

Myths in Advice:  
Regulating Women's Desire in *Mademoiselle*

by

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## • Abstract •

For centuries, prescriptive discourses have circulated in western culture; these are often based upon gendered ideals, and many devoted to audiences of women. Since the 1700s, advice has been included in women's magazines. Currently, women's magazines, and numerous other sites in popular culture, dispense advice on sex and relationships. As a provocative form of public discourse, the meanings underlying sex and relationship advice are of interest as these contribute to the social construction of gender and hetero/sexuality. In this thesis, the question and answer advice pages on love, sex, and men in one popular woman's magazine, *Mademoiselle*, are under investigation. Attention is paid to the advice columnists' gender to gain an understanding of the gendered nature of advice. Using content analysis and semiotics, *Mademoiselle's* advice pages are examined, thereby contributing to the documentation of one magazine's set of meanings. Content analysis is used to thematically code values, behaviours, attitudes. Semiotics is used to expose norms, and reveal these as myth.

Heterosexuality and gender are revealed as complex and contradictory constructions. However, a dominant mythical code resonates in the manifest and latent findings which reveal that advice codes sex as male, and relationships as female. In this manner, men are designated as libidinous, and women are constructed as relationship experts. Care and understanding of relationships and men's (sexual) needs are assumed to be part of the practices of femininity. In the main, the advice re/creates a gender dichotomy, founded upon heterosexist assumptions. Myth obscures the social forces which contribute to shaping of hetero/sexuality and gender, to signify these concepts as natural, normal, and desirable. Within the contradictory moments, breaks from dominant sex and gender norms are offered. Although female eroticism and desire is at times recognized, advice frequently overlooks women's sexual pleasure, and often places women's desire in response to men's. To this end, women are discursively organized in relation to men, thereby subordinating women's sexuality, and reinforcing male heterosexual domination. Gender and heterosexuality are placed within feminist politics, whereby the eradication of women's oppression includes placing women's erotic possibilities within feminist politics.

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## ❖ Chapter One: Literature Review of (Sex) Advice and Women's Magazines ❖

Each month, the covers of women's magazines seductively tantalize readers, offering up pleasurable consumption. The titles of feature articles catch my eye, and hold my attention. Although the feature articles encompass a variety of subjects, I get caught up in the titillating titles. Often the titles seduce me, especially while I am waiting in the grocery store check-out lines (a way to liven-up otherwise boring trips to the market), and I flip to the page on which the feature article appears. Let me illustrate some recent, enticing captions.

On my last visit to Chapter's bookstore, I examined the women's magazine section. On the first shelf<sup>1</sup> in this section are several prominent magazines; the sex-related captions are as follows: *Mademoiselle's* June 2000 cover has two feature articles: "Love and Freedom: How to find the Right Balance;" and "Where are all the Nice Guys?" *Glamour's* June 2000 cover lists: "20 Master Dating Tips: How to Meet and Attract Quality Men;" "50 Most Perplexing Sex Questions - The Answers (What You Don't Know Will Shock You!);" and "Yahoo! Find your Secret Sexual Personality. . . and His!" *Marie Claire* boasts "Sex: Your Best Advice Ever" (June 2000). *Jane's* May 2000 cover asks "Horney? Quick Solution on p 94." *More* (from the Ladies' Home Journal) declares "50 Ways to Find a Lover: Readers Tell us Where and How it Happened for Them." Well known for its explicit content, *Cosmopolitan's* cover lists "*Cosmo* Readers Confess: 1001 of You Reveal the Wild Things that Make a Man Whimper (warning don't try them all in one night);" and "The Worst Dates We've Ever Heard of. Compare your Nauseating Nights Out to these Encounters with the Sleaziest, Cheesiest, Creepiest Losers of All Time" (June 2000). From better sex, to finding a man, to improving one's relationship, the captions listed on the covers of these magazines purport to offer help, namely by means of advice. Suggestively, heterosexual sex and relationships are not only predominant topics in the pages of popular magazines, but these

topics fall within the realm of prescription.

Interestingly, provocative advice does not end at women's magazines, but is also advertised on the covers of a few men's magazines<sup>2</sup>. Continuing my observations in the bookstore, I discovered that on the first shelf of the men's magazine section are three relatively new publications advertising sex advice: *Maxim's* May 2000 cover states "Pull her Trigger: 20 Surefire Sex Surprises to Try out Tonight;" *FHM* (For Him Magazine) declares, "Secret Sex: What's in her Head when you're in Bed" (May/June 2000); and *Stuff for Men's* cover reveals: "S=ex<sup>2</sup> Is there a Formula for Really Great Sex? You Bet!" The covers of popular men's and women's magazines indicate that sex and relationship advice is a hot topic.

Advice, however, is not limited to magazines, nor is advice limited to sex and relationships. Indeed, prescriptive discourses escape few topics. Advice is offered on a vast range of subjects, from finance and employment, to business and wedding etiquette, to family and friends relations, to health and well-being. Interestingly, advice is easily located in popular culture, in a number of other media forms, including self-help books, newspaper columns, radio talk shows, and televised programs. (For example, Oprah Winfrey's show often features experts who give advice, and Martha Stewart offers her expertise on a range of themes. She is perhaps most known for her gardening (my personal favourite), wedding, and food preparation advice.)

A number of well-known advice personalities are renowned for their recommendations on relationships, and others, on sex and relationships. Take for example, the American advice columnist Anne Landers. Offering advice for decades on a vast array of relationship dilemmas in her self-titled column, she is perhaps the most widely known and her name seems synonymous with advice itself. In one of her recent columns appearing in the *Vancouver Sun*, Landers advises on how to preserve marriages by having couples follow some communication guidelines. Readers can order a free booklet on marital

communication, offered by matrimonial lawyers who want to prevent divorce (Saturday, May 20, 2000: pB11).

Radio talk show host, Dr. Laura Schlessinger (a doctor by title, not by credentials), is also a renowned advisor, if not known for her self-titled show or numerous self-help books, then for quickly becoming infamous for her anti-homosexual views. The *Globe and Mail* recently reported that Schlessinger "was censured by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council last week for being 'abusively discriminatory' towards gays and lesbians" (Heather Mallick, May 16, 2000: p R3). Schlessinger is scheduled to host a televised advice show. Gays and lesbians have been protesting outside of the television studio which is supposed to air the show. Undoubtedly, Schlessinger would disapprove of gay advice columnist Dan Savage.

In his racy column, 'Savage Love,' Savage dispenses blunt, rude, and cheeky advice on an extensive range of sexual matters to straight and queer readers. Interestingly, like Landers, Savage also has a regular, syndicated column throughout North American newspapers. Savage's column appears to be quite popular, perhaps attesting to the popularity of sex advice. Some sex advisors are celebrities. The American doctor, Ruth Westheimer, comes to mind. She has published numerous books, and has made appearances on talk shows. A few Canadians are also well known. Sue Johanson is a therapist whose weekly program called the 'Sunday Night Sex Show' (8:00 pm) airs on the 'Women's Television Network.' Rhona Raskin is a sex advice columnist in *Chatelaine* magazine, and host of 'Rhona at Night,' aired Canada-wide, weeknights on a FM radio station at 9:00 pm. Although not an exhaustive list of sex advisors, these noted celebrities point to the popularity of sex advice.

Dawn Currie's (1999) study of adolescent girls' found that girls enjoy reading advice columns in magazines. Currie observes that girls find the advice in adolescent magazines highly appealing. Many girls reported reading advice regularly, and found information on

otherwise repressed topics, including sex, as a source of knowledge (Currie 1999:163).

More studies on reader-perceptions of sex advice are needed.

The above examples of prominent advisors provide a clue to our society's fascination with sex. Although sex advice is a form of guidance, some may simply read/ listen to advice for a number of reasons, ranging from entertainment to titillation to information. Certainly sex is not just present in prescriptive discourses, but is ubiquitously present in western culture. Sex receives a great deal of attention, and is the source of much talk. We encounter representations of sex often, perhaps daily, in speech, images and texts. Yet despite its prevalence, and all the talk, sex is not a straightforward matter. Sex is imbued with meaning, and within prescriptive discourses that we uncover particular values and norms. Indeed, the framing of titillating sexual discourses within prescriptive discourses is in itself fascinating, as well as socially significant.

The advice in women's magazines holds a certain charm and fascination with me. I was drawn to women's magazines at age fourteen. Initially, the fashion and mature femininity depicted, and endlessly described, held my attention (and urged me to transform my teenage awkwardness). Information on the details of femininity, the intricate codes of dressing, and the practices of cosmetic application intrigued me. Later, my interest in women's magazines was held by the titillating monthly features on dating, romance, men, love and sex. My Mom forbade me to read *Cosmo* for its sexual explicitness. She called the magazine "sleazy," but this only added to its appeal. Also of great interest were the summaries of social-psychological studies of relations between women and men, although I usually found these write-ups too brief. In my adolescence, women's magazines provided explanations on gender relations, and sex, yet I found the information lacking. I needed more thorough elaborations, but did not know of any resources to consult.

During my undergraduate schooling, I developed an uneasy relationship with women's

magazines. I became increasingly critical of the textual messages as I developed a sociological perspective and feminist consciousness. Nonetheless, I did not give up reading women's magazines and continue to read them today. I recognize that I may become annoyed with certain texts, other times I simply overlook textual difficulties so as to maintain my reading enjoyment. Seldom do I purchase women's magazines - this is my small statement against the advertising that drives much of the content of the magazines. I will pause in bookstores or newsstands to select a women's magazine to peruse. I also select the longest lines at the check-out in grocery stores so I can flip through magazines, and while exercising on the bike at the gym, I choose the latest or most interesting to read. Lately, I have developed an interest in health magazines with the intent to gather information and advice on how to ease the effects of a disease. Not only did I discover herbal remedies, but that many of these magazines are geared towards women. The format is similar to women's magazines; the content has merely shifted to health, including a herbal/ vitamin approach to beauty and cosmetics. This genre of magazines would be also be an engaging area of study, particularly from the perspective of women's health and the social construction of health and illness. I digress; at the moment, my main interest is the prescriptive, sexual discourse in one women's magazine, and I have chosen *Mademoiselle*.

*Mademoiselle* is but one magazine for women that contains sex and relationship advice columns. Certainly the sexual content is appealing to many women (and to some men, I have spotted a number of men reading women's magazines at the gym I attend), undoubtedly for a plethora of reasons. Poignantly, sex sells and women's monthlies comprise a significant portion of the popular press. A unique feature of *Mademoiselle* is its three question and answer columns titled 'Love Q&A,' 'Sex Q&A,' and 'Men Q&A.' Interestingly, these columns are six years old, indicating that they are popular. These columns present a unique opportunity: they have not yet undergone feminist study, and they are a means to

explore prescriptive sex and relationship discourses aimed at audiences of women, specifically white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women in their twenties: As the researcher, I should note that I can be included in this demographic. Conceivable differences exist among women's magazines, suggesting that studies of particular magazines be undertaken (Beezer et al. 1986: 95). A study of *Mademoiselle* contributes to the documentation of one magazine's set of meanings.

In *Mademoiselle*, as in a number of other women's magazines, sex is discussed, described, and analyzed; it is an object of guidance (Hawkes 1996). For example, measures on how to get, and keep a man, how to have sex, what good sex is, and how to attain sexual pleasures are frequent themes. Women's magazines are a site provocative, public discourses devoted to audiences of women. Of feminist and sociological interest are the meanings captured in prescriptive sexual and relationship discourses. As public discourses, how are these meanings of concern to women? It can be argued that this is one of the few public arenas, generally free of social stigma, that openly discusses sexual relationships with men. Moreover, women's magazine advice columnists, along with sex advisors in general, have given us particular ways to think about sex, thus contributing to the forming, shaping and directing of sexuality. Martha Vicinus has said, "history repeats itself as men appear to have appropriated the 'scientific' study of sexuality, while women have concentrated upon its social implications" (quoted in Segal 1994: 70). It is within the sphere of sex and relationship advice that we find some important issues regarding the constitution of hetero/sexuality, and the implications of women's role within it.

My inquiry is into the 'normal' and taken-for-granted aspects of sexuality in a women's magazine, *Mademoiselle*. As Jonathan Katz (1995) argues: "we fail to name the 'norm,' the 'normal,' and the social process of 'normalization,' much less consider them perplexing, fit subjects for probing questions. Analysis of the 'abnormal,' the 'deviant,' and 'other,' 'minority'

cultures has seemingly held much greater charm" (p 16). This project is an inquiry into how 'normal' sexuality is shaped and directed within *Mademoiselle's* prescriptive discourses; it is an exploration of meaning. Social texts provide us with clues into the social organization of society, specifically women and men in heterosexual relationships.

So far, I have placed (sex) advice within a current context, observing the covers of popular magazines, noting some prominent advisors, and pointing to the popularity of advice. My task at hand is to further contextualize advice within a wider historical and cultural frame. Below, I explore how advice in *Mademoiselle* is one site where femininity is socially organized, and further, how practices of femininity are embedded in advice. The discursive format of *Mademoiselle's* Q&A texts is then analyzed as a form of confession. As the sex-confession was an incitement to discourse (Foucault 1990), I trace some historical roots of sex and relationship advice. Perhaps most significant is the inception of marital and sex manuals which aim to shape sex in its 'proper' direction. I then turn to the historical foundation of western advice, observing how instruction has been concerned with women. I also explore the literature on women's magazines, concentrating upon advice, and sex and gender research, followed by the research techniques used in this literature.

## TEXTS, SEX, DATING AND RELATIONSHIPS AS PRACTICES OF FEMININITY

Dorothy Smith (1990) asserts that texts can provide us within insight into the social organization of femininity. At work in *Mademoiselle* is the cultural and social construction of femininity. In particular, the Q&A texts are one site where certain (normative) notions concerning femininity are prescribed. Prescriptive discourses are of particular interest as they invite readers to be conscious of themselves, and further, provide a means of comparison. As Smith observes,

the nineteenth-century novelist, Mrs Gaskell, in *Sylvia's Lovers* observes a transition in consciousness linked to the evolution of textual discourse. Reading books of conduct, she suggests, creates a special consciousness of self. People come to know 'what manner of men' they are, 'fully conscious of their virtues, qualities, failings and weaknesses. . . who go about comparing others with themselves - not in a spirit of Pharisaism and arrogance, but with a vivid self-consciousness. Striking here is how the textual discourse appears as providing a standpoint for the subject from which her own conduct or the conduct of others can be examined. The consciousness of self is the lived moment bringing local settings under the jurisdiction of public textual discourse (1990: 168).

Reading *Mademoiselle's* Q&A, for example, can make the female reader conscious of her self; she can compare herself to the reader posing a question, and in turn, the advice offered in response. To this end, social consciousness includes femininity (Smith 1990: 163).

Consciousness and the act of comparison, Smith argues, are 'social relations': "They reorganize relationships among local everyday worlds within them and by relating them to others through common participation in the textually mediated discourse" (ibid.: 168).

(Comparing oneself to the text is taken up in Chapter 4.) Textually mediated discourses have the effect of coordinating individuals by virtue of reading the same texts (ibid.): Thousands of *Mademoiselle* readers do not know one another, yet they enter into similar social relations by reading the magazine.

Advice offered in *Mademoiselle's* Q&A columns on love, sex and men provides us with insight into how femininity is textually organized within the social relations. The specific social relation under examination in this thesis is heterosexuality. A range of subjects is discussed in *Mademoiselle's* columns, including sexual technique, descriptions of good sex, how to go about attaining sexual pleasures, queries about love, how to find, as well as keep, a man, and how to solve relationship problems. Practices of dating, romance, engaging in sexual activities, and maintaining relationships are accomplishments of what Smith would call the 'practices of femininity.' These practices require skill, knowledge and tact. Further, these practices require work, thought and time (ibid.: 199). The handling of problems can require

women to undertake the considerable tasks of fixing, mending, smoothing, solving, resolving, revitalizing and igniting relationships, for example. The wielding of such skills are accomplishments of femininity. Certainly men engage in relationship activities, too. However, within the current context, heterosex and relationships are coded in particular ways, identifiable within the concept of femininity.<sup>3</sup> (How men's magazines code men's activities in relationships would be an engaging, comparative study.)

As women actively interpret texts, Smith asserts that "interpretative practices intersect with and structure people's everyday worlds and contributing thereby to the organization of the social relations" (ibid.: 163). In this manner, the actual social relations of dating and (long term) relationships, engaged in by women, are organized by, and embedded in, textually mediated discourses (ibid.: 162, 163). To this end, texts structure social relations.

By examining the femininity prescribed in *Mademoiselle's* instructive texts, we can gain access to the practices of femininity, and its social organization. As Smith puts it, "inquiry here works from the assumption that texts of or referring to femininity provide points of entry into the social relations that concept gathers for us in the text" (ibid.: 167). In the current context, access to the practices of femininity are examined through the values, behaviours, and attitudes sanctioned in the text.

## THE CONFESSIONAL NATURE OF ADVICE

The question and answer format is a socially significant form of communication. As the questions reveal a problem needing to be resolved, information must be divulged in order for the question to be answered. Specifically, questions about sex and relationships must be revealing. Namely, questions about sex must expose, in detail, individual secrets, impart desires, dislikes and fantasies. The disclosure of secrets has a confessional undertone. Michel

Foucault (1978; 1990) might argue this point. Advice columns may very well be part of an historical tradition of (sexual) confession. Foucault argues that confession currently

plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is the most difficult to tell. One confesses in public and private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and pain, things it would be impossible to tell to anyone else, the things people write books about (1990:59).

Or write to advice columnists about. Here are some examples from *Mademoiselle* readers<sup>4</sup>

"I worry that I smell 'down there,' and that my boyfriend notices and is turned off. What can I do about it?" (*Mademoiselle*; Oct. 1998: p 82)

"I was having sex with my boyfriend when I suddenly had a vivid fantasy about the actor Steve Buscemi. I am very attracted to my boyfriend, and I think Steve Buscemi is ugly. Where did this come from?" (*Mademoiselle*, Jan. 1998: p 50)

"My boyfriend's penis is so small I'm avoiding sex. What can I do?" (*Mademoiselle*, July 1998: p 48)

"My boyfriend wants to dress up like a woman and then have sex. I don't think this would turn me on. It sounds harmless, but I'm afraid to try it because he might want to do it all the time. Should I be worried?" (*Mademoiselle*, June 1994: p 52)

Readers confess all sorts of difficult and private matters. Otherwise hidden sexual worries, fantasies, and desires are confessed to, and made public. The confessor unburdens herself of her 'terrible' secrets (Foucault 1990: 62). In confessing, sex is reconstructed "in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations and quality of the pleasure that animated it" (Foucault 1990: 63).

Foucault argues that the modern era marks the "first time no doubt, a society has taken it upon itself to solicit and hear the imparting of individual pleasures" (ibid.).

Through the confession, sexual secrets are made known. These are offered to the advice columnist for help, interpretation, analysis, consolation, and resolution. Curiously, pleasure is derived from confessing, from telling the truths about sex, and, in hearing the analysis. As Foucault states, this pleasure derives from "the consultations and examinations;

the anguish of answering questions and the delight of having one's words interpreted" (ibid. 71). According to Foucault, readers are not just seeking answers, but the 'truth about sex,' and it is through the confession that the truth is (supposedly) revealed. It is hoped that in divulging the truths about sex, one will understand and know the self better. As Foucault puts it, "we demand that it tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth of that truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness" (ibid.:69). The truth, however, does not set one free; on the contrary, the one who confesses becomes caught in a relationship of power.

Notably, confessions are made to authority figures: "One does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile" (Foucault 1990: 61-62). Advice columnists assume an authoritative position by adopting the role of 'expert' through manner and tone. In *Mademoiselle*, the columnists' credentials are not given, yet by virtue of their position as advisor, they are perceived experts. In any case, there is an inherent power structure in place between the confessor and the one who listens where the 'agency of domination resides' (ibid.: 62). Ironically, the act of confessing unburdens an individual, granting her or him the feeling of freedom (ibid.: 60). Foucault notes that "the obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us" (ibid.).

The 'interplay of truth and sex' is centuries in the making. The confession arose from the Christian ritual of penance where sex was a privileged theme (ibid.: 58, 61). From religion, the confession gradually spread (ibid. 68). Foucault explains that "beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this rite gradually detached itself from the sacrament of penance, and . . . emigrated toward pedagogy, relationships between adults and children, family relations,

medicine, and psychiatry" (ibid.: 68). The sexual confession became part of the procedures of science (i.e. clinical listening methods) (ibid.: 64). As the confession 'emigrated,' scientific discourses became concerned with the "normal and the pathological." As Foucault states,

a characteristic sexual morbidity was defined for the first time; sex appeared as an extremely unstable pathological field: a surface of repercussion for other ailments, but also the focus of a specific nosography, that of instinct, tendencies, images, pleasure and conduct. This implied that sex would derive its meaning and its necessity from medical interventions: it would be required by the doctor, necessary for diagnosis, and effective by nature in the cure (ibid.: 67).

Under the guise of science, sex was medicalized, scrutinized and studied. The truth is believed to heal sexual problems which can only be resolved through the confession (ibid.). Moreover, sex became a object of guidance, and of pedagogical concern. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a steady proliferation of discourses on sex began (ibid.: 18). Sex was an object within institutions and professions, and sex was codified within a language of decency, as an authorized vocabulary, employing "a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor" (ibid.: 17). A host of individuals began producing detailed volumes devoted to deciphering the mysteries of sex - especially to laypersons.

## SEX(OLOGY) ADVICE

In 1903, R.T. Trall commented on his recently published book; he stated: "in style, arrangement and application [my sex advice manual is] addressed to the popular rather than the professional reader. Its sole object is to instruct the masses of the people on those subjects which have hitherto been to them, in great part, a sealed book" (quoted in Hawkes 1996: 54). Trall's comment on "those subjects" is a euphemism for sex, illustrating the rhetoric of allusion. Nevertheless, sexual secrets are at last revealed, and western societies witnessed the birth of the first marital and sex manuals. These manuals demonstrate the

expansion of sexual knowledge as sex became the object of scientific study. Significantly, medical practitioners saw themselves as educators and providers of sexual enlightenment by making sexological ideas available to 'ordinary' folks who were unable to access sexological literature (M. Jackson 1994: 159). It might be said that sexology has contributed to the popularization of public discourses of sex advice, as well as the acceptance of expert guidance for the proper direction of sex.

From the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-1970s a liberalizing sex reform movement developed in counter distinction to restrictive Victorian politics. Early advice authors formed part of this social trend. Comprised of physicians, psychiatrists, journalists, social scientists, feminists, birth control advocates as well as some public officials and figures, liberal reformers sought to change sexual attitudes, beliefs, values and conventions in the shaping of a new intimate culture (Seidman 1992: 28,43). Steven Seidman (1992) argues that "in the forefront of liberal sex reform were the hundreds of martial and sex advice writers and advocates, most of whom were physicians and scientists who wrote popular books and lectured widely" (ibid.: 28). Some of the most well known early advisors include Marie Stopes, Theodore van de Velde, Margaret Sanger, Abraham and Hannah Stone, Eustare Chesser, and Maxine Davis and more recently Mary Calderone, William Masters and Virginia Johnson, David Ruben and Alex Comfort; all "carried enormous public prestige" (ibid.). A marked change occurred in intimate life as erotic attraction became the driving force behind love, thus sexualizing love (ibid.: 30). The sexualization of love marked a shift from the Victorian notion of coupling sex and love in the spiritual companionship of marriage (Segal 1994: 85).

At the root of the reform movement is an ideology stressing the importance of heterosexual pleasure and its intimate link to social and individual health. Attainment of these benefits is accomplished through knowledge and the mastering of skills and technique. Of

course, advice manuals have changed since their inception, but their form nevertheless has remained the same. Over the past few decades, increasing focus has been on technique rather than health, pleasure rather than parenthood (Seidman 1992: 47).

Millions of marital and sex advice books have sold over the past century, many enjoying best-seller status (Segal 1994). For example, Stopes' (1918) *Married Love* sold 2000 copies in a fortnight and more than half a million within four years (Hawkes 1996: 90); it was also translated into seven languages. In 1935, *Married Love* "was listed sixteenth of the twenty five most influential books of the previous fifty years" (M. Jackson 1994: 129). Van de Velde's (1928) *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique* rapidly became known as the 'bible' of sex manuals; its popularity remained up until the 1970s (ibid.: 164). Today, sex advice books are widely available. The *Joy of Sex* is perhaps one of the most well known books for its descriptions of heterosexual techniques.

It seems that marital and sex manuals have contributed to the popularization and acceptance of public discourses of sex advice. According to Margaret Jackson (1994), the success of marital and sex advice books suggests that a sexological model has become part of popular consciousness (p. 159). More poignantly, Hawkes asserts that "the work of the scientists of sex implanted the importance of benign but expert guidance [of sexual pleasure] in its proper direction" (1996: 89). The dispensing of sex advice, appears to be a socially acceptable, heterosexual norm. Expert guidance on sex and relationships is not restricted to books and manuals, but can be widely found in other forms of (popular) literature. Hawkes maintains: "In more popular arenas, discussions about sex have been promoted from the back to front pages of those chronicles of consumption and lifestyle, the monthly magazines. The latter-day descendants of the sexologists -the sex experts- flourish in symbiosis with these bibles of lifestyle" (ibid.: 6). Evidence of the flourishing business on expert sex advice is easily found within women's magazines. While women's magazines advice columnists are not

scientists, the tradition of advice is rooted in science and morality. As we shall see, this tradition is part of a wider ideal which encourages women to seek the advice of experts.

## THE CULTURE OF PRESCRIPTION

Prescriptive discourses are part of a broad cultural and historical phenomenon based on a specific set of (gendered) ideals. According to Wendy Simonds (1992), advice was sparked by an ideology of self betterment pioneered in self help books. This ideology is based on individualism and the development of selfhood growing "out of seventeenth-century Puritan notions about self improvement, Christian goodness, and other worldly rewards" (Simonds 1992: 4). Further, Jillian Sandell (1996) notes that self improvement is closely related to "the American preoccupation with self-reliance" proclaimed in the philosophies of Tocqueville and others (p 22). More specifically, advice to women, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English (1978) suggest, is a product of the modern era.

Women were once healers, midwives and care givers. They were highly esteemed in their communities and travelled abroad, spreading their knowledge (Ehrenreich & English 1978: 30). The inception and rise of science, and the growth and spread of the Industrial Revolution, along with the advent of a capitalist economy and the increasing separation of the public and private spheres, gave rise to the 'Woman Question.' Scientifically-minded men became increasingly concerned with women's proper role in the modern world. Women's expertise, and the right for women to assert their skills, was gradually wrested away as medical experts began to profess knowledge and assert their power (e.g. displacing midwives) over the domain which had heretofore been solely women's (ibid.).

Rationalist and Romantic solutions were posed to the 'Woman Question.' Women would either be considered equal with men, or kept separate from men (ibid.). The solution

has fallen within the latter proposition, legitimated by science and heralded by white, middle-class male doctors who became primary advisors on activities they had never engaged in (e.g. child care). Experts deemed women's new role to lie in motherhood, within the private, domestic sphere (ibid.). Experts have largely been responsible for constructing women in particular ways. Women have often been defined, for instance, as 'reproductive beings,' mothers, abnormal, and supposedly different from men (ibid.)<sup>5</sup>.

Within the realm of prescription, some scholars of the mass communication of advice assert that a woman's self help culture exists. Simonds explains that this culture has risen due to a wider cultural ideal which encourages women to "seek the advice of experts", and due to a "capitalist consumer culture [which] focuses on the self as a product to be improved with the aid of purchases (like books)" (1992: 114). Within the media, a wide manifestation of advice exists devoted to the dissection of women's problems (Simonds 1992: 217). Arlie Russell Hochschild (1994) argues that the wide prescriptive trend encompasses several genres of advice: television talk show hosts, professional therapists, radio commentators, video producers (e.g. mail order video cassettes on how to improve heterosex), and magazines (Hochschild 1994:2).

Simonds and Hochschild offer some pertinent observations on self help books which may be noted here. Simonds observes that the literature directed at female audiences encourages women to develop their selves in concert with others (1992: 6). Commonly, differences between women and men are focused upon. One of Simonds' most poignant analyses reveals that women desire all encompassing care (out of bed) by men, and self help books offer the needed care and support that men do not provide (although some authors argue that women care too much). She asserts that "in self help books for women, men are depicted as wanting to be cared for but wanting also not to have to care in return" (ibid.: 224). Reciprocity of care is a central issue in relationships and self help books view reciprocity

as a means of overcoming gendered power-inequalities. As Simonds puts it, "because self help literature shows reciprocity to be so difficult to attain, men are cast as obstacles that women work around as we attempt to forge meaningful relationships in what appears to be very much like a war zone" (ibid.: 225).

In Hochschild's analysis, women's advice books convey the message that women should "assimilate to male rules of love" by establishing their career, waiting to settle down, delaying falling in love until the late 20s or early 30s, and having occasional affairs (separating sex from love and therefore feminizing adultery) (1994: 16, 17). Fulfilling each life 'stage' in such orderly succession requires emotional management (ibid.). Self help books do not criticize the male model of love and masculinity. Rather, patriarchal ideals are further entrenched as a unisex code of love is advised (ibid.). As Hochschild puts it, "advice books conserve the already capitalized male culture. They *conserve* the damage capitalism did to manhood instead of *critiquing* it" (ibid.; emphasis in original). Discourses of feminism juxtapose patriarchal ideals. Intimate forms of advice which draw upon some feminist principles, such as independence, are employed by many authors and in turn, utilized for profit. Feminism is taken out of a social movement, turned into an individualistic prescription away from community supports, and squarely placed in commercial culture. Some authors are self-identified feminists and frequently refer to 'equality,' 'progress,' 'independence' and 'struggle.' Social change becomes less of a possibility as advice books move in the opposite direction. A gender revolution is stalled, Hochschild argues, "instead of humanizing men, we are 'capitalizing' women" (ibid.: 19). In three of the four sections which follow, feminist magazine literature is reviewed. In maintaining a focus on pertinent issues, I begin with 'advice in women's magazines,' followed by 'sex and gender in feminist magazine research,' and 'research techniques in the literature review.'

## ADVICE IN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Studies indicate that advice has been a part of women's magazines for some time.

Mary Poovey frames women's magazines within a broader realm of advice to women:

During the eighteenth century . . . an entire body of literature emerged that was devoted exclusively to this cultivation. Instructions of proper conduct appeared in the numerous periodicals addressed specifically to women, in more general essay-periodicals like the *Spectator* and in ladies' conduct books. This last genre, which consisted of works composed by both men and women, was directed primarily to the middle classes and was intended to educate young girls (and their mothers) in behaviour considered 'proper,' then 'natural,' for a 'lady.' Conduct material of all kinds increased in volume and popularity after the 1740s, in keeping with the increased emphasis on domestic education and the growing number of middle-class readers (quoted in Smith 1990: 169).

On the specific subject of magazines, Winship states that the problem pages have existed since the inception of women's magazines. As early as 1770, *The Lady's Magazine* sought to "combine 'amusement with instruction'" (Winship 1987: 13). Similarly, in 1852, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* claimed to combine "practical utility, instruction and amusement" (cited in Winship 1987: 13). Some contemporary editors suggest that they continue the tradition of providing practical, and stimulating entertainment: The 1976 *Vogue* editor declared that "we are 60% selling a dream and 40% offering practical advice." In 1982 another editor said, "We want *Options* to be a lot of information, a lot of help and a lot of fun" (ibid.). With reference to these editorial quotes, researchers suggest that the form of advice has remained consistent over time while the content has changed. To be sure, there has been an increase in sexual content in a number of women's magazines. According to Leman, contemporary magazines continue to play the role of confidant: "The direct address, commanding both intimacy and identification still constitutes the principal tone of women's magazines in Britain" (1980: 64).

In greater detail, McMahon and Winship point out some common ways in which

advice texts are structured. McMahon observes that purveyors of advice adopt the role of an expert and authoritatively address readers through a tone of scientific objectivity (McMahon 1990: 389). Prescriptive assertions are not necessarily dispensed in clinical terms, as one may expect from credentialed experts. Rather, McMahon and Winship both note that often an intimate tone underlies a text. In Winship's view, the problem pages construct sentiments of unity among women, often comforting readers with encouragement. Frequently, credentials are not mentioned, but the text often refers to a recognized individual or scientific study to create authority and support (Winship 1987: 101). Winship states that columnists' insights are often in reference to an expert, including writers, lawyers, economists, and most frequently psychologists, to explore the problem at hand (ibid.). Neither researcher systematically explores the differences in advice offered by male and female experts, although McMahon remarks upon the sexism evident in one male-authored text (McMahon 1990: 389).

In Winship's observation, advice is commonly dispensed by first setting up a personal problem. Although the predicament may not necessarily be the reader's, it is often general enough for many readers to relate to. Commonly, the differences between women and men are emphasized (Winship 1987: 101). Towards the text's conclusion, resolutions are "numbered or labelled strategies of action about what-is-to-be-done" (ibid.: 101, 103). In short, "articles are reflective, analytic and opinionated but within a pragmatic framework" (ibid.: 103). Women are reassured that they are not alone with their problems. Yet, the authors of the letters are alone with their personal difficulties, suggesting a lack of companionship. Winship remarks, "certainly from the evidence of the problem pages many women are not only not 'friends' with Esther Rantzen [advice columnist] but lack any friends to be intimate with" (ibid.: 77). Furthermore, Winship argues that class, ethnicity and cultural difference are erased. Commonalities among women are emphasized, particularly in discussions of men. Winship's analysis suggests that problems with men are presented as one

of the biggest issues women face and commonly endure in isolation from women friends or relatives (ibid.).

Although the content of the advice columns has undoubtedly changed over the decades, isolation and lack of companionship appear to have historical roots in women's magazines. Similar to Winship and McMahon's analyses, Joy Leman (1980) discovers that the problem pages in women's magazines from 1937-1955 sought to play a comforting role. Comparably, Leman also notices intimate and personal communication within the agony columns. She goes one step further than Winship and McMahon and argues that the 'sisterly' relationship established between magazine and reader effectively erases women's isolation *and* denies the existence of inequalities (Leman 1980: 63). Whether this analysis is true of current magazines is yet to be explored. Additionally, this form of communication describes problems, difficulties and prescriptions in a 'neutral,' non-political fashion serving to hide the operation of ideology. The mass media and capitalist ideology are argued to work together to 'effortlessly' conceal the existence of structural problems (ibid.). In Leman's words, "the incantations of false intimacy are foregrounded - a discourse of friendliness reassures and relocates women in an identity of oppression and a position of exploitation" (ibid.: 65).

Issues of isolation and loneliness are absent from Jacqueline Blix's (1992) analysis of 1950's prescriptive texts in *Good Housekeeping*, because she maintains that advice columns stress the commonalities among women. Although Blix's conclusion is similar to that drawn by McMahon and Winship, the specific similarities emphasized among women are likely to have shifted over time. Blix argues that the columns provide a space to "help women negotiate the conflicting demands of their existence, vent their frustrations and share a 'commonsense' wisdom" (Blix 1992: 58). Blix asserts that columns present the opportunity for resistance and negotiation through instances of contradiction, irony and humour. Yet these moments of resistance are fragile and tentative, perhaps serving solely as instances of

relief from the demands of being a perfect wife, housekeeper and mother (ibid.: 67).

## LIMITS TO ADVICE

Given the longevity and widespread mass communication of advice in western culture, it is certainly perplexing how individuals may follow or partly adhere to certain prescriptions. Importantly, advice is not read by all, yet its message is not out of the ordinary. Why individuals adhere to dominant sexual norms held in prescriptive discourses is one of the perplexing questions analyzed by Mary Louise Adams (1997). Adams argues that sex advice literature contributes to the shaping of hetero/sexuality.<sup>6</sup> She asserts that sexuality is slippery, and can not be pinpointed to one site where it is constructed and maintained (1997:16). Nevertheless, prescriptive sexual discourses maintain what are 'normal' and acceptable behaviours, and contribute to the process of normalisation, which in turn, serve to organize and regulate sexuality. As Adams puts it,

individuals are encouraged, through a variety of discursive and institutional practices, to meet normative standards, and they come to desire the rewards that meeting those standards makes possible. In this way individuals become self-regulating... Julian Henriques and colleagues write that norms form the 'conditions of our desire.' The point is not that we simply try to meet social norms, its that we *want to*" (1997:13; emphasis in original).

Advice literature, does of course, have limitations, for not all individuals read or use advice, and it is difficult to determine which groups engage in the reading of advice literature, and to what extent ideas within prescriptive discourses are supported (ibid.: 88). Nevertheless, Adams maintains that prescriptive discourses are part of wider social norms which may often lead to self regulating behaviour. As Adams explains,

But the possibility that young people did not subscribe to the information about sexuality and sexual behaviour they received from adults does not negate the role of that 'advice' in constructing the normative standards by which teens were judged. . . Discursive constructions of good teenagers and bad teenagers, of healthy sexuality and immoral sexuality, may not

have been the immediate determinants of teen behaviour, but they did influence the context of that behaviour and the meanings that would eventually be ascribed to it (ibid.).

The norms re/produced in advice literature are not unusual or uncommon, but often reflect dominant social norms, and individuals may experience the pressure to conform. Norms and the process of normalisation are taken up in Chapter 4.

## SEX AND GENDER IN FEMINIST MAGAZINE RESEARCH

### The Heterosexually Skilful Gal

Of interest are some of the pertinent meanings uncovered in feminist research of women's magazines, including sexual knowledge and skill, the undoing of essentialism, subjective desire and gender equality, and pleasure and danger. Angela McRobbie (1996) comments that "more than ever before sex now fills the space in the magazines' pages. It provides the frame for women's magazines in the 1990s. Proclaimed on the covers ('Oral Sex? Pussy Power?') sex sets the tone, defines the pace, and shapes the whole environment of the magazine" (p 177). Hawkes notes that explicit and detailed discussions of sex in women's magazines evidence the 'every-dayness' of sex (Hawkes 1996: 118). More specifically, sexual knowledge is a prominent feature in women's magazines. Women are instructed on how to become more skilful and, as it is suggested, more successful lovers. Certainly, greater sexual knowledge likely contributes to the attainment of sexual pleasure and the avoidance of particular sexual harms, such as STDs, but by the same token, there is a negative side to these discourses.

Angela McRobbie (1996) observes that discourses of sexual knowledge and technique are often couched within the rubric of sexual information. She explains that sexually

provocative material allows room for fantasy while dispelling knowledge (McRobbie 1996: 186). Facts on safe sex, for instance, may be linked to explicit methods of practice, including 'rimming,' 'sex toys,' mutual masturbation, game playing and sadomasochism (ibid.: 187). Racy details on how to perform sex acts are not necessarily reserved for HIV prevention. A general emphasis on sexual knowledge and the development of technique is a common theme. The British magazine *More!*, for example, features a "position of the fortnight;" text accompanies a hand drawn couple who demonstrate the sex act.

The emphasis on sexual technique is of consequence. In Kathryn McMahon's (1990) study of *Cosmopolitan* (US), she argues that no matter how well intended and sexually enthusiastic a woman is, she may not be pleasing her partner. Abandonment or infidelity may ensue if a woman does not keep up with current standards and techniques (McMahon 1990: 392). Sexual technique is construed as an 'asset' or necessity for the maintenance of relationships, and women are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the latest positions.

### Undoing Essentialism

As a learned skill, McRobbie connects the mastery of sexual technique to the text's suggestive denaturalization of heterosexuality: "Sex is now recognized as something which has to be learned. Both romance and sexual expertise have been revealed as myths and they have been replaced by a much more frank, even mechanical approach to sex, but one which is without the cold, clinical or moralistic language associated with sex education" (ibid.: 186). Although women may know that romance is a myth, it does not preclude the end of the desire for romantic encounters or romantic practices (e.g. dinners with candles and wine). Moreover, the denaturalization of heterosexuality is questionable.

Arguably, most folks still believe that sex between women and men is the most natural and normal expression of desire. In any case, individuals may want to learn positions other than the standard, 'normal' missionary position by adding variety to their sexual repertoire or by improving their technique. Or, as McMahon suggested above, women may also feel the demands of becoming skilled lovers in order to satisfy and keep male partners (1990: 392). Even simply reading about sex and viewing other possibilities may in itself be titillating for some. Increasing the complexity of sex practices does not necessarily disrupt essentialist notions about heterosexuality.

### Desiring Subjects and Gender Equality

The notion that women's magazines are titillating for some readers suggests that sexual texts might instil desire, prompting or encouraging readers to be sexually active. In some feminist work, researchers argue that magazines encourage women to express their sexual desires. For example, in Janice Winship's (1987) landmark study, she observes that since women's 'sexual liberation' of the 1960s, and movement during the 1970s, *Cosmopolitan* (UK) has brought women's sexuality into view along with occasional feminist principles. During the 1980s, the magazine contained two main goals: to dispel myths about women's sexuality, and to encourage women to explore their sexuality. Readers are instructed to overcome sexual shame and guilt and to enjoy the right to express their sexuality. *Cosmo* began operating under the rubric, 'nice girls do and should enjoy sex,' and female desire entered popular discourses. Winship asserts that articles on sex "provided for the first time in magazines a legitimate space for women to contemplate their own desires, not simply their responses to men's" (1987: 112).

McMahon (1990) maintains that on the one hand women are encouraged to take a

more active role in sex, allowing their "desire to desire" (p 392, 393). On the other hand, women are encouraged to objectify themselves by placing their bodies on display for their partner. McMahon argues that this practice of objectification removes subjective desire: a "reader's desire to be an active subject is recognized. She is told to be more active. Yet, her activity is then prescribed. She is told not to be present, herself, naked. By definition she is lacking and must be transformed by the text to become adequate" (ibid.: 393).

Underscoring the issue of sexual subjectivity is gender equality. Women can only become more sexually active once they are no longer bound by traditional notions of asexual femininity. Researchers argue that women's magazines attempt to provide some relief to gender inequality. In McMahon's view, *Cosmo* symbolically changes gender roles to temporarily resolve persistent gender conflict and inequality. As she puts it, "unresolved desires and conflicts [between the sexes] are acknowledged, and anxieties about psychic and social conflicts are even increased by the popular text which then provides a temporary and false resolution" (McMahon 1990: 387). Women are discursively constructed as sexually empowered, dominant and (sexually) active whereas men are objectified and commodified (ibid: 387). Readers are offered a textual fantasy that toys with power, yet the tone attests to the instability of the resolutions by means of repetition, authority, and 'tongue in cheek' attitude (ibid.:395). Further, McMahon maintains that in popular culture, women are frequently constructed as active subjects, rather than passive objects. While subjectivity may only be textually based and a fantasy, this fantasy is perhaps a source of reader pleasure. Unfortunately, McMahon does not explore issues of reader pleasure as her analysis is not linked to real social relations, but is confined to the text and its fantasy. Furthermore, broader questions on the social structuring of heterosexuality are untouched, yet possibilities for problematizing it certainly exist.

In her analysis of gender inequality, Winship argues that *Cosmopolitan* toys with

gender role reversal in the attempt to relieve gender inequality. She explains that the magazine "made a provocative statement by upturning feminine codes, relishing a humour about sex and relationships and making men, for a change, the butt of laughter" (Winship 1987: 110,111). Winship also argues that *Cosmo* proposes that women are as sexually active as men. Women are also urged to work at sex to improve technique and skill. Like McMahon, Winship asserts that subjectivity is erased through instruction. However, I would dispute this claim, as readers do not simply follow what is instructed; texts are actively negotiated. Winship views the improvement of skill and technique as 'sex work,' similar to other forms of personal work such as 'beauty work' and 'house work' (Winship 1987: 112). Winship unfortunately does not extend her analysis of heterosexuality beyond a work analogy. Further, she does not consider how 'sex work' might be different from other forms of work.

#### Pleasure and Danger in Women's Magazines

In feminist research we find some instances where the concepts of pleasure and danger have not been explored within the space of women's magazines. Findings indicate the presence of discourses of pleasure, or active female desire juxtaposed with the threat of harm. The message is that while women should actively pursue sexual pleasure, their sexual conduct must be performed in a controlled manner.

Winship notes a tension in *Cosmo*: on the one hand, women are instructed to desire men and sex, and assert their right to desire. On the other hand, women are cautioned when handling problems of sexual differences and sexual conflicts. While it is important that *Cosmo* acknowledge these difficulties, the 'solutions' conflict with feminist messages of sexual equality. For example, Winship found that women are advised to take care in disputes with their mates. Although it is advised that women negotiate as equals, women are told to cradle

males egos and avoid being too assertive, for instance, because they could provoke dangerous male aggressive behaviours (Winship 1987: 113).

McRobbie finds a sharp juxtaposition of pleasure and danger, as well as a candidness in contemporary sexual discourses in women's magazines of the 1990s. She asserts that magazines squarely focus on sex, discussing it in a strong, frank, and explicit manner. A commercial aspect is also involved: sex sells and women desire fantasy in their magazines as much as men (McRobbie 1996: 193). McRobbie also states that sexual discourses are sophisticated and contain a great deal of information, insinuating "the death of [female] naïvety," while also suggesting that "girls and women need to be forewarned" (ibid.: 188). The acknowledgement of sexual dangers is simultaneously addressed with sexual pleasures. For instance, women are advised to learn how to satisfy themselves in order to avoid contracting sexually transmitted diseases:

masturbation is true loving-it's a way of making yourself feel loved. . . Many girls find it easier to orgasm through masturbation because they're not worried about their boyfriend seeing their cellulite/bum/hairy legs . . . And by satisfying yourself regularly, you'll be less tempted to have sex for the sake of it, thus reducing your chance of catching STDs (from 19 quoted in McRobbie 1996: 187).

Interestingly, this text presents itself as adventurous and controversial, for female masturbation is not openly discussed or widely encouraged. Such a bold and titillating topic could indeed be seen as transgressing traditional, passive, asexual femininity (ibid.). Yet McRobbie argues that limits and controls to female sexuality are firmly placed: 'Sex for the sake of it,' or pleasure 'for the fun of it' is not encouraged, and it is in fact, dangerous. In effect, this text can be understood as constraining sexual exploration, risk and fantasy (ibid.: 187). At the same time, McRobbie ties magazine sexuality to feminine norms, arguing that these are relied upon and re/produced in popular sexual discourses (ibid.). She argues that it is not

therefore that AIDS awareness produces one stable and identifiable set of effects in the realm of popular representations of sexuality, but rather that it warrants a new agenda in which

knowledge, fantasy and autoeroticism play a more central role for girls and women than it has done in the past (ibid.).

Such detailed sexual information is highly significant because readers are offered more (public) sexual knowledge than earlier generations.

## RESEARCH TECHNIQUES IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflected in the above studies is a current research trend which concentrates upon literary analyses, and semiotics, in particular. This trend suggests a feminist preference for literary as opposed to social scientific methods. McRobbie's work on *Jackie* magazine speaks to this preference:

[Semiology] has more to offer than traditional content analysis, because it is not solely concerned with the numerative *appearance* of the content, but with the message which such contents signify. Magazines are specific signifying systems where particular messages are produced and articulated. Quantification is therefore rejected and replaced with understanding media messages as *structured wholes* . . . semiological analysis proceeds by isolating sets of codes around which the message is constructed. . . these codes constitute the 'rules' by which different meanings are produced and it is the identification and consideration of these in detail that provides the basis to the analysis (McRobbie quoted in Strinati 1995: 204; emphasis in original).

Although McRobbie argues for the value of a qualitative method over a quantitative method, she has merely shifted emphasis to an analysis of specific messages, but at the expense of understanding the manifest meanings of a group of texts (i.e. a set of advice columns) . Other feminist magazine researchers seem to concur with McRobbie's methodological preferences. In the literature, qualitative textual analyses are generally favoured over quantitative methods. However, methodological discussions proved to be problematic as methods were under-discussed and/ or unclear.

Winship, for example, avoids a methodological discussion. In her introduction, she simply states that she has not written a sociological survey of magazines: instead, "some

general ways of understanding, first, the place of women's magazines in women's lives since the second world war, and secondly, the social processes and cultural codes which shape those magazines as a combination of 'survival skills and daydreams'" (Winship 1987: 14). Arriving at a general understanding is a crucial methodological issue. Nonetheless, Winship states that her aim is to read the dominant messages (ibid.: 21), yet this purpose is also a question of methodology. Other discussions of methodology proved to be too brief, resulting in a lack of clarity.

Blix explicitly rejects content analysis, opting for an 'interpretative technique.' She states that she has "used the historian's method of reading, sifting, weighing, comparing and analyzing the evidence, performing content assessment rather than the more quantitative technique of content analysis" (Blix 1992: 59). I am unsure of what content assessment is: 'sifting' and 'weighing,' for instance, are ambiguous concepts. Moreover, Blix does not explain why this method is chosen over content analysis.

McRobbie's discussion of her literary technique is cloudy. Based as it is on Judith Butler's notion of resignification (developed from a reworking of Foucault's work), McRobbie demonstrates the volatility of textual meanings. As she puts it, "meanings have been forced into a false stability through the violences and violations of the language of dominant culture" (1996: 176). This quote is loaded with terminology that begs for explanation, and also serves to obfuscate McRobbie's method; additionally, how Butler's concept is applied to texts is not mentioned. One gets the impression that s/he should read Butler to further understand McRobbie's study.

Leman also employs a literary method, which seems to be a variation of semiotics. She states, "it is useful to consider an approach to textual analysis developed in film theory. This involves the notion of a hierarchy of discourse which in the novel 'privileges' the 'voice' of the novelist over reported dialogue, authenticating it as the reader's view of the world" (1980:

64). Much is required to unpack this statement, leaving me confused over her method, and wondering about film theory and its relation to novels. Additionally, Leman could have included a discussion on the application of semiotics to magazine texts. Using Barthes' notion of myth, Leman seeks to expose how femininity is naturalized. Although Barthes' work is briefly discussed, Leman does not specifically state how she *employed* semiotics in her study. In short, how myth operates in a specific text is not commented upon.

McMahon's work is suggestive of a quantitative technique similar to content analysis, revolving around the construction of categories and the enumeration of articles selectively chosen according to the repetition of 'developed themes' (McMahon 1990: 384). Neither of these two qualifications, which sound similar to content analysis, are clarified or defined. The most provocative methodological question is on a reading of 'race.' McMahon writes, "*Cosmopolitan's* self help advice and feature articles assume a white audience. Models, if third world, which is not often the case, are represented in codes which signify differences as the culturally exotic. [...]" (ibid.: 383). The rest of the paragraph problematizes the presentation of models as the Other, and sexually exotic. Important questions of how whiteness is encoded in advice texts is unexplained, and moreover, unexplored.

Beverly Skeggs (1995) maintains that it is imperative for academics to explain their research processes. Too often, the practice of using a methodology is overlooked in academic work. Theorizing is of central concern in the academy and not always carefully articulated in light of methodology. Skeggs asserts that it is essential to highlight the research process so that "we learn to critique, theorize and construct feminist explanations" (ibid.: 2). If we are to learn from others, improve upon methodologies, and enrich our understandings of how to produce feminist theories (ibid.: 3), academics need to explicate how they arrived at their own understandings. Skeggs pinpoints some of the difficulties I encountered writing the literature review. Indeed my task is not just to outline previous magazine studies; my

purpose is to learn how others went about doing similar studies. Yet, this task proved frustrating as techniques are 'closely guarded secrets': analyses are not framed by explicated methodologies to which they gave rise, and research processes are not clearly outlined. Divorced from the process of inquiry, textual analyses stood alone, as if researchers mysteriously received Divine textual insight. In several cases the method was a sort of riddle and it was my job as the reader to untangle theory from method in an attempt to identify the researcher's course of inquiry. Major clues lay in key words, names, and sometimes analyses. Within the majority of the works I reviewed, theoretical interpretations took center stage. As we shall see in later chapters, I employ a method combining content analysis and semiotics for textual research.

In sum, these studies indicate the significance of hetero/sexual discourses in women's magazines. An inquiry is yet to be done which analyzes popular prescriptive heterosexual discourses. My aim here is to undertake such a project by naming the constituents of heterosexuality in *Mademoiselle*. While many feminists have commented upon, and researched, *Cosmopolitan*, I take this opportunity to investigate another popular, but under-researched magazine, *Mademoiselle*.

*Mademoiselle* lends itself well to an analysis of the discursive construction of heterosexuality within instructional texts: it contains an interesting combination of sex and relationship advice within its three regularly featured columns. In examining question and answer columns, I consider the following questions: How does a women's popular text construct heterosexuality? How is women's heterosexual pleasure textually negotiated? How is female desire constructed? What sorts of sexual dangers are readers alerted to? What sorts of issues are readers advised upon, and further, what is the quality of advice by women, by men? How does the text construct relations between women and men? What sorts of messages concerning sex and gender norms are present? Does the text challenge dominant

constructs of active and passive gender roles? Is sexuality and gender entangled or separate? Can we postulate that feminism has influenced discourses on hetero/sexuality and gender relations in the popular press?

A study of sexuality is important if we are to advance greater social equality for women; sexuality is one domain that requires detailed understanding and scrutiny. Sex advisors are one group who contribute to the defining of sexuality, hoping to guide it in its proper direction (Hawkes 1996). Traditionally, sex advice was offered by experts who wrote marital and sex advice manuals (see for example Seidman 1992). Today, sex advice is widespread, and can be found in a variety of media forms. Of specific interest are the prescriptive sexual discourses aimed at female audiences. Sexuality is complex for women, involving sexual exploration and pleasure, as well as risks and dangers. Importantly, historical changes (beginning with the sexological 'discovery' of the clitoris) which emphasize greater sexual pleasure for women have an impact on women's lives. On the one hand, sex is expected to be pleasurable for women, but on the other, women now endure certain pressures, to be sexual athletes, for instance, or have multiple orgasms (ibid.: 36). In Valverde's view, "changes in sexual behaviour and ideology thus have more of an impact on women than on men simply because sex (and relationships) continue to be regarded as women's speciality" (ibid.). As we shall see, *Mademoiselle's* advice continues to view women as relationship experts.

In the following chapter, I examine feminist discourses on hetero/sexuality, namely the 'sex wars,' paying particular attention to how feminists debate the meanings over sex. These debates inform my analyses. In the third chapter, the research technique is discussed, and content analysis is used to document the most frequently promoted topics, as well as the thematic content. Results illustrate that heterosexual relationships are woman-coded, whereas sex is man-coded. The encoding of heterosexuality in this manner is illustrated

through values, behaviours, and attitudes. Chapter 4 links values to norms, examines normalisation, and how *Mademoiselle* contributes to normalising heterosexuality, and invites readers to 'measure up.' Timeless and natural notions underlie that which is considered normal. These notions are exposed as myths through a semiotic analysis of two Q&A texts. Finally, Chapter 5 ties the current study together.

## ENDNOTES

1. American titles occupy the first shelf in the women's section suggesting the popularity of U.S. magazines over Canadian and International titles.

2. Sex and Relationship appears to be a new trend in American men's magazines.

3. Notably, within women's magazines, including *Mademoiselle*, are a range of texts devoted to the practices of producing a feminine appearance on the body (Smith 1990). Within this study, I limit my focus to prescriptive texts.

4. Whether or not readers are actual or fictional, the intended effect is that of an actual person and her real problems on which she seeks advice.

5. In general, women have been portrayed in various ways, often intersecting with portrayls of racial or ethnic groups. In particular, women of colour, including Native American women, African Canadian and American women, and Latina Canadian and American women have been stereotyped in certain ways. For example, Linda LeMoncheck (1997) notes that "Latina and American Indian women are stereotyped by many Anglos as poor, illiterate, and eternally pregnant" (p 61). In this sense, experts' construction of women may be dependent on stereotyped, racialized and sexualized notions of particular groups of women; further research in this area is needed.

6. Adams' primary concern is with youth; I have borrowed some of her more general ideas on the shaping of heterosexuality through normative, prescriptive discourses.

## ❧ Chapter 2: Sex-Talk from Feminists ❧

My investigation into *Mademoiselle's* love, sex and men Q&As is informed by, and analyzed in terms of feminist discourses on hetero/sexuality and gender. Within these discourses is a debate over sexual pleasure and sexual danger; the role sex plays in women's liberation and domination underscores the debate (Chapkis 1997: 11). In particular, meanings surrounding sex are contested. Sex is imbued with diverse and contradictory meanings; it is understood by a number of feminists that sex is complex, and must be contextualized in terms of oppressive gender politics, and the liberating, erotic possibilities of sex (LeMoncheck 1997: 11).

My inquiry into popular sex-texts was spurred by the ground breaking American anthology, *Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality* (1984). The contributors squarely placed sexual pleasure in the forefront of feminist politics. According to editor Carole Vance, the anthology's contributors are devoted "to expand[ing] the analysis of pleasure, . . . to creat[ing] a movement that speaks as powerfully in favour of sexual pleasure as it does against danger" (1984: 3). She asserts that if discourses on sexuality did not shift emphasis to sexual pleasure, it would be to the detriment of female sexuality and freedom. Not only may dialogue on pleasure become taboo (ibid.: 7), we run the risk of further inflating male power (ibid.: 5). I found Vance's argument highly compelling, contributing to my decision to study the meanings underscoring a popular prescriptive text devoted to audiences of women. As Vance presses,

whether scientific, religious, or political, prescriptive texts that aim to tell people what to do or what is normal pose a number of questions. Are they self-assured restatements of prevailing norms, safely read as literal indicators of behaviour? Or are they anxious attempts to resocialise readers to norms they are flouting? To what degree do prescriptive texts reach a mass audience? (1984: 11, 12).

To untangle the meanings in *Mademoiselle's* prescriptive sex and relationship texts, feminist

thought on hetero/sexuality is explored. Mainly, perspectives associated, sometimes rather loosely, with the pleasure/ danger debate, are examined. The debates are of interest because meanings associated with hetero/sexuality are under scrutiny.

When published, *Pleasure and Danger* created a stir amongst feminist circles; strong opposition to an emphasis on pleasure came from radical feminists, and the decade of 1980-1990 is characterized as the 'sex wars' (Duggan 1995:1). Factions amongst feminists over sexual politics had begun brewing in the 1970s,<sup>1</sup> and in the 1980s, political debate heated to a boil. Yet the 'sex wars' does not mark the first time feminists disputed meanings over sexuality. Indeed, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, sex, too, was a hot topic (Burnstyn 1985). As Jill Nagle (1997) explains, debates over pornography and prostitution, which began in the 1970s, became increasingly polarized and acrimonious in the 1980s, culminating in the 'sex wars' of 1980s (p 3). Wendy Chapkis (1997) explains that "one effect of organizing conversations around sex as a 'war' of positions was the need to define neatly dichotomous and hostile camps" (pp 11-12). The dispute over sex rests upon notions of which aspects of hetero/sexuality should be emphasized and changed: protection from male harm is placed at odds with female sexual freedom (Jackson & Scott 1996: 8).

It would be inaccurate to state that a particular group of theorists stood on one side of the debate, for differences among women have and do exist, and thus do not always neatly fit into one category. Nonetheless, some theorists are often associated with a particular variant of feminism (Jackson 1996a: 22; see also, Chapkis 1997; Nagle 1997; Seidman 1992; Valverde 1989). Notably, while the debates on sexuality are international in scope, they are largely dominated by white feminists in the 'North.' Stevi Jackson (1996a)/ Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (1996) trace feminist thought within the following three perspectives.

The first position is concerned with how we become desiring subjects. Psychoanalytic feminists are often associated with this perspective<sup>2</sup> (Jackson & Scott 1996: 8). The second

deals primarily with the centrality of male dominance in which sexuality is analyzed in relation to patriarchal structures. Sexuality is considered a site of male power, and as a masculine construction serving the interests of men (Jackson 1996a). Radical feminists are often associated with this perspective, choosing to stress sexual dangers (rape, incest, humiliation, intimidation, exploitation, sexual abuse and harassment (Vance 1984:1)) and the oppressiveness of the institution of heterosexuality (Jackson & Scott 1996: 7). Central to this perspective is an insistence upon theorizing gender and sexuality together, each influencing the other. I find that I cannot disagree with some of the issues raised by radical feminists; however, there are limitations to these debates. Furthermore, as a heterosexual feminist, I have found some radical feminist arguments out of step with my own experiences.

The third position concentrates on the 'malleability and variability of sexual desires'. Many feminists are currently engaged in this approach, focusing upon the historical and cultural variability, and complexities of sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, hetero/sexuality is rethought. Discourses of sexual pleasure fall into this position where women are encouraged to seek pleasure and fulfil their desires (ibid.: 8). Feminist libertarians have created strong arguments for the pursuit of pleasure. Others, who work from many different theoretical and political perspectives, including sex radicals (i.e. Califia, Chapkis, Duggan, Hunter, Nagle, Queen, and Vance) and feminists who focus specifically on heterosexuality<sup>4</sup> (i.e. Hollway, Jackson, Segal, and Smart), have made cases for a politics of pleasure (ibid.: 8). Within this perspective is a debate over gender and sexuality. Some libertarians argue that the two are separate spheres of analysis while others posit an interconnection between the two.

In the main, the third position can perhaps be described as a dialectical one, and most important for the analyses in this thesis. In Linda LeMoncheck's (1997) view, a dialectical framework examines the intersections of gender, sexuality, and male heterosexual domination. Such a framework allows for textured understanding of sexuality, supple enough

to permit a nuanced understanding of the interplay between sex and gender within the advice texts under study. She explains that

such a framework defines a dialectical and variable relationship between the politics of gender and the erotic possibilities of sex: a woman's gender circumscribes her sexuality within the framework of dominance and submission constitutive of Western cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity; in opposition to sexual oppression, sexuality informs gender with potentially liberating strategies for transforming women's sexual exploration, pleasure and agency (LeMoncheck 1997: 11-12).

In this manner, hetero/sexuality is identified as a problematic for feminism. Sexuality is identified as one site of women's subordination, interlocking with other sites, including, gender, 'race,' class, ethnicity, age, and ability. Positioning individuals within the multitude of intersecting oppressions means that sexuality can take on a multitude of meanings (LeMoncheck 1997: 22).

As a problematic, feminists work towards changing the oppressive nature of gender and hetero/sexuality. In this manner, heterosexuality is problematized as a source of privilege and norm that works to judge, exclude and oppress other sexualities. Bisexual persons, lesbians, gay men, transsexuals, transgendered, the intersexed, and other sexual 'deviants' face discrimination, and are at risk of psychological and physical harms. Problematizing heterosexuality involves a host of other political goals, including changing exclusive heterosexual politico-legal privileges such as pension, marriage, housing, and inheritance rights by extending them to a range of relationships. This change would entail the restructuring of social institutions, meaning that heterosexual couples would no longer have special status in these domestic and quasi-public forms (Smart 1996b: 235). Challenging heterosexuality means working towards abolishing a host of oppressions, including, sexual and gender stereotypes, restrictive and constraining sex and gender norms, institutionalized male domination, and the sexual appropriation and abuse of women. Women's emancipation is central to feminist sexual politics, making the meanings associated with sex highly contested.

As my aim is to understand the meanings of heterosexuality in a popular text; it is in the effort to work towards destabilizing heterosexuality as a privileged, normalised position, and create greater equality for women.

## THE NATURE OF THE DEBATES

In a cogent summarization of the 'sex debates,' Wendy Chapkis (1997) makes the following distinction: "Feminist sex radicals generally accept [radical feminist] analyses of sex as deeply implicated in structures of inequality. But what distinguishes the sex radical perspective is the notion that sex is a terrain of struggle, not a fixed field of gender and power positions" (p 26). In this sense, Chapkis explains that the key difference between the two feminist positions "does not rest on whether attention should be paid to the structures of gender inequality in which sex is constructed, enacted, and represented. Rather, the two perspectives differ in their assessments of whether the meaning and function of sex is fully determined by that sexist social order" (1997: 29). To grasp how the meaning and function of sex is understood between the two feminist camps, two central issues are concentrated upon: pleasure and danger, and sex and gender. In the examination of these two issues, radical feminists are discussed first, followed by feminist sex radicals and those whose theoretical concentration is on heterosexuality.

## SEXUAL DANGERS VS. SEXUAL PLEASURES: THE INSTITUTION AND SEXUAL PRACTICES

Some feminists have formed analyses over the notion of heterosexuality as an oppressive institution. This notion is closely linked to structural analyses of heterosexuality.

Principally, the harms women experience within this institution are under scrutiny (Jackson 1996a: 32). To be sure, connecting male violence against women to patriarchy, is an effort to challenge men's sexual appropriation and abuse of women. The result of such efforts is the politicization and theorization of prostitution, rape, incest, and wife abuse and battery. Yet many link violence against women to sexuality, not violence, as Susan Brownmiller has argued<sup>5</sup> (Valverde 1989: 242). Three central figures, Gayle Rubin (1975), Adrienne Rich (1980, 1983) and Shelia Jeffreys (1990) prompt us to consider the ways in which sexuality is constituted and formed as an institution. The first two writers emphasize the obligatory and coercive nature of heterosexuality, while Jeffreys focuses on the oppressive nature of the institution itself.

Rubin formulates a 'sex/ gender system' which maintains that women and men are constructed as naturally opposite beings or categories. Apart, women and men are only halves who are mutually dependent upon one another for survival. This dependence is primarily structured around the sexual division of labour which rests upon marriage (Rubin 1975: 178). Needs are, in effect, created which only the other sex can fulfil. The sexed division of labour creates a strong social incentive for women and men to bond and share resources (Katz 1995: 134), thus producing an obligatory heterosexuality. Within the system of heterosexuality, women are trafficked according to the needs of men (Rubin 1975: 182).

Rich's well known essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," describes women's conscription into heterosexuality. In this view, heterosexuality is not a natural choice, but an imposed institution designed to meet the needs of men. She argues that women are conscripted and controlled by men "forcibly" and "subliminally" by eight primary tactics (Rich 1983: 183, 184). These tactics comprise a long list of "forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness" (ibid.: 185). Most of the physical harms Rich lists are well known. Rich expands the notion of 'conscription' to a range of 'covert'

forces which shape female heterosexuality, perhaps comprising the most compelling aspect of her analysis. I perceive these forms as contributing the most to the shaping of hetero/sexuality, including my own. (How has romance, in the manner that it is popularly constructed, shaped my passion towards men?) Rich provides a powerful and thought-provoking context in which to analyze heterosexuality: the "socialization of women to feel that the male sexual 'drive' amounts to a right," "the idealization of heterosexual romance" in various cultural forms, the norms/ laws against "female adultery," the cultural erasure of lesbian sexuality, and the "psychoanalytic denial of the clitoris" (ibid.: 183).

Rich presses her analysis further, suggesting that particular norms and values embodied within heterosexuality direct women. She asserts that, historically, women have "married because it was necessary, in order to survive economically, in order to have children [...], in order to remain respectable, in order to do what was expected of women [...] and because heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty, and fulfilment" (1983: 196,197).

Rich makes it quite clear that the 'man made' institutional structure of heterosexuality is not simply influential, but moulds women's choices and behaviours. I find that I cannot disagree with her criticisms. However, Rich does not afford women agency; the structure is fully determining of women's (in)actions, of women's lives. Rich does not consider how women might negotiate their own interests within relationships with men, or how women have chosen to live without men. Further, men are viewed as a monolithic group across time and culture. Masculinity is not criticized or interrogated. Rich, for instance, uses the term 'male sexuality' throughout her essay, suggestive of an essential male trait. This notion conflicts with the social construction of the institution of heterosexuality.

Jeffreys is critical of Rich, arguing that Rich manages to validate 'optional heterosexuality' by letting feminists chose whether or not to be heterosexual (Jeffreys 1990: 295). Jeffreys

takes another route to problematizing heterosexuality by emphasizing the oppressive nature of the institution. Male dominance is said to be organized and maintained through heterosexuality. Several state institutions, including the courts, religion and social services are argued to uphold male power. Violence against women is argued to be condoned through these institutions (ibid.: 299).

Jeffreys asserts that women are born into a system of subordination and that we do not have equality to eroticize (Jeffreys 1990: 302). Continuing, Jeffreys argues that "under male supremacy, sex consists of the eroticizing of women's subordination. Women's subordination is sexy for men and for women too" (ibid.: 301). The proclamation that heterosex is the simple eroticization of gendered power differences is a sweeping generalization of women's experiences and sexual choices. It has never been part of my sexual experiences to have been in a position of subordination; furthermore, I do *not* find inequality sexy.

The institutionalization and practise of heterosexuality under patriarchy is questioned by Shelia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson (1993). In the main, they view heterosexual pleasure as problematic (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1993: 17). To make their point, Kitzinger and Wilkinson marshal a host of quotes on the sexual experiences of heterosexual women. They cite several well known feminists, including Sandra Lee Bartky, Caroline Ramazanoglu, Shulamit Reinharz and Lynn Segal. Each writer honestly and openly illustrates the complexities of desire, but Kitzinger and Wilkinson slate all heterosexual feminists as misguided, and flatly refuse to understand heterosexuality as having multiple meanings. In doing so, they deny heterosexual feminists' experiences.

Kitzinger and Wilkinson take issue with the language heterosexual feminists have used in the attempt to create a feminist discourse on women's sexual experiences and desires. They argue that feminist "reconstructions" of heterosexual erotic expression are simply

'linguistic slates,' not practical and theoretical strides to develop egalitarian sexual practices:

Even though women sometimes take pleasure in the sensation of a full vagina, it can be argued that: "[quoting the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981: 7)] . . . no act of penetration takes place in isolation. Each takes place in a system of relationships that is male supremacy. As no individual woman can be 'liberated' under male supremacy, so no act of penetration can escape its function and its symbolic power." The linguistic sleight proposed by some feminists in renaming penetration 'enclosure' (Ramazanoglu 1989: 164) or 'penile covering' (Hite 1989) simply serves to obscure the problems of the *institutionalization* of penile penetration under heteropatriarchy (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1993: 21; emphasis in original).

Ironically Kitzinger and Wilkinson support the sexological notion of one passive and one active organ signified by the term 'penetration.' Additionally, they have a dismal view of social change. Not only are feminist gains over the last century ignored, historical evidence clearly demonstrating the changes and shifts in meanings of heterosexuality and lesbianism is neglected (Jackson 1995; 1996b: 177). Furthermore, a distinction between personal experience and practice, and the institutionalization of heterosexuality, needs to be made: The institution is not determining of [individual] heterosexual practices (ibid.).

Certainly heterosex cannot be neatly summarized, nor can it be argued that male power is exercised uniformly and evenly, as Kitzinger and Wilkinson claim in the enactment of 'penetration' as constitutive of male power (Jackson 1996a: 34, 35). Jackson maintains that it cannot be assumed that "micro processes can simply be read off from the structural level, . . . [that] the physical act is meaningful in itself, as magically embodying male power without any intervening processes" (ibid.: 35). Elsewhere Jackson argues, "I am not sure that what we do in bed, or who we do it with, is as socially and politically significant as some lesbian feminists imply" (1995; 1996b: 178).

The dialectics of hetero/sexuality

As noted by Kitzinger and Wilkinson, feminists have indeed attempted to reconceive sexuality through the creation of feminist discourses. In the main, sex radicals and heterosexual feminists<sup>6</sup> emphasize rethinking sexuality, outside of sexological, radical or libertarian feminist paradigms, striving to conceive of a feminist emancipatory heterosexuality (Hollway 1995: 88). Wendy Hollway (1995) notes that we are bound by existing discourses which limit the ways available to us to talk about women's sexuality (p 90). Women have had to draw upon and reconceptualize men's discourses on women and sexuality. As Lucy Bland (1983) explains, we have "a past and a present in which there has never been a *language* allowing us to think about and define women's sexuality" (p 9; emphasis in original). By extension, Smart maintains that "the language available to describe sexuality is rigid and preformed in discourses of sexology, the tabloid media, sex education, the moral right and so on" (1996a: 176).

In rethinking heterosexuality, many provocative analyses have formed which point to the diversity, variability, and complexity of female sexuality. Feminist discourses on the 'pleasure' side of the debate essentially view sexuality and gender within a dialectical frame (noted above) by maintaining a focus on the many interlocking social locations of gender and sexuality with 'race,' class, ethnicity, nationality, ability and age (LeMoncheck 1997: 13). This focus allows for sensitive and textured analyses. LeMoncheck asserts that a dialectical framework

defines a dialectical and variable relationship between the politics of gender and the erotic possibilities of sex: gender circumscribes her sexuality within the framework of dominance and submission constitutive of Western cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity; in opposition to sexual oppression, sexuality informs gender with potentially liberating strategies for transforming women's sexual exploration, pleasure and agency (ibid.: 12).

LeMoncheck also notes that over the course of a woman's life, a woman's sexuality may be both oppressive and liberating, sometimes simultaneously (1997: 12). In this manner,

"women's lives are dialectically situated within a culture that circumscribes women both as the subordinated objects of an oppressive heterosexuality and as the defining subjects of our sexual experience as women" (ibid.). In this sense, women actively negotiate their sexual experiences. In the current context, this perspective is important as readers are recognized as active interpreters of the prescriptive texts who define their own sexual experiences.

To maintain a dialectical perspective, hetero/sexuality is frequently broken into components. Commonly, distinction is made between *institution*, and *practice / experience* (which encompasses desire and pleasure) (Valverde 1985: 18; Jackson 1996a: 29; Smart 1996b: 235). Mariana Valverde (1985) defines this distinction:

By stressing that the *institutions* of sexuality - ranging from sexology through pornography to Christian sexual ethics - are particularly oppressive for women because of the male bias in definitions of sexual pleasure, we can see ourselves as the more or less willing objects of the historical and social construction of sexuality. But by simultaneously emphasizing the variety of our own sexual *experiences*, we can try to highlight the ways in which we resist these social forces, counteract them, and sometimes even manage to change them (p 18; emphasis in original).

Further, this distinction moves away from libertarian and radical feminist perspectives which often perceive heterosexuality as monolithic (Jackson 1996a: 29). From a dialectical perspective, we can begin to conceptualize heterosexuality/ies. Feminism has already taught us an understanding of difference, and differences among lesbians have been foregrounded in recent debates (Jackson 1996a: 29; see also Chapkis 1997; LeMoncheck 1997; Ross 1995). As Smart puts it, "we already know that there could be no unitary heterosexual subjectivity. Our consciousness of difference means we already have to speak of heterosexuality/ies at the very least" (1996a: 234).

Heterosexual Practices

Notably, Anne Koedt (1970; 1991) is one of the first to challenge dominant conceptualizations of heterosexual pleasure and practice. From a radical feminist<sup>7</sup> perspective, and following Masters and Johnson, Koedt provocatively argues that the clitoris produces orgasm, although it is not the only site for pleasure. Her aim is to destabilize the institution of heterosexuality and make it an option by deprioritizing the penis, and in effect, coitus itself, as well as teach women about their bodies. Interestingly, she argues that it is men who wish to maintain traditional intercourse, particularly since the act is socially tied to masculinity and men's fear of becoming "sexually expendable if the clitoris is substituted for the vagina as the centre of pleasure for women" (1991: 333). Although lesbianism and bisexuality are suggested alternatives, Koedt is not necessarily an advocate of these sexualities. In short, heterosexuality is challenged, albeit in a positive and uncomplicated manner.

Since Koedt's article, heterosexual practices have received overwhelming attention, notably by radical feminists, as discussed earlier. Heterosexual feminists have aimed to contrast these discourses as well as debunk the meanings in traditional/ sexological/ scientific discourses and overlapping discourses, including those found in popular culture and pornography (Smart 1996b). Some feminists, such as Lynn Segal (1997), are becoming increasingly impatient with feminists' resistances to reconceiving heterosexual practices.

At a base level, many have argued against passive and active notions of vaginas and penises (e.g. Campbell 1983; Jackson 1995; 1996; Jackson & Scott 1996; Segal 1983; 1994, 1997; Smart 1996a, 1996b; Tisdale 1994; Valverde 1985, 1989). Feminists have questioned how receiving a penis could possibly be construed as passive - is one not actively embracing another? Passive constructions serve to obscure women's sexual agency. Further, arguments have been made against the essentialist belief that vaginas (as the 'lock' or the 'glove') and penises (as the 'key' or the 'hand') simply fit together. Valverde poignantly demonstrates how this conviction is an illogical, phallogocentric fallacy:

The lock was made so that a key would fit into it, and has no purpose in and of itself; ditto for gloves which would make no sense if considered apart from hands. But vaginas have all sorts of purposes such as allowing menstrual blood out, and most importantly giving birth to children - that have nothing to do with the phallus (1985: 52).

Penetration, more than any another sex act, receives the greatest amount of attention.

Smart argues that penetration can lose its defining power when disengaged from two primary ideas: that it is the essence of heterosexuality (a sexological notion), or an invasion/ or the act of colonization of women's bodies (a radical feminist view). When penetration is considered in and of itself, the heterosexual significance is lost. The growth of sexual writings reveals that men penetrate men, women penetrate women and significantly, women penetrate men (Smart 1996b: 236). "I believe we are all penetratable," Sallie Tisdale (1994) asserts, "we can all penetrate, we can all be top, bottom, masculine, feminine, up and down" (p 76). In practice, Carol Queen echoes Tisdale: "When I strap on a dildo and fuck my male partner, we are engaged in 'heterosexual' behaviour, but I can tell you it feels altogether queer" (quoted in Jackson & Scott 1996: 16). Queen (1997) asserts that heterosexual couples are "switching roles, insertion wise," which she calls "gender role slippage" (p 162). Tisdale notes that "there are many sexualities, there are many homosexualities, many heterosexualities, more than 31 flavours" (1994: 76). The diversity of penetration indicates a variety of meanings and does not turn actors into heterosexuals (Smart 1996b: 236). At the same time, dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, dominance and submission, are wrested from heterosexuality. These concepts are returned to further on.

Firmly seated in the practice of heterosexuality is the pursuit of pleasure and feminism's attempt to define it. As Jackson and Scott put it, "feminists have sought to increase women's sexual pleasure through decentring penetration and arguing for more egalitarian forms of heterosexual practice" (1996: 19). Change must occur around the conceptualization of heterosex. Sex need not be equated with intercourse, but encompass a range of sensual

practices. In short, a reconstruction of heterosex is called for. Angela Hamblin (1982), for instance, seeks to define a feminist heterosexuality while Segal argues for a more woman-centred heterosexuality and aims to politicize pleasure. Some, however, disagree with Segal's stance, questioning the nature of pleasure and pointing out that pleasure may still be difficult for women to attain.

Segal (1994) seeks to (re)claim pleasure, arguing it is essential to (sexual) freedom. Not simply tied to hedonistic goals, Segal argues that pleasure is potentially personally empowering and a source of agency: "Sexual pleasure is far too significant in our lives and culture for women not to be seeking to express our agency through it" (Segal 1994: 314). At the same time pleasure is politicized and declared as a site for women's struggle among the other multitude of oppressions women face, just as sexism, racism and poverty are fought against, and fertility and education rights are fought for. In this sense, pleasure is not divorced from traditional feminist politics. In summing up Segal's work, Smart (1996a) writes,

Segal seems to be linking a politics of sexuality both to an institutional politics (of welfare right, etc) and to the concept of agency and personal empowerment. It is crucial to Segal's argument that these elements of structure and agency are linked because a focus on personal pleasure is hardly radical or ethical in itself (p 175).

Segal is acutely aware of the lack of economic choices and material realities/ constraints on women's lives in the 1990s. For instance, she identifies the pressures British welfare policies place on women to rely on individual men rather than state benefits. The British moral majority has sought to lessen women's (and gay men's) (sexual) autonomy: "Conservative forces have mobilized consistently for battle against abortion, against homosexuality, against divorce, against sex education, against 'pornography'" (ibid.: 311). Segal further asserts that pursuing sexual pleasure can be an act of resistance to the many negative discourses denying women pleasure and bodily autonomy.

Segal envisions the possibilities of attaining sexual pleasure. During sex, gender

polarities are said to be unstable; there is a blurring of bodies as sensations are unique to neither gender. This is a fluid view of sex where "the codes linking sexuality to hierarchical polarities of gender, though always present, are never fixed and immutable. On the contrary, they are chronically unstable and actually very easy to subvert and parody - however repeatedly we see them recuperated" (Segal 1994: 242). Attaining pleasure may not be as easy as Segal maintains. Segal herself has said that masculinity, as it is currently constructed, still poses a problem for women. Critically, Jackson contends that we cannot underestimate the pervasiveness of male power in and out of bed: materially, culturally and socially. Simultaneously, we must recognize that power operates at many levels. Segal offers a seemingly uncomplicated and effortless way of undermining male power, subverting the "hierarchical ordering of gender and sexuality is not as easy as [Segal] implies" (Jackson 1996a: 35). Caroline Ramazanoglu (1994) explains that powerful social forces continue to constrain female desire and pleasure may remain elusive (p 320). Jackson argues that the possibilities for sexual pleasures can be enhanced, but in so far as power can be subverted, contested, negotiated, etc. (1996a: 33). She points out that our ability to challenge heterosexuality and patriarchy may rely on our social and cultural position, and on our access to feminist discourses which might "enhance our ability, in practice, to resist" (ibid.).

Jackson also draws our attention towards the notion of pleasure itself, and the meaning it can hold for some women. For example, a study by J. Holland, C. Ramazanoglu, S. Sharpe and R. Thomson<sup>8</sup> found that women still discipline themselves to fit into a male model of sexuality which includes suppressing their own desires and the receiving of pleasure in the *giving* of pleasure (Jackson 1996a: 36). Practices of servicing men, Jackson argues, are embedded in femininity and are "hardly confined to sexuality" (ibid.). Poignantly, Ramazanoglu argues,

we cannot exclude structural features of male dominance from our explanations. . . . Where

earnings are unequal, child care is taken to be women's responsibility; femininity is defined in terms of submission, and male needs are valued over women's, sexual relations and sexual pleasures are not the outcome of open negotiations or easy agency (1994: 321).

She reminds us of the difficulties surrounding heterosex, of how male power/ female submission is institutionalized and expressed in sex (ibid.). Indeed it may be easy to lose sight of the struggles of others when one comes from a privileged, educated, middle class position, with access to feminist discourses and the support of feminist friends. Nonetheless, Segal encourages us to see how we might subvert gendered roles, and even how gender can dissolve during sex. This is a relatively new way of conceptualizing sex that diverges from dominant discourses. It is of little wonder then that Segal connects pleasure to a broader system of social change that seeks empowerment for women in all aspects of life.

Vance notes a host of other anxieties which may also impede women's path to pleasure. Care is taken to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, abusive relationships and unwanted pregnancies. Vance points out that dominant culture demands that women control their *public* expression of sexuality lest they provoke attack from 'unpredictable' men (Vance 1984: 4). Further, a loss of 'reputation' may also warrant women's attention (ibid.). 'Intra-psychic anxieties' are also often over looked; these include the "fear of merging with another," "the blurring of body boundaries," a loss of self, overwhelming sensations, as well as the fear of dependency and loss of control (ibid.: 5). Losing control to desire can also incite fear, which, Vance argues, "causes profound unease about violating the bounds of traditional femininity" (ibid.). Similarly, Tisdale notes, "as soon as I imagine it my lust expands outward, and as soon as I feel my desire, I feel embarrassed about my body, anxiety about my performance, fear of rejection" (1994: 205). We may also fear un-sisterly competition for lovers, whether we are straight, bisexual or lesbian, when we compete for attention from another (Vance 1984: 5).

Notably, this debate over pleasure and danger may seem removed from women's

daily lives. LeMoncheck notes that "many women do not regard their sexual preferences as choices at all but simply as ways of living out their sexual lives" (1997: 1.1). Furthermore, women currently expect and struggle to have pleasurable sex. As Valverde argues, "this is a very significant historical change" (1985: 36). She contends that we should not underestimate the significance of studies by Shere Hite, Masters and Johnson, and others. Reports on the findings of such studies, however brief, find their way into women's magazines. As a result, Valverde argues that a 'heterosexualization' of social relations has occurred: there is an "emphasis on the sexual aspect of all relations" (ibid.). Paradoxically, women may feel pressures to be sexual athletes who have multiple orgasms, and regularly 'work at sex,' for example. Articles on improving sex in women's magazines may have an ideological effect where women are, for instance, encouraged to try new positions or create sexy/romantic settings, thereby turning sex into work (different from sex trade work). Sex as work, for instance, is a type of labour often described in women's magazines and specifically addresses women. Therefore, an analysis of women's involvement with sex is dependent upon how one perceives the relationship between sexuality and gender.

## CONTEMPLATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER

Contemporary feminists have yet to come to terms with the relationship between sex and gender. A number of radical feminists link sex and gender together, as one influencing the other. This association has, in part, been attributed to feminism's theorization of gender and viewing all that is sexual as a product of gender constructs. One of the first to explicitly problematize heterosexuality is Kate Millett (1970) in linking masculinity, violence and heterosexual society together. She also distinguishes between sex and gender by separating the biological from the social, respectively. Sex differences are argued to give rise to social

differences between women and men thereby creating feminine and masculine, and sex-differentiated eroticism (Katz 1995: 130).

Following a similar line of thought, Rubin's 1975 'sex/ gender system' maintains that the differences between men and women arise from the social distinction of biological differences. Gender identities and roles are argued to have been formed from the sex system (Rubin 1975:167). Labour divisions also ensure the maintenance of gender roles, so that no mistake between women and men occurs. A prohibition against sameness divides "the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby *creates* gender" (ibid.: 178; emphasis in original). As Rubin puts it, "gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of the social relations of sexuality" (ibid.: 179). Rubin argues that "at the most general level, the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality and the constraint of female sexuality" (ibid.).

Catharine MacKinnon fuses sex and gender into the same concept. In her blurred view, "gender is crucially constituted in and by sexuality, while sexuality is in turn largely if not totally determined by gender" (Valverde 1989: 238). MacKinnon further argues that "male and female are created through the eroticization of dominance and submission" (quoted in ibid.).

In a similar vein, Jeffreys asserts that an erotic hierarchy is embedded in heterosexual desire. Strikingly, she maintains that women learn to eroticize inequality. (She seems to suggest a process of socialization - a theoretical position marred with difficulties.) In part, it appears that Jeffreys' perspective stems from her analysis of sexological discourses which have significantly impacted society. These discourses hold a tightly bound ideology of essentialized differences between women and men, constructed in oppressive ways. Heterosex is configured within a matrix of penetration and ejaculation *in vaginam*, making the needs and

release of men primary and women's needs secondary.

### Dis/connecting sexuality and gender

Many feminists disagree with radical feminist notions, creating two diverging perspectives. The first is held by feminist libertarians who argue for an analytical distinction between sex and gender. Rubin's 1984 discussion on the matter is one of the most well known and oft cited. Others, including feminist sex radicals, and feminists who specifically focus upon heterosexuality, reject analyses such as Rubin's to form a second perspective. They perceive multifarious and intricate connections between sexuality, femininity and masculinity. Both of these positions arose from a feminist overconcentration on gender which resulted in the subordination of sexuality to gender. From this perspective, it is suggested that if masculinity and femininity were altered, heterosexuality would be too (Smart 1996b: 235). In any case, sex and gender are seen as unstable categories; meanings have the ability to change, and individuals may subvert sex and gender norms.

In 1984, Rubin presented a strong case for divorcing sex from gender, thus revising her earlier concept, the 'sex/ gender system.' She asserts that a theory of sexuality may not be derived out of a theory of gender. Gender does, however, count in some instances, such as the sex trade where women have largely been excluded from this male dominated and organized industry (1984: 308). Rubin argues that sex is organized into a hierarchy which she calls the 'sex system,' in part developed from the insights of Foucault and sexology. She states that Foucault has shown us that "a system of sexuality has emerged out of earlier kinship forms and has acquired significant autonomy" (ibid.: 307). In other words, sexuality is no longer connected to kinship systems. From sexologist Alfred Kinsey, Rubin uses the concept 'benign sexual variation' to develop a pluralistic sexual ethics. She argues that variation is fundamental

to all aspects of life and should apply to sex, too.

A sex hierarchy is organized as follows: 'Good' sex, as "normal, natural, healthy and holy," is "heterosexual, married, monogamous, reproductive, at home." The 'major area of contest' is "unmarried heterosexual couples, promiscuous heterosexuals, masturbation, long-term, stable lesbian and gay male couples, lesbians in the bar, promiscuous gay men at the baths or in the park." 'Bad' sex is deemed "abnormal, unnatural, sick, sinful, 'way out' "Transvestites, transsexuals, fetishists, sadomasochists, for money, and cross-generational" are included in this category (ibid.: 282). In the main, Rubin is arguing against the persecution and stigmatisation of sexual deviants. She asserts that a great deal of 'erotic variety' exists; however, differences are largely condemned in culture and society (i.e. sex negativity).

Rubin maintains that sex should only be evaluated in terms of consent. As she puts it, sexual acts should be judged by "the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide" (ibid.: 283). In this manner, sex is separated from gender as bodies, pleasures and desires form the basis for sex. Rubin provides some interesting insights into sex, including her concept of a sex hierarchy. Yet, I find that her ideas are not fully explained, and I have some difficulty understanding the 'sex system.' As one sceptic, Valverde (1989), puts it, "in the end we are left without knowing exactly what the 'sex system' consists of, much less how it interacts with the gender system" (p. 247).

Two difficult and conflicting notions underpin Rubin's libertarian analysis as essentialism is juxtaposed with social constructionism. In the defense of sexual pluralism, the origin of desires is unquestioned. Rubin is keen to develop Kinsey's notion of benign sexual variation, in part due to her political commitment to oppressed sexual communities. Problematically, Kinsey's scientific empiricism is uncritiqued. The science of sex is developed from 'post-Darwinian biology and by the regulatory features of liberal states' (Valverde 1989: 246). As

Valverde explains, the "variation thesis" as a framework for inquiry "privileges biological models as tools in social inquiry. The physiology of desire is the precondition of sexual relationships, but that does not mean the analytical tools useful to study the former are applicable to the realm of language and social life" (1989: 246). Additionally, biological variation and bodily experience are too simplistic to be applied to complex human social frameworks (ibid.:247). Existing desires remain unquestioned, suggesting that they are natural (Jackson 1996a: 26; also see Seidman 1992 and Cameron & Frazer 1987), leaving consent as the sole basis of judgement.

Libertarian arguments, including Rubin's, selectively draw upon Foucault. As a result, Rubin directly places the social constructionist Foucauldian ideas in conflict with the empiricism of Kinsey. Indeed Foucault spends a great deal of energy describing social regulatory functions and practices of the state, and religion over sexuality, for example. Yet it is the 'bodies and pleasures' aspect of his work - as a resistance to power - is emphasised. However, bodies and pleasures are treated as unproblematic (Jackson 1996a: 26). This is an unhelpful assumption when we are attempting to problematize power differentials within heterosexual relationships. How gender continues to play a pivotal role in sexual relationships remains unaccounted for (Seidman 1992: 132).

Although Rubin alerts us to important distinctions between sex and gender, a some feminists insist that these two domains overlap and intersect one another. In this latter position, feminists maintain that sexuality continues to be structured by patriarchal norms and expectations which continue to code heterosexual practices polemically. Everyday notions of male and female sexuality are embedded in dominant notions of femininity and masculinity.

Jackson and Segal, for example, maintain that gender is hierarchically ordered. As outlined by Segal, the "feminine/ effeminate/ homosexual remain subordinate identities in and out of their clothes" (Segal 1994: 315). Jackson argues that the ordering of gender, like skin

colour, has been allotted social significance whereas other differences are not. No two people are the same, and a lover "is always someone 'other' " (Jackson 1996a: 24). Furthering her point, Jackson argues that desire is gendered. The social category of 'woman' or 'man' is significant, and gender hierarchy determines what is "socially and erotically significant" (ibid.). Patriarchal norms determine that difference between women and men is erotic, and the power relation that this entails is eroticized. Jackson argues that the greatest significance lies in the fact that at the 'top' of the 'list of differences,' gender or anatomical differences holds the most value. However, these differences need not be infused with power, or that the eroticization of sameness is necessary for equality, as Jeffreys asserts (ibid.: 34). Jackson asks, "given that gender difference remains a material fact of social life, does this mean that power is an inescapable feature of heterosexual eroticism" (ibid.)?

Valverde does not think so. In her exploration of eroticism, she explains that erotic play is dependent upon power. (She inquires: do we envision a feminist society where "there is not erotic power, no lust, and where everything is enveloped in the soft mists of tenderness and mutual nurturing" (Valverde 1985: 43)? ) Erotic power is not inherently bad, "but rather the way in which power gets used by one gender against another, and by one individual against another" (ibid.). Amongst individuals, eroticism is dependent upon recognizing the other as fully human. From an Hegalian perspective, this means a dialectical interplay between the self and the Other, as subject and object (ibid.: 19). Sexual power is therefore not the question, gender relations are; eroticism must be divorced from patriarchal social relations (ibid.: 43).

Similarly, Segal asserts that the eradication of sexism and heterosexism means opposing gender hierarchies and challenging the very conception of gender itself (ibid.: 310). She argues that we must "continue to fashion new concepts and practices of gender based upon the mutual recognition of similarities and differences between women and men, rather

than upon notions of their opposition" (ibid.: 317).

## FURTHER POINTS OF INTERSECTION

Hetero/sexuality and gender take on further meanings according to the social locations of 'race,' class, ethnicity, nationality, ability and age (LeMoncheck 1997: 13). Although much research is still needed in these areas, a smattering of brief insights are collected here in the effort to further contextualize heterosexuality. In the main, feminists focus upon the interlocking categories of ethnicity and 'race.' Heterosexuality is contextualized in relation to racialized difference and the diverse meanings heterosexuality may have within ethnic groups.

Western culture has historically constructed an array of racialized stereotypes in respect to beliefs about the sexuality of visible minority women and men (Frankenberg 1993). Segal argues that "black and ethnic minority women face the full sexualized perniciousness of white racism, which has always used 'black' or 'coloured' men and women as targets for projecting its own most demeaned private fears and longings" (1994: 261). bell hooks (1982; 1996) asserts that black women have often been characterized as sexually loose, and as prostitutes. Similarly, Sarah Carter (1997) argues that in Canadian history Aboriginal women have been represented as prostitutes, inherently immoral (p 167, 187), and have "behaved in an abandoned and wanton manner" (p 183). Additionally, the sexuality of black men and Asian men have been constructed as lascivious and predatory (Frankenberg 1993: 92). Both groups have been painted from 'hypersexed' to 'oversexed,' although Asian men have, at times, been feminized (ibid.). These examples indicate how people of colour are purposefully differentiated as an Other through the lens of sexuality. Sexuality is but one site of the creation of racialized difference.

Historically much has been done to discourage inter-'race' heterosexual relationships

in Canada (Satzewich & Wotherspoon 1993: 224; Anderson 1991: 107) and the United States (Frankenberg 1993). Currently, a taboo against inter-'racial' dating and marriage prevails. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) observes:

Given a society that is more racially segregated than (quasi-) integrated, and given the generalization that people tend to find sexual and marriage partners within, rather than outside their class, community and religious groups, it is perhaps not surprising that inter-racial relationships are the exception and not the norm. . . such relationships are not merely exceptional. . . they are a focus of anxiety, disapproval and taboo. Alongside concerns about the social and cultural problems that racially 'mixed' couples and children may experience are arguments that turn (implicitly or explicitly) on notions of essential, irreducible differences between racial groups (p 100).

'Inter-racial' couples face struggles against racism and intolerance, as well as familial acceptance, as I have learned from personal experience. For example, my family exhibited an unnervingly high level of anxiety and concern when I dated an African-Canadian man. A markedly different response was expressed when I began dating a Chinese-Canadian man. My family shifted concern from one of safety, echoing stereotypes of black men as dangerous to white women, to emphasizing the otherness of Chinese culture. Interestingly, over time, my family has begun to see fewer points of difference.

Across time, constructs of heterosexuality have had diverse meanings for different ethnic groups. Historically, for African American women, the right to have sex, and choose with whom to have sex with, is of significance. After the abolishment of slavery in the United States, hooks explains, "some manumitted black women exercised their new found freedom by engaging freely in sexual relationships with black men" (1996: 219). On another level, the family has been a site of historical and contemporary freedom, a refuge from white racism (Goldsby 1993: 123). The prevalence of racism has led some, such as Kadiatu Kanneh (1993: 1996) and Tamara (1987), to point out how doing anti-racist work importantly involves maintaining ties with men of colour. In this sense, feminism and anti-racism are interconnected social movements.

In conclusion, the feminist debates over the meanings of hetero/sexuality demonstrate how the institution of heterosexuality poses many difficulties for women. A number of feminists point out that the institution does not determine women's, or men's behaviours. Sex radicals and those feminists who focus specifically on heterosexuality perceive hetero/sexuality as a complex dialectic; although male heterosexual domination persists, it is not simply encoded into practices of heterosex as some radical feminists maintain. Analyses of sexuality maintain focus on the dialectical interplay between sex and gender, to understand their interconnection, and work towards destabilizing their ties. To do so is an effort to work towards social change so that neither women nor men are constrained by binding sex and gender norms, values, ideals and stereotypes. To this end, *Mademoiselle* is analyzed in relation to values, behaviours, attitudes to provide an account of how hetero/sexuality is organized within prescriptive texts. As Gail Hawkes (1996) asserts,

the issue at stake then, is not so much what does or does not constitute 'sexuality,' but how do we make sense of its ascribed constituents? To describe some social phenomenon as a 'social construction' is to give a name an end-point. What is required is a detailed and coherent account of how we got to that point, of what and who was involved in the process and why (p 8).

In the following chapter, content analysis is used to provide an empirical, detailed account of some of the ascribed constituents that contribute to the ongoing production and organization of heterosexuality. As texts contribute to the organization of society, they are a site of inquiry into social relations (Smith 1990).

## ENDNOTES

1. In the mid-1970s some feminists advocated the separation of women - i.e. political lesbians - from men as a solution to women's inequality. For accounts on 1970s feminist politics see, for example, Atkinson (1974); Campbell (1987); Jackson and Scott (1996); Jeffreys (1990); Ross (1995); Seidman (1992); Segal (1994); Valverde (1985).

2. I will leave this body of literature aside because I am not seeking explanations on how we *become* sexual beings.

3. In the 1980s, a number of anthologies were born, contextualizing sexuality. Some of the well known texts include the Canadian anthologies, *Still Ain't Satisfied* (1982), *Women Against Censorship* (1985), and *Who's On Top? The Politics of Heterosexuality* (1987), the American collection, *Powers of Desire* (1983), and the British compilation, *Sex and Love: New Thoughts on Old Contradictions* (1983).

4. Note that heterosexual feminists working in the area of hetero/sexuality are an unlabelled group (Jackson 1996a; Jackson and Scott. 1996). I do not think that Jackson, Smart, Segal and others can be, or would consider themselves, to be Sex Radicals, although both groups share similar ideas.

5. A connection between rape and pornography was postulated during the 1980s, leading to an attack on porn. Landmark texts within this genre of thought include Diana Russell's (1982) *Rape in Marriage*, Andrea Dworkin's (1982) *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Catharine MacKinnon's (1982) "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State," and Linda Lovelace's (1981) *Ordeal*.

6. On recent heterosexual discourses, see, for example, the following anthologies: *Theorising Heterosexuality* (1996), *(Hetero)sexual Politics* (1995), *Feminism and Heterosexuality: A Reader* (1996), *Border Patrols: The Politics of Heterosexuality* (1996), and *New Sexual Agendas* (1997).

7. Koedt's perspective is significant because of her pro-sex position as a radical feminist, demonstrating that not all radical feminists are sexual pessimists.

8. See J. Holland, C. Ramazanoglu, S. Sharpe and R. Thomson. "Power and Desire: the Embodiment of Female Sexuality." in *Feminist Review*. 46: 22-38. 1994.

### ❖ Chapter 3: Content Analysis of the Advice Pages: Findings and Discussion ❖

Magazines dedicated to women are among the most popular selling magazines. Sammye Johnson (1989) notes that year after year, according to the American Audit Bureau of Circulations, women's magazines uniformly appear in the top 10 magazines by total circulation (p 195). Established in 1935, *Mademoiselle* is currently one of the most popular women's magazines. An advertisement in the women's magazine section of *SRDS Consumer Magazine Advertising Source* (July 1998) reads as follows: *Mademoiselle* is "the third largest fashion and beauty magazine in America," has "5.4 million readers each month" (I wonder how this figure was calculated), and is "the authority on twenty-something women" (p 923) (I also wonder how the magazine became an authority on young women) (see Figure 1). Published by Condé Nast Publishers in New York, 1,239,062 copies (by September of 1997) were printed and, of this total, 45,962 copies had been sent to Canada (SRDS July 1998: 907). Numerically supporting the claim that *Mademoiselle* is the third largest fashion and beauty magazine sold in America, *SRDS* provides several distribution calculations. Below, Table 1 provides the figures of several popular women's magazines<sup>1</sup>.

Table 1: 1997 Circulation Figures of Several Popular Women's Magazines

Magazine	Total Paid*	Average non-analyzed**	Territorial distribution***	Canada****
<i>Mademoiselle</i>	1 169 799	54 503	1 239 062	45 962
<i>Allure</i>	811 484	55 932	830 811	23 341
<i>Essence</i>	1 000 273	118 102	988 086	8 248
<i>Cosmopolitan</i> (Eng.)	2 701 916	n/a	3 008 107	214 439
<i>Glamour</i>	2 115 642	54 730	2 175 839	98 443
<i>Marie Claire</i> (Eng.)	702 063	32 877	852 632	53 218
<i>Self</i>	1 102 858	45 267	1 134 499	33 003

\* includes subscriptions and single issues sold on a six month average at 12/31/97

\*\* the total of the average number of copies that are sent free of charge to particular recipients

\*\*\* territorial breakdown of the distribution of magazines for 1997

\*\*\*\*those sent to Canada (source: *SRDS Consumer Magazine Advertising Source* 1998: A75)

Figure 1



## *What are you still doing at work?*

The plan is due. You're stressed out and you're tired. You could use a back rub and you could use an easy to rationalize media buy. We can help you with both.

### **Mademoiselle**

- the 3rd largest fashion and beauty magazine in America
- 5.4 million readers each month
- the authority on twenty-something women

Back rub still sound good? Answer the question below correctly and Mademoiselle will send you a free back massager. Relax.

Here's your question:  
Name three of the topics always featured in Mademoiselle.  
(hint: look on the front cover)

**Call 212-880-8587  
with your answers.  
Good luck!**

Source: MRI Fall 1997

©The Condé Nast Publications Inc.

While circulation figures provide some concrete evidence regarding readership, these numbers are not necessarily accurate measures of audiences. Women's magazines are offered in waiting rooms, medical offices, coffee shops, salons, gyms, airplanes and numerous other public places. Women share magazines, and read or borrow magazines from public libraries. Several branches of the Vancouver Public library have current subscriptions to *Mademoiselle*. Some branches shelve and sign out back issues. And, as I discovered while conducting this research, *Mademoiselle* was frequently borrowed so that I had to enlist the help of several librarians, at several branches, to help me collect issues.

Like a number of other popular women's magazines, *Mademoiselle* continually prints material on a range of interests. Each month articles on beauty (i.e. skin and hair care, make up application, etc.) and the latest/ seasonal fashion trends appear, as well as 'self-discovery' quizzes, entertainment/ celebrity news, careers, and health and fitness. Sometimes articles feature famous or prominent women. As well, a significant portion of monthly content focuses on heterosexual relationships. Regularly, a few feature articles discuss men, sex and/ or relationships. Additional articles on men and relationships appear in the section 'Relationships.' Under the 'Q&A' section, six question and answer format advice columns are listed: 'Love,' 'Men,' 'Sex,' 'Friends,' 'Work,' and 'Money.' Relationships comprise 5 of the 6 regular advice columns (including 'Work' which frequently discusses relationships with co-workers and bosses).

Atop each cover is a description of the magazine's contents, revealing the lifestyle which *Mademoiselle* textually constructs. In April 1994, in capital letters, the cover reads "FASHION, BEAUTY, RELATIONSHIPS, HEALTH, FITNESS." In October of the same year, the heading changed to "FASHION, BEAUTY, SEX, WORK, HEALTH, FITNESS." Expanding further in 1997, the heading changed to: "SUCCESS IN LIFE & LOVE► FASHION, BEAUTY, Q&A, SEX, WORK, MEN, RELATIONSHIPS, HEALTH" (emphasis in original).

The heading changed several times over the course of 1998. Beginning in January, the heading read: SUCCESS IN LIFE & LOVE AT 20, 25, 30► FASHION, BEAUTY, Q&A, SEX, WORK, MEN, HEALTH, FITNESS. A few months later, the cover proclaimed: THE NEWSMAGAZINE OF FASHION, BEAUTY, Q&A, SEX, WORK, MEN, RELATIONSHIPS, HEALTH. In their description of *Mademoiselle*, the authors of *Magazines for Libraries*, Bill Katz and Linda Sternberg Katz (1995) write:

*Mademoiselle* has gone through a recent change in editor after a short, nine-month stint with an editor who tried and failed to radically remake the publication. The immediate result was a return to a more traditional, toned-down design and layout. In her first issue, new editor Crow states, "my editorial philosophy is simple: leave out the stuff no one reads and give people more of what they want." It remains to be seen how this philosophy translates into content, but rest assured that *Mademoiselle* will continue to be primarily a life-style magazine for young single women. The magazine is dominated by a question-and-answer format covering sex, work, friends, money, health, diet, and fitness. Columns such as "Couples Clinic" and "Men" discuss various relationship issues and provide advice. *Mademoiselle* continues to feature the arts with brief items on celebrities, trends, films, books and music. A "self-discovery test" is in each issue, assessing reader self-awareness on such questions as "Are you too honest?" and "Are you a good friend?" (p 1162).

Notably *Mademoiselle* is described as being 'dominated by a question and answer format,' indicating that advice constitutes a large portion of the magazine. Furthermore, *Mademoiselle* is described as a *lifestyle* magazine. Specifically, this is a hip, white, heterosexual lifestyle. Relationships with men are central, and fashion forms part of the complexity of living in the late modern era. In this urban, *chic*, textually constructed lifestyle, women are conscious of themselves, men, money, work, health, and appearance; and, significantly, they are also sexually active and aware. Remarkably, interpersonal bonds form a large part of this lifestyle, revealing the importance of relationships in women's lives. The sheer number of feature articles and regular Q&As on heterosexual relationships suggests an imperative for women to have successful relationships with men. Whether the function of texts devoted to men and sex is for fantasy, pleasure, titillation, information, or entertainment, it is clear that these texts are popular.

## ADVICE IN *MADemoisELLE*

*Mademoiselle* has offered advice on hetero/sexual relationships for some time. For instance, during the 1970s and 1980s, advice was in a sort of 'commentary' form. Two of the longest running columns, "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Sex" (early 1970s to 1991) and "His" (1981-1990), discussed particular issues from the columnists' point of view. Several editorial changes took place in the early 1990s resulting in changes in the magazine's format. In February 1994, Elizabeth Crow landed the position of editor in chief. February's issue contained an 'experimental' relationship and sex advice column offering two responses to each question, one from a man's point of view and the other from a woman's. This format marked the first time readers could have queries on relationships answered in *Mademoiselle*. The following month, Crow introduced the question and answer advice columns, 'Love,' 'Men,' and 'Sex.' Just as Crow maintains her editorial position to date, the format of the advice columns remains. Crow's format is successful - not only has she kept her job - but the columns are six years old.

## ABOUT *MADemoisELLE*

*Mademoiselle* can be purchased at small and large grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, cornerstores, and newsstands. An issue is moderately priced at \$2.75 Canadian, making *Mademoiselle* a fairly accessible magazine. A Canadian and Foreign<sup>2</sup> price is printed on the cover suggesting that a specific allotment is designated for Canada. Readers may send for a subscription. The subscription cards nestled between the pages are not, however, printed with Canada solely in mind. Fine print at the bottom of the card reads that an annual subscription of 12 issues is \$30.00 Canadian (more than twice the American subscription rate)

plus GST and PST. A regular reader would only save herself \$3.00 through subscription rather than if she purchased the magazine at a newsstand. But with the inviting convenience of selecting the 'bill me later box' and receiving the magazine in the mail, one might be tempted to post the card. Perhaps a large portion of magazine revenue and financial security depends on subscriptions and not on potentially haphazard retail purchases.

The main library branch in downtown Vancouver has bound issues from 1978 to 1994. This branch no longer subscribes to *Mademoiselle*, or any other popular women's magazines. Instead, the main library purchases a cd-rom containing a number of women's magazines. The advent of this technology changes reading. Readers cannot flip through a single issue from cover to cover. Instead, one is forced to conduct a 'search' by topic. Results can call articles from several years from all the magazines included on the cd-rom. For some types of social inquiry this technology may prove useful; however, I was disappointed as the programme was not conducive to my research needs. How this technology will affect readership is certainly interesting. Finding information and advice on love, sex and men is, in some ways, more easily facilitated by the stroke of a key.

## THE TECHNOLOGY OF ADVICE

Further attesting to the popularity of *Mademoiselle's* advice, individuals can access all past advice columns on the World Wide Web. Certainly, the readership of the magazine and its advice columns is larger than estimated by circulation figures. In August 1997, *Mademoiselle* formed a web site. Listed at the end of the table of contents is a small box with the address, <http://www.swoon.com>. The homepage on the web is titled "Magazines @ Swoon," and lists *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Details* and *GQ*,<sup>3</sup> respectively. Features of this homepage include 'hot personals' (when I logged onto the website, a short personal ad from

a Torontian male was posted; at the end of his self description, a 'browser' could reply), 'horoscopes,' 'newflash,' and 'magazine rack' (which posted a question from *Mademoiselle*: "Is sex a cure for the common cold?"). The features within the homepage are updated on a frequent basis. Website browsers have the option to view one of the four magazines by clicking on the appropriate title.

When *Mademoiselle* is chosen, its own homepage appears. Near the top of the page is an advertisement for the current issue on sale. On the left hand side of the page is a self discovery test. Opposite this are 'Q&A' topics, 'Love,' 'Sex,' 'Men,' 'Friends,' and 'Work,' similar to print magazine's table of contents. Viewing one of these topics is accomplished by clicking on the title; results list the current issue's Question and Answer pairs. At the bottom of each individual 'Q&A' page is the phone and fax number for *Mademoiselle*, "if more help is needed."

Most interesting about this website is the browser's ability to search past 'Q&As' "for help." Near the bottom of the page is a box containing the statement "search all *Mademoiselle's* Q&As." Below this statement is a blank line for browsers to place the cursor and type a topic of advice. Search results of course vary but, depending on the topic, one can retrieve question and answer pairs from as far back as 1994. Interestingly, texts do not become 'dated,' and no longer read. Instead, *Mademoiselle's* prescriptive texts form part of a data base of information. These texts are perhaps accessed for a longer period of time than regular print material. In this sense, *Mademoiselle's* advice maintains significance as readers can continue to peruse past advice.

### *MADemoisELLE'S* Q&A

Historically, readers sent agony letters by mail. Although *Mademoiselle* still accepts

handwritten letters, readers can also send questions by telephone or fax. In the bottom right hand corner of each column, readers are invited to call a toll free line with their problems (I discovered that the line is not accessible in Canada, but one can still fax questions). Short, snappy statements urge readers to call. For instance, the 'Men Q&A' column reads, "Do you have questions about men? Give us the dirt. Call us at (800) 664-MLLE, or send us a fax at (212) 880-7MEN." Similarly, the 'Sex Q&A' column poses, "Questions about sex? Don't be afraid to ask." The telephone number is the same, but the fax number changes to (212) 880-6SEX. For the 'Love Q&A' column the fax number is (212) 880-5KIS; it asks, "Questions in love? Let us know."

Each monthly column is comprised of three or four question and answer pairs. Female columnists respond to the 'Love' and 'Sex' questions while a male author responds to questions in the 'Men' column. Generally, columnists write for the magazine for a considerable period. In the 'Love' column, Valerie Frankel was the columnist for all of 1994, and Ellen Tien for 1998. Currently, Tien retains her position. Questions in the 'Sex' column were responded to by Dolores Hays in the first issue, March 1994. Blanche Vernon followed, writing from April 1994 to April 1998. In May 1998, Sandara Hollander began answering the sex questions, and continues to do so to date. In the 'Men' column, Rick Marin offered advice from March to June 1994. He was followed by Jim Dixon who responded to questions from July 1994 to January 1998. For the remainder of 1998, Paul Bibeau is the 'Men' columnist.

Each problem page has two to three photos or illustrations, often of people, which reflect the subjects of 'Q&A' pairs. The format for each pair follows a pattern. Usually questions are two or three sentences in length and appear in bold print. These sentences frame sex and/ or relationships as a problem; they are the readers' confession, requesting guidance from the columnist. Underneath the question in a smaller, italicized font, is a

reader's initials and age. The practice of attaching an anonymous name and age to a question began in 1995. Ages range from 20 to 29. In response, columnists must interpret the reader's brief scenario, and analyze the problem. Typically, two or three interpretations are offered. Responses often begin with a rude or cheeky explication, followed by a more plausible view(s) of the reader's situation. On average, two or three prescriptive courses of action comprise an answer. In general, advice is written in a 'practical,' 'common-sense' manner.

### AN APPROACH TO TEXTS

As a means to document the messages in the advice, an approach outlined by William Leiss, Stephen Klein and Sut Jhally (1986) is employed, combining semiotics and content analysis. Labelled the 'middle range' approach, this technique permits two levels of awareness and sensitivity to textual messages (Leiss et al. 1986). To this end, the 'middle-range' approach reflects the current research trend of employing literary techniques in the social sciences. This approach has been used in magazine research by feminist sociologists Shelley Budgeon and Dawn Currie (1995).

Budgeon and Currie examine dominant discourses of femininity and contradictory discourses of the women's movement in *Seventeen*. They find the 'middle-range' approach highly suitable for textual analysis for two reasons: content analysis "treats the basic elements of communication -the signs- as positive and meaning as imminent: content analysis, by necessity, assumes that the text says what it means and means what it says" (Budgeon & Currie 1995: 176) while semiotics "requires us to break apart the sign, which is simply enumerated during content analysis, into its primary components of signified and signifiers . . . unlike content analysis, semiological analysis rejects the transparency of signs, looking instead

for hidden motivators of meaning which reveal their ideological character" (ibid.: 176).

Content analysis is employed to enumerate political messages and document changes over time (ibid.: 176). Signs within the advertisements of *Seventeen* are decoded by moving between the iconic symbols and texts. Budgeon and Currie assert that ads contain a preferred reading and these readings comprise antifeminist messages which draw upon the values and goals of the women's movement. As a result, feminist discourses are reconstructed and public understandings of feminism are transformed (ibid.: 184). In short, the 'middle-range' approach breaks a set of texts into two components, or two levels of communication, manifest and latent.

### Strengths and Limitations of Content Analysis

The strength of content analysis lies in the ability to treat qualitative data in quantitative terms. Such a procedure allows for patterns within communication to be detected. As objectively as possible, we can seek answers about texts and ground our analyses that may otherwise be an individual and impressionistic interpretation (Leiss et al. 1990: 223). Despite these merits, several critics have aptly noted the weaknesses of content analysis, with some summarily dismissing the method. As Leiss et al. explain, "they [critics] claim that meaning cannot be captured when communication is broken down into discrete categories of form and content, for meaning is dependent upon the place of any particular item within an entire system of language and image" (ibid.). One commentator, Colin Sumner, maintains that a great deal of emphasis is placed on the 'repeatability' of signs (ibid.). Repetition is of little significance if readers do not pick up on it. His main difficulty with content analysis is it lacks a theory of signs. As Sumner puts it, "the absence of a theory of signs, significations and significance renders content analysis absurd because its key concept is left unsupported and

that concept gives it no knowledge of its avowed object, the content" (quoted in Leiss et al. 1990: 224). Leiss et al. do not, however, perceive Sumner's remark as problematic provided that content analysis is not used to determine the effect of the message on the audience (ibid.). The greatest weakness of content analysis is its restriction to the surface meaning, or manifest content. This difficulty can largely be overcome by semiotics. Semiotic analyses are undertaken in the following chapter; semiotics is used to further unpack some of the dominant findings revealed through content analysis.

Together, content analysis and semiotics allow for a rigorous and systematic analysis while paying attention to multiple levels in meaning, bringing communication formats, messages and meanings to the fore. Additionally, content analysis and semiotics mesh a sort of 'check and balance' system; the disadvantages of one are addressed by the other. Differently put, a 'middle range' approach does not privilege one set of meanings over another, for individuals interpret both denotative and connotative messages.

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is used to systematically document *Mademoiselle's* 'Love', 'Sex' and 'Men' advice columns. I have chosen two years for study, 1994 and 1998, both of which were available at the time of study at the Public Library. This sample includes March 1994 (the month when the columns began) to December 1994, and January 1998 to December 1998. I chose 1994 for study because this is the year the columns commenced, and was the final year bound at the Main Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. Subsequent years are not kept (as they are on CD rom, as noted above). When I began the content analysis, 1998 was the most recent year shelved at library branches throughout Vancouver.

In the most basic sense, content analysis is a method of coding texts based upon a

conceptual scheme that allows for the categorizing of material into compartments for analysis. Categories are fundamental to the research: as one noted analyst put it, "content analysis stands or falls by its categories" (Berelson, quoted in Holsti 1969: 95). Categories are linked to the objective of the inquiry, related to theoretical concerns, evince the problem under investigation, and reflect the research questions (derived from theory). Developing categories can be the most difficult and time consuming process, partly due to a lack of guidelines, to the variability of texts, and to the intents and goals of the research (ibid.: 104). Trial and error encompass the sometimes daunting task of category construction. Moving back and forth from theory to data, and modifying categories in light of the data is the only method to realize the formation of logical categories (ibid.). To this end, content analysis is limited to recording the specified words/ themes/ symbols/ etc., that actually appear in the text and fit into the categories (Holsti 1969: 12). Therefore, the coding operations restrict the researcher to the surface meanings of the texts. As Budgeon and Currie explain, "content analysis, by necessity, assumes that the text says what it means and means what it says" (1995: 176).

In total, there are 263 question and answer pairs in the 1994 (n=119) and 1998 (n=144) issues of *Mademoiselle*. I designated each question and answer as one unit of analysis (i.e. recording unit). Together, Q&A pairs neatly form one 'component:' the confession of a problem and the interpretation. Short, snappy sub-headings pull the questions and answers together. For example, four sub-headings in the January 1998 'Sex Q &A' column read: 'Can you burn on, not out?'; 'Royal Flush'; 'Sex Enhancer'; and 'Fantasy Man' (p 56). In this sense, questions act as frameworks for the answers.

I broke apart the units of analysis in two, thus isolating questions from answers. This strategy allowed an in depth analysis of how questions are responded to. In the main, my first purpose was to uncover the subjects of the questions as these 'set the stage' for the prescriptive replies. Second, my aim was to examine the columnists' gendered advice.

Advice is analyzed in terms of the values, behaviours, and attitudes promoted in the texts. In accomplishing these two aims, a number of carefully calculated steps were followed.

Beginning with the questions, I compiled lists of phrases used to describe or typify the subject matter (i.e. topic) of the questions. These phrases were then thematically organized into groups in order to form categories<sup>4</sup> or compartments for analysis. Subsequently, the content of the questions (i.e. data) was coded according to each category's definition.

Categories are a sort of 'pigeon hole' into which data must cohere (Holsti 1969: 12). Due to the varying complexity of each unit<sup>5</sup>, some units contained more than one topic. In these cases, more than one category could apply to each question.

## QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

As a result, seven general categories emerged which serve to represent the thematic subject matter of the questions (see Table 2). Significantly, the greatest number of topics centre on 'relationships with men' (33.3%). Topics included in this category dealt with love; meeting and dating men; and fixing, smoothing and solving problems and dilemmas in dating, long-term, and co-habiting relationships. The second largest number of topics fell into the category 'understand men better' (30.2%) which focused on 'decoding' men's thoughts, feelings and actions. 'Women, sex and their bodies' comprise the topics of the third largest category (22.7). These topics concentrated on women's involvement in heterosexual, ranging from female reproductive functions to increasing sexual satisfaction. In the fourth category, 'how to resolve problems with your family or his family and friends' (4.7%) enumerated topics which concerned problems or issues with, for example, his 'exes' or the demands of parents. Falling into the fifth category, 'general information about sex, STDs, and condoms' (4.0%), are general topics dealing with sex, including finding a sex therapist, STD prevention

and illegal sex. Interestingly, these topics were generally gender-neutral. Sixth, topics concerning self improvement fell into the 'improve/ understand self' (2.8%) category include topics such as overcoming jealousy. Nearly all topics were exhausted with a few assorted subjects remaining, coded as miscellaneous (2.1%); the seventh category. Examples of miscellaneous topics include appropriate gifts for boyfriends.

Table 2: Subjects of Questions in *Mademoiselle's* Love, Sex and Men Q&A Columns

Categories	% of questions
<i>-primary topics</i>	
1. relationships with men	33.3
2. understand men better	30.2
<i>-secondary topics</i>	
3. women, sex and their bodies	22.7
4. how to resolve problems with your family or his family and friends	4.7
5. general information about sex, STDs, and condoms	4.0
6. improve/ understand self	2.8
7. miscellaneous	2.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	294
number of units of analysis <sup>2</sup>	263

1. Total enumerated topics (exceeds the total units of analysis due to the complexity of the questions)

2. Includes all 'Love,' Sex,' and 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 & 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*

Indicated in Table 2 are the primary and secondary topics. Categories one and two are designated as the primary topics as they comprise nearly two thirds of the content, 63.5 per cent. These topics become my main concern because they reflect the magazine's concentration as well as editorial topic preferences. According to these findings, men are the principle topic of the Q&A columns. In this sense, readers confess in detail, admitting to their desires and dislikes, as sex and relationship problems with men are explicated. As we shall see, men become a principle focus of discussion, analysis and interpretation by columnists. The remainder of the topics were subsequently specified as secondary topics. Interestingly, topics concerning 'women, sex and their bodies' occurs less frequently than those topics

concerned with men.

To discover the texture and depth of the primary topics, my next order of business was to develop sub-categories using a method of selective coding: A process of detailed coding limited to codes which relate solely to the primary categories (Strauss 1987: 33). In effect, the primary categories were analytically broken apart. Subsequently, these sub-categories are labelled topic sub-categories. As an important aspect of the content analysis, topic sub-categories reveal some of the detail within the questions and act as 'axials' for the coding of the answers. Anselm Strauss (1987) defines 'axial coding' as:

an essential aspect of the open coding. It consists of intense analysis done around one category at a time. . . This results in cumulative knowledge about relationships between that category, other categories and subcategories. A convenient term for this is axial coding, because the analyzing revolves around the 'axis' of one category at a time (p 32).

In order to form sub-categories, a secondary list of phrases was compiled through 'selective coding.' I systematically comprised a list of phrases concerted for the primary categories (Strauss 1987: 33), 'relationships with men' and 'understand men better.' In this manner of coding, topic sub-categories become directly linked to primary categories. Just as the primary categories were formed, I once again thematically grouped phrases together to create sub-categories. Eight sub-categories concerning 'relationships with men' (see Table 3) emerged, while four sub-categories characterize ways to 'understand men better' (see Table 4).

'Relationships with men' comprise the greatest number of topics, 33.3 per cent (Table 3). Within this category, the greatest number of topics fall into the sub-category, 'get him to listen, understand, do something.' In short, readers (are portrayed to) seek advice on how to get a man to comply or pay attention to them. The second most frequently asked questions centre on 'improving or mending relationships.' Third, readers request advice on particular problems and/ or whether it is worthwhile to maintain a relationship or go out on a date with a particular man. In the fourth topic sub-category, readers want to know how (or where) to

'meet men,' such as singles parties, and how to ask a guy out, including how to muster the courage to ask a man on a date. A number of questions were about love, how to identify it, what it is, and how it changes over time. These questions were recorded as 'understand love better.' Sixth, some topics centred on 'dating protocol,' meaning, what are appropriate things to do, for instance, when you invite a man over for dinner for the first time, or what to say in dating situations when you wish to find out if a man is married, or gay, without asking him directly (which would seem rude). 'What to tell a guy,' is designed to record all the questions in which advice is specifically requested on how to disclose problems, including relieving uncomfortable situations. Some questions express 'concern over boyfriend's activities' and readers seek advice on what to do about boyfriends wanting to involve themselves in high risk, traditionally masculine activities. Mainly, these questions demonstrate how masculinity poses a problem to men's safety and well-being, which may also affect a women's safety (e.g. aggressive driving, motorcycle riding).

Table 3: Sub-Categories Developed for the Primary Category 'Relationships with Men'

Sub-categories	% of questions
1. get him to listen/ understand/ do something	24.4
2. how to improve or mend a relationship	19.3
3. whether or not to date someone/ keep a relationship going	15.3
4. how to meet men/ express interest in someone	12.2
5. understand love better	8.1
6. understand dating protocol	7.1
7. what to tell a guy	7.1
8. concern over boyfriend's activities	6.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	98
number of units of analysis <sup>2</sup> (all issues in 1994 & 1998)	294

1. Total enumerated topics (exceeds the total units of analysis due to the complexity of the questions)
2. Includes all 'Love,' 'Sex,' and 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 & 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.

Four topic sub-categories fall under the second largest category, 'understand men better' which makes up 30.2 per cent of all the questions (Table 4). In the first of these sub-

categories, questions centre on 'understanding men's actions or thoughts better,' meaning that men need to be 'decoded' to be comprehended. Also requiring interpretation are 'men's sexual desires and turn-ons,' the second sub-category. Readers wish to know what men find desirable and sexy, and sometimes, why. 'Men's bodies, sexual functioning and sexual health' are mysterious and in need of explanation, tallied in the third sub-category. Questions on how penises function are common within this topic sub-category. Finally, questions focus on decoding the signs men display when they 'are interested, in love, or are committed' to the relationship.

Table 4: Sub-Categories Developed for the Primary Category 'Understand Men Better'

Sub-categories	% of questions
1. understand men's actions or thoughts better	49.4
2. understand men's sexual desires/ turn-ons	34.8
3. understand men's bodies/ sexual functioning/ sexual health	8.9
4. how to read signs that he's interested in you/ loves you/ is committed	6.7
N <sup>1</sup> =	89
number of units of analysis <sup>2</sup> (all issues in 1994 & 1998)	294

1. Total enumerated topics (exceeds the total units of analysis due to the complexity of the questions)
2. Includes all 'Love,' 'Sex,' and 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 & 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.

## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS: ADVICE IN *MADemoisELLE*

### Coding rationale for the answers

Now that the subject matter of the questions has been identified, attention turns to the answers. The main purpose of coding the answers was to bring to the fore the behaviours, attitudes and values sanctioned in the prescriptive discourses. A gender distinction was made during this stage by coding the advice of the male and female columnists separately to allow for an analysis of gendered advice. The result of following the many rigorous steps to

complete the content analysis portion of this research allowed me to "get close to the material whilst still allowing for the possibility for the research to produce its own 'surprises'" (Beezer et al. 1986: 96), and indeed it did.

Values, behaviours and attitudes are all closely linked. According to Johnson, values, along with beliefs and norms, "are perhaps the most important of all cultural ideas, for they are primary components in the social construction of reality and the regulation of behaviour" (1991: 38). Values define goals by distinguishing between desirable and undesirable principles (Johnson 1991: 24). A helpful definition of values is offered by Johnson:

Values distinguish aspects of reality by ranking them in terms of their social desirability. Values have less to do with how things are than with a collective idea about how they ought to be. Values define goals by discerning what is good and bad, and as such play a crucial part in the orchestration of human energy and will. . . values have an obvious taken-for-granted quality, as if they were natural rather than cultural constructions (1991: 24).

Here, the study of values is of great consequence, making obvious the constructedness of gender and hetero/sexuality. Further, the "collective idea" of how gender and sexuality "ought to be" (as determined by a popular text) is illustrated through this inquiry (ibid.). Interestingly, the number of values is astounding, far exceeding behaviours and attitudes. The sheer number of values indicates how prescriptive discourses weave a complex array of notions surrounding gender and sexuality.

As values serve as guidelines for making choices, they are tied to behaviours (Johnson 1991: 31). Behaviours are meaningful for they define the actions which readers are encouraged to adopt. A key principle within the advice columns is making choices, typified in the statements, 'its up to you,' or 'its your decision.' While the text suggests that there are endless possibilities to solving a problem, the behaviour a reader chooses to follow is not simply picked by chance. Indeed, behaviours are ranked according to social desirability and it is the intent of this phase of the research to make transparent the most favourable behaviours.

Behaviours are identified in the text as perceivable actions.

Attitudes are feelings, and they are cognitive, requiring energy and effort. While some attitudes, such as fear, are innate, a host of attitudes are learned expressions, appropriate in different social situations (Johnson 1991: 38). As Johnson notes, "attitudes regulate the expression of feelings in different social situations [...] attitudes predispose us to feel and, therefore, to act in certain ways, depending on the object of our feelings and the social situation in which we find ourselves; but underlying the feelings are beliefs and *values* that elicit and in many cases legitimize them" (ibid.; emphasis added). In *Mademoiselle*, attitudes are not restricted to how one ought to feel about one's self, but about men and relationships, too. A relevant example is noted by Johnson:

Feelings of superiority and inferiority associated with 'race' and gender, for example, are based on stereotyped beliefs and values that rank those beliefs in a hierarchy. Men are believed to be more rational and less emotionally expressive than women, and when this belief is placed in the context of a patriarchal value system that ranks rationality and control more highly than nonrationality and emotional expression, men are objects of respect and women are objects of disrespect if not contempt (ibid.: 39)

As women's magazines are devoted to gendered expressions, these texts provide an opportunity to study feelings valued in popular discourses.

Proving to be more difficult to code than values and behaviours, the attitudes in the texts are complex; often times, a single answer provides contradicting anecdotes, shifting between sarcasm and empathy. As well, analogies are often used which served to obscure the detection of attitudes. An example of an analogy would be, 'think of love as a brand new pair of shoes.' As a result, responses appear ambivalent, and advice confounding. Further, attitudes were not as self evident as behaviours, as the former involves emotion which in itself is difficult to detect. Nonetheless, attitudes are important as they indicate which feelings are sanctioned by the magazine's relationship experts. Interestingly, sociologists have not tended to study attitudes, with the exception of prejudice (ibid.: 38).

## Coding the answers, revealing the findings

To code behaviours, attitudes and values, sub-categories were once again required. As these sub-categories represent the types of recommendations in the text, they are labelled prescriptive sub-categories. To form this set of sub-categories, a procedure of 'axial coding' was followed once again to produce lists of phrases used to describe behaviours, attitudes and values. These lists were compiled in three separate stages. During the compilation of phrases during each stage, all the Q&A columns were piled together, and phrase after phrase was recorded; I made no attempt to distinguish between the columnists' gender to avoid a gender-bias. It was only during the coding of the values, behaviours, and attitudes that texts became distinguished by gender to permit an analysis of gendered advice. Behaviours were coded first, followed by attitudes, and, lastly, by values. In several cases, behaviours and/or attitudes were not present within the text because a number of answers simply provide 'factual' explanations. Nonetheless, explanations themselves are of great consequence as they are value laden. Significantly, more values are contained within the texts than behaviours or attitudes.

As a result of coding the values, behaviours and attitudes for 12 topic sub-categories (8 from primary category 'relationships with men,' and 4 from the primary category 'understand men better'), 36 sets of data were produced. I organized the data within tables, categorizing findings according to the gender of the columnist. To the right of each of prescriptive sub-category is a percentage indicating its numerical occurrence within the Q&A texts. Interestingly, I detected a pattern amongst the tables. Data suggest that advice codes 'sex as male' and 'relationships as female.' To illustrate this pattern, I have selected five analytically significant tables. Remaining tables can be found in Appendix A. I chose 2 tables from the values, 1 from the behaviours, and 2 from the attitudes. Although behaviours reveal a great

deal regarding what is considered (editorially) important regarding female heterosexual conduct, values and attitudes are of the most interest, especially since these are tied to norms which, in turn, may have an impact on behaviour (Johnson 1991: 38). As we shall see in Chapter 4, norms can play a powerful role in an individual's decision making. Although each of the five tables contains the subject matter of different questions and their respective responses, this focus on a number of questions helps illuminate how the particular gendered coding of sex and relationships is patterned throughout the advice. Values are examined first, followed by behaviours and attitudes.

Our first example uncovers the values sanctioned in the advice. Readers are concerned with men's lack of relationship participation, coded in the topic sub-category, 'get him to listen/ understand/ do something' (Table 5). This topic is of consequence, implying that relationships are not men's priority or interest. Already we are given a clue that relationships are women's domain. Significantly, this topic sub-category forms the largest group of questions within the primary category 'relationships with men' (Table 3). Readers perceive men's lack of involvement in relationships as problematic, and seek advice on how to increase men's participation. Columnists encourage an acceptance of men, rather than asking men to change their ways - to be more romantic, more communicative, etc..

Looking at the male columnist's advice, data suggest that women not confront men with this particular relationship issue. Observe that the majority of his advice, 74.1 per cent, supports traditional gender notions. The value, 'traditional femininity' (28.1%), enumerates notions of women as content, passive, compliant, patient, selfless, supportive, giving, and calm, as well as the sustainers of interpersonal bonds. In itself, traditional femininity suggests that women not upset the 'status quo' by maintaining the relationship in its current form. 'Traditional masculinity' (25.1%) promotes insensitivity, incommunication, fear of commitment and aggressiveness, as well as dominance, uninvolvedness, and emotional distance in

relationships. In this sense, traditional masculinity sanctions male uninvolved in relationships. Indeed, the value, 'male defined relationships' (10.2%), seeks to define relationships based on the terms, goals and needs of men, thereby placing men's values above women's. Furthermore, polarities between women and men are emphasized in the value, 'gender differentiation' (10.2%), in support of gendered roles. To this end, the majority of the male columnist's advice supports patriarchal notions of heterosexuality. More to the point, readers' wishes of changing men, so they will 'listen, understand, do something,' is glossed over.

In this dominant reading of values, the male columnist encourages women to follow masculinist relationship values. In a broader sense, the social relationships between women and men, organized within these texts - on the problematic of male non-compliance within relationships - organizes women in relation to men (Smith 1990). Relationships become 'woman-coded' as the advice reaffirms that women subscribe to traditional feminine norms, by conforming or complying to masculine relationship 'rules.' Traditional femininity encourages a non-judgemental stance towards men, whereby women are not to be critical of men, and masculinity. As Smith puts it, "the feminine woman is yielding, pliant and compliant" (1990: 177). As a result of an uncritical stance, men's behaviour goes unchallenged, thereby excusing men from greater involvement in relationships.

On a more subtle level, male advice does not uphold the outright dominance of men; otherwise, I am sure, readers would have little reading enjoyment, and sales of the magazine would plummet. Observe in the latter portion of the man's advice, (totalling 25.2 %), the promotion of egalitarian notions allows for subversive, and (more) pleasurable readings. We find that some mixed notions of traditional and non-traditional femininity, coded as 'neo-traditional femininity.' 'Non-traditional femininity' codes values asserting women's independence, and 'woman centred sex/ sexual equality' encompasses messages of equality,

places importance on female sexual subjectivity, pleasures and desires, and moves away from a phallic oriented sexuality. 'Non-traditional masculinity' promotes communication and expressiveness in men, and 'disapproval of machismo' encourages readers to be critical of (some) aspects of traditional masculinity. In the current context, these latter two values suggest that men do need to change, to be more attentive, understanding, cooperative and participate in the relationship. In short, the onus of maintaining a relationship is not solely placed on women. Interestingly, some of men's behaviours are medicalized. While women's behaviours have been under the medical gaze for some time, it appears that the gaze is now shifting to include men: they, too, require professional help. Further, the male columnist recognizes some feminist principles, including equality, as well as some subtleties and nuances in gender difference. Indeed, not all men are boorish, but are sensitive and understanding. To this end, some deconstructive notions of gender are imparted in the latter half of the advice.

In contrast to the man's advice, the women's advice is not evident of a neat, and apparent divide between traditional values, and egalitarian notions. The women paint a more conflicting picture in response to questions on 'getting him to do something.' In painting this picture, a more textured set of responses is created which suggests that heterosexual relationships are complex.

Like the male columnist, the females' most frequently endorsed value is 'traditional femininity' (21.7%), followed by 'male defined relationships' (13%). While these two values suggest that women adhere to dominant notions of femininity by complying to a male relationship-model, the third value is critical of masculinity (10.8%), suggesting that men ought to participate in relationships more. The remaining advice is nearly in tandem: for every traditional value is a conflicting value. 'Neo-traditional femininity' (a blurring traditional and non-traditional femininity) does not necessarily 'disapprove of machismo.' 'Traditional

masculinity' conflicts with notions promoting the care of the 'self.' This value places importance of the self over relationships with men. 'Male approval and acceptance' and 'male centred sex' are in opposition to 'non traditional femininity' and 'woman centred heterosex/sexual equality.' 'Heterosexual partnering' values the formation of heterosexual couples, and 'partnership/ social equality' codes feminist notions of equality. Of consequence are the many conflicting notions, suggesting that solving relationship dilemmas is context dependent. Women need to figure out what may be at stake in asserting themselves. Whether the problem lies in 'making him listen and remember our plans' (*Mille*. Nov. 1994: 72) or getting him to 'make the first move' (*Mille*. Oct. 1998: 82; Sept 1994: 86), one may be inclined to be more assertive in the former problem, rather than the latter. Dominant notions of 'good girl' heterosexuality may lead women to avoid sexually demeaning labels by opting to be sexually unassertive. Influences on women's choices is taken up in greater detail in Chapter 4.

From a comparative perspective, the data suggest that the female columnists analyze reader problems more closely, if not more proficiently, than the male columnist. In my experience, female friends and family members spend a great length of time analyzing men, and our relationships with them. They have an expansive knowledge about interpersonal relationships, and a vast language on which to draw, to go about describing and analyzing problems, carefully arriving at solutions, sometimes even orchestrating complex and elaborate plans, ranging from problem solutions to meeting men. As a single gal, I have been part of some highly intricate 'set-up' plans cooked-up by friends. My point is that heterosexual relationships largely reside within women's domain. The language at women's disposal is a 'toolbox,' and the ability to proficiently analyze heterosexual relationships is an accomplishment of the practices of femininity (Smith 1990). In the remaining tables, it will become increasingly apparent that relationships are indeed woman-coded: the extent and range of analysis women columnists analyze relationships, and the encoding of relationships as

feminine, encompassing the skills which women wield to 'look after' relationships.

Table 5: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Get him to Listen/ Understand/ Do Something'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
traditional femininity	28.1	traditional femininity	21.7
traditional masculinity	25.6	male defined relationships	13.0
male defined relationships	10.2	disapproval of machismo	10.8
gender differentiation	10.2	neo-traditional femininity	10.8
neo-traditional femininity	5.1	traditional masculinity	8.6
non-traditional femininity	5.1	self	6.5
woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	2.5	male approval and acceptance	6.5
disapproval of machismo	2.5	male centred sex	4.3
heterosexual partnering	2.5	non-traditional femininity	4.3
non-traditional masculinity	2.5	woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	4.3
medicalization of men's behaviours	2.5	heterosexual partnering	2.1
other	2.5	partnership/ social equality	2.1
		social grace	2.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	31	N <sup>2</sup> =	29
total values <sup>3</sup>	39	total values <sup>4</sup>	45

1. Includes all units of analysis in this particular subcategory in the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
2. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
3. Total values enumerated in the 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, there are more values than units of analysis.
4. Total values enumerated in the 'Love' and 'Sex' columns in this particular subcategory. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, there are more values than units of analysis.

On the matter of 'whether or not to date someone/ keep a relationship going,' data suggest that both male and female columnists recommend women to date the man in question or maintain the current relationship (Table 6). Additionally, both genders endorse the notion that relationships take precedence over the care of the 'self.' Indeed, a significant part of the man's advice, and a smaller portion of the woman's advice, endorse 'traditional femininity' which suggests that a woman 'stand by her man.' Together these values impart the importance of heterosexual coupling, over the importance of the self, singlehood, celibacy, lesbianism or bisexuality.

Even the male columnist's endorsement of 'sexism,' proposes that women are secondary, placed in response to men's relationship needs. Yet, 'standing by one's man' is not as simple as the male columnist's advice suggests. Strikingly evident is a lack of scope in the male's prescriptive discourses. Notice that in the male's column, the total number of units is 8, and 10 values were coded within these units (i.e. exceeding 100% of the total units). In relation to the females' column, there are nearly 7 times as many units of analysis (55) than the male's. Furthermore, the number of coded values nearly doubles the number of units! These numbers are of consequence, evidence of women's elaborate discourse devoted to the analysis of heterosexual relationships.

As the data from the female columnists suggest that women 'date the man in question or keep the relationship going,' an array of traditional and non-traditional values are offered in support of maintaining heterosexual relationships. Further, this array of values denotes the complexities and contradictions of femininity. Within heterosexual couplehood, 21.4 per cent of the values are non-traditional and support egalitarian notions: 'woman centred heterosexual equality;' 'non-traditional femininity;' 'non-traditional masculinity;' 'partnership/ social equality.' 'Friendships with women' and 'career' place importance in other aspects of women's lives apart from heterosexual relationships. A few cautionary values, 'wariness of men,' and 'wariness of sex' (totalling 3.1 per cent), suggest that there are some dangers associated with heterosexuality.

Just over half of the evidence, 52.2 per cent, points to the importance of couplehood: 'heterosexual partnering;' 'love' (can be read as a positive value supporting emotional bonds rather than couplehood for the sake of it); 'marriage;' and 'heteronormativity.' 'Non-promiscuousness,' 'male monogamy,' 'female monogamy,' define the values or manner in which heterosexuality ought to take shape, as does 'male defined relationships' and 'male centred sex.' Legitimation for centring sex and relationships on men is provided by the values

'naturalization of masculinity,' 'traditional masculinity,' and 'male approval and acceptance.'

Overall, 'dating the man in question and maintaining the relationship' are not only dependent upon valuing heterosexual couplehood, and the predominance of men in relationships, but traditional and non-traditional values also insinuate that women place value on maintaining relationships. Suggestively, relationships are integral to womanhood, and femininity. Practices of dating and maintaining relationships require women to give themselves, to devote their time, skills and energy, requiring knowledge, initiative and judgment (Smith 1990: 201).

Table 6: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Whether or Not to Date Someone/ Keep the Relationship Going'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
traditional femininity	50.0	heterosexual partnering	11.7
non-traditional masculinity	10.0	self	8.6
self	10.0	traditional femininity	7.5
woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	10.0	woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	6.5
sexism	10.0	traditional masculinity	6.5
other	10.0	love	5.4
		non-traditional femininity	5.4
		non-traditional masculinity	4.3
		non-promiscuousness	4.3
		neo-traditional femininity	3.2
		heteronormativity	3.2
		marriage	3.2
		male monogamy	3.2
		partnership/ social equality	3.2
		male centred sex	3.2
		naturalization of masculinity	2.1
		social grace	2.1
		female monogamy	2.1
		wariness of men	2.1
		wariness of sex	1.0
		safe sex	1.0
		career	1.0
		personal hygiene	1.0
		friendships with women	1.0
		male approval and acceptance	1.0
		male defined relationships	1.0
		other	3.2
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	55
total values <sup>3</sup>	10	total values <sup>4</sup>	90

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Turning to some behaviours sanctioned in the advice, we can gather insight into particular details concerning the practices of femininity. Recall that behaviours are informed by values whereby feminine values, put into practice, can be read as behaviours. Taking questions devoted to 'understanding men's bodies/ sexual functioning/ sexual health' as our example, we find that responses are solely made by the female columnists (Table 7). One

wonders, do men not understand their own bodies? Seemingly, the male columnist lacks the discursive ability to explain men's bodies. Most striking, the female columnists recommend that women look after, or take care of, men's bodies: the practices of femininity are broad, not only encompassing care of relationships, but the care of men's bodies, too.

Readers are to 'pay attention to his penis,' to examine for abnormalities (i.e. bent at an acute angle), or signs of an STD, for instance. If something is wrong with the penis, readers are to encourage 'him to seek professional help.' In this sense, penises are medicalized. 'Don't have sex' enumerates those instances when readers are advised not to have sex if they do not 'feel like it,' or due to the risk of STDs/ HIV. Solving relationship dilemmas, or as the case may be, helping him solve bodily concerns, includes 'offering an alternative' or one's 'support/ help.' These are skills, possibly involving tactful communicative abilities. 'Support and help' was once a traditional feminine occupation. Jean-Jacque Rousseau, for example, defined woman's role as helpmate (Smith 1990: 175). Today, support and help continue to be a desirable feminine trait: one has to know how to be knowledgable in the art of selflessness in order to give support and help.

The recommendations to 'initiate intimacy/ romance,' and 'be sexually suggestive/ have sex' (to be sexy or initiate sex for a man's benefit or needs), are particular feminine techniques of setting a romantic mood, and knowing which sexual practices titillate men. Significantly, techniques related to increasing female pleasure are absent. If readers desire to understand men's bodies, would it not be to readers' benefit to understand how one might derive pleasure in contact with a man's body?

Data suggest that an expansive set of knowledge on the 'practices of safe sex' is required: ranging from knowing where to shop for male/ female condoms, dental dams, etc., and furthermore, knowing how to put safe sex into practice. In short, 'understanding men's bodies/ sexual functioning/ sexual health' entails being knowledgable on a vast array of subject

matter which is no small accomplishment!

Table 7: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Bodies/ Sexual Functioning/ Sexual Health'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		practice safe sex	26.6
		pay attention to his penis	16.6
		offer an alternative	10.0
		get him to seek professional help	10.0
		decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	9.9
		be sexually suggestive/ have sex	9.9
		initiate intimacy/ romance	6.6
		support/ help him	6.6
		don't have sex	3.3
N=	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	50
total behaviours	0	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	30

1. Includes all the units of analysis within the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
2. Includes all the units of analysis within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
3. Total enumerated behaviours in this particular subcategory within the 1994 and 1998 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain more than one prescriptive behaviour, in other cases, some units do not contain any behaviours.
4. Total enumerated behaviours in this particular subcategory within the 1994 and 1998 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain more than one prescriptive behaviour, in other cases, some units do not contain any behaviours.

Attitudes can play a role in women's behaviours, as thought is often a precursor to action. In the next two (and final) tables, the woman-coding of relationships becomes even more apparent as sex is revealed in finer detail to be man-coded. This manner of coding sex and relationships re/creates a gender dichotomy, a notion further explored in the next chapter. In Table 9, differences in gendered advice are strikingly apparent. Rather than address questions on how to 'improve or mend a relationship,' the male columnist concentrates on sex: 33 per cent of his advice 'divorces sex from intimacy or love.' This separation is liberating in certain instances, but it certainly does not aid in the betterment of a

relationship. In fact, it suggests that meaningful relationships are not men's priority, and encourages emotional distance. Furthermore, it suggests that the mending of interpersonal problems rests on sex, rather than communication. 'Men like sex' (22.2%) serves to further the notion that men are mainly concerned about sex. These two attitudes comprise just over half of the man's advice, encouraging women to adopt masculinist beliefs about sex and its predominance in relationships.

The remaining four attitudes in the male columnist's advice are sensitive to the issue of bettering relationships, thereby moving away from a concentration on sex to providing empathy on interpersonal difficulties, and advocating a focus on the self. However, the shift from sex to relationships and self, refocuses on women thereby reinforcing gender differentiation: sex is men's concern, and relationships, women's. This differentiation is also apparent in the women's column, if not more so. We observe a greater number of attitudes used in the advice, denoting greater complexity of analysis, and a broad language base which women draw upon. As well, the gendered encoding of sex and relationships is made more apparent.

In contrast to the man's advice, the women's is unrelated to sex; it is more textured and illustrates a depth of analysis. Importantly, the first attitude, 'independence, confidence, self concern' places the self above others, and men in particular. The three attitudes which follow suggest that there are difficulties and work involved in relationships: 'love can be difficult,' 'relationships require work,' and 'relationships end'. Not simply based on romantic, idealistic notions, the text promotes attitudes concerning the constructedness of relationships. Significantly, in this construction, women are at work: 'kindheartedness and sympathy,' 'patience and perseverance,' 'fidelity,' 'contriteness' (when one is wrong), are necessary attitudes for working at improving relationships. Notably, these are 'giving' attitudes, integral to the practices of femininity.

Interestingly, sex is promoted as 'important to a relationship,' and as 'fun and enjoyable.' The former attitude suggests that sex is also an act of giving, helping to maintain a relationship; the latter implies that columnists are convincing readers of the merits of sex. Nevertheless, in contrast to the former attitude, the latter, albeit indirectly, asserts that sex can be pleasurable for women, encompassing playfulness and exploration. The last two attitudes, 'men can be nervous, fearful or insecure,' and 'men are incompetent,' furthers the notion that women are relationship experts whereas men's skills are lacking. Read another way, 'men can nervous, fearful or insecure' can indicate a break in dominant notions of masculinity. Men are recognized as having emotions and feelings. Significantly, men's emotions are unrecognized by the male columnist.

Table 8: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Improve or Mend a Relationship'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
sex can be divorced from intimacy/love	33.3	independence, confidence, self concern	16.5
men like sex	22.2	love can be difficult	11.4
relationships require work	11.1	relationships require work	9.8
dating can be difficult	11.1	relationships end	9.8
independence, confidence, self concern	11.1	kindheartedness and sympathy	8.1
patience and perseverance	11.1	sex is important to a relationship	8.1
		patience and perseverance	8.1
		fidelity	6.5
		be contrite	6.5
		dating can be difficult	4.9
		sex is fun and enjoyable	3.2
		men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	3.2
		men are incompetent	1.6
		other	1.6
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	80
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	9	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	61

1. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory in the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.

2. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.

3. Total enumerated attitudes in this particular subcategory the 1994 and 1998 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain may contain more than one prescriptive attitude.

4. Total enumerated attitudes in this particular subcategory of the 1994 and 1998 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain may contain more than one prescriptive attitude.

In view of columnists' responses to questions concerning 'understanding men's sexual desire/ turn-ons,' both genders devote a significant amount of attention to sex. Implicitly, readers are encouraged to adopt men's attitudes towards sexuality (Table 9). While 89.1 per cent of the man's advice, and 85.1 per cent of the women's advice, concerns sex, there are some marked gender differences. The male columnist's recommendations are direct and frank. His most frequent attitude is simply, 'women turn men on' (39.2%). Second, 'men enjoy sex' (21.4%), and third, 'men's pleasure is important' (10.7%), and 'sex is natural and

healthy' (10.7%). Of consequence, three of these four attitudes centre on men's sexual enjoyment and pleasure. 'Sex is natural and healthy' implies that sex is good for both women and men. Yet in the thematic context of the questions, 'to understand men's turn ons,' suggests that men are expressing their innate desires. In this respect, readers might adopt men's attitudes towards sex, especially since readers are counselled to 'be sexually alluring' (7.1%), meaning that women should adopt an enticing demeanour. Collectively, these attitudes suggest that women embrace the attitude that men's sexuality is highly important, and, moreover, that women's sexuality exists in response to men's. Indeed, the attitudes, 'be cool and calm' and 'don't worry' further indicate that women not be overly concerned with 'men's sexual desires and turn-ons.' 'Independence, confidence, and self concern' is overwhelmed by the sheer number of attitudes devoted to concentrating on men's sexual needs.

Interestingly, the women's advice contains some of same attitudes as the male columnist. Examining the sexual attitudes in concert (comprising 12 of the 16 attitudes in Table 9), we find that even the female columnists place an overwhelming emphasis on sex for men: 'men's pleasure is important' (14.2%) is the most frequent attitude. The second and third attitudes are 'women turn men on' (11.9%) and 'sex is natural and healthy' (10.7). The following 8 attitudes, in descending order, provide a more textured outlook to a sexuality which centres on men: 'Sex is complicated' (9.5%) maintains that sex is not straight forward; it can be fraught with many emotions, for example. Additionally, the view that 'women's and men's arousals differ' (8.3%), suggests that women and men may not always desire to have sex at the same time. This difference may cause problems, especially since 'men enjoy sex' (5.9%), perhaps more than women: the advice does not endorse the sentiment that women enjoy sex, too. Also, 'men like porn' (5.9%). Stated matter of factly, columnists suggest that perhaps women will concede to understand that men enjoy pornography and should perhaps

accept this form of entertainment (in the text, readers view porn as problematic, not, for instance, as a couple's activity or something a woman might derive pleasure from). In any case, women are implicitly advised to accept men's sexual desires as they 'don't change' (4.7%). As sexuality 'is the way it is' the columnists suggest that women might adopt the outlook that 'sex is fun and enjoyable' (4.7%) (after all), and 'be sexually alluring' (3.5%) to captivate men's attention. Nonetheless, readers do have to hold a cautious attitude, as 'sex can be risky' (3.5%); women are not free from the dangers of STDs, pregnancies, etc.. As a final note, readers are encouraged to 'be sexually expressive' (2.3%), to convey their own desires. Perhaps a difficult endeavour, if one's sexuality had not yet become stifled while taking men into consideration first.

Significantly, male and female columnists suggest that 'understanding men's sexual desires' means knowing that sexual activity centres on men. Furthermore, attitudes suggest that men are highly sexed and libidinous. In contrast to male desire, female desire is largely ignored, also supporting the notion that sex is male coded. Limited to the attitude, 'be sexually expressive,' notably comprising only 2.3 per cent of the attitudes in the women's column, the magazine does not endorse sentiments regarding women's enjoyment, or importance of pleasurable sex. Female passion and eroticism are notably absent. An interesting subject position is created whereby women are sexually active for men's benefit. Attitudes of pleasure are limited to broad, non-gender specific expressions: 'sex is fun and enjoyable,' 'sex is natural and healthy, and 'sex is important to a relationship.'

Table 9: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Sexual Desires/ Turn Ons'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
women turn men on	39.2	men's pleasure is important	14.2
men enjoy sex	21.4	women turn men on	11.9
sex is natural and healthy	10.7	sex is natural and healthy	10.7
men's pleasure is important	10.7	sex is complicated	9.5
be sexually alluring	7.1	women's and men's arousals differ	8.3
don't worry	3.5	men enjoy sex	5.9
be cool and calm	3.5	men like porn	5.9
independence, confidence, self concern	3.5	sex is fun and enjoyable	4.7
		men's desires don't change	4.7
		men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	4.7
		be sexually alluring	3.5
		sex can be risky	3.5
		be sexually expressive	2.3
		patience and perseverance	2.3
		don't worry	2.3
		be cool and calm	1.1
		other	3.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	33	N <sup>2</sup> =	117
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	28	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	84

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Attitudes are a fascinating phenomenon. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the feelings sanctioned by the magazine. In addition to attitudes about sex are a number of sentiments regarding readers' selves, promoting a certain posture: 'Independence, confidence and self concern;' 'patience and perseverance;' 'be cool and calm;' 'kindheartedness and sympathy;' 'don't worry;' 'be contrite;' 'cheerfulness;' and 'feel good about yourself.' Collectively, these attitudes sanction quietness, pleasantness, self control, and composure in women. Furthermore, these attitudes suggest that readers focus on their own lives in order to maintain an uncritical attitude towards men. Strikingly absent are the colourful emotions, including anger, indignation, irritation, scepticism, enthusiasm, zest, passion, and elation. In effect, many emotions are suppressed to sanction those attitudes most favourable to femininity. The self control needed to possess, or express, attitudes of feminine sensibility are accomplishments

of the practices of femininity.

In the five exemplary tables discussed above (two of which are values, one representing behaviours, and two containing attitudes), encompass the range of topics analyzed in *Mademoiselle's* advice. Significantly, the advice codes relationships as female, and sex as male. This specific gendered-encoding is revealed on two fronts, in the discourses (i.e. language) of the male and female columnists, and in their advice to readers. The female columnists analyze relationships and sex more proficiently than the male columnist whose advice is often blunt, and explanations rather terse and cursory. Perhaps his purpose in the magazine is to provide a 'man's perspective. Because a great number of questions seek explanations on 'men,' the male columnist's role functions to represent men, and further, as a man, provides legitimation of 'how men are.' Despite his inability to analyze relationships as proficiently as the women, he provides 'insiders' knowledge. Moreover, his lack of language and analytical ability furthers the notion that relationships are woman-coded. The male columnist's linguistic and analytic struggle will become more apparent in the next chapter.

In each table, the greater number of sub-categories in the women's column provides evidence of an expansive language base, and furthermore, the ability to discuss relationships with impressive detail. An elaborate discourse evinces women's skill to discuss relationships, and solve interpersonal matters. The ability to interpret and 'look after' relationships is part of the woman-coding of relationships, and more broadly, the practice of femininity.

In their advice to readers, columnists also encode gender in a number of ways. The relative absence of discourse on female sexual desire obscures women's sexual pleasure and desire. The sample five tables revealed a few sex related sub-categories: the value, 'woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality,' and the attitude, 'be sexually expressive.' Although not gender specific, the attitudes, 'sex is fun and enjoyable,' 'sex is important to a relationship,' and 'sex is natural and healthy' can be read as promoting women's enjoyment of sex.

Nevertheless, advice suggests that sex is not an integral feature of womanhood/ femininity. In contrast, sex is coded as male in a number of sub-categories.

The value 'male centred sex,' the behaviour 'be sexually suggestive/ have sex,' and the attitudes, 'women turn men on,' 'men enjoy sex,' 'men's pleasure is important,' 'be sexually alluring,' 'men like porn,' and 'men's desires don't change,' point to the coding of sex as male. Men's preoccupation with, and desire for sex suggests that readers respond to men's needs. In particular, attitudes appeal to readers to adopt men's sexual values and sentiments. Consequently, data suggest that women's sexuality is secondary, and furthermore, in response to men's.

In coding sex as male, data insinuate the predominance of sex in relationships. Men are constructed as highly sexed, and moreover, more preoccupied with sex than relationships. In this sense, care of relationships is women's responsibility, and also suggests that meaningful relationships are not men's priority. Table 9 is a case in point. The male columnist's responses to questions on 'improving or mending relationships,' advises that an understanding of men's desires is the key to improving relationships. Not only does sex take precedence over fixing relationship problems, sex is revealed as the solution to problems. This advice is for the benefit of men, not readers who seek to resolve interpersonal issues. To this end, readers are encouraged to become relationship experts as men are excused from greater involvement in relationships.

Relationships are woman-coded in a number of ways, encapsulated in values, behaviours and attitudes. Values denote the importance of forming and maintaining heterosexual bonds, whether one ascribes to traditional or non-traditional notions of femininity. Behaviours are skills devoted to nurturing relationships and looking after men. Attitudes place importance on men's sexual desires, differentiate desire between genders, and denote the complexities of working at relationships. Overall, women are urged to use

communication to solve problems, strive towards problem resolution, and not scrutinize men. Although men's lack of participation in relationships is a problem, readers can overcome this difficulty by taking matters into their own hands. The values, behaviours and attitudes encoded in the text reveal a doctrine of femininity (Smith 1990). Smith explains that general ideological designs of femininity are

refracted in books, pamphlets, and magazines, as practical guides to conduct, creating a common code among readers vested in languages and images. It is referenced when people talk, when they reflect on their own and others' actions, and provides that kind of general resource in interpreting behaviour and events that builds it into the organization of social reality" (1990: 171).

In this sense, the values, behaviours and attitudes inscribed in *Mademoiselle* reinforce and reflect social and cultural codes of femininity. These codes are not foreign or outlandish, but easily interpreted by those sharing similar cultural knowledge.

Interestingly, the values, behaviours and attitudes endorsed in the advice are not shocking. In fact, they are ordinary: The pattern of woman-coding relationships and of man-coding sex is not out of the ordinary. Neither is the positioning of women in relation to men. This pattern of encoding gender underlies the prescriptive discourses. According to Smith, these are documents of femininity.

Documents are perceived to reflect social reality (ibid.: 177). However, documents often do not reflect the lived complexities of social circumstances, including sex and relationships (ibid.: 178). Although the advice continually patterns gender relations in particular, and similar ways, readers actively interpret texts for their own purposes, dependent upon the many variables of personal contexts, social location, etc.. Nevertheless, by virtue of reading public texts, individuals enter into similar local relations in their interpretation of texts; it is in this manner that texts have the ability to structure social organization as individuals contemplate that which is read. Smith explains: "Texts are situated in and structure social relations (extended courses of action) in which people are actively at

work. Texts enter into and order courses of action and relations among individuals" (ibid.: 162). An interesting aspect of *Mademoiselle's* prescriptive discourses are particular textual devices which draw readers in, to actively engage them, and make them conscious of their own position within the doctrine of femininity. In the next chapter we shall see how readers are invited to 'measure up.'

In conclusion, content analysis has allowed us to uncover, and further, explore the primary themes in a popular advice text. Values, behaviours and attitudes have acted as vehicles for this exploration, revealing the thematic, manifest content while demonstrating significant patterns within the advice. I began this inquiry with the questions of the Q&A pairs. Through systematic analysis, the primary and secondary question-topics in *Mademoiselle's* advice columns were revealed. I discovered that the majority of the questions sought to understand 'relationships with men' and 'men.' Subsidiary topics, in descending order, are: 'women, sex and their bodies;' 'how to resolve problems with family/ friends;' 'general information about sex, STDs, condoms;' 'improve/ understand self.' Of consequence, 'women, sex and their bodies' is a secondary topic. As a subsidiary topic, 'women and sex' holds a double meaning: not only is this an infrequent topic, but data indicate that women's sexuality is often subordinate, and considered in relation to men's.

A secondary analysis gave more depth to the primary question-topics, illustrating that understanding relationships and men centres on 'getting men to listen/ understand/ do something,' 'improving or mending a relationship' 'whether or not to date someone/ keep a relationship going,' 'understanding men's actions or thoughts better,' and 'understanding men's sexual desires/ turn-ons.' These questions are answered by one male and two female columnists. Their responses were analyzed for the values, behaviours and attitudes promoted and sanctioned in the text to illustrate the 'collective idea' of how sexuality and gender and 'ought to be' (Johnson 1991). The collective idea is that sex is man-coded, and

relationships are woman-coded. What remains to be seen, is how question and answer texts work to discursively code hetero/sexuality and gender as myth. As we have gained insight into the overall, manifest content of *Mademoiselle's* Q&A texts, we now turn to two Q&A texts to demystify gender and sexuality, to reveal these concepts as social constructs, and tie them to social norms.

## ENDNOTES

1. Note that circulation figures in Table I are from an American source. The number of magazines sent to Canada provide us with an indication of the popularity of top U.S. magazines in Canada. Unfortunately, a Canadian publication listing the circulation figures of American women's magazines in Canada is not available.
2. 'Foreign' is the term used on the cover. Curiously, 'international' is not used, suggesting the 'otherness' of non-North Americans.
3. In addition to producing *Mademoiselle*, Condé Nast, also publishes *Glamour*, *Details* and *GQ*.
4. Categories must meet several requirements. In Ole Holsti's (1969) view, categories should "reflect the purposes of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, and independent" (p 95). The stipulations of the first requirement call for clearly defined categories, designated as 'conceptual definitions.' 'Operational definitions' are also necessary. These definitions "specify the indicators which determine whether a given content datum falls within the category" (ibid.). The second necessity deems that all items in the sample must be capable of being placed into a category (ibid.: 99). Thirdly, mutual exclusiveness means that content should fit into only one category, and not overlap into others. Meeting this requirement hinges on the clarity of the operational definitions. Fourthly, the independence of categories requires that the classification of datum not affect the classification of subsequent data (ibid.: 100).
5. Ole Holsti (1969) defines units of analysis as single words, themes, symbols, paragraphs or advertisements; deciding upon a unit depends upon the material under examination (p 12). In this case, units are themes

## ❖ Chapter 4: Norms and Semiotic Analyses ❖

Whether scientific, religious, or political, prescriptive texts [on sexuality] that aim to tell people what to do or what is normal pose a number of questions. Are they a self-assured restatement of prevailing norms, safely read as literal indicators of behaviour? Or are they anxious attempts to resocialise renegade readers to norms they are flouting? - Carole Vance (1984: 11,12)

. . . the conviction that the power of heterosexuality comes from its unchallenged claim to be natural - meaning ahistorical, not produced in history - from its claim that it exists prior to and independently of any social institutions and is in essence unaffected by social struggles. If we could show the opposite, that in fact heterosexuality has not always existed in the same form, then its power as norm would be diminished. - Ladelle McWhorter (1999: 36)

Notions of what is 'natural' and what is 'normal' are often tied together. One means of diminishing the power of norms is to expose that which is considered natural, thereby undoing the knot of natural and normal. Efforts to untie natural from normal is to work towards social change, aiming to diminish the power of norms over individuals. In the previous chapter, the ascribed constituents of heterosexuality and gender were exposed through content analysis. By coding the values, behaviours and attitudes we gained an understanding of how sexuality and gender are re/produced, and further how gender is organized in relation to sex and relationships. Prescriptive discourses can be further explored through an examination of norms. As one discursive site, *Mademoiselle* contributes to the normalisation process of gender and hetero/sexuality. As sexuality is a social construction, it is not free floating but is grounded in social and cultural processes, of which language is a part. Discourses continually re/construct hetero/sexuality, so that in a particular time and place, heterosexuality retains a certain form for an instant. Part of the normalisation process of hetero/sexuality is the belief that it is natural, (pre)determined by Nature. Masked by language, hetero/sexuality and its link to gender is demystified through semiotics. As meanings in *Mademoiselle* become disentangled, some of the complexities of gender and sexuality are revealed, and further, exposed as myths.

## NORMS, NORMALISATION AND COMPARISON: HOW READERS 'MEASURE UP'

The previous chapter illustrates a number of the values promoted in *Mademoiselle*. Overall, the data present a host of values, many of which are conflicting, placing traditional and non-traditional gender and sexual values at odds with one another. Three types of feminine values are endorsed: traditional (the most frequently promoted value), non-traditional and neo-traditional (a mix of traditional and non-traditional values) values. Arguably, a number of femininities are captured in the text, appealing to a wide audience. Furthermore, femininity is interwoven with hetero/sexuality. Traditional heterosexual values are promoted with the greatest frequency, whereas non-traditional values are endorsed infrequently. Despite the infrequency of the latter values, I believe they have an impact on reader interpretation, painting a conflicting picture: femininity in the late modern era is complex and fraught with contradiction; sex for women is not a straightforward matter either, but a carefully orchestrated balancing act. How women choose to balance femininity and sexuality may be dependent upon normative systems which have an influence upon behaviour and attitude.

Values reveal to us what is considered important in culture and society, and, in particular, they provide a set of ideals of how women ought to behave. Herein lies the limitation of values; as simply ideals, values are unable to control an individual's behaviour. As Johnson puts it, "value systems are inherently problematic because they serve only as guidelines for making choices" (1991: 31). As the data in the previous chapter revealed heterosexuality to be the most favoured sexuality, and traditional femininity the most desired femininity, we can not conclude that these values alone shape female heterosexuality. Moreover, the presence of conflicting values in *Mademoiselle* (and society) make behavioral choices complicated. Take, for example, the values 'non-promiscuousness' and 'woman

centred heterosex/ sexual equality.' How are women able to discern between promiscuous or 'loose' behaviour, and the pursuit of one's sexual desires? Johnson notes that "there is no definitive rule that tells us what to do in the face of such choices, especially given the endless number of possible situations in which they might occur" (ibid.). From keeping one's skirt down to waiting for a man to 'make the first move,' norms are of social significance as they define the sexual and gendered behaviour expected and required of women. Johnson asserts that

the regulation of behaviour, from preventing sexual violence against women to promoting hard work and honesty, must rely on specific ideas focusing not simply on what is good and desirable (as values do) but on what is expected and required. The result is a *normative system* which enforces standards of appearance and behaviour. The difference between what is desired and what is required is sanctions - the rewards and punishments that norms attach to specific appearances and behaviours. Values are simply ideas about how people ought to behave, while norms go a step further by connecting appearance and behaviour to social consequences, from a stern look to the death penalty (ibid.: 31-32; emphasis added).

Moreover, while the effects of, or compliance to, such prescriptive discourses are difficult to determine, advice reflects a number of dominant norms which individuals may adhere to.

Norms are defined as:

prescriptions serving as common guidelines for social action. Human behaviour exhibits certain regularities, which are the product of adherence to common expectations or norms. [...] Since the term refers to social expectations about 'correct' or 'proper' behaviour, norms imply the presence of legitimacy, consent and prescription (Abercrombie et al. 1988: 168).

Norms provide a means to regulate behaviour, and they reflect social values. Normative systems and their associated values and beliefs reflect that which is desirable in appearance and behaviour, and further, there are consequences in non-compliance (Johnson 1991: 31). Certainly individuals resist norms, to varying degrees, as well as subvert norms, with the purpose of changing or loosening normative constraints. Norms do change over time, and, while in flux, 'defiant' individuals face all sorts of pressures, to re-conform, for example, and threats to personal safety.

Norms are extremely powerful. I was reminded of this power when I impulsively kissed a man at the end of our date. What was an expression of my desire, suddenly became a boundary I had just crossed, and I felt embarrassed. I departed quickly and while walking back to my apartment, I wondered what he thought of me. Did I seem aggressive? And why was I even worrying about this, believing that if a man is intimidated by this gesture, he is not worth my time.

Women who fail to conform to dominant sexual standards are perceived as 'abnormal' or deviant, or as 'bad girls' (Nagle 1997). The stigma of labels is often enough to warrant compliance to sexual norms (Vance 1982: 4). In a society which already labels women different from men, women may choose to adhere to patriarchal norms as an attempt to minimize gender differences, and perhaps 'fit in' to dominant society. Johnson expands:

One of the most paradoxical cases of [deviance] is the treatment of females who, while clearly being integral and necessary members of every society, are often treated as deviants. For centuries women have been regarded as incomplete, flawed versions of men, with constitutions that render them weak and below the physical, emotional and mental standards expected of a normal, healthy human being. In patriarchal societies dominated by masculine values, women cannot escape being viewed as outsiders at least to some degree (1991: 35).

As we saw in the content analysis, masculine values are predominantly promoted, suggesting that these values are standard, and the norm. Norms are perceived ideals, and function as comparisons. Individuals evaluate themselves against normative standards, and strive to meet these standards.

Leonore Tiefer (1995) speculates that an individual's desire for normality rests upon three reasons. First, medical discourses have deemed 'abnormal' sexual desires as a sign of mental or physical illness (Tiefer 1995: 14). Second, many consider sex to be the cornerstone of successful relationships. With a great deal of people worried about breakup and divorce, sexual satisfaction is deemed significant (ibid.). Third, people wish to conform and have a sense of belonging. Tiefer argues that the "current use of *normal* is a code for

socially okay, appropriate, customary, 'in the ballpark.' The average [sic] person uses the word in a kind of cultural-statistical way" (ibid.). In greater detail, Adams explains:

Individuals are encouraged, through a variety of discursive and institutional practices, to meet normative standards, and they come to desire the rewards that meeting those standards makes possible. In this way individuals become self-regulating... Julian Henriques and colleagues write that norms form the 'conditions of our desire.' The point is not that we simply try to meet social norms, it's that we *want* to (1997: 13; emphasis in original)

Anxieties concerning sexual normality may lead individuals to compare themselves against others, and work at meeting particular normative standards.

Readers may use *Mademoiselle* as a source of information on what is sexually appropriate as a means to measure their own sexual normality. Our concern with sexual normality is expressed by Vance:

Our own insecurity and sexual deprivation make us wonder about what other women are doing. Could I do that too? Is it better? Are they getting more pleasure? Do I come out unfavourably in the sexual sweepstakes? Are they pathetic and sick? Am I? Our state of sexual insecurity, fuelled by ignorance and mystification, turn any meeting with sexual difference into an occasion for passing harsh judgment on ourselves as well as others (1984: 20).

Seeing how one 'measures up' is the act of judging one's self against others, or a normative standard. This act is part of the process of normalisation. Normalisation is a meaningful concept lending an understanding of the power of norms over individuals. Developed by Foucault, many scholars have taken up his notion of normalisation as a means to explain control and self-regulation. In the most basic sense, Caroline Ramazanoglu (1993) explains that "discourses define what is normal, and what is not normal is then seen as in need of normalisation, or conformity to the norm" (p 22). In greater detail, Ladelle McWhorter (1999) explains normalisation as a means in which individuals within a group are simultaneously homogenized and individualized (p 156). As she puts it,

norms homogenize the group by enabling all differences among its members to be understood as deviation from a norm and therefore are essentially related to it. No one stands outside of normalisation; everyone can be located with regard to the norms. There is

no pure difference, only measurable deviance. At the same time, norms individualize each member of the group by enabling a precise characterization of that person (animal, etc.) as a case history of particular, measurable degree of deviation from the set of norms. Normalisation has proven to be a very powerful means of ordering groups of people for the purpose of acquiring knowledge about the processes and for the purpose of intervening in and reshaping those processes and, therefore, the future individuals that those processes construct (McWhorter 1999: 156).

*Mademoiselle* can be seen as part of the process of normalisation as its sexual discourses are part of wider sexual discourses circulating in society.

*Mademoiselle* contributes to normalisation by implicitly judging heterosexuality to be the most desired form of sexuality. For example, although the sexual options of celibacy, lesbianism and bisexuality are not discussed, they are not admonished either. These options are ignored, indicating that heterosexuality is considered *the* norm, against which all individuals are measured, differentiated and categorized. It also tends to be the privileged status position (Carabine 1996: 66). Normalising judgements compare individuals against a narrowly defined heterosexual ideal. Jean Carabine (1996) elaborates:

Normalising judgement compares and contrasts. . . It establishes the measure by which all are judged and deemed to conform or not. The *normalising effect* is a means by which appropriate and acceptable sexuality - hetero- and homo-sexuality - is enforced and regulated. The normalising effect is such that sexuality is understood in terms of what is 'natural' and 'normal' . . . The normalising effect means that we commonly believe sexuality to be an inherently natural biological drive and that the natural and normal direction of that drive is heterosexuality (p 61).

Normalising judgements are made in *Mademoiselle* through a process of comparison, whereby particular textual devices invite readers to assess their own normality - to see how they 'measure up.' I have identified three narrative devices: the use of the singular pronoun 'you;' the initials of the hypothetical readers following each question; and questions regarding definitions of 'normal.' A number of questions ask, implicitly and explicitly, what is sexually normal. The first two devices, 'you,' and the reader-initials, individualize readers, and separate readers as 'abnormal' or 'normal.' The latter devices organize readers into a group,

indicating what is normal for women.

'You' is used throughout the Q&A texts which acts as a device to individualize a reader's problem as a particular case. The hypothetical reader has an isolated problem which is specific to her hypothetical situation. As a result, the hypothetical reader is separated from the actual reader who knows that the advice is not directed at her. In turn, if the hypothetical reader is construed as 'abnormal,' she is in need of normalisation. Even though the actual reader may identify with the textual problem, the specificity of the problem and situation allow the reader to distance herself, knowing that she does not have this problem, someone else does. She is able to assure herself that she is 'normal.'

Recall from the previous chapter that the practice of disclosing reader's initials began about a year after *Mademoiselle* began the Q&A columns. Similar to the narrative device 'you,' the initials also serve to individualize readers and allow hypothetical problems to be a point of comparison for actual readers. Advice thereby invites readers to be conscious of themselves, conscious of their femininity. In this consciousness, texts become lived moments for readers, as "actual practices, actual activities, taking place in real time in real places" (Smith 1990: 163). These moments are "shared practices of reflection," which place texts within social relations (ibid.: 168).

At the same time, initials loosely identify readers while creating commonalities amongst women. Certainly, other readers share the same initials, and perhaps encourage others to relate to the hypothetical reader. Because initials are 'generic,' ethnic differences are in effect erased, thus suggesting that all women share the same queries and difficulties regardless of ethnicity. Additionally, heterosexuality becomes normalised and naturalized across cultures. The initials 'M.K.,' for instance, can stand for Min Kyung, Monique Koyré or Monica King. To this end, commonalities amongst women are highlighted, and in this case, problems with men are the central issue.

Implicit in *Mademoiselle*, ideal womanhood is white, able-bodied, and middle class.

Although the magazine probably does not assume that all their readers fit this ideal, deviations from the norm do not appear, thereby homogenizing readers into one group. As Carabine argues:

The 'ideal' against which all women are measured is white, heterosexual, preferably married or at least in a long-term stable, heterosexual relationship, non-disabled, and if a mother, aged between 18 and 40 years. Women who do not conform to this ideal . . . are in need of normalisation (1996: 63).

As a result, non-white, disabled, lower-class readers are implied deviants who must strive to meet the standards of ideal womanhood. Furthermore, diversity of class, ability, 'race' or ethnicity is ignored in the advice texts, suggesting that the sole problem of all women is men. At the outset of this study, I anticipated issues of inter-'racial' partnerships to be addressed as inter-'racial' dating causes strain on many individuals for a variety of reasons. In any case, white, middle-class, able-bodied values remain central to the text's construction of a hip, *chic*, heterosexuality.

Implicit and explicit queries over precisely what is normal comprises the third narrative device. Hypothetical readers have specific concerns with normality which a number of questions attest; the following are some examples:

- "My friend always brags about her great sex life. I thought I was satisfied with mine, but I don't have sex as often as she does. Is she exaggerating, or am I really missing out?" (Sept. 1998: 128).
- "My boyfriend wants me to shave my pubic hair. Is this a common male request, and can it harm me in any way?" (July 1994: 43).
- "I get very turned on when my boyfriend tickles my toes. Is this kind of thing a common fetish?" (Nov. 1994: 76).
- "Do a lot of couples use vibrators together? I'm curious and want to use one with my boyfriend" (August 1994: 75).
- "Is it possible to like sex too much? I really, really enjoy it. Is this a serious problem?" (August 1998: 84).
- "Is it possible to wear down the clitoris? I've noticed that mine feels desensitized lately, and I'm worried" (July 1994: 43).
- "I have to urinate right after orgasm. Is this normal?" (June 1998: 72).

- "I think images of naked women are beautiful. Does this make me a lesbian?" (Sept. 1994: 86).
- "Lately, I've been having erotic dreams about women. I've only gone out with men, but do these dreams mean I'm really a lesbian?" (April 1994: 70).

Whereas the two previous textual devices individualize the hypothetical reader, the 'defining normal' device has a homogenizing effect whereby actual readers can make judgments about themselves to discover if they conform. Clearly readers are worried about deviance. From concerns of being over-sexed, to worries about maintaining one's (sexual) health, and wondering if one is still a heterosexual, women's magazines act as vehicles for self-measurement and differentiation. Nonconformity is often hidden (Vance 1984: 20), yet magazines like *Mademoiselle* air apparent deviations. Potentially renegade sexualities are brought back to the heterosexual centre as the answers reassure readers that they are normal and reside in the status quo.

Looking at the last two questions above, the readers wonders if they are lesbians, and in the respective answers, readers are told that they are probably not. However, they are encouraged to continue to celebrate women's bodies. On the one hand, a reading of the dominant messages suggests that heteronormativity is maintained. On the other hand, a subversive reading is opened. Readers are not damned for visually enjoying women's bodies or having fantasies or dreams about women; instead readers are advised to continue to savour images and dreams of women. Vernon, the columnist, notes that too often women's bodies are denigrated. She advises, "give yourself credit for appreciating what should be appreciated and celebrated: female sensuality" (*Mademoiselle*, Sept. 1994: 86).

#### A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF PRESCRIPTIONS: UNDOING THE NATURAL

A powerful aspect of norms is the belief that they are natural. Naturalized aspects of

social reality can be deciphered through the semiotic concept of myth. Myths are about meanings, and the distortion of meanings when myth takes hold of linguistic signs and turns them into mythical signifiers (Barthes 1972: 117). Roland Barthes (1957; 1972) provides us with a technique, or a set of concepts, to go about exposing myths (Coward & Ellis 1977: 27). Significantly, Barthes uses myth to expose social conventions (1972: 9). Intended as an ideological critique, Barthes demystifies naturalized social reality and labels signs which pass themselves off as natural as myth (Eagleton 1996: 117):

Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion. . . . Entrusted with 'glossing over' an intentional concept, myth encounters nothing but betrayal in language, for language can only obliterate the concept if it hides it, or unmask it if it formulates it. The elaboration of a second-order semiological system will enable myth to escape this dilemma: driven to having either to unveil or to liquidate the concept, it will *naturalize* it (ibid.: 129; emphasis in original).

Naturalized signs are an indication of an authoritarian and ideological stance, and one of the functions of ideology is to make social formations universal, innocent and unchangeable as Nature itself (Eagleton 1996: 117).

Myths, however, are ever changing. Barthes argues that one myth may replace another over time. None are eternal "for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things" (Barthes 1972: 110). Within bourgeois ideology, myth is "well-fed, sleek, expansive, garrulous, it invents itself ceaselessly. It takes hold of everything, all aspects of the law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment" (ibid.: 148). If myth takes hold of everything, the portrayals of gender and heterosexuality in *Mademoiselle* cannot be excluded from the mythologized social realm.

## Critique of Semiotics

Myth can be difficult to uncover, as semiotics merely provides a set of concepts to tackle signs or issues (Abercrombie et al. 1988: 218). Budgeon and Currie note this difficulty, and overcome it accordingly: "As a method, semiotics consists of numerous conceptual tools which are not always used in a systematic way or in any standardized fashion. . . we treat semiotics as a relational method which analyzes elements at work within the text" (1995: 176). Unlike the clearly defined principles of content analysis, semiotic concepts can be vague and difficult to grasp. Further, validating the claims made by semiotic analyses are at best difficult, thus questions of reliability and validity arise. Claims are frequently made that are consistent with content analysis in so far as they seek to capture or summarize a series of popular texts; ironically such generalizations suggest that texts can be enumerated and perhaps defined more precisely with content analysis (Strinati 1995: 206). The reliability and validity of one's claims can be called into question when generalizations are made concerning a series of texts. Judgements made by semioticians/ literary analysts are arbitrary because their approaches concentrate on the specificities of text(s). The insights extracted from texts remain impressionistic as they attempt to provide an "overall sense of constructed meanings on the examination of a large number of messages" (Leiss et al. 1986: 165). Additionally, semiotics can be applied at random, analyzing or discussing those texts which serve to confirm one's argument. Leiss et al. argue that "because such a procedure courts the danger of self confirming results, the conclusions should be confined to those instances alone, and not generalized to an entire range of texts" (ibid.: 165).

While literary analyses significantly place importance on meanings, an overwhelming emphasis is placed on latent or covert meanings and messages (Strinati 1995: 207). Reading and understanding do not concentrate solely on 'hidden' messages. If the denotative or overt

content is ignored, one set of meanings is privileged over another (ibid.). Dominic Strinati (1995) asks the following pertinent questions: "Why should the surface meaning be dismissed if it is the one most people recognize? How can meanings which are covert have more impact upon people's consciousness than meanings which are overt? If people are only aware of the latter, why are they so likely to be influenced by the former" (p. 207)? Strinati furthers his argument concerning issues of validity and reliability in light of the limits of meaning.

Semiological analyses are not intended to be objective, but merely try to tease out the variety of meanings to be discovered in the text. However, this not only undermines the validity of the conclusions semiology arrives at, but it has to come to terms with the fact that texts do not contain an infinite number of meanings, and are not open to an infinite number of interpretations. Objective criteria still need to be established in order to determine the limits which can be set on meanings and interpretations . . . content analysis may have been too hastily dismissed (1995: 208, 209).

Through his critique of semiotics, Strinati implicitly makes a case for using a 'middle range' approach. An objective set of criteria has already been established in the previous chapter. In the current context, semiotics is used to add depth to quantitative, denotative findings.

### Analyses of Myths

A close reading of a text helps to reveal that which is invisible in the advice, thereby aiding to deconstruct normative, and naturalised notions. At the same time, we can begin to understand how texts become neutral, matter-of-fact statements of social reality which do not provoke questioning as they are emptied of political meaning (Barthes 1972). Below are two Q&A pairs, one from the 'Sex Q&A' column, and one from the 'Men Q&A' column, thus representing the female and male columnists advice, respectively. Although it was difficult to chose just two pairs from the 263 in the advice pages, the significance of the selected pairs lies

in their categorization in the content analysis portion of the research. Both were coded in the second largest topic sub-category, 'understand men's sexual desires/ turn-ons.' I found this sub-category to be one of the most interesting. A female columnist's Q&A is analyzed first, followed by the male's. Significantly, both pairs illustrate how sexuality escapes the social, cultural and historical; myth distorts sexuality, presenting it as a biological imperative, different for women and men. Arousal becomes the function of anatomy and physiology, not pleasure and fantasy (Tiefer 1995:6).

#### Lust at First Sight

- 1 "I've heard that men are more visually stimulated than women. Is this true, and why?" K.F.,  
27
- 2 Psychologists at the University of Vermont confirmed in 1995 that men's fantasies tend to  
3 be more explicit and visual, whereas women's tend to more emotional and romantic.  
4 They concluded that this was "reflected in different consumption patterns of commercial erotica,  
5 men preferring pornography and women preferring romance novels."  
6 Well, duh.
- 7 There are people who dispute this claim - like Candida Royale, a former porn star who  
8 now produces erotic films for women. But ask yourself: How many guys do you know who've  
9 bought *Playboy*? And how many women do you know who've picked up *Playgirl*?  
10 It's unclear why men are more hooked up to their eyeballs than women are. Some evolutionary  
11 anthropologists speculate that being aroused by youth and health is genetically desirable,  
12 since a young, vigorous woman is more likely to be fertile. Regardless of the reason, look at it as  
13 an advantage. A man has to woo you and murmur sweet nothings to excite you; you just have  
14 to strip. Which is easier? (Blanche Vernon, *Mademoiselle*, April, 1998: 92)

In this Q&A pair, the (hypothetical) reader wishes to know if women's and men's visual arousals differ and why. Erotic desire is the underlying theme of her question. Following the semiotic principles outlined by Barthes, the text is analyzed in relation to first and second order systems. In first order signification, language is our object, and meanings are readily apparent to us. Language is analyzed in terms of a signifier, a signified, and a sign. We grasp all three terms at once; however, it is "the associative total of the first two terms" which form the sign, or the (denotative) meaning (Barthes 1972: 113). The relationship between the

signifier and signified is one of equivalence (ibid.). For the purpose of analysis, the Q&A text is broken into components of signifier and signifieds, illustrated in Figure 2. There are a number of signifieds, and these are supplied from the text itself.

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SIGNIFIER (novel concept)	SIGNIFIEDS (supplied associations)
visual sexual arousal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ evolutionary/ anthropological imperatives</li> <li>◦ biological imperatives</li> <li>◦ psychology studies/ theories</li> <li>◦ industry of sexuality (advice) draws on gender stereotypes</li> </ul>

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Figure 2<sup>1</sup>: First Order Erotic Message  
(*Mademoiselle*, April 1998, p 92)

Vernon constructs her advice from a wide array of social and cultural notions pertaining to sexuality to offer 'everyday' explanations of how sex 'works.' Gender stereotypes are drawn upon to provide 'everyday' evidence concerning erotic desire (lines 4,5). Evolutionary and biological imperatives are chosen as common sources of sexual knowledge (lines 11, 12). A psychology study merely documents what we 'already knew' about women's and men's visual erotic preferences (lines 3, 6). Evolutionary anthropology confirms these notions as part of the human 'make up' (lines 10-12) At the same time, this sexual information is granted legitimation. An American university provides authority, and its team of psychologists are experts on human behaviour who produce legitimate knowledge using scientific methods and psychological theories (line 2). These experts "confirmed in 1995" notions about desire, denoting a truth-claim, and assuring readers of the validity of the study. Further scientific validation is provided from evolutionary anthropology, also rooted in the biological sciences. Consumption patterns of commercial erotica (porn and romance novels) contribute 'empirical' evidence in support of scientific claims (line 8,9).

In the first order, we are able to identify the chain of cause and effect: The psychologists

documented what is 'already known' about women's and men's erotic visual preferences. The effect of these differences is echoed in gendered consumption patterns (lines 4,5). There is a potential to perceive gendered eroticism as more than simply preferences, as an historical construct (the cause). However, myth, as second order signification, stops us short of arriving at an understanding of the social forces which affect the erotic preferences and practices of women and men. As myth grabs hold of language, meanings are resignified, creating a confused knowledge (Barthes 1972: 119). Myth is able to shift the meanings in language by grasping onto the semiological chain which existed before it (ibid.: 114).

Like the order before it, myth consists of three terms. Relabelled for clarity, the form, concept and signification comprise the signifier, signified and sign, respectively. Myth takes hold of meaning (the sign) from the first order and converts it to a mere signifier in the second order, thereby allowing the signifier to be re-used. The second order signifier presents itself ambiguously; it has two aspects: "one full which is the meaning, and one empty which is the form" (ibid. 122). In relation to the Q&A text, the full historical meaning of gender and hetero/sexuality become obscured by the form. As Barthes explains, "the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal. . . it is a constant game of hide and seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth" (ibid.: 118). Barthes describes a swivelling movement between meaning and form as a turnstile, "which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form" (ibid.: 123). Nevertheless, the turnstile stops revolving at a certain point (ibid.). The form draws its "nourishment" from the lost values in the meaning (ibid.). In this sense, the meaning becomes transparent as it is invaded by the connotative meaning. The second order signified, the concept, distorts the meaning as it absorbs the "history which drains out of the form" . . . [and] reconstitutes a chain of causes and effects, motives and intentions" (ibid.). In the concept, a whole new history is implanted in myth (ibid.: 119). Figure 3 illustrates the

meaning, form and concept of the Q&A text.

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SECOND ORDER SIGNIFIER (form) (borrowed from First Order)	SIGNIFIED (concept) (implied associations)
gendered visual sexual arousal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦scientists conclude that desire is rooted in physiology</li><li>◦men's fantasies are explicit and visual</li><li>◦women's fantasies are emotional and romantic</li><li>◦men prefer porn</li><li>◦women prefer romance novels</li><li>◦men woo &amp; murmur sweet nothings to excite women</li><li>◦women strip to titillate men</li></ul>

---

Figure 3: Second Order Erotic Message  
(*Mademoiselle*, April 1998, p 92)

The message that visual stimulation is based on the erotic preferences of women and men, is invaded by myth. The myth that is created is that visual eroticism is founded on gender; it is normal, natural and desirable. Nature determines that which is erotic for females and males; consequentially, the natural direction of gendered erotic desire is heterosexual. As a result, gender becomes intrinsically bound to heterosexuality. Ahistorical notions of gender, eroticism, and heterosexuality are re/created, underscored with biological imperatives. More broadly, this visual arousal is signified as a dichotomy (lines 4&5, 8&9, 13&14). The 'great' gender polarity of subject/ object, active/ passive is re/created as natural, signifying that eroticism is dichotomous, based on masculinity and femininity, and all erotic energies are heterosexual (see Figure 4).

Through the advice, heterosexism is re/produced, and universalized in so far that *all* men are aroused by women (line 11). Furthermore, the speculation in line 11 signifies that men, *not* women, are aroused. Men's desire is an innate phallogentric imperative (line 11), turned on by youthful women because they might be fertile (line 12). The connotative meaning suggests a natural, ageist (beauty) standard of desirability, fuelled by procreative urges.

Significantly, men's desire is active; it takes centre stage as they are presumed active, seeking young, vigorous women (to impregnate) whereas women's arousal is strikingly invisible. Herein lies one link between gendered behaviour and hetero/sexuality: women are construed as passive, and men as active.

Active and passive notions of masculinity and femininity are legitimated by scientific fact (lines 2, 11) legitimating men's fantasies and behaviour (lines 2-3, 4-6), in turn naturalizing the male gaze, and tying it to an innate, active masculinity: the objectification of women is 'simply what men do.' Men *actively* stimulate themselves by looking at unclothed female bodies (lines 4, 14). Women's erotic interests (line 3) conjure chivalrous notions, with women waiting for the active pursuit by men. In short, men excite women, and men are excited by women. The myth that is created is that women are incapable of self-arousal; female desire is placed in response to men's (line 13). Notably, stripping is reduced to a simple act (lines 13-14), undermining the skill required to successfully perform a striptease. Numerous codes are required in strip tease that one can only hone with practice, to develop skill, and perhaps an act. Barthes notes that amateurs appear clumsy and awkward as they fumble with clothing (Barthes 1972: 86). In any case, stripping does signify sexual subjectivity which is largely ignored in our example Q&A.

Active female desire, signified in the enjoyment of visual erotica, is removed through two textual devices. The first device, 'well, duh' (line 6), connotes a shift in expertise, from the scientists to the columnist to the reader, who is then asked to draw upon her own knowledge (lines 8,9) of the gendered consumption of porn. Just as a reader might begin to answer Vernon's questions (line 8,9), a tautology, the second device, answers. Barthes notes that tautology "is a verbal device which consists in defining like by like . . . one takes refuge in tautology . . . when one is at a loss for an explanation" (1972: 152). Vernon is at a loss for why women would take pleasure in erotica. It is significant that a sex radical is referred to

here: Royale is highly successful at what she does. She owns her own company, Femme Productions, and is said to place "emphasis on heterosexual women's sexuality. Femme's films are romantic fantasies with an unrepentant emphasis on pleasure, pleasure, pleasure" (Doyle & Lacombe 1996: 198). Perhaps just mentioning Royale will peak the interests of readers. Perhaps some do not know of porn made by women for women; maybe some will rent her films and explore a new realm of eroticism, and take pleasure in looking, exploring, etc..

Vernon does, nevertheless, attempt to dispute the validity of Candida Royale's work: Notice that the subject matter is erotic film, yet Vernon contrasts film with magazines (line 8 vs 9). The tautology seeks to erase women's pleasure in looking, and moreover, women's subjective desire. Additionally, Vernon ignores the fact that women may enjoy porn with their partners or read/ view their partners' porn. The myth that is created is that pleasure is experienced through men's arousal, and moreover, women are not participants in the pursuit of pleasure; rather women *receive* pleasure from men.

---

SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
◦men are active	◦biology (i.e. genetics)
◦women are passive	
◦erotic energies are heterosexual	

---

Figure 4: Mythology Complete: Gender and Sexuality as Innate  
(*Mademoiselle*, April 1998, p 92)

Norms are the underlying force of myth, and the message created in the advice is that masculinity, femininity and hetero/sexuality are natural, normal and desirable. Turning to the second example, once again a gendered-erotic dichotomy is re/created.

## By Breasts Obsessed

1 *It seems like every guy I've ever been with can't not look at other women's breasts. What*  
2 *is it about them that men find so irresistible?*<sup>2</sup>

3 I'm more of a leg man myself. Give me a shapely thigh over a pair of 44 double D's  
4 any day of the week. But I think I understand the breast thing. We live in what sociologists  
5 might call a "tit-centric" culture. Even our early ancestors did. Those little caveman fertility-  
6 goddess sculptures had major hooters. In *L.A. Story*, Steve Martin says he could never be  
7 a woman cause he'd just play with his breasts all day. They come in so many shapes, sizes,  
8 colours. And they're dynamic. They move. They're always doing something new. You  
9 should also know that a guy might not be attracted to a woman and he'd still stare at her  
10 breasts. What I'm saying is: Don't take it personally. Confront him with his breast-o-philia.  
11 "What's up with you and this boob thing?" you might query. If he tells you, "Just because I'm  
12 on a diet doesn't mean I can't look at the menu!" smack him with a rolled up magazine and  
13 consider the bright side. If he weren't so obsessed with breasts, he wouldn't be so into  
14 yours. - Rick Marin (*Mademoiselle* June 1994, p 50)

In our second example, the reader wishes to understand men's unswerving attraction to women's breasts. Possibly the reader is jealous of her boyfriends' obsession, and one can only hope that the men referred to are watching the breasts of passer-bys, and talking to a woman's face, rather than her breasts, while engaged in conversation. In any case, Rick Marin, the columnist, attempts to ease our reader's concerns, telling her that breasts are fascinating, men appreciate breasts, and mean no harm in looking. As in the first example, the male columnist attempts to 'cook-up' an explanation, drawing from a similar social and cultural stew of 'everyday' explanations as the previous columnist does. These explanations are broken into the components of signifier and signified in Figure 5.

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SIGNIFIER (novel concept)	SIGNIFIEDS (supplied associations)
visual inclination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦evolutionary imperatives (ancestors were breast-obsessed)</li> <li>◦biological imperatives (men are attracted to breasts)</li> <li>◦sociological theories (society is breast-obsessed)</li> <li>◦anthropological/ archeological evidence ('caveman' fertility goddesses)</li> <li>◦industry of sexuality (advice) discourses draws on gender stereotypes</li> </ul>

---

Figure 5: First Order Message: Visual Inclination  
 (*Mademoiselle*, June 1994, p 50)

Marin draws upon social and cultural explanations, grasping at 'everyday' notions in the attempt to theorize male heterosexuality (line 4, "I think I understand"). Sociological and anthropological/ archeological explanations are attempts to provide legitimation and evidence. The former discipline is employed to provide cultural knowledge (line 5) about sex, and the latter draws upon an artifact (line 6) as evidence. Additionally, this artifact draws attention to the evolutionary imperatives of humanity: signifying fertility, and dating breast obsessions to our early ancestors (line 5). Additionally, gender stereotypes are denoted as Marin looks to commercial culture (lines 5-6), his own preference for thighs (line 3), and other men's practices of watching women (lines 9-10).

Once again, we are able to identify a chain of cause and effect in the first order. Marin merely tells us what we 'already knew' about heterosexual men: they enjoy 'ogling' women, breasts, thighs, whatever the case may be. There is potential to perceive men's practices of looking at women as socially constructed (the cause), particularly since men have different tastes (the effect). Marin reminds the reader that *not all* men like breasts; he enjoys legs (line 3). Indeed, this type of enjoyment sounds like a bucket of fried chicken shared amongst friends: some prefer legs, others wings, some insist on breasts, and others don't care, they'll eat anything. The point is that tastes differ, and some people, for religious, ethical and/ or

philosophical reasons do not eat chicken or any other meat. Taste is culturally/ socially dependent. Women's body parts have been a part of commercial culture for some time, (i.e. advertising, pornography, etc.), and it is not surprising then that some men objectify, or even fetishize, certain body parts to the point where one's heterosexual masculinity identity can, in part, be dependent on which aspect of female anatomy he prefers (i.e. 'I am a leg man'). The potential for understanding the social forces which inform men's preferences is stopped by myth.

---

SECOND ORDER SIGNIFIER (form) (borrowed from First Order)	SIGNIFIED (concept) (implied associations)
gendered visual inclination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦sociologists theorize our culture is breast obsessed</li> <li>◦men are visual</li> <li>◦breasts are markers of female fertility</li> <li>◦women can derive pleasure from men's admiration of breasts</li> <li>◦breast obsession is trans-historical</li> <li>◦men objectify parts of women's bodies, plays a role in heterosexual masculine identity</li> </ul>

---

Figure 6: Second Order Message: Gendered Visual Inclination  
(*Mademoiselle*, June 1994, p 50).

The myth that is created is that men are visually inclined to gaze at women. Myth links gender to heterosexuality by normalising and naturalising male behaviour. The social and cultural construction of masculinity is obscured by myth; in particular, the cultural artifact (lines 5,6) removes the historical cultural and social context of breast obsession/ objectification; objectification becomes trans-historical, and further naturalized, as it is assumed that the sculpture signifies fertility (who knows what it signified at the time it was formed). Connotatively, heterosexuality is signified as procreative, and phallocentric. Breast obsession is further normalised in reference to popular culture (line 6,7), suggesting that men are helplessly fascinated by breasts. Interestingly, breast obsession is coded as a syndrome (line

10), akin to other 'phillias' which suggests medicalization, and possibly the need for professional help.

Marin suggests that the reader try to understand men's helplessness 'in the face of breasts,' and not 'take it personally' - a significant piece of advice occurring throughout the advice columns (and coded as such in the content analysis) (lines 8-10). On the one hand, not to take something personally, suggests not asking men to change, in turn, endorsing female passivity which entails accepting another's unwelcomed behaviour. Indeed, if one has a problem with a partner's 'ogling,' we could only hope that the partner would be understanding, considerate, and sensitive to his partner's needs and feelings. Yet, this is not the case in our example (lines 11-12); instead men's behaviour - looking - is sanctioned through the euphemism of diets and menus.

On the other hand, Marin has a point: men may be appreciative of women's bodies which does not mean that men want to break an otherwise committed, monogamous relationship. Moreover, Marin could have emphasized the appreciation of bodies, rather than the objectification of parts. Importantly, this shift would entail displacing one's heterosexual masculinity identity as a 'leg man,' while perceiving women as complete beings, not a sum of isolated parts. Marin might have also made some parallels with women, who also enjoy looking at men's bodies, and even women's bodies, as the case may be. Doing so would have sanctioned female desire, the pleasure in looking, and disrupted the gender dichotomy.

Interestingly, Marin does place some emphasis on pleasure. He seeks to reassure the reader of her attractiveness in lines 8-10. Marin also suggests that a woman can derive pleasure from a man's breast obsession (lines 13-14) as he will pay attention to her breasts. Lines 6-7 connotatively sanction auto-eroticism. A fun, pleasurable activity. On another note, Marin makes an inclusionary move, noting the diversity of breast colours, denoting the many skin colours of women (lines 7-8). I wish breasts were 'always doing something new' (line 8):

I might have taught mine to type, or something else important. The silliness or playfulness often encoded in the advice attempts to take some of the seriousness from sex, a task Queen (1997) and other sex radicals have undertaken for some time. In any case, Marin succeeds in re/creating a heterosexual gender dichotomy (Figure 7).

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SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
◦men are active	◦biology
◦women are passive	
◦women are objectified by men	

---

Figure 7: Mythology Complete: Gender and Heterosexuality as Inexorably Linked (*Mademoiselle*, June 1994, p 50)

The myth that is re/created is that men are active(ly looking at women). In turn, women are objectified as isolated parts. Notably, the notion that women look at men is ignored. Additionally, readers are advised to take a rather passive approach to men's 'looking.' Although readers are advised to confront men with issues, readers are problematically not advised to ask men to change so that they will be more sensitive to one's feelings. Instead, one might learn to accept men's behaviours.

Unexpectedly, a number of similarities are apparent in the female and male columnists' advice. As we shall see, some differences also exist illustrating the gendered nature of the advice. Differences are most evident in terms of language ability. Both columnists grasp for explanations in an attempt to theorize gender and heterosexuality. They draw upon notions of what social scientific discourses might argue. Vernon turns to psychology and evolutionary anthropology, and Marin sociology and anthropology/ archeology. Interestingly, Vernon attempts to verify her explanations by grounding her advice in a university study and 'speculations' made by evolutionary anthropologists. Marin, on the other hand, makes his own inferences about how sociologists might describe our culture. He does not reference

studies. In both instances, columnists use gender stereotypes to explain sexuality.

Whereas Vernon explains that men are visual and actively enjoy looking at female bodies, Marin asserts that this is indeed the case. Men do look, at breasts, thighs, etc.. In this sense, Vernon explains men, Marin represents men. Both columnists assume that women do not look at men, and ignore women's visual desire. Vernon places female desire in response to men, and Marin does not acknowledge that women might look at men's bodies just as men look at women's. Additionally, both columnists turn to commercial culture as evidence of gendered behaviour. Vernon points to the porn and romance industry, and Marin a Hollywood movie. In both cases, men are assumed to actively derive pleasure from female bodies. Women's pleasure is largely ignored, although Vernon implies that romance, 'wooing, and sweet nothings' provides pleasure, and Marin suggests that a man's breast obsession can be beneficial as 'he'll pay attention to yours.'

As a result, gendered stereotypes are reproduced by both columnists, and moreover, reinforced as natural by myth. Furthermore, sexuality is naturalized and dehistoricized in both Q&As as men are innately assumed libidinous and visually oriented. Fertility is a key notion: Vernon cites youth and health as genetic markers for fertility, and therefore men's erotic interest, whereas Marin refers to a large-breasted goddess artifact as a marker of fertility. In re/creating gendered stereotypes, columnists support arguments of gender difference. In this dichotomy, sex is coded as male. Female sexuality is largely lost in both Q&As. Whereas the male columnist simply ignores women's desire, the female columnist's advice is of significance. In a dominant reading, she signifies women as passive, and in response to men's desire. Although Royale is cited, her work is caught within a tautology. A subversive reading has to pull the significance of Royale's presence in the text; doing so acknowledges women's pleasure in looking to reaffirm active female desire.

The woman-coding of relationships is not as apparent in these Q&A examples, yet as

women are placed in contrast to men, we find some clues supporting this encoding. As Vernon argues that women enjoy romance novels, relationships are an assumed foundation of romance, particularly since romance is contrast to men's porn where there is a relative absence of relationships. Additionally, in noting that women are emotional, it is suggested that interpersonal bonds are important to women. Marin's advice to discuss interpersonal problems implies that women are communicative, and seek resolution.

A striking difference in gendered advice is the use of language. Vernon not only demonstrates her skill of analysis, but she does so with ease. She provides depth to her explanations through the citation of studies. In contrast, Marin appears to have a smaller language base. He uses slang, such as 'major hooters' (line 6) and colloquial language: a case in point is 'breast thing' (line 4) and 'boob thing' (line 11). Of late, the colloquial use of adding the word 'thing' to another noun suggests a lack of verbal skills, of being incapable of greater, more precise description. Marin also invents words, including 'tit-centric' (line 5) and 'breast-o-philia' (line 10), suggesting a lack of vocabulary. While the latter is a rather clever way to describe a breast obsession, sociologists (line 4) are not likely to label a culture's breast obsession 'tit-centric.' I call it objectification.

Vernon's language ability further illustrates the woman-coding of relationships by wielding an elaborate discourse in which to go about describing, analyzing and solving relationship issues. This discourse is part of the practices of femininity. Although Marin struggles with language, grasping for explanations as he uses a smaller vocabulary 'tool-kit,' it certainly does not mean that men lack communicative or prose writing ability. Instead, Marin's inability to use language further serves to differentiate women from men, acting as a marker of masculinity. In this manner, the gender dichotomy is not only reinforced through the gendered encoding of sex and relationships, but also through the use of language. Significantly, the gendered use of language has no impact on the creation of myth. Myth

operates in both Q&As with the same effects to re/create a naturalized, ahistorical, erotic gender dichotomy.

Tiefer notes that "we always seem to find the birds and the bees: biology and reproduction, the genes and the genitals. The privileged position of biology in sexual discourse is based on the assumption that the body dictates action, experience, and meaning" (1995: 24). Through an analysis of myth, we are able to reveal how gendered eroticism is normal, natural and desirable, and how desire is heterosexual. As a result of the myth, sexuality and gender are bound by the constraints of Nature, and biology becomes destiny.

This binding is in itself oppressive. Tiefer elaborates:

Biology's privileged position within contemporary sexuality discourse descended from early researchers' [i.e. sexologists] hope that 'objective science' would replace the repressive orthodoxies of the past [i.e. Western Judeo-Christian beliefs]. Yet the emphasis on biological variables can create its own oppressive constructions (1995: 25).

Individuals are expected to be heterosexual, and to exhibit particular behaviours and attitudes deemed appropriate for heterosexuals. Gender and heterosexuality, however, often do not seem oppressive as they are signified as desirable, natural, and therefore normal (in *Mademoiselle* and elsewhere in culture and society). It is difficult for individuals to argue with Nature, as it is unchangeable. Certain gendered behaviours and attitudes are germane as well, and for women this can mean adhering to dominant norms to avoid stigmatizing labels.

Tiefer suggests that by emphasizing the biological bases of sexuality, sexual discourses are less "dirty" or risque (ibid.). Certainly women's magazines do not wish to gain the reputation that they are dirty or risque as men's magazines, such as *Playboy*, are reputed for. On the whole, women's magazines might wish to maintain their 'good girl' status (although one can read about being a 'bad girl' in bed). Perhaps by placing hetero/sexuality within the realm of scientific discourses, women's magazines are able to maintain their social standing, just as they maintain a number of dominant sex and gender norms. Readers may still find the sexual

content titillating, and the grounding of these discourses in science may provide legitimation for feelings of desire. Biological discourses neatly fit into prescriptive discourses because the latter seek to provide common-sense advice which 'anyone' can follow. Moreover, biological discourses are part of every day speech, and appear common-sensical (Smart 1996a: 177). In my observation, one of the most often expressed protests to lesbianism and homosexuality is that "it is *not* natural." Although we have analyzed only two Q&A texts, we have seen that despite differences in gendered advice, the same myth resides in both texts, arguably, contributing to the myth of the whole magazine.

#### ENDNOTES

1. The design of Figures 2 through 7 are borrowed from Currie 1994, pp 108, 111, 112.
2. The practice of attaching reader initials to questions had not yet begun.

## ❖ Chapter 5: Conclusion ❖

Advice is a fascinating social phenomena, containing an array of interwoven, complex elements. One aspect of sex advice aims to guide our sexuality in its 'proper' direction (Hawkes 1996: 86). Men are thought to be more libidinous and preoccupied with sex than women, while women are considered to have greater concern for interpersonal bonds than men. In one sense, women are constructed as relationship experts. Predominant findings of content analysis and semiotics both point to the male coding of sex, and female coding of relationships. Semiotic analyses poignantly reveal that myth obscures this gender dichotomy as natural, normal and desirable.

*Mademoiselle's* dispensing of (sex) advice is not novel, but has become part of a western conventional tradition of offering expert advice to women. Whereas marital and sex advice manuals originated in the last century, some devoted to audiences of women, prescriptive discourses have an even earlier beginning. Advice was sparked in the early seventeenth century in response to an ideology of individualism and Christian self-improvement (Simonds 1992: 4). A stream of advice aimed specifically at women arose from modernist notions concerned with women's proper role in the modern world. Since the industrial revolution, women have been encouraged to follow the advice of experts - often scientifically-minded white men (Ehrenreich and English 1978: 30). By the late 1700s, instructive discourses were included in women's magazines (Winship 1987: 13).

*Mademoiselle* carries on the tradition of dispensing advice to women. Spanning over six years (and still accessible as current advice on-line), *Mademoiselle's* columns retain the same form.

The Q&A advice format suggests a form of confession whereby readers convey intimate details about themselves, and their relationships with men. The confession, and

advice, both have roots in the scientific preoccupation of providing guidance and education for individuals (Foucault 1990; Seidman 1992). Although current advice purports to offer guidance, whether individuals follow the recommendations is another matter. Indeed, reasons for reading advice may vary a great deal, ranging from information to entertainment. In any case, one of the appeals of sex advice is that it discusses a subject which is still taboo (Currie 1999: 163). Further, sex discussed under the guise of advice contributes to the proliferation of discourses on sex. As a form of confession, there is a willingness, despite the discomfort, to relay sexual details, pleasures, fantasies, and dislikes (Foucault 1990).

*Mademoiselle* makes confessing somewhat easier, as one can impart personal difficulties without revealing herself. It is within the disclosure of problems, and the analyses/proscriptions which follow, that we find a host of meanings concerning sex.

The numerous Q&As in *Mademoiselle*, and the numerous Q&As found elsewhere in our (media) culture, illustrate "the nearly infinite task of telling - telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, has some affinity with sex" (Foucault 1990: 20). The incitement to discourse on sex, and to confess all, becomes a public confessional in the (printed) question and answer columns. Readers are given a peephole into another's sexual life. Q&As have a voyeuristic quality as otherwise hidden pleasures, displeasures, desires, fantasies, and emotions are exposed. In this sense, Q&As are a seductive form of entertainment (perhaps just as seductive as the sexual captions on the covers of women's magazines which hold my attention while grocery shopping). Nestled in the pages of the socially acceptable women's magazine, racy topics flourish. Placed in the context of problems, sex can be discussed, analyzed, and described at length. Seemingly, within the context of advice, otherwise taboo sexual topics become appropriate matters of public discussion, granted legitimation through the presence of an expert/ advisor. The deep

confessional roots in our culture incite one to speak to an expert, who listens, forgives, consoles, analyzes and proscribes (Foucault 1990).

As voyeurs to another's sexual/ relationship problem, readers can become conscious of their own sexuality and relationships. The individualization of problems, signified through the textual devices of 'you' and reader initials, can invite readers to 'measure-up,' to analyze themselves against socially and culturally desired norms of femininity. (Hypothetical) readers air concerns over sexual normality; actual readers can measure themselves against the text. Femininity becomes a form of consciousness as readers are engaged with the text, perhaps differentiating themselves from the hypothetical reader, participating in the process of normalisation.

Norms are ideals which individuals evaluate themselves against. Certainly, individuals do not blindly conform to norms, but norms are powerful, and individuals may desire to meet certain normative standards, to fit in, and receive social rewards for doing so (Adams 1997; Johnson 1991; Tiefer 1995). Indeed, heterosexuality is a privileged position, and 'good girls' reap particular benefits. As Nagle explains, the western binary of 'good girl' and 'bad girl' is marked, respectively, by relative privilege, and by relative stigma. "These binaries construct identity by forcing females to choose, or at least negotiate between them. Their strength and power is evidenced by the paucity of such 'between' space, and what happens to those who dare to inhabit it, or otherwise challenge the binary" (1997: 5). Nagle also notes that "heterosexual privilege generally functions as a subset of 'good girl' privilege while lesbian and prostitution are subsets of 'bad girl' categories" (ibid.: 5-6). *Mademoiselle's* advice reproduces this binary. Heterosexuality is favoured over lesbianism and bisexuality as the latter two sexualities are marginalised. The 'good girl' 'bad girl' divide is also evident. In some instances women are urged to restrict their sexual behaviours; for example, women are not to have too many partners, or too much sex, as the following prescription illustrates: don't be "so

indiscriminate that the villagers are forced to bury you in a Y-shaped coffin" (*Mademoiselle* July 1998: 43). However, there are also moments when the 'between space' is slippery and unclear. Readers are to discern for themselves where the 'good girl' 'bad girl' line might be drawn. Take the following example. A reader asks, "What's the etiquette for dating two guys at the same time? Should I tell them about each other? When?" The female columnist responds:

If you haven't bedded down with either of them, it's open season: tell, don't tell, hook up with a third guy and tell him about the other two, whatever. But if you're already conjugating verbs with either one (using scads of condoms, obviously), some disclosure might be in order. Once you've gotten naked, feelings can get hurt more easily, and, besides, wouldn't you want to know if they're tomcatting their way around town? . . . (Feb. 1998: 43).

On the one hand, actual readers might see the hypothetical reader as a promiscuous 'bad girl' if she is having sex with more than one man at a time. On the other hand, by advising the use of 'using scads of condoms' for protection, and disclosing some information to the sexual partners, the columnist sanctions the reader's sexual behaviour. In fact, promiscuity loses its stigma, and, indirectly, sexual pleasure and exploration are promoted. A multiplicity of sexual partners has been socially frowned upon for some time, and primarily, women have suffered the brunt of stigmatizing labels, including whore and slut (currently in the process of resignification, namely by sex radical feminists). In latter example, the 'bad girl' is no longer an 'outlaw.'

While negotiating the slippery terrain between 'good girl' and 'bad girl,' readers are encouraged to follow a doctrine of femininity (Smith 1990). Whether proscriptive messages concern dating protocol, such as the disclosure of sexual information to lovers, or knowing how to use 'scads of condoms,' a woman must acquire knowledge on a range of subjects so that she may be successfully heterosexual, and safe, too. Take, for example, the following prescription:

Be sure to socialize safely. Don't hook up with any old Tom, Dick, or Harry.com on the Internet; meet in public places; don't drink yourself senseless (rhymes with 'defenceless'); make sure the party's venue isn't some seedy back-alley joint (*Mademoiselle* March 1998: 81).

Written in a 'common sense' manner, the advice prescribes safety measures, and alerts readers to dangerous consequences of behaviours perceived to be out of control. In short, women must be knowledgeable in numerous practices of femininity, ranging from dating, to sex, to (maintaining) relationships. Further, these practices are accomplishments.

Couched in a hip, heterosexual lifestyle-discourse, women are discursively constructed as sexually savvy and active. Indeed, prudery is not sanctioned. Further, sex within relationships is assumed to be pleasurable, and is not necessarily reproductive (for instance, 'scads of condoms' is for STD/HIV and pregnancy prevention). This discursive construction is no accident. One might argue that sex sells, and women wish to read about sex and fantasize. Perhaps the construction of the sexually active woman is in itself a fantasy element for some readers who are not as sexually daring or active as they might wish to be. On another note, the construction of the sexually knowledgeable and active woman linguistically construes women as sexually liberated, and no longer in need of feminism.

Significantly, this hip heterosexual lifestyle is largely framed within relationships. More to the point, sex is not *independent* of relationships, rather relationships are *dependent* upon sex. Relationships in *Mademoiselle* encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from casual-dating to long-term committed. Despite the range of relationships, they nevertheless remain forms of interpersonal connections. *Mademoiselle* readers are not encouraged to become swinging singles (but if they are, their lifestyle is not admonished - it's just not discussed in the columns). To this end, *Mademoiselle* implicitly contains women's sexual desire and behaviours within relationships by sanctioning particular values, behaviours, and attitudes. By promoting sex in relationships, relationships are women's priority, thereby shifting the focus away from sex to

(problems with) men. As content analysis and semiotic findings indicate, relationships are woman-coded, and sex is man-coded. Advice recreates a gender dichotomy, illustrated through the thematic coding of content, and the unmasking of myth.

Content analysis findings reveal that the gendering of values, behaviours and attitudes towards sexuality maintain a number of gender and sex norms. Five exemplary tables (those pertaining to values, attitudes, and behaviours) were chosen to illustrate the gendered encoding of sex and relationships. Although each table reflects a different question-topic and corresponding answer, data suggest that the coding of sex as male, and relationships as female, is patterned throughout the advice. This gendered encoding indicates that sex and gender are overlapping social categories, in the way that women are textually organized in relation to men.

As advice encourages women to enter into, and maintain, heterosexual relationships, relationships appear integral to femininity. As Rich comments on compulsory heterosexuality; heterosexuality continues to be re/presented as "the great female adventure, duty and fulfilment" (1983: 196, 197). And so it seems: traditional and non-traditional values, behaviours, and attitudes, all point towards the importance of heterosexual relationships. Within relationships, a predominant number of values, attitudes and behaviours link the success of relationships to practices of femininity. A dominant reading of these practices precludes the development of skills necessary to nurturing relationships and men's needs.

According to the findings, communication is women's primary skill. Male and female columnists both advise readers to discuss problems and difficulties, and offer solutions. Interpreted through statements of femininity which encourage readers to be helpful, compliant, supportive, calm, and content, for example, women are constructed as emotional labourers: to mend problems, nourish the growth of the relationship, and provide emotional support. Assertive values, attitudes and behaviours are not frequently endorsed, and are

therefore not part of the dominant message. In this sense, women's problem solving ability is dependent upon communication which is, in turn, dependent upon the skilful, diplomatic and tactful use of language. Honed skills are necessary to the art of communication. Further, these subtle methods are necessary to avoid being too critical of men, as a significant portion of the advice recommends that women not challenge men's behaviour, or masculinity. Suggestively, conforming to a male relationship model is required of women.

In a manifest reading of content analysis messages, it is suggested that while women work at relationships, men are excused from the maintenance of inter-personal affairs. Readers are prescribed empathy towards men, and are encouraged to understand that men 'try their best' but do not always grasp women's needs and desires. Significantly, men's lack of relationship participation is seen as unproblematic, and this advice suggests that meaningful relationships are not men's priority. More to the point, masculinity is re/constructed as unproblematic, and is thereby reinforced. Consequently, men are excused from greater involvement in relationships, and as Carl Holmberg (1998) notes, in popular culture men are constructed as "boorish, inept, and lacking in relationship skills" (p 101), traits which serve to distance men in intimate relationships while re/creating gender differentiation. Additionally, Holmberg asserts that "men are linguistically conceived to be inherently deficient in social graces by words and phrases that out number linguistic forms that are woman-coded" (1998: 100). This linguistic coding contributes to the re/construction of the gender dichotomy.

There are instances in *Mademoiselle* where there are breaks from the dominant thematic construction of the dichotomous gendered encoding. For example, there are moments when women are encouraged to break up with unsuitable men (although readers may then be advised to find someone more suitable). In other instances, readers are told to be critical of 'machismo,' and insist that men take a greater role in relationships. Indeed, columnists also recognize that some men are sensitive, nurturing, and caring. Notions of

gender equality are also imparted in the advice. Breaks in dominant messages not only provide relief to gender and sexual norms, but also illustrate the complexities of heterosexuality. Significantly, the female columnists paint a more complex and conflicting picture over sexuality and relationships than the male columnist as the women illustrate tensions between pleasing men and satisfying one's own sexual desires. Messages denoting female sexual agency may invite pleasurable reading, and / or maintain reader interest. Additionally, non-traditional, egalitarian values, behaviours and attitudes suggest possibilities for negotiation within heterosexual relationships, permitting readers to define, and give meaning to their own social situations. Possibilities for creating *heterosexualities* exists as new meanings are devised, also giving women the ability to create more egalitarian relationships. In the context of popular women's magazines, we can only hope for further disruptions of gender and heterosexual norms, so that readers are encouraged to negotiate their sexual possibilities.

If we are to see further ruptures in sex and gender norms, women's magazines will have to discontinue coding sex as male to allow for further female sexual exploration, fantasy and pleasure. In *Mademoiselle*, sex is man-coded as a number of values, behaviours, and attitudes illustrate. Data suggest that men are highly sexed and libidinous, whereas women's sexuality is, for the most part, secondary. The relative absence of female desire perpetuates a male model of sexuality. Notably, the male columnist supports female sexual agency less frequently than the female columnists. Furthermore, the male columnist sanctions values, behaviours and attitudes which encourage readers to adopt men's sexual attitudes more frequently than the female columnists. Poignantly, women's sexuality is usually considered in relation to men's. In this sense, the text socially organizes women in relation to men, thereby re/creating women's subordination. Men are re/presented as requiring more sex than women, yet differences in 'drive' and desire are not seen as an impasse to a successful

relationship, nor are men believed to be oversexed. Rather, men are '*normal*,' and need 'regular' sexual release. In particular, attitudes encourage readers to understand that men's sex drive is higher than women's, and that men have particular sexual tastes. Additionally, men's sexual satisfaction is perceived as highly important (specifically coded in the attitude 'men's pleasure is important') and tied to the belief that men innately require regular sexual release. A woman may choose to indulge her partner's sexual desires more often than she might like, in order, for instance, to maintain the relationship, or because she believes that he needs sex often, and/ or it is easier for her to oblige than refuse. In this sense, my findings echo Segal's (1997) assertion that coerciveness from men and compliance from women remains encoded in heterosexuality (p 82). At the same time, the advice normalises women's lack of sexual 'drive,' suggesting that it is 'normal' to be less interested in sex.

As the advice recommends that women accommodate differences in desire, it is suggested that obliging men is also part of the practices of femininity. Ironically, indulging men's desires insinuates that women are sexual actors, yet the behaviour itself is for the benefit of men. Furthermore, women's sexual initiation is based upon the myth that men need frequent, exciting sexual release, and the quality of pleasure women experience is unknown, suggesting the need for further research. While women are encouraged to accommodate men's sexual needs, it is unknown if women are receiving pleasure. Problematically, the giving of pleasure may be pleasurable in itself. To reiterate an earlier discussion, Jackson maintains that practices of servicing men are embedded in femininity and are "hardly confined to sexuality" (1996a: 24). Similarly, Holland et al.'s study found that women still discipline themselves to fit into a male model of sexuality which includes suppressing their own desires and receiving pleasure in the giving of pleasure (ibid.). Content analysis findings support Jackson's and Holland et al.'s arguments as the advice codes sex as male, and recommends readers to pleasure men.

On the positive side, although readers are encouraged to titillate men to sustain sexual interest, women may be able to take on new roles, such as sexual domination. Further, women may be able to act sexually voracious with perhaps little stigmatisation. Or, for some women, a (committed) relationship can be a time when they feel secure to sexually express themselves, and enjoy sexual exploration. These speculations can be taken up in further research. Additionally, (exciting) sex is framed in prescriptive discourses as part of a healthy, well maintained relationship which can be a source of pleasure. Take the following advice as an example: "Jane Greer, Ph.D., a New York City therapist, says, "good sex is an ingredient that sustains and nourishes a relationship. . . sex is vital for keeping a relationship alive over long periods of time" (October 1998: 82). Although 'good sex' is a rather loose concept, the notion of 'good sex' lends itself as an endorsement of pursuit of erotic pleasures.

Framing sex within relationships as the example above does, or as enumerated in the attitude 'sex is important to a relationship,' entrenches the notion that sex is most desirable within relationships, and furthermore, promotes sex for the purposes of maintaining a relationship. Consequentially, this positioning also encourages women to acquiesce to men's sexual needs and desires so that relationships with men are not placed in jeopardy. The custom of tying sex to the survival of a relationship (notably sex used to be tied to marriage, and is now upheld within a variety of relationships, from casual to committed to marriage - this is a significant historical change) contributes to the construction of women as relationship experts, furthering the notion that the responsibility of building and maintaining relationships is placed in the hands of women.

Significantly, the advice does not offer recommendations for readers to increase their sexual pleasure. Although the behaviour, 'follow/ fulfil own sexual desires,' and the attitude, 'be sexually expressive,' endorse sexual subjectivity, these sub-categories are usually endorsed within a relationship, or in potential relationship situations, do not directly address pleasure,

and moreover, are infrequently promoted. To this end, a passiveness towards pleasure is implied, suggesting that the act of sex is pleasurable in itself, as if women will automatically receive pleasure from sex/ men. The attitude, 'sex is fun and enjoyable,' is indicative that sex is 'always already' pleasurable.

In sum, content analysis findings illustrate the manifest thematic content, revealing sex as man-coded, and relationships as woman-coded. Nevertheless, there are breaks within this dominant coding to provide relief from traditional femininity while recognizing women's desire and sexual pleasure. At the same time, data reveals that advice contains contradictory messages, and readers must negotiate the conflicting terrain. In any case, contradictory messages allow for reading pleasure and make openings for subversive reading. When language is examined more closely through a semiotic analysis of two texts, further evidence of gendered encoding is revealed, and exposed as myth.

Two Q&A texts, one authored by one of the female columnists, the other by the male columnist, were chosen for semiotic analysis. Analyses revealed gender and heterosexuality as mythical constructs, contributing to coding sex as male and relationships as female. Significantly, similar myths are re/created by the male and female columnists, despite their differences in language usage. Both authors re/create a gender dichotomy, and re/enforce heterosexuality as natural, normal, and desirable. Eroticism is signified as gendered and is bound to heterosexuality. In both Q&As, men are assumed to be (the most) sexually active, stimulated by visual arousal, and inclined to objectify women. Men's sexual behaviours are rooted in ahistorical notions which perpetuate a naturalised heterosexual masculinity and heterosexism. Active female desire is largely ignored, particularly by the male columnist. Although the female columnist endorses mythical, romanticized notions of women's fantasies, she recognizes women's sexual activities through stripping and, for some women, taking pleasure in watching Candida Royale's films. The social forces responsible for constructing

gender and heterosexuality are obscured by myth. Significantly, the columnists drew upon gender stereotypes, commercial culture, and historical notions to offer explanations about gender and sexuality, resulting in the re/ creation of myths. Naturalised and normalised notions of gender and heterosexuality continue to circulate in society as myth has the ability to change, to replace one myth by another over time; as Barthes asserts, myth invents itself ceaselessly (1972: 148).

Together, content analysis and semiotics provide evidence of the hetero-gendered encoding of sex and relationships. Relationships as female and sex as male is illustrated through the quantitative enumeration of thematic codes, and the semiotic decoding of two texts. Content analysis findings revealed that relationships are woman coded in a number of ways. Values portrayed the importance of forming interpersonal bonds, while behaviours depicted the skills needed to nurture relationships, and attitudes cogently denoted the importance of men's sexual desires and the need to use communication to resolve problems. Furthering the notion that sex is male is the relative absence of thematic codes concerning female desire, pleasure and eroticism. Comparatively, there is a greater number of sub-categories for male sexual codes than female. As a result, relationships appear to be of little interest to men as they are discursively constructed as highly sexed. Care of relationships is not only women's responsibility, but part of the accomplishments of femininity.

Semiotic analyses added more depth to the observations made from content analysis by further exemplifying how sex is coded as male. This notion is entrenched by myth which signifies heterosexuality and active heterosexual masculinity as normal, desirable, innate and ahistorical. In contrast, active female desire is largely ignored, mainly due to the dichotomous construction of gender. Through myth, women are signified as passive, waiting to be sexually aroused by men. In this sense, men are aroused by women, and women by men. Normal as natural myths of gender and sexuality are reinforced by both the male and female

columnists.

As the content analysis data depicts the female columnists' greater linguistic capacity to proficiently describe and analyze relationship problems and solutions, evidence of the woman-coding of relationships is further supported. In each of the five exemplary tables selected for analysis, a greater number of sub-categories is recorded for the female columnists. As indicated by the ability to skilfully wield language, the female columnists offered more complex and textured analyses of relationships than the male columnist. Suggestively, the male columnist struggles with language, and is therefore unable to offer more sensitive or complex advice. This struggle became even more apparent during the semiotic phase of the research, involving the close reading of one male and one female authored Q&A.

In the male columnist's response to a reader's question, he fumbles with language, creating new words in the attempt to express himself. At the same time, his answer lacks depth as he attempts to explain 'how men are.' In contrast, the female columnist's response offers detail which is also supported by psychology research. The expertise of the female columnist also marks the woman-coding of relationships, as her analyses demonstrate an accomplishment of the practices of femininity: the knowledge and ability to proficiently assess relationships and decode men. The male columnist's lack of language skill and analytical ability further serve to differentiate women from men while emphasizing the gendered encoding of sex and relationships.

Myths are now apparent nearly everywhere I look. Indeed, my reading enjoyment of women's magazines has declined, yet I still manage to find some escape in women's magazines. I find the warm, personable tone appealing. With few popular discourses written for women, women's magazine maintain their allure. In a predominately male-stream press, women's magazines are amongst the most popular selling magazines. My enjoyment stems

from selective reading, largely avoiding sexual discourses, thereby employing the creative 'art of making do' (Currie 1994: 115). Yet, as Currie (1994) asserts, "our pleasures of consumption help maintain systems of domination and subordination" (p 115). Caught between a lack of (popular) cultural material for women and the problematic of social inequalities, we must continue to work towards social change.

I have used myth to expose sexuality and gender norms, just as Barthes used myths to expose the bourgeois norm. Biological imperatives remain a strong undercurrent in the (popular) media and everyday discourses, and as a mythologist challenging these discourses, there lies the danger of becoming alienated from others. As Barthes suggests,

the mythologist cuts himself [sic.] off from all the myth consumers, and this is no small matter. . . . when a myth reaches the entire community . . . the mythologist must become estranged if he [sic.] wants to liberate the myth. Any myth with some degree of generality is in fact ambiguous, because it represents the very humanity of those who, having nothing, have borrowed it . . . The mythologist is condemned to live in a theoretical sociality (1972: 156-157).

Indeed. A "theoretical sociality" may be even more binding for feminists. I am reminded of the popularity of essentialist beliefs in social gatherings when people discuss matters of sexuality. I have nearly given up objecting to others' biological explanations of 'how we are.' Largely, my arguments against essentialism are ignored, and my examples of historical changes and cross-cultural differences in sexuality and gender are perceived as uninteresting. When others learn of my educational background, their biological convictions grow stronger, and their arguments become more fierce. Men are especially difficult to argue with; often, they become more aggressive in their attempts to persuade me. I have grown weary, and wary of arguing.

Measuring meaning is a complicated craft. The meanings I have unearthed from the advice pages are attributed to the 'middle-range' approach. I also understand that my analyses are situated within feminism and sociology, my perspective is not exclusive, and may be

shared by others. As content analysis demands that all texts be included in the study, researcher bias is reduced because one is required to examine all texts, not just those which support one's claims or hypotheses. While I have aimed to be as objective as possible, objectivity can be enhanced through reliability tests which would involve the aid of another coder (i.e. research assistant, perhaps an undergraduate student). A reliability test would involve measuring the extent of agreement in the classification of data between myself and another coder (Holsti 1969: 135). Usually, research assistants are paid, and funding for such help is not available in our department.

Nevertheless, there are limits to meanings; texts do not contain signifiers with endless possible readings. Indeed, in order for texts to be understood, all readers, including myself, must be able to interpret particular signs which is based on shared cultural knowledge. Certainly, readers actively interpret meanings, yet in the absence of reader interviews, we are unable to assess how *Mademoiselle* is understood by others. A major difference in textual interpretation may be based on the recognition of myth. Additional studies of prescriptive and sexual discourses are needed so that we may expand feminist knowledge. I have only touched on the surface of *Mademoiselle's* sexual content. Additionally, I have bracketed the question and answer pages from the rest of the magazine. Further studies can examine the broader scope of advice offered in the magazine, possibly comparing Q&A columns to feature articles. Comparative studies with other magazines are certainly possible, too. Indeed, the cultural scope of prescriptive sexual discourses is broad, and numerous research possibilities exist.

The analyses within this thesis are generated from principles of sociology and feminism; consequently, my perspective is not mine alone. I bring forward my own insight in the effort to form a critical analysis of the messages in *Mademoiselle*. However, I have not incorporated the views of readers; future research projects may undertake the task of

interviewing readers of women's magazines sex-advice columns to understand, for instance, how others interpret women's positioning within sexual relationships. Although readers are not interviewed, ways of understanding how meanings are generated are useful in considering how the perspectives of others might form.

As long as gender and heterosexuality continue to be signified through myth as innate and normal, femininity, masculinity, and heterosexuality will continue to be perceived as inseparable and desirable. As a result, a dialectical approach to sex and gender, which maintains a focus on male heterosexual domination is important to understanding how these are overlapping social categories, affecting women's choices, behaviours and attitudes (LeMoncheck 1997). Although some theorists, such as Rubin, have correctly made us aware that theories of sex need not be derived from theories of gender, we are not yet able to insist that sex and gender are two analytically distinct domains which call for separate analyses. As we have seen, women's sexual attitudes and behaviours do not appear to be independent of feminine norms. Further, myth contributes to the maintenance of gender and sexual inequalities as it creates a naturalized hierarchy whereby women are subordinate to men, and other sexualities are subordinate to heterosexuality. This distortion is of social consequence.

As Segal puts it,

we [must] continue to fashion new concepts and practices of gender based upon the mutual recognition of similarities and differences between women and men, rather than upon their opposition. In the mean time, we can continue to insist, with all the passion we can muster, that there is no necessary fit between maleness, activity and desire; any more than there is a fit between femaleness, passivity and sexual responsiveness (1994: 317).

In short, analyses must continue to examine how one domain influences the other, and furthermore, deconstruct them.

In Hawkes' assertion, "for if sexuality were simply defined and understood as the mode of expression of sexual desire, then the largely intact connection between sexuality and

gender would be severed, and the grounding of sexuality in behaviour alone would be challenged" (1996: 8). Indeed, and as the evidence suggests, the advice is fraught with contradictions regarding female sexual conduct. 'Good girl' and 'bad girl' behaviours are present within the Q&A pages, leaving readers the task of negotiating the slippery terrain between the binaries, deciding which norms to follow and those to disregard.

On the one hand, in some places, readers are urged to regulate their desire, restricting it to heterosexual relationships so as to avoid the dangers of social stigmatisation and the jeopardization of personal health and safety. A normal, natural and desirable form of femininity continues to rest upon notions of passivity: to accommodate men's sexual desires; to maintain intimate relationships; and to keep one's own desires in check, lest they run out of control and/or provoke male attack. Norms are powerful; they contribute to the social construction of reality and the regulation of behaviour (Johnson 1991: 38). Avoiding deviant labels can be sufficient motivation for individuals to conform to desired sexual norms to meet expectations of an ideal womanhood. (How women negotiate their hetero/sexuality would be an engaging, socially significant study.) In this sense, prescriptive discourses can be said to perform an implicit regulatory function.

On the other hand, readers are encouraged to pursue, and fulfil their sexual desires and fantasies. Women are assumed to be sexually active and, having 'good,' pleasurable, non-reproductive sex. For the most part, the advice assumes that women adhere to an ideal of serial monogamy. Incidentally, on the cover of *Mademoiselle's* August 2000 issue is the title of a feature article: "Six guys to do before you say I do." Although I have not yet read the article, I assume that one is not 'to do' all six guys at once. Poignantly, marriage is the final goal, the ending one arrives at after 'promiscuity.' Although serial monogamy in many ways does not challenge dominant norms of heterosexual femininity, it is a break from the historical expectation of having one life-long spouse. As advice contains a number of contradictions, it

can not be solely read as a having a regulatory function. Advice can also be a source of information, titillation, and/ or entertainment, depending on the context, and one's perspective. In any case, advice gives us particular ways to think about sex, contributing to the forming, shaping and directing of sexuality (Hawkes 1996: 89). In the main, heteronormative notions concerning sexuality are maintained. Further, male heterosexual domination is retained as a cultural and social construction as women are discursively organized in relation to men.

The politics of gender and the limited female erotic possibilities are cause for on going feminist struggle. Future studies and critiques must continue to disrupt normative assumptions and stereotypes concerning female sexuality to allow women to define their own sexuality. Myth has created a confused knowledge about sexuality and gender, and this knowledge widely circulates in culture and society: From the anthropomorphization of sex in televised animal shows, to the belief that the reason why we have been put on earth is to procreate, naturalized notions of sexuality and gender abound. By removing sexuality and gender from history, myth has obfuscated notions of social constructionism through depoliticized speech.

Continually, sexuality and gender must be placed with political areas, including within feminist politics. Although feminists have not yet come to terms over sex, feminist work must continue to insist that our bodies do not determine eroticism and desire. The constructedness of sexuality and gender must persistently be revealed in a wide variety of domains so that knowledge on social constructionism expands. In doing so, we may continue to strive towards creating new sexual discourses which include women's desires and erotic preferences and practices. Through the creation of woman-coded sexual discourses, we can aspire to create greater social equality for women, as women's (sexual) agency increases. In developing new discourses, heterosexuality can be *rethought*. Meanings associated with heterosex require reshaping so as to disrupt myths which tie dichotomies of active/ passive,

subject/ object, to male/ female, respectively. *Mademoiselle's* advice reveals a lack of discourses pertaining to women's pleasure, and in some ways, seeks to restrain and restrict the pursuit of women's sexual desires. In keeping with Segal's (1994; 1997) politics, women's sexual empowerment remains an integral aspect to women's greater social empowerment and equality. Furthermore, rethinking heterosexuality is of importance to disrupting the myth that heterosexuality is the most natural and normal expression of sexual desire. To do so, requires work towards changing the privileged status of heterosexuality in culture and society.

❖ Appendix A ❖

VALUES

Note: Tables A.1 - A.6 are subcategories of the primary category 'Relationships with Men'  
 Tables A.7 - A.10 are subcategories of the primary category 'Understand Men Better'

Table A.1: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Improve or Mend a Relationship'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
male defined relationships	36.7	traditional femininity	15.9
multiplicity of heterosexual	18.1	partnership/ social equality	11.6
traditional femininity	18.1	good sex	10.1
male centred sex	18.1	traditional masculinity	9.0
heterosexism	9.0	self	5.6
		woman centred heterosexual/ sexual equality	5.6
		marriage	5.6
		male defined relationships	4.5
		non-traditional femininity	4.5
		traditional masculinity	4.5
		multiplicity of heterosexual	3.4
		male centred sex	3.4
		non-traditional masculinity	2.2
		social grace	2.2
		heterosexual partnering	2.2
		neo-traditional femininity	2.2
		friendships with women	2.2
		sexism	1.1
		non-promiscuousness	1.1
		naturalization of masculinity	1.1
		safe sex	1.1
		love	1.1
		career	1.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	80
total values <sup>3</sup>	11	total values <sup>4</sup>	88

1. Includes all units of analysis in this particular subcategory in the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
2. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
3. Total values enumerated in the 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, there are more values than units of analysis.

4. Total values enumerated in the 'Love' and 'Sex' columns in this particular subcategory. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, there are more values than units of analysis.

Table A.2: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Meet Men/ Express Interest in Someone'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
self	33.3	self	22.8
non-traditional masculinity	33.3	protection of women	14.2
non-traditional femininity	33.3	non-traditional femininity	14.2
		heterosexual partnering	11.4
		male approval and acceptance	8.5
		traditional femininity	5.7
		money seeking women are contemptuous	5.7
		non-traditional masculinity	5.7
		traditional masculinity	2.8
		social grace	2.8
		personal hygiene	2.8
		marriage	2.8
N <sup>1</sup> =	3	N <sup>2</sup> =	21
total values <sup>3</sup>	3	total values <sup>4</sup>	18
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.3: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Love Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		love	15.1
		heterosexual partnering	12.1
		relationships change	12.1
		traditional masculinity	9.9
		social graces	9.9
		non-traditional femininity	9.9
		non-traditional masculinity	6.6
		naturalization of femininity	6.6
		self	6.6
		disapproval of machismo	3.0
		male centred sex	3.0
		non-promiscuousness	3.0
N <sup>1</sup> =	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	23
total values <sup>3</sup>	0	total values <sup>4</sup>	33
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.4: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Dating Protocol'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
male defined relationships	36.3	social grace	17.8
non-traditional femininity	36.3	non-promiscuousness	17.8
traditional masculinity	9.0	non-traditional femininity	14.2
male centred sex	9.0	traditional femininity	14.2
other	9.0	male defined relationships	14.2
		traditional masculinity	7.1
		neo-traditional femininity	7.1
		male monogamy	3.5
		self	3.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	40
total values <sup>3</sup>	10	total values <sup>4</sup>	28
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.5: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'What to Tell a Guy'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
traditional femininity	22.6	traditional femininity	41.1
male centred sex	18.1	masculine defined relationships	8.8
gender differentiation	13.6	career	5.8
self	13.6	sexism	5.8
male centred desire	9.0	self	5.8
women centred heterosex/sexual equality	4.5	traditional masculinity	5.8
sexism	4.5	male centred sexuality	5.8
traditional masculinity	4.5	non-traditional femininity	2.9
		heterosexual partnering	2.9
		women centred heterosex/sexual equality	2.9
		heterosexism	2.9
		marriage	2.9
		other	2.9
N <sup>1</sup> =	17	N <sup>2</sup> =	26
total values <sup>3</sup>	22	total values <sup>4</sup>	34
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.6: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Concern Over Boyfriend's Activities'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
traditional masculinity	40.0	disapproval of machismo	28.5
disapproval of machismo	20.0	traditional femininity	28.5
social equality/ partnership	10.0	self	14.2
non-traditional femininity	10.0	traditional masculinity	14.2
self	10.0		
N <sup>1</sup> =	9	N <sup>2</sup> =	8
total values <sup>3</sup>	10	total values <sup>4</sup>	7

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.7: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Actions or Thoughts Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
traditional masculinity	29.6	traditional masculinity	19.0
traditional femininity	10.4	traditional femininity	15.1
non-traditional masculinity	8.0	non-traditional masculinity	7.5
male defined relationships	8.0	male defined relationships	6.0
neo-traditional femininity	6.4	woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	5.3
sexism	6.4	disapproval of machismo	5.3
non-traditional femininity	5.6	self	4.5
self	5.6	male centred sex	4.5
naturalization of masculinity	3.2	non-traditional femininity	4.5
marriage	3.2	male monogamy	3.7
disapproval of machismo	3.2	neo-traditional femininity	3.7
apoliticalism	2.4	sexism	3.7
male centred desire	2.4	protection of women	3.0
heterosexual partnering	1.6	male centred desire	2.2
male approval & acceptance	.8	social grace	2.2
gender differentiation	.8	heterosexual partnering	2.2
friendships with women	.8	naturalization of masculinity	2.2
monogamy	.8	sex is sinful	1.5
social grace	.8	female monogamy	.7
		apoliticalism	.7
		non-promiscuousness	.7
		love	.7
		other	1.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	125	N <sup>2</sup> =	91
total values <sup>3</sup>	164	total values <sup>4</sup>	131

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.8: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Sexual Desires/ Turn Ons'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
male centred desire	20.3	male centred sex	15.2
traditional femininity	14.2	woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	11.5
traditional masculinity	12.2	traditional femininity	9.9
male centred sex	10.2	male centred desire	8.1
sexism	10.2	sexism	7.6
male approval and acceptance	6.1	men's pleasure	6.4
men's pleasure	6.1	traditional masculinity	4.6
woman centred heterosex/ sexual equality	4.0	denaturalization of heterosex	4.6
heteronormativity	2.0	non-traditional masculinity	4.0
non-traditional masculinity	2.0	heterosexism	2.9
gender differentiation	2.0	multiplicity of heterosex	2.9
male centred relationships	2.0	gender differentiation	1.7
monogamy	2.0	scientific truths about sexuality	1.7
self	2.0	male approval and acceptance	1.7
medicialization of women's bodies	2.0	male heterosex variation	1.7
career	2.0	gender similarity	1.1
		naturalization of male sex drive	1.1
		personal hygiene	1.1
		wariness of sex	1.1
		self	1.1
		heteronormativity	.5
		sex is sinful	.5
		safe sex	.5
		medicialization of women's bodies	.5
		disapproval of machismo	.5
		female monogamy	.5
		birth control	.5
		social graces	.5
		neo-traditional femininity	.5
		non-promiscuousness	.5
		apoliticalism	.5
		other	2.3
N <sup>1</sup> =	33	N <sup>2</sup> =	117
total values <sup>3</sup>	49	total values <sup>4</sup>	171

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.9: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Bodies/ Sexual Functioning/ Sexual Health'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		phallogentrism	17.9
		medicalization of men's bodies	14.9
		traditional femininity	14.9
		male centred sex	8.9
		wariness of sex	7.4
		woman centred heterosex/sexual equality	5.9
		self	5.9
		female health	4.4
		medicalization of sex	4.4
		traditional masculinity	2.9
		non-traditional femininity	2.9
		non-traditional masculinity	1.4
		disapproval of machismo	1.4
		male pleasure	1.4
		gender similarity	1.4
		heteronormativity	1.4
		male centred desire	1.4
		other	1.4
N <sup>1</sup> =	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	50
total values <sup>3</sup>	0	total values <sup>4</sup>	67

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.10: Values Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Read Signs He's Interested/ Loves You/ is Committed'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		traditional femininity	47.7
		non-traditional femininity	13.0
		heterosexual partnering	13.0
		neo-traditional femininity	13.0
		non-traditional masculinity	8.6
		other	4.3
N <sup>1</sup> =	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	15
total values <sup>3</sup>	0	total values <sup>4</sup>	23

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

## BEHAVIOURS

Note: Tables A.11 - A.18 are subcategories of the primary category 'Relationships with Men'  
 Tables A.19 -A.21 are subcategories of the primary category 'Understand Men Better'

Table A.11: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Get Him to Listen/ Understand/ Do Something'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
initiate intimacy or romance	20.8	discuss the problem &/or your feelings	28.0
initiate activities together	16.6	initiate activities together	24.0
support/ help him	12.5	tell him to stop	12.0
discuss the problem &/or your feelings	12.5	practice safe sex	8.0
divide household chores/ finances	12.5	divide household chores/ finances	8.0
accept him/ the way men are	8.3	figure him out	4.0
decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	8.3	support/ help him	4.0
offer an alternative	4.1	work on the relationship	4.0
do what's right for you	4.1	be sexually suggestive/ have sex	4.0
		don't have sex with him	4.0
N <sup>1</sup> =	31	N <sup>2</sup> =	29
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	24	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	25

1. Includes all the units of analysis within the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
2. Includes all the units of analysis within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
3. Total enumerated behaviours in this particular subcategory within the 1994 and 1998 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain more than one prescriptive behaviour, in other cases, some units do not contain any behaviours.
4. Total enumerated behaviours in this particular subcategory within the 1994 and 1998 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain more than one prescriptive behaviour, in other cases, some units do not contain any behaviours.

Table A.12: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Improve or Mend a Relationship'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
initiate activities together	30.0	decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	24.9
get him to seek professional help	20.0	discuss the problem &/or your feelings	20.3
work on the relationship	20.0	work on the relationship	16.6
do what's right for you	10.0	do what's right for you	13.0
discuss the problem &/or your feelings	10.0	support/ help him	8.3
support/ help him	10.0	figure out the problem	4.7
		offer an alternative	2.3
		be monogamous	2.3
		follow/ fulfil own sexual desire	2.3
		be sexually suggestive/ have sex	1.1
		accept him/ the way men are	1.1
		don't pressure him	1.1
		go slow	1.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	80
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	10	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	84
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.13: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Whether or Not to Date Someone/ Keep the Relationship Going'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
go out on dates	33.3	decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	20.5
initiate activities together	16.6	do what's right for you	17.6
decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	16.6	go out on dates	17.6
accept him/ the way men are	16.6	follow/ fulfil own sexual desires	8.8
ask him to stop	16.6	be safe	8.8
		don't be loose or string guys along	8.8
		accept him/ the way men are	5.8
		practice safe sex	2.9
		don't pressure him	2.9
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	55
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	6	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	34
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.14: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Dating Protocol'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
call him	80.0	go out on dates	15.5
go out on dates	20.0	consider his feelings	15.5
		do what's right for you	13.3
		don't be loose or string guys along	13.3
		be sexually suggestive/ have sex	8.8
		initiate intimacy/ romance	8.8
		discuss problems &/ or your feelings	4.4
		don't tell too much too soon	4.4
		practice safe sex	4.4
		decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	4.4
		work on the relationship	2.2
		other	4.4
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	28
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	5	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	45

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.15: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Meet Men/ Express Interest in Someone'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		go out on dates	31.5
		be safe	21.0
		be independent and self concerned	21.0
		seek professional/ medical help	15.7
		do what's right for you	10.5
N=	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	21
total behaviours	0	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	19

<sup>2&4</sup> See above

Table A.16: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Love Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		make your romance work	38.4
		decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	38.4
		do what's right for you	23.0
N=	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	23
total behaviours	0	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	13
<sup>2 and 4</sup> See above			

Table A.17: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'What to Tell a Guy'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
discuss the problem &/ or your feelings	60.0	do what' right for you	31.2
support/ help him	20.0	don't tell too much too soon	18.7
decide if he's worthwhile/find another	6.6	offer an alternative	12.5
do what's right for you	6.6	discuss the problem &/or your feelings	12.5
other	6.6	decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	6.6
		work on the relationship	6.6
		other	12.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	17	N <sup>2</sup> =	26
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	15	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	16
<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above			

Table A.18: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Concern Over Boyfriend's Activities'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
figure him out	37.5	initiate activities together	40.0
support/ help him	25.0	support/ help him	20.0
initiate activities together	12.5	let him decide for himself	10.0
let him decide for himself	12.5	tell him to stop	10.0
avoid certain men	12.5	do what's right for you	10.0
		discuss the problem &/or your feelings	10.0
N <sup>1</sup> =	9	N <sup>2</sup> =	8
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	8	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	10
<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above			

Table A.19: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Actions or Thoughts Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
discuss the problem &/or your feelings	31.6	discuss the problem &/or your feelings	22.6
accept him/ the way men are	15.2	figure him out	17.3
decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	10.1	decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	10.6
support/ help him	7.5	support/ help him	10.6
initiate activities together	5.0	do what's right for you	9.3
be sexually suggestive/ have sex	3.7	follow/ fulfil own sexual desires	8.0
figure him out	3.7	accept him/ the way men are	5.3
suggest an alternative	3.7	work on the relationship	4.0
don't take it personally	3.7	avoid certain men	4.0
work on the relationship	2.5	don't have sex with him	1.3
share household tasks/ finances	2.5	don't be loose or string guys along	1.3
go out on dates	2.5	practice safe sex	1.3
seek professional/ medical help	1.2	suggest an alternative	1.3
avoid certain men	1.2	have sex only if you want	1.3
don't have sex with him	1.2	get him to seek professional help	1.3
other	3.7		
N <sup>1</sup> =	125	N <sup>2</sup> =	91
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	79	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	75

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.20: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Sexual Desires/ Turn Ons'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
accept him/ the way men are	33.3	be sexually suggestive/ have sex	21.7
be sexually suggestive/ have sex	16.6	pleasure him	14.1
discuss the problem &/or your feelings	13.2	follow/ fulfil own sexual desires	12.8
don't take it personally	10.0	discuss the problem &/or your feelings	10.2
do what's right for you	3.3	don't take it personally	10.2
figure him out	3.3	figure him out	6.4
suggest an alternative	3.3	accept him/ the way men are	5.1
don't have sex with him	3.3	practice safe sex	5.1
go out on dates	3.3	support/ help him	3.8
initiate intimacy/ romance	3.3	have sex only if you want	3.8
suggest an alternative	3.3	do what's right for you	3.8
support/ help him	3.3	decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	1.2
		tell him to stop	1.2
N <sup>1</sup> =	33	N <sup>2</sup> =	117
total behaviours <sup>3</sup>	30	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	78

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.21: Behaviours Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Read Signs He's Interested/ Loves You/ is Committed'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		figure him out	33.3
		work on the relationship	33.3
		decide if he's worthwhile/ find another	20.0
		don't pressure him	6.6
		discuss the problem &/or your feelings	6.6
N=	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	15
total behaviours	0	total behaviours <sup>4</sup>	15

<sup>2&4</sup> See above

## ATTITUDES

Note: Tables A.22 - A.29 are subcategories of the primary category 'Relationships with Men'  
 Tables A.30 - A.33 are subcategories of the primary category 'Understand Men Better'

Table A.22: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Get Him to do Listen/ Understand/ Do Something'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
men are incompetent	35.6	independence, confidence, self concern	52.0
independence, confidence, self concern	21.4	relationships can be frustrating	16.0
men want to be independent	14.2	be cool and calm	12.0
kindheartedness and sympathy	7.1	kindheartedness and sympathy	8.0
patience and perseverance	7.1	feel good about yourself	4.0
relationships can be frustrating	3.5	sex requires communication	4.0
men like sex	3.5	relationships have power struggles	4.0
be cool and calm	3.5		
don't worry	3.5		
N <sup>1</sup> =	31	N <sup>2</sup> =	29
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	28	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	25

1. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory in the 'Men' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
2. Includes all the units of analysis in this particular subcategory within the 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns of the 1994 and 1998 issues of *Mademoiselle*.
3. Total enumerated attitudes in this particular subcategory the 1994 and 1998 'Men' Q&A column. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain may contain more than one prescriptive attitude.
4. Total enumerated attitudes in this particular subcategory of the 1994 and 1998 'Love' and 'Sex' Q&A columns. Due to the complexity of the Q&A texts, some units of analysis contain may contain more than one prescriptive attitude.

Table A.23: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Whether or Not to Date Someone/ Keep the Relationship Going'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	71.4	love requires risks	21.4
dating can be difficult	14.2	independence, confidence, self concern	17.8
men are not that bad	14.2	kindheartedness and sympathy	17.8
		patience and perseverance	10.7
		fidelity	10.7
		love can be difficult	10.7
		cheerfulness	7.1
		sisterhood	3.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	55
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	7	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	28
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.24: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'How to Meet Men/ Express Interest in Someone'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
independence, confidence, self concern	50.0	independence, confidence and self concern	49.9
cheerfulness	25.0	feel good about yourself	16.6
kindheartedness and sympathy	25.0	cheerfulness	16.6
		kindheartedness and sympathy	11.1
		men are not that important	5.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	3	N <sup>2</sup> =	21
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	4	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	18
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.25: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Love Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		relationships require work	33.3
		love can be difficult	26.6
		love is blissful	13.3
		relationships end	13.3
		romance is important	13.3
N=	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	23
total attitudes	0	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	15
2&4 See above			

Table A.26: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'What to Tell a Guy'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
independence, confidence, self concern	25.0	dating can be difficult	25.0
men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	25.0	cheerfulness	20.0
kindheartedness and sympathy	18.7	kindheartedness and sympathy	15.0
men like sex	6.2	be cool and calm	15.0
dating is difficult	6.2	independence, confidence, self concern	15.0
men's and women's desires differ	6.2	men are not that important	5.0
romance requires work	6.2	men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	5.0
cheerfulness	6.2		
N <sup>1</sup> =	17	N <sup>2</sup> =	26
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	16	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	20
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.27: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Dating Protocol'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	36.3	kindheartedness and sympathy	23.4
men think about sex a lot	27.2	cheerfulness	21.2
be cool and calm	18.1	men's pleasure is important	17.0
kindheartedness and sympathy	9.0	dating is difficult	8.5
independence, confidence, self concern	9.0	independence, confidence, self concern	8.5
		feel good about yourself	6.3
		be honest	6.3
		relationships end	4.2
		romance is fun	2.1
		men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	2.1
N <sup>1</sup> =	8	N <sup>2</sup> =	28
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	11	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	47
1,2,3,4 See above			

Table A.28: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions:  
'Concern over Boyfriend's Activities'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
independence, confidence, self concern	40.0	independence, confidence, self concern	37.5
men can be dangerous	20.0	be cool and calm	25.0
be cool and calm	20.0	men are incompetent	12.5
kindheartedness and sympathy	20.0	don't be jealous	12.5
		men like porn	12.5
N <sup>1</sup> =	9	N <sup>2</sup> =	8
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	5	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	8

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.29: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions:  
'Understand Men's Actions or Thoughts Better'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	27.4	independence, confidence, self concern	25.6
independence, confidence, self concern	15.2	men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	16.1
kindheartedness and sympathy	8.1	kindheartedness and sympathy	13.5
patience and perseverance	6.1	men enjoy sex	9.4
men enjoy visual arousal	5.3	men are incompetent	6.7
men are incompetent	4.0	dating can be difficult	5.4
relationships can be frustrating	4.0	relationships can be frustrating	4.0
be calm and cool	4.0	be cool and calm	4.0
cheerfulness	4.0	don't worry	2.7
men can be jerks	4.0	be contrite	2.7
men enjoy sex	4.0	patience and perseverance	2.7
don't worry	3.4	fidelity	2.7
relationships end	3.4	relationships end	2.7
men's pleasure is important	3.4	men are not that bad	1.3
women turn men on	3.4		
men are not that bad	3.4		
fidelity	.6		
N <sup>1</sup> =	125	N <sup>2</sup> =	91
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	147	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	74

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

Table A.30: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Understand Men's Bodies/ Sexual Functioning/ Sexual Health'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
		penises can have problems	20.5
		sex can be risky	17.6
		his body is normal	14.7
		independence, confidence, self concern	14.7
		men enjoy sex	8.8
		sex is enjoyable	8.8
		men's pleasure is important	5.8
		size does not matter	5.8
		other	2.9
N <sup>1</sup> =	0	N <sup>2</sup> =	50
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	0	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	34

Table A.31: Attitudes Promoted in Answers of the Advice Columns in Response to Questions: 'Read Signs He's Interested/ Loves You/ is Committed'

<i>male columnist</i>	% of units	<i>female columnists</i>	% of units
men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	66.6	patience and perseverance	16.6
patience and perseverance	33.3	independence, confidence, self concern	16.6
		men can be dangerous	16.6
		men are not that important	16.6
		love is important	16.6
		men can be nervous, fearful or insecure	16.6
N <sup>1</sup> =	3	N <sup>2</sup> =	15
total attitudes <sup>3</sup>	3	total attitudes <sup>4</sup>	6

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> See above

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