can be problematic for men because “if your partner is the one left wanting, she’ll probably be even more frustrated, critical, and angry, making your life miserable in return.” Cleaver recommends increasing non-

sexual touching to “renew your connection”, “reignite your enthusiasm along the way”, “reduce your stress”, and “improve the way you feel about each other.”

**Exploration of connotation.** “Couples: Feels Like the First Time” provides a limited assessment of the source, nature and cause of marriage stressors, making treatment of the issue of marital dissatisfaction, despite utilizing numerous expert opinions and convincing statistics, cursory at best. Cleaver began the article by reminding readers that “the route to marital happiness might not be as hard to find as you think, but you first have to identify why your relationship is off course.” *MH* experts proceeded to guide readers through a laundry list of problems that they (should) have, and then through a collection of “solutions”, as well as predictions for how their “unhappy” wives “will” (should) respond. The *solutions* Cleaver offered are connoted as a sure thing, in terms of upholding the reward-incentive imperative found in many lifestyle magazines in their instructions on how to establish, maintain and negotiate within intimate relationships.

The reward-incentive imperative refers to the reward-based incentive prescriptive instruction in lifestyle magazines uses persuasively to justify various kinds of behavioral mandates, suggesting that relationship “work” should be evaluated from an end-gain perspective. For example, Cleaver recommends unwinding after work to de-stress yourself, and allow your wife time to de-stress as well. Cleaver emphasizes that this is important, as experts explain that unhappy women beget unhappier men. Thus, your incentive to do the work, and take corrective initiative in your relationship centers on the ultimate benefit, or *reward*, to you, which is you can finally get some rest, you will have more sex, she will understand you better and make changes to suit your needs, etc.

The complicated beast of marital dissatisfaction is connoted as something that can be tackled by the *MH* reader with a few helpful hints, making both the problems, and the solutions seem temporal and less taxing than they may actually be. Cleaver also argues that according to the *MH* experts these “types of strains challenge couples the most,” which yields a limited construction of (acceptable) marital dissatisfaction, and connotes narrow, homogenous, and prescriptive construction of marital bliss (i.e. what it *should* be and only possible in the absence of these strains), by illustrating the inner workings of universally acceptable relational politics.

**Multimodal semiotic elements.** The title page of this article included a black-and-white photo about one half of a page in size, showing two white models, male and female (presumably a couple), lying together atop distressed sheets. Both are pictured from the mouth/cheeks to the waist, the female model is the focal point of the picture, lying on her side with open body language, pictured in undergarments, partially if not fully exposing her midriff, chest, arms and upper thigh, also pictured with a slight smile, and the male model is pictured with one bare hand gripping the upper thigh of the female model. The male model is fully nude from the waist up, his chest is pictured exposed, and he is positioned facing the female model, also on his side, featured with the text, “Bridge the libido gap – no matter which side you’re on – with nonsexual touching. Then see where it leads.”

This photo portrays a pair of male/female models as a couple, in a very sexual context. The article’s text discusses a number of ways each of the five “marriage stressors” can impact a married couple’s sex life. This photo encourages the reading and interpretation that supports that a satisfying sex life is healthy for readers’

marriages. The text accompanying the photo also encourages this interpretation, and additionally suggest that sex is the place from which a relationship may be improved.

This article also included a sidebar graphic entitled “Spicing things up, centerfold-style”, a 1-10 (“Not a chance” to “Can We Post Online?”) scale of answers 697 women said how far they would go “when he fires up his camera”, in the following instances: “lingerie”, “naked but covered”, “topless”, “bikini on a beach”, “artsy nude”, “raunchy nude”, “wet t-shirt”, “making out with girlfriend”, “making out with him”. While this segment does not relate topically to the rest of the article, it adds a playful and sexually suggestive element that seems intended to mitigate the intensity and seriousness of the article’s subject matter.

### **Summary of the Overall Structures of Meaning**

The analytical elements of the Peircian model and the multimodal elements evident in each article elucidate the (re)construction and (re)production of gendered relational and sexual discourse within the examined texts. Each article examined by this study as an individual communicative event is part of a widely shared collective discourse which enables certain gendered social, relational and sexual positions to exist and privileges them over alternative behaviors, attitudes and perspectives. The discursive content of these articles invites readers to validate their adherence to these *accepted* positions or groups in recognizable ways by adopting specified attitudes and behaviors, while wholly excluding alternative *unaccepted* attitudes and behaviors. Through the Peircian model we note that each article signifies its relationship to an established discourse on sex, love and relationships overtly. The prescriptive and instructive content in each article, both textual and multimodal, identifying accepted sexual and relational behaviors and attitudes is subjectified by the heralded advice of

various experts, the use of statistical evidence, and opinion polls/interviews of ‘average’ men and women. Connotation was used as a tool of suggestion and advocacy in each article, buttressing the subjectified advice as acceptable ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’. In this section, these magazine articles are considered in comparative context.

***Cosmopolitan***. Of all four magazines examined in this study *Cosmopolitan* yielded the largest quantity of articles pertaining to sex, love and relationships (56 articles, versus 6 articles in *Maxim*, 21 articles in *Men’s Health*, and 24 articles in *Women’s Health*). *Cosmopolitan* focuses on providing its readers with information and strategies to ‘decode’ the opposite sex by interpreting what men ‘really’ mean.

The articles analyzed in this study showed a relatively even distribution between presumed relationship statuses (i.e. single, dating, in a committed/monogamous relationship). However, regardless of relationship status major emphasis was placed on the frequency and success of sexual encounters. Additionally, sex and physical interaction within relational constructs were framed as the source from which most other aspects of the relationship could be understood, improved and managed.

In order to engineer credibility *Cosmopolitan* articles incorporated an overwhelming amount of descriptive elements, used to normalize their prescriptive and instructive content directed toward female readers, including the use of ‘expert’ opinions (Ph.D.s and authors) and testimonials from other readers, as well as ‘average’ guys who were polled or interviewed on their opinions about various topics and segments in each issue of the magazine.

In advice pertaining to sex specifically *Cosmopolitan* readers were approached as being penis-obsessed and penis-driven. Some authors even blatantly encouraged

women to break from their innate conceptions of sex and sexuality, to be more masculine by mimicking the expert biological male sex drive and skill set (see “What Guys Know about Sex That You Don’t”, *Cosmopolitan*, May 2009). Women were also encouraged to be more sexually active, and sexually aware, in order to please their partners. Sexuality is enacted through *Cosmopolitan* as being less natural for women than men, which is similar to findings made by previous studies (see Farvid & Braun, 2006). The ‘orgasmic imperative’ (see Farvid & Braun, 2006)<sup>2</sup> places the utmost importance on achieving orgasms in all sexual encounters and was repeatedly referenced as a detriment to having a positive, successful sexual experience for all participants.

*Cosmopolitan* also encouraged a negative view of feminism, and feminist gains, which were faulted with preventing women from achieving committed monogamy, an unattainable and ideal relationship goal, because of their newly found access to technology, career opportunities, education, and increased social acceptance of the open expression of female sexual desire. Women are frequently told by *Cosmopolitan* experts to do relationship ‘work’, by cultivating bonding and growth in their relationships with their partners, improving their sexual skills, and by making more of an effort to understand and ‘impress’ men.

In terms of the suggested gains women are told to expect from undertaking this ‘work’, *Cosmopolitan* relies heavily upon its use of the reward-incentive imperative. This imperative conveys to female *Cosmopolitan* readers that ‘work’ is worthwhile because it

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<sup>2</sup> Farvid and Braun (2006) refer to the ‘orgasmic imperative’ as one which associates men’s orgasms as automatic and unproblematic, women’s orgasms as complicated and ‘difficult to achieve’ conversely, while maintaining that the orgasm is the end goal of all sexual relations and encounters and reaffirming a traditional model of ‘masculine’ sexuality as more natural and more important (p. 304).

will result in some greatly desired end result. This imperative devalues the intrinsic value of doing relationship 'work' by encouraging readers to judge the worth of the instructive content they find in *Cosmopolitan*, by the gains they are told to expect when they follow these instructions. Moreover, the gains readers are told both to expect and told to want are most frequently based on determining what men find attractive, getting into a committed/monogamous relationship, and having more, improved upon, sexual relations, which is desirable because *men* want to have more, improved upon, sexual relations.

**Maxim.** *Maxim* contained the least amount of articles explicitly pertaining to sex, love and relationships of all four magazines selected for this study, yielding six articles total. While this was initially surprising, the photographic and textual content of these articles provided a rich source for a multi-modal and multi-tiered Critical Discourse Analysis. The editorial photographs in *Maxim* were very sexually explicit, in terms of their composition and setting, and in terms of nudity. The majority of large photographs (i.e. those accompanying "Have Condom, Will Travel", *Maxim*, November 2009, and "Riding Out the Recession", *Maxim*, July 2009) showed female models in sexual settings and poses, and either in the nude, or very close to it. Unlike the photographs in *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health* or *Women's Health*, the *Maxim* models also made direct eye contact with the camera, inviting readers to view them through an overly sexualized lens, characteristic of pornography.

The textual content in the articles reinforced and encouraged this view. The language in *Maxim* particularly, was extremely explicit. The articles celebrate their own bawdiness and capitalize on the use of the space as one in which authors could be

'real' or 'honest'. This was especially true in the articles which were written by female authors (i.e. "Have Condom, Will Travel", *Maxim*, November 2009, and "Riding Out the Recession", *Maxim*, July 2009), because these demonstrated that women also encourage and celebrate this bawdiness, and included the testimonies of women who were complicit in perpetuating the readers' view of them, and of women generally, as sexual objects.

Articles like "Valentine's Day Upgrade" offered a sex-based reward-incentive imperative, suggesting that women are sexually aroused by the quality of their material consumption, additionally presenting women as being typically, and overwhelmingly concerned with social status, and encouraging men to make extravagant gestures and buy expensive gifts in order to have more sex. Men are hailed as solely being interested in the increased acquisition of sex, regardless of whether in a relationship or single/dating. In terms of identity, or lifestyle choices, *Maxim* offers a limited array of choices. The narratives available are all sexual, aggressively heterosexual at that, and provided limited choices outside of 'traditional' gendered constructions. Men are positioned as the sexual aggressors and women conversely, as passive sexual participants. Women are characterized as sexually eager and available in certain contexts (i.e. on vacation, economic recession, when you buy them expensive or flashy gifts), and men are viewed prescriptively as sexually eager at all times.

One *Maxim* article, "Sexual Stealing", included a limited discussion of homosexuality. One of the article's co-authors, Ky Henderson, writes this description of the scene he intends to reenact with his girlfriend:

After a totally *not* gay afternoon of shirtless volleyball with his flyboy buddies, Maverick (Tom Cruise) realizes he's late for dinner with Charlie

(Kelly McGillis)-again, *not* gay, because it's short for Charlotte. He shows up to her house drenched in sweat, and after she denies his request to use her shower, they eat. When she offers herself to him for dessert, he...declines. Nope, *not* gay. His idea is to leave her in a panting, sexually frustrated heap on her couch so she'll pine for their next encounter. See? Not gay!

This discussion framed rampant homophobia as socially acceptable, and further limited acceptable masculine identities to the archetypal 'alpha-male'. Homosexuality was also briefly addressed for women. In "Have Condom, Will Travel" author Gillian Telling writes,

Another friend of mine met a couple at a bar in New York City, and they all decided to fulfill a mutual fantasy. "They asked if I wanted to go back to their hotel room, which was nearby, and keep drinking. Once we were there the girl started kissing me, and soon we were making out and stripping down while her husband watched and encouraged us to get it on. He eventually joined in, too."

Additionally, in "Riding Out the Recession" author Holly Eagleson encourages male readers to seek out women in a time of economic downturn in the hopes of achieving some of their sexual fantasies including "threesomes, S&M-lite, and sex with strangers," in the hopes that women are interested in crossing these "now or never" acts off of their lists. These articles offer a pseudo-acceptance of female homosexuality as an element of male sexual fantasy and as an intermittent wild or experimental sexual behavior for participants usually under the influence of alcohol, rather than as a distinct choice or identity.

All of the magazines generally emphasized the importance of sex, sexual gratification, sexual acquisition, sexual identity, and sexual satisfaction, in terms of being a 'complete' person, which was true regardless of whether the magazine or article targeted a male or female audience in particular. However, *Maxim* was by far, the most focused on these sexual narratives. While the six *Maxim* articles made an attempt to be

humorous, ironic and irreverent in their tone, all of the textual content was fairly one-dimensional, in that it explicitly, and nearly exclusively, pertained to sex. There was little to no discussion of any other theme, and no real discussion of any other relational context between men and women, outside of physical sex and potential sex.

***Men's Health.*** *Men's Health* yielded 21 articles total. *Men's Health* considers its reader to be savvy and intelligent, which was indicated by the language and vocabulary of the articles. Readers were also encouraged to seek understanding from and about their partners, especially in order to better meet their partners' needs. Experts gave advice in multiple articles in an attempt to help readers understand and explain female psychology and pathology, even at times attempting social commentary. For example, in "She's Out There" author Kyle Western cautions readers against the myth of the pickup, as "the reality is that less than 6 percent of women report having sex with their partners within 2 days or less of meeting them" and a survey of 1,034 women by StrategyOne, a market research agency, "reveals that nearly one in four women would be embarrassed to admit that she met a mate in a bar."

*Men's Health* authors and editors also approached readers as either being in a monogamous, committed relationship, or desiring to be. This assumption was evident in advice based on the additional assumption that men desire to have strong and successful relationships that are built upon deep bonds, and that men are also willing to take on the workload necessary to ensure that their relationships are working. The editorial photographs included with the articles echo this sentiment. With the exception of the "Couples: Feels Like the First Time" article, the portrayals of male and female models were not overly sexualized or reliant upon nudity.

*Men's Health* focused heavily on being 'informative' and seeming credible. Each of the four issues examined contains a "MH EXPERT ADVISORS" page, which lists various Ph.D.s and M.D.s consulted in a particular issue. The experts are listed with photos and a brief explanation of their degree, position(s), or research focus. The articles included the most 'expert' opinions, as well as a large number of statistics, polls, and study results from reputable sources (i.e. The Pew Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau, several peer-reviewed academic journals). In an interview with Christopher Hansen in 2007 *Men's Health* editor-in-chief David Zinczenko explained how the magazine has continued to boost its circulation and overcome the largely male audience's trepidation against health as a subject by saying,

Health class in high school was about venereal disease...so we redefined the word to be inclusive of everything that could improve a man's life. Great sex. Great food. Endorphin-boosting exercise. Looking and feeling your best. We turned health into a concept every guy would want to embrace, starting with the healthy guy on the cover. He was living the life, and our readers could achieve that have-it-all lifestyle as well, if they picked us up on the newsstand.

Boni (2002) has argued that the "recent and growing success of *Men's Health*...is a reflection of men's changing gender relations and identities" (p. 465). Overall, *Men's Health* was certainly less misogynistic, and more respectful toward women in its treatment of a wide variety of sexual and relational issues than *Maxim* and *Cosmopolitan*. In this way, the magazine embraces the idea that men 'should' be sensitive and well-informed, which is a deviation from the 'alpha-male' masculinity advocated by *Maxim*, for example. Despite that the publication maintained a generally progressive view in this regard, further analysis shows that while it may be true that *Men's Health* is redefining male identity as a concept through their approach to these

topics, particularly those that deal with how men treat and perceive women, this (r)evolutionary editorial approach only pertains to how *men* are defined.

The *Men's Health* approach to the topics of love, sex and relationships is distinct from *Cosmopolitan* and *Maxim* in its informative style, abundant use of expert opinions, studies and research, as well as editorial perspective on readers' goals in love, sex and relationships. The style and nature of the photography and text in *Men's Health* on these topics is more sophisticated, sensitive, and even progressive as a result, which some scholars may attribute to the changing nature of male identity (see Boni, 2002). In spite of the headway made by these distinctions the limited range of these topics reveals that lifestyles and behaviors recommended and accepted by *Men's Health* are less progressive and very much in line with narrow, hetero-normative, patriarchal gendered co-constructions found in the mainstream publications.

***Women's Health.*** *Women's Health* yielded a total of 24 articles at various ends of the spectrum in terms of hetero-normative gender expectations. Similarly to *Men's Health*, *Women's Health* placed a great deal of importance on seeming 'informative'. *Women's Health* used many 'expert' opinions, and also provided the same "Advisors" page in each issue detailing the various experts that were consulted throughout the issue.

A few articles, such as "Is being an Alpha Wife ruining your life?" (*Women's Health*, February 2009), were decidedly post-feminist, advocating a return to femininity in the domestic sphere now that feminist gains, such as success in the workplace, have been achieved. This article in particular heavily criticized 'do-it-all divas' for abandoning their husbands and children, depicting their dissatisfaction in the editorial photo spread,

and damaging the quality of their marital or intimate relationships. On the other end of the spectrum, articles such as “Becoming a mom, minus the dad” celebrated positive affirmations of breaking free from the constraint of gender norms. For example, author Lori Gottlieb describes her endeavor upon single parenthood saying,

It taught me that we don't get to order a life plan like we order takeout: “I'll have one loving husband, two adorable kids, one flexible but exciting career, one healthy body, and the ability to travel, with the dressing on the side.” Nobody's life is tied up that neatly in a bow – not even my married friends'.

*Women's Health* editors and authors treated monogamous and committed relationship statuses preferentially, similar to discourse examined in *Cosmopolitan*, in almost all of the articles giving advice on sex, love or relationships. For example, “Love & sex version 2.0” author Jill Waldbieser warns women in relationships against discussing infidelity saying, “Confessing an indiscretion can shatter your man's trust in you and make him feel inadequate and insecure. More often than not, it also results in an ugly break up.”

The analysis of this study shows that *Women's Health* editors and authors consider their readers to be free, successful women, empowered to make choices that make them gender equals, such as having a career and a family. However, *Women's Health* also perpetuates a conservative gendered construction of femininity which suggests that women should serve their partners in a multiplicity of ways, especially by protecting their (male) partner's ego and improving their sexual skills, in addition to juggling an array of post-feminist elements, such as financial independence and success, having a career, sexual freedom, etc.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

In the analysis of this study answering Research Question 1, What are the differences, if any, in the ways in which men's, women's, and health-based lifestyle magazines construct, (re)produce, enact, and frame gendered sexual discourses?, revealed many common threads between *Cosmopolitan*, *Maxim*, *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*.

All four magazines were prone to 'check-listing', although it was most prevalent in *Cosmopolitan*. A number of articles made informal lists of problems, advice, tips, etc., while a number of articles also entitled themselves as lists, such as "12 Reasons Guys Love Badass Chicks" or "Love & Lust: 50 Guy Phrases Translated". The danger in check-listing is not so much in what makes the typical 'short' list, but more so in which problems, issues, concerns and preferences do not make the list. Gauntlett (2002) argues for example, that lifestyle choices give personal narratives an "identifiable shape", which links us to "communities of people 'like us'", and illustrates that "the behavior associated with our chosen lifestyle will likely have a practical value in itself, but is also a visible expression of a certain narrative of self-identity" (p. 103). The act of listing (re)produces a small number of accepted choices, preferences, and even problems that narrowly define and confine the 'typical' and desired heterosexual existence from the popular, lifestyle editorial perspective.

Giddens (1991) suggests that in recent history sexual behavior became closely associated with intimate relationships, often characterized by love and trust, which resulted in sexual development and sexual satisfaction being tied to "the reflexive project of the self" (p. 164). Giddens emphasizes the importance of the relationship

between sexual identity and sexuality and self-identity, particularly in an era where what Gauntlett (2002) terms “intimate relationship discourses” are being fitted into “autobiographical narratives” (p. 101). In this study sex was found to be at the heart of identity, self-identity, how we identify each other, and how we are instructed to identify ourselves, and masculine and feminine discursive constructions in all four magazines portrayed happiness as contingent upon knowing and understanding this sexual identity.

As a filmmaker, Alfred Hitchcock’s success has been attributed many times to his ability to create character *types* instead of *characters*, which allowed him to create a normalized concept, or conception, that could be eased without struggle into any person’s cinematic experience. In popular lifestyle magazines the model includes descriptive elements, such as the testimonies of readers or members of the opposite sex, and reading about incidents, situations, and relationships that are enacted in ways which make them seem firsthand, familiar, and likely to occur. These descriptive elements, testimonies in particular, create normalized conceptions of gender roles and sexual identities, as well as enable identity convergence. The result is a homogenized conception of sexual identity, and narrow constructions of male and female sexuality within that conception.

All four magazines were found to be overwhelmingly hetero-normative, almost entirely ignoring alternative gendered and sexual identities. In the remote aspects in which alternative sexual identities were discussed, the discussion was limited to homosexuality, and even then broached in an ‘ironic’, but homophobic tone, or broached indirectly and dismissively. Even ethnically or racially diverse models or actors

indicate in interviews or are positioned editorially to seem to want the “same” things as “everyone else”. Outside of this limited (re)production of racial or ethnic diversity, little to no mention was made of any other significant demographic differences, albeit education, income, social class, race, ethnicity or sexuality, by any of the four magazines.

The magazine format utilized by all four magazines is generic, shared by men’s, women’s and health magazines. This is typified by the fact that the several issues and varying publications relied upon the same authors and relationship experts (ex. Holly Eagleson, Ky Henderson, Yvonne K. Fulbright, Ph.D., and Helen Fisher, Ph.D.). Each of the magazines devotes a significant presence to fashion, beauty, style, celebrity interviews, consumer culture and (hetero)sexuality. Within this format, there are two kinds of underlying, ongoing, conversations taking place on the subject of gendered norms, expectations, roles, and acceptable behaviors. In one conversation, post-feminist elements, such as “sexual freedom, the right to drink, smoke, have fun in the city, and be economically independent,” as McRobbie (2009a) might suggest, have been absorbed by an array of topics under any of the aforementioned segments in each magazine (p. 12). These elements are not signified in any special way; rather they are taken to be assumed both from the editorial perspective and by readers. Women are consistently referred to as persons who have careers, who frequent bars, who are openly interested in sexual experiences, etc. This discursive construction suggests that gender equality exists, as women can and will be found in and have many of the formerly male-dominated or exclusively male socially accepted activities, interests and attitudes. McRobbie (2009a) might also argue that this discourse presumes that gender

equality exists “to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed” (p. 12). In *Maxim* for example, this discourse justifies the prescriptive editorial perspective on masculine interest in the acquisition of sex. Women are constructed as being financially independent, or generally busy with their own interests, and positioned as being open to frequent sexual encounters because their needs may not include relational or emotional entanglements, or financial support.

In a second discourse, because post-feminism is assumed, women are asked to return to and repair conventional identities of femininity and the domestic sphere. Women are told to abandon their ‘natural’ or innate conceptions of sexuality and acceptable relational behaviors, and adopt sexual tendencies and attitudes they are told men will find more attractive. Women are also told to restrain the impulses feminist gains have given them (i.e. working single-mindedly for career success or seeking sexual satisfaction outside of a monogamous relationship). There are a multiplicity of ways in which men’s, women’s and health-based lifestyle magazines tell women that the domestic sphere requires a return to femininity, which women are told will not upset the feminist gains they have achieved, or compromise the gender equality that is taken for granted. . The discourse of ‘work-life balance’, for example, problematizes female success and empowerment subtly criticizing married career women as , “alpha wives”, subject to new insecurities and failures. Without directly challenging feminism (i.e. empowerment and freedom) these magazines tell women their professional success is the source of relationship failures (see McRobbie, 2009b). These conversations work hand in hand to promote the return to femininity, i.e., female subordinate male-female relationships. The testimonies of women that are invoked to shape this conversation,

available in nearly every article, engineer feminine consent to and participation in their subordination in ways that enact the traditional gender hierarchy as desirable, a message disseminated to both male and female readers.

Answering Research Question 2, Is any one genre more *progressive*, in terms of reflecting changes brought on by dynamic cultural and political elements (i.e. third-wave feminism and the popularity of health-based lifestyle publications)?, is more problematic.

Lindemann-Nelson (1996, 1997, 2001) coined the term 'counter-narrative,' meaning "a story that resists an oppressive identity and attempts to replace it with one that commands respect" (2001, p. 6). Harter, Scott, Novak, Leeman and Morris (2006) added that counter-narratives are meant to "disrupt stories of domination" and as such "represent a performative strategy with particular significance for individuals marginalized or otherwise absent within dominant discourses" (p. 4). Throughout this study I have discursively and textually examined mainstream and health-based lifestyle magazines in the hope of finding any such counter-narratives. Instead, we find that the editorial content within these magazines pertaining to love, sex and relationships prescriptively and instructively re-inscribes a sexist, hierarchal and patriarchal structure of gender relations, while ignoring existing dimensions of diversity within male-female relationship (i.e. race, class, education, sexual orientation). Discursive (re)productions within these magazines pertaining to love, sex and relationships construct gender as an unproblematic, legitimizing disparate gender statuses as natural and necessary, even preferred, while ignoring or criticizing alternatives. This content overtly affirms feminist gains while simultaneously advocating women's return to subordinate and subservient

sexual and relational positions. It hails readers legitimize themselves as sexually active heterosexual adults, heralding only a narrow set of acceptable relational and sexual attitudes, behaviors, and identities.

Hegemonic ideological structures maintain themselves by promoting adherence to ideals, social practices and actions where general conformity already exists. In the absence of counter-narratives, it is impossible to consider either *Men's Health* or *Women's Health* any more progressive than *Cosmopolitan* or *Maxim*. These findings are disappointing, in that while both health-based magazines are more 'informative', and more comprehensive, they only seem progressive. *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* both reproduce the same narrow sexual and relational narratives which create limited discursive constructions of masculinity and femininity, evident in mainstream lifestyle publications *Maxim* and *Cosmopolitan*, albeit in texts which are more sensitive, well-researched, and use a more impressive, scientific vocabulary. Even this small distinction can be explained simply as a stylistic or aesthetic difference instead of a reflection of wavering editorial commitment to perpetuating gender inequity, based only on the desire to seem informative and scientific because readers identify themselves by selecting these magazines as being interested in *health* issues and having preferences to be addressed from an informational editorial perspective.

Upon undertaking this study, there was some expectation of expansion in both the range of topics and perspectives given a voice in *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* in comparison to what was already known about the 'mainstream' content of *Maxim* and *Cosmopolitan*. Critical Discourse Analysis revealed that in spite of these hopeful expectations, gendered discourses and behavioral expectations of men and women, as

well as the perpetuated and expectative identities of a heterosexual man or woman and being recognized as such, are very consistent throughout all four publications. While trend analysis is not a formal part of this study, these findings do raise a question speculatively, of why hasn't the editorial content pertaining to sex, love and relationships changed? The rise of third wave feminism, and other social, political and cultural circumstances discussed in earlier chapters of this study show a number of ways in which other groups have received increased opportunities and recognition, in addition to women. The number of institutions, organizations, and advocacy groups that locate marginalized and alternative groups and lifestyles has vastly increased. These achievements are both necessary, and successful in their own rights. Unfortunately, these marginalized and alternative identities are also relegated to certain, visible and conservatively defined spaces which make their existence generally understood, without requiring that they become accepted or recognized by mainstream publications. As such, the 'outsiders' that would provide counter-narratives remain outsiders, and gendered and sexual discourses offered by *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, are consistently filled with narrowly heralded sexual and relational attitudes, behaviors, and identities. However, McRobbie's (2009a) argument that magazines have a constant need to re-invent themselves does lend hope to the idea that, given the editorial will, broader constructions of masculinity and femininity might one day be expressed in these magazines.

## CHAPTER 6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted in light of social, political and cultural contexts that suggested sexualized gendered portrayals of men and women in lifestyle magazines could be changing. These contexts included, but are not limited to, evident positive and more accurate changes in gendered media coverage (see Yun et al., 2007) and the growing success of both men's and women's health lifestyle magazines.

Magazine publishing naturally complements special interests. As such, there are many specialized publications within a broad genre like lifestyle magazines. Adding or interchanging one or a few of these publications focused on a particular ethnic group for example, such as *Latina* or *Essence*, is one way to expand the parameters of this study. Health-based lifestyle magazines consider themselves to be progressive, forward-thinking, and holistic, speaking to men and women the way they would like to be spoken to, about the things they want to know (see *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* Media Kits). Including lifestyle magazines that target a particular ethnicity would supplement the comparison between mainstream publications (i.e. *Maxim* and *Cosmopolitan*) and magazines that position themselves in order to offer a different view point, providing the same kind of contrast that including *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* do for this study.

The magazines selected for this study are all successful, widely-known U.S. magazines that are still expanding and growing, despite the general decline of other print media. Several of the studies included in the research utilized by this study examined versions of *Cosmopolitan* or *Maxim* published in the U.K. or Australia. For the men's magazines in particular, several popular and well-know magazines, like *Maxim*, were initially printed in the U.K. and ultimately experienced great success once crossed-

over to the U.S. market. Because of success in the United States *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Men's Health* have all expanded their publication internationally. Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis are equally concerned by the dimensions of race, class, and ethnicity, and how they affect the discourse of gendered hierarchy. A cross-cultural discourse analysis is one way to expand the parameters of this type of study.

Editorial content categorized by the magazines themselves as pertaining to sex, love and relationships was selected for this study because these types of articles openly and overtly advocate specific strategies, gendered behaviors, attitudes and opinions. However, CDA places significant emphasis on multimodal semiotic analysis, which would certainly allow for the selection of editorial photographs, advertisements or variant editorial content that is more implicit for a study similar to this one. Also, in future examinations of magazine content, editorial or otherwise, the importance and relevance of digital content available on magazine websites, etc., will continue to grow. Including online content or solely focusing online content is another option for future studies.

This study also exclusively focused on a specific type of editorial content found in a single year (2009) for each of the magazines examined. Much of the past research on magazine content referenced by this study was conducted using multiple years of publication for the magazines examined to determine the degree of change, if any, evident in various types of content. CDA does not constrain the volume of material selected for study, nor the type of material selected for study. Examining these magazines over time, particularly if different types of lifestyle magazines or digital content are included, is another useful expansion of this study.

Finally, this study relied upon the editorial focus in content pertaining to sex, love and relationships, not reader or audience interpretation. Boni (2002) conducted a discourse analysis of media framing of masculine ideals, imagery and identities in the Italian publication of *Men's Health* that included this dimension. Boni (2002) centered his two-part analysis first on identifying various textual frames of masculine identity, lifestyle and body image through discourse analysis, and secondly on the use of a series of focus groups to identify the audience frames used to 'make sense' of the magazine. Using focus groups or in-depth interviews in this way would be another way to expand the depth and dimensions of this study by providing localized insight into how specific populations, male or female, make sense of the discursive instructions provided to them by popular lifestyle, health-based or otherwise, magazines.

APPENDIX  
ARTICLE CATALOG BY MONTH

February 2009

<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i> January/February	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
"Cosmo News: Relationships - Why More Chicks are Now Cheating" p. 34; A(F)*	"Ask the Guy Next Door" p. 24; A(M)	"Stuff for Her: Valentine's Day Upgrade" p. 36; A(Mult)	"Ask the Girl Next Door" p. 20; A(F)
"Man Manual: The Man Report" p. 47; A(F/Mult)	"Breakthroughs: Sex" p. 32; A(Mult)	"The Decider: She Loves You or Loves You Not" p. 96; A(M)	"Sex Bulletin" p. 32; A(Mult/F)
"Man Manual: Guy Spy - What Makes a Great Girlfriend" p. 48; A(F/Mult)	"Life Lessons: The Obama Rules" p. 83; A(M)		"Malegrams: Sex - Pleasure Updated" p. 52; A(Mult/F)
"Man Manual: His Point of View - The Best Times to Impress Him" p. 50; A(M)	"Is Being an Alpha Wife Ruining Your Life?" p. 132; A(F)*		"Malegrams: Couples - Stroke Her Ego, Stroke Her Fire" p. 54; A(Mult)
"Man Manual: Cosmo for Your Guy - Put Her in a Sexy Mood" p. 52; A(F)	"Bring Sexy Back" p. 138; A(F)		"MH Woman: Catch the Dream Girl" p. 98; A(F)
"Man Manual: how I got him to..." p. 54; A(F)			"Couples: She's Online, Digging Up Your Dirt" p. 98; A(M)
"Love & Lust: Couples" p. 97; A(F)			"Speak Her Sex Language" p. 112; A(F)
"Love & Lust: What Sex Feels Like for Him" p. 98; A(M)			"You: The Whole-Life Audit" ("Upgrade #5 Your Sex Life") p. 121; A(M/Mult)
"Love & Lust: 50 Guy Phrases Translated" p. 102; A(F)			

February 2009 Continued

	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i> January/February	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
	"Love & Lust: Freaky Sex Dreams - Do NOT Be Alarmed p. 106; A(F)			
	"Love & Lust: New Guy? This Trick Still Works" p. 108; A(F)			
	"Love & Lust: Ask Him Anything" p. 114; A(M)			
	"Totally Cosmo: Perfect Your First Date Mojo" p. 160; A(M)			
	"Naughty Messages to Treat Each Other to" p. 185; A(F)			
	"Cosmo Weekend: You and Him" p. 190; A(F)			
Total	15 articles	5 articles	2 articles	8 articles

\*Indicates the article is an exemplar, and was selected for detailed analysis

A(F/Mult/M) indicates whether the author of the article is female (F), multiple authors (Mult), or male (M)

May 2009

<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i>	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
"Cosmo News: Relationships - The Sexiest New Kind of Woman" p. 42; A(F)	"Ask the Guy Next Door" p. 22; A(M)	"Sexual Stealing" p. 51	"Ask the Girl Next Door" p. 22; A(F)
"Man Manual: The Man Report" p. 55; A(M)	"Breakthroughs: Sex" p. 34; A(Mult)		"Sex Bulletin" p. 34; A(F/Mult)
"Man Manual: Guy Spy" p. 60; A(F)	"Your Time: Couples" p. 64; A(Mult/F)		"Malegrams: Sex - Cut to the Climax" p. 54; A(F/Mult)*
"Man Manual: Cosmo for Your Guy" p. 62; A(F)	"Sex & Relationships: Love & Sex Version 2.0" p. 82; A(F)*		"Malegrams: Couples - Make Her Chase You" p. 56; A(F)
"Love & Lust: Date Night Just Got Hotter" p. 107; A(F)	"Becoming a Mom, Minus the Dad" p. 108; A(F)*		"Couples: Her Body on Booze" p. 104; A(F)
"Love & Lust: What Guys Know about Sex that You Don't" p. 111; A(F)*	"Sex Secrets all Men Keep" p. 148; A(F)		
"Wedding Day Freak-Outs" p. 115; A(F)	"The Average Woman: Sexy Time" p. 158; A(Mult)		
"What You Must Know by the Fourth Date" p. 120; A(F)			
"Guy Truths They'd Tell if They Had the Guts" p. 122; A(M/Mult)			
"12 Ways to Feed Your Sex Drive" p. 126; A(F/Mult)			
"Love & Lust: Little Love Truths"; A(F)			

May 2009 Continued

	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i>	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
	"Love & Lust: Ask Him Anything" p. 140; A(M)			
	"You You You: The Single Girl's Bible" p. 152; A(F)			
	"You You You: 50 Things to Do Naked" p. 154; A(F)			
	"Cosmo Life Weekend: You and Him" p. 218; A(F)			
Total	15 articles	7 articles	1 article	5 articles

\*Indicates the article is an exemplar, and was selected for detailed analysis

A(F/Mult/M) indicates whether the author of the article is female (F), multiple authors (Mult), or male (M)

July 2009

<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i> July/August	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i> July/August
"Cosmo News: Relationships - Can You Have More than One Soul Mate?" p. 32; A(Mult)	"Ask the Guy Next Door" p. 22; A(M)	"Ask the Dating Gamer" p. 6	"Ask the Girl Next Door" p. 18; A(F)
"Man Manual: 4 Signs He Secretly Craves You" p. 50; A(F)	"Breakthroughs: Sex" p. 34; A(Mult)	"Riding Out the Recession" p. 45; A(F)*	"Sex Bulletin" p. 30; A(F/Mult)
"Man Manual: The Guy Report" p. 52; A(M)	"Your Time: Couples" p. 40; A(Mult/F)		"The Best Life: Sex - Win Her <3 Online" p. 46; A(F/Mult)
"Man Manual: His Point of View" p. 54; A(M)	"Your Time: Love & Sex - Rub Each Other the Right Way" p. 42; A(F)		"Couples: The Sex Secret You're Not Using" p. 86; A(F)
"Man Manual: Cosmo for Your Guy - Be Sexier in Her Eyes" p. 56; A(F)	"Your Time: What Men Think" p. 46; A(F)		"She's Out There" p. 122; A(M)*
"Man Manual: 10 Things Guys Wish You Knew" p. 58; A(M)	"Fire Up Your Desire" p. 131; A(F)		
"Love & Lust: 100 Naughty Sex Questions" p. 100; A(F)			
"Love & Lust: What He's <i>Really</i> Thinking" p. 104; A(M)			
"Love & Lust: Yoga Tricks that Help You Climax" p. 108; A(F)			

July 2009 Continued

	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i> July/August	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i> July/August
	"Love & Lust: Great Relationship but Sucky Sex?" p. 112; A(F)			
	"Love & Lust: Ask Him Anything" p. 116, A(M)			
	"Love&Lust: Little Love Truths" p. 120; A(F)			
	"You, Even Better: Feel So Freakin' Sexy" p. 136; A(F)			
Total	13 articles	6 articles	2 articles	5 articles

\*Indicates the article is an exemplar, and was selected for detailed analysis

A(F/Mult/M) indicates whether the author of the article is female (F), multiple authors (Mult), or male (M)

November 2009

<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i>	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
"Can Love Work the Second Time Around?" p. 50; A(F)	"Ask the Guy Next Door" p. 22; A(M)	"Sex: Have Condom, Will Travel" p. 63; A(F)*	"Ask the Girl Next Door" p. 20; A(F)
"Man Manual: Size Him Up in a Single Glance" p. ; A(F)	"Sex Scoop" p. 34; A(Mult)		"The Best Life: MH Woman - Win a Witty Woman" p. 46; A(F/Mult)
"Man Manual: The Guy Report" p. 70; A(Mult)	"Sex & Love: Instant Love Fixes" p. 92; A(F)		"Couples: Feels Like the First Time" p. 110; A(F)*
"Man Manual: Why He Loves Your Weird Obsessions" p. 72; A(M)	"Sex & Love: Uncover His True Feelings" p. 94; A(F)*		"What She's Saying About You" p. 134; A(F)
"What He's Really Thinking During Sex" p. 111; A(M)	"Sex & Love: Secretly Sexy Things" p. 96; A(F)		"Sex Bulletin" p. 34; A(Mult)
"The Six Worst Things You Can Say to a Guy" p. 115; A(F)	"Have Amazing Sex all Month Long" p. 127; A(F)		
"Your Tricky Love Issues Resolved in Seconds!" p. 119; (F)			
"The New Way to Foreplay" p. 120; A(F)			
"8 Things Guys Notice about You Instantly" p. 124; A(F)			
"Ask Him Anything" p. 126; A(M)			
"Big News about the Big O" p. 169; A(F)			

November 2009 Continued

	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Women's Health</i>	<i>Maxim</i>	<i>Men's Health</i>
	"12 Reasons Why Guys Love Badass Chicks" p. 180; A(M)			
	"Cosmo Life Weekend: You and Him" p. 214; A(F)			
Total	13 articles	6 articles	1 article	5 articles

\*Indicates the article is an exemplar, and was selected for detailed analysis

A(F/Mult/M) indicates whether the author of the article is female (F), multiple authors (Mult), or male (M)

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Since her graduation from the International Baccalaureate program from Atlantic Community High School in 2003, Tasha Shangvi has pursued a diverse, international education. Tasha attended the University of Florida from 2003-2007 and the Universidad de Granada, Spain in 2005, and graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in political science, accompanied by a minor in Spanish. Tasha is also familiar with Hindi, Urdu and Brazilian Portuguese. In 2007, Tasha entered the Master of Arts in Mass Communication graduate program at the University of Florida to pursue a degree in international communication, accompanied by a concentration in Latin American studies.

Throughout her time at the University of Florida, Tasha has served her community in many capacities as an employee of the Stephen C. O'Connell Center, where she remains a technical advisor, hire and event coordinator currently. Tasha also works as a freelance Spanish-language translator and web editor. Her work currently focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness, in association with the MTV Staying Alive Foundation, MTV International and MTV Latin America.