





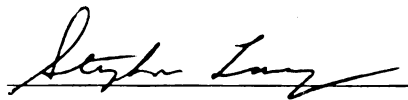
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A Content Analysis of Seventeen,  
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Erin Claire Gillespie

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**THE SEXUAL MESSAGES IN THREE WOMEN'S MAGAZINES, 1971-1991:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SEVENTEEN,  
COSMOPOLITAN AND MADMOISELLE**

**By**

**Erin Claire Gillespie**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE SEXUAL MESSAGES IN THREE WOMEN'S MAGAZINES, 1971-1991: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SEVENTEEN, COSMOPOLITAN, AND MADMOISELLE**

**By**

**Erin Claire Gillespie**

A content analysis of three popular women's magazines was conducted to evaluate them as sources of sexual information. Non-fiction, non-advertising content was coded according to twenty coding questions for mention of emotional, physiological and responsibility aspects of sex, for attempts to dispel myths and misconceptions and in comparison to statistical data on the sexual behavior of young women.

The magazines included vastly different quantities of sexual content. Sexual relationships and sexuality in general clearly dominated all other sexual topic categories. Mention of emotional and physical aspects of sex was fairly balanced, but the responsibility for the potential consequences of sexual activity received very little mention. There were a few attempts to dispel myths and misconceptions.

In general, the magazines studied did not appear to precede trends in sexual behavior, and if the content responded to trends, the response was unaggressive at seemingly vital times.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the main difficulties of being a teenager is sex, at once a great discovery, a great mess, a great pleasure, a great frustration, and an all around great muddle.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past few decades, the number of out-of-wedlock births and teenage pregnancies in the United States has risen dramatically. Research shows that between 1960 and 1982, the number of live births per thousand unmarried females aged fifteen to nineteen climbed from 15.3 to 28.9.<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census data from 1971 to 1989 show that among the total number of illegitimate live births, by 1989 over 63 percent were to mothers fifteen to twenty-four years of age.<sup>3</sup>

Seventy percent of unmarried American women have had intercourse by their twentieth birthday,<sup>4</sup> and the average age at which young women have their first sexual intercourse is 16.<sup>5</sup>

Some psychologists suggest that teenagers are ill-equipped to make decisions about sexual intercourse, that they lack the emotional maturity it takes to make serious judgments about intimate relationships and to take responsibility for their actions.<sup>6</sup> According to Moore, "Young people today are socially pressured to be sexually active long before they have been prepared educationally and psychologically to cope with the deeply personal and highly charged nature of sexuality."<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the risk of pregnancy and emotional consequences of adolescent sexual intercourse, the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including AIDS, is of pressing concern to teenage women, who rank third after homosexual men and prostitutes in cases of gonorrhea, cytomegalovirus, chlamydia cervicitis, and pelvic inflammatory diseases of any age group.<sup>8</sup> Irregular contraceptive use and early age of intercourse are

characteristics typical of many sexually active young women, characteristics which most often result in 1) early and often unwanted pregnancies that have contributed to increased abortion rates, 2) births to unwed mothers that pose serious health, social, and economic problems, and 3) occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases at epidemic rates.<sup>9</sup>

The focus of this study is sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraceptive use, pregnancy, and STDs as they are presented in three large-circulation women's magazines from 1971 to 1991. Through content analysis an attempt has been made to determine what the three magazines have communicated to their readers with regard to sexual topics over the past twenty years, and what their potential as sources of sexual information for young women may be. How women's magazines compare to societal trends regarding the sexual behavior and characteristics of young women is also addressed here. Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Cosmopolitan are the three long-lived and popular magazines examined in this study.

## NOTES: CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Alan Guttmacher Institute, 11 Million Teenagers (New York: Planned Parenthood of America, 1976), 57.

<sup>2</sup>Sandra L. Hanson, David E. Myers, and Alan L. Ginsberg, "The Role of Responsibility and Knowledge in Reducing Teenage Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (May 1987): 241.

<sup>3</sup>National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics," supplement to Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 35(45), July 1984, 35(4) July 1986, 40(8) December, 1991.

<sup>4</sup>Lynn Crawford Cook, "Girls: Just Say 'Not Now,'" Psychology Today, April 1989, 59.

<sup>5</sup>Melvin Zelnik and Farida K. Shah, "First Intercourse Among Young Americans," Family Planning Perspectives, 15 (March/April 1983): 64.

<sup>6</sup>Allen J. Moore, "Teenage Sexuality and Public Morality," The Christian Century, 9-16 September 1987, 747.

11 Million Teenagers, 57.

Cook, 59.

<sup>7</sup>Moore, 747.

<sup>8</sup>Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Frank F. Furstenburg Jr., "Adolescent Sexual Behavior," American Psychologist 44 (February 1989): 259.

<sup>9</sup>Ruth A. Hudson, "Sexual Knowledge, Attitudes and Sources of Information Among Adolescents," (M.A. thesis, Texas Women's University, 1985), 115.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SEX AND THE SINGLE GIRL

Traditionally, there has been disparity between the attitudes of the adult community and the attitudes of teenagers regarding premarital sexual activity. The adult community says premarital sexual intimacy is wrong, while the youth community often says that premarital sexual intimacy is not wrong, given certain interpersonal commitments.<sup>1</sup> Such “commitments” generally include being in love, going steady and engagement, and have been found by researchers to be significant catalysts for the frequency of adolescent sexual activity, contraceptive use and pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

The premarital sexual behavior of unmarried women became a suddenly popular topic of public discussion in 1953 when an obscure Indiana zoologist named Alfred C. Kinsey published the landmark study Sexual Behavior in the Human Female and “vaulted into the same prominence once occupied by such scholars of sex and reproduction as Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Havelock Ellis.”<sup>3</sup>

It has been observed that probably no finding in Kinsey’s report was “more shocking and upsetting to the American population than that which showed about 50 percent of all the women they studied who had ever married had had premarital coitus. It sharply publicized the disparity between the values of premarital virginity and actual sexual behavior.”<sup>4</sup>

Kinsey’s study has been criticized by some for methodological reasons, most notably, potential biases that could have been introduced by a sampling technique which required women to recall from memory details about their earliest sexual experiences. The validity of the sample group of women was also questioned for its accuracy in representing the female population as a whole: the study participants were all volunteers, all white, most

were from northeastern states and were highly educated.

Nevertheless, the study was important for having brought into the open the news that 50 percent of these American women had premarital sex, and that over a quarter of them admitted extramarital relations, despite the traditionally perceived American social taboos against it. One-third of the unmarried women interviewed had lost their virginity by age twenty-five, and 77 percent of the married women who had been sexually active prior to marriage said they felt no remorse or regret as a result of their premarital sexual relations. For 69 percent of the still unmarried females who had had sex relations, there was no regret, and only 30 percent of the still unmarried women said they intended to abstain from sex until they were married.<sup>5</sup>

In analyzing the behavior of his subjects, Kinsey modified the traditional definition of “virgin.” Women who considered themselves virgins were often involved in a number of intimately sexual behaviors, and Kinsey said a woman who participated in deep kissing, who had her breasts manipulated manually or orally, who received or performed masturbation, who performed or received oral-genital contact, or who had contacted male genitals with her own but stopped short of actual coitus, was still, technically, a virgin.<sup>6</sup>

As shocking as Kinsey’s findings were made to seem, in reality, the sexual behavior of young women in 1953 was nothing new. As one magazine observed, “Kinsey’s mass study shows that premarital sex activity of girls today has not differed over the years since 1920 from the activity of their mothers and grandmothers.”<sup>7</sup> It seemed that the most surprising aspect of Kinsey’s study was not the results themselves, but their popularity as a topic of open discussion. An article in the August 24, 1953 issue of Time magazine said the effect of Kinsey’s work on the U.S. would take another twenty years to discover, but that certain effects were already visible:

Perhaps the biggest of them is conversational. Despite the tremendous increase of talk about sex after World War I, public and printed discussion was accepted only gradually. As late as the '30s, the New York Times refused ads for Ideal Marriage.

by a highly respectable Dutch physician, Theodoor H. Van de Velde, who spoke of sex with great candor but also with an almost romantic reverence. No single event did more for open discussion of sex than the Kinsey report, which got such matters as homosexuality, masturbation, coitus and orgasm into most papers and family magazines.<sup>8</sup>

Researchers since Kinsey have charted a rise in the number of young women who initiate sexual activity prior to marriage, and some attribute the increase to the fact that women are waiting longer to marry than they were twenty years ago. The percentage of unmarried twenty to twenty-four year-olds rose from 36.8 percent in 1971, to 55.5 percent in 1980, to 61.1 percent in 1988. In 1988, nearly 90 percent of women aged eighteen to nineteen were unmarried, compared with 77.5 percent in 1971. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the median age at first marriage for women in 1989 was 23.8 years, higher than any previously recorded level. An “especially rapid” increase of 2.7 years in the median age at first marriage occurred between 1975 and 1989 for men and women alike.<sup>9</sup>

These increases, and the shift in age distribution of marriages to older ages during the 1970s and 1980s, reflect both an increase in time spent in school and an increasing tendency for women to work for several years before marriage.<sup>10</sup> (Table 16 in Appendix C shows marital status of women aged 18 to 34 from 1971 to 1988). With more time between puberty and marriage, the percentage of unmarried women aged fifteen to nineteen engaging in sexual intercourse also increased, by 52.9 percent, between 1971 and 1982.<sup>11</sup> As Table 1 shows, between 1971 and 1988, the percentage of sexually active, unmarried American women aged fifteen to nineteen rose from 29.5 percent to 54 percent.

In addition to this combination of early initiation of sexual activity and delayed marriage, the availability of prescribed, medical forms of birth control has also been credited for the rising number of sexually active young people. Since their introduction in the mid-1960s, and their refinement in recent years, medically prescribed contraceptives such as the pill, diaphragm and intrauterine device (IUD), have lessened the risk of

pregnancy for young women and given them the independence to control their own fertility. Some researchers have also hypothesized that the legalization of abortion in 1973 encouraged more women to be sexually active prior to marriage by giving them a “backup” if they did become pregnant as a result of premarital intercourse.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1--Percent of never married girls ages 15-19 living in metropolitan areas experiencing sexual intercourse, 1971-1989\*

|      | 15   | 16   | 17   | 18   | 19   | Total |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1971 | 14.4 | 20.9 | 26.1 | 39.7 | 46.4 | 29.50 |
| 1976 | 18.6 | 28.9 | 42.9 | 51.4 | 59.5 | 40.26 |
| 1979 | 22.5 | 37.8 | 48.5 | 56.9 | 69.0 | 46.94 |
| 1982 | 17.8 | 28.1 | 41.0 | 52.7 | 61.7 | 40.26 |
| 1988 | 27.0 | 34.0 | 52.0 | 70.0 | 78.0 | 54.00 |

\*Sources: M. Zelnik and J.F. Kantner, “Sexual activity, contraceptive use and pregnancy among metropolitan-area teenagers: 1971-1979,” Family Planning Perspectives, 12 (Sept/Oct. ):1980.  
and  
Ned Zeman, “The New Rules of Courtship,” Newsweek (Special Edition: the New Teens), Summer/Fall, 1990, 27.

The increasing prominence of sexual promiscuity in the American mass media, especially television, has also been blamed by some as a catalyst for the early onset of sexual behavior among adolescents. While some theorists maintain that changes found in literature and media over time reflect external changes in society, societal norms and values, others support the theory that mass media and literature confirm and strengthen existing cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs, thus shaping societal norms and values.<sup>13</sup>

While the impact of mass media is difficult to assess, the values presented there may similarly indicate something about what is believed, or assumed to be believed, about sex in contemporary American society.<sup>14</sup> Historically, the mass media, comprising radio, television, movies, and large-circulation magazines and newspapers, have unquestionably both influenced and threatened many people’s attitudes toward sex:<sup>15</sup>

Among the most conspicuous changes in U.S. society over the past two decades has

been the content and visibility of the media (print, radio, television, movies, etc.). The extensive exposure of the American public to the media and the greater liberality of programming and advertising since the 1960s have been documented elsewhere. Less well-documented, however, are whether and to what extent these changes in media exposure and content have affected changing patterns of adolescent sexual and fertility behavior, whether they simply reflect more pervasive changes in values, attitudes, and behavior that have become accepted throughout society, or both. This issue is difficult to study empirically, and very little relevant research has been done. Several investigators have conducted content analyses of TV programming and have documented the amount of time children and adolescents spend viewing, yet none has convincingly linked program content and exposure to adolescent sexual attitudes and behavior. Such research is needed to understand how the choices of adolescents of different ages, genders, races, and other background characteristics concerning sexual activity, contraception, pregnancy, and pregnancy resolution are influenced by what they see and hear in the media. It is also needed to begin to identify strategies for using the media to promote more responsible sexual, contraceptive, and fertility behavior among teenagers.<sup>16</sup>

It is with this perceived influential power of media in mind that this study examines a selection of large-circulation magazines which have young unmarried women as their target audience, as a potential source of sexual information for young unmarried women.

## NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>Robert R. Bell, Premarital Sex in a Changing Society (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), 80.

<sup>2</sup>Sandra L. Hanson, David E. Myers, and Alan L. Ginsberg, "The Role of Responsibility and Knowledge in Reducing Teenage Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (May 1987): 248.

<sup>3</sup>"All About Eve: Kinsey Reports on American Women," Newsweek, 24 August 1953, 68.

<sup>4</sup>Bell, 98.

<sup>5</sup>"All About Eve," 68.

<sup>6</sup>Ira L. Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards in America (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), 110.

<sup>7</sup>"All About Eve," 68.

<sup>8</sup>"5,940 Women," Time, 24 August 1953, 58.

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Marital Status of Women (in thousands), 1971-1988.

<sup>10</sup>Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Supplement) August 26, 1991, pg. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Melvin Zelnik and John Kantner, "Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan-Area Teenagers: 1971-1979," Family Planning Perspectives, 12 (Sept./Oct. 1980): 231.

<sup>12</sup>Catherine S. Chilman, Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society (Bethesda, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978), 181.

<sup>13</sup>L. Ann Geise, "The Female Role in Middle Class Women's Magazines from 1955 to 1976: A Content Analysis of Nonfiction Selections," Sex Roles, 5 (1979): 52.

<sup>14</sup>Bell, 48.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Cheryl D. Hayes, ed., Risking the Future, vol. 1, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1987) 249.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the premarital sexual attitudes and behaviors of young women, along with studies on how women are presented in and use the media, magazines in particular, form the backdrop for this study. Such literature provides the historical and social perspectives against which to compare possible trends in the content of the magazines.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of Kinsey's Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, Princeton University researcher Hadley Cantril criticized Kinsey's lack of attention to the emotions and responsibilities that accompany the physical side of sexual activity:

The authors have made bold and important beginnings in their two published books. If in their further studies they can shed light on the significance of the sexual behavior of men and women as human beings endowed with the capacity to experience love, devotion, sacrifice, choice, responsibility, guilt, anxiety, and frustration rather than as males and females having erotic experiences through petting, masturbating, homosexuality, or coitus, then they will truly be on their way to contributions of even greater social and scientific importance."<sup>1</sup>

A decade after publication of Kinsey's report came the work of Ira Reiss. Like Kinsey, Reiss addressed the concept of virginity and the paradoxical idea of a "promiscuous virgin" who, though technically a virgin because she has not participated in intercourse, "is also a sexually experienced female."<sup>2</sup>

But Reiss criticized prior research which paid much attention to sexual behavior, yet neglected consideration of sexual standards.<sup>3</sup> While the major emphasis of Kinsey's study was on the physical aspects of sexual behavior, Reiss found psychological and attitudinal factors largely missing. So, unlike Kinsey, Reiss's research considered the role of emotions and other psychological factors in the premarital sexual behavior of young adults. Reiss distinguished between two basic types of sexual behavior, "body centered" or

“unaffectionate” intercourse which accents only the physical aspects of the act, and “person centered” or “affectionate” intercourse which emphasizes the emotions and feelings of the particular person with whom the sexual act is being performed.<sup>4</sup>

Like Reiss, Chilman in 1978 found it inappropriate that most adolescent sexual research concentrated on specific sexual activities significantly more often than it did the emotional aspects of sexuality:

Heterosexual behaviors and attitudes during adolescence usually have been researched and discussed in specific sexual terms. Research generally has referred to such sex activities as kissing and hugging, light and heavy petting, and intercourse ... It would be more appropriate to think of premarital sexual attitudes and behaviors as those that encompass the development of adolescents in their interests and abilities to form intimate, interpersonal social, psychological, and physical relationships, as they move from their families of origin to families they may form in the future. However, the nature of the available research requires an overemphasis on specific sexual subjects.<sup>5</sup>

This concern over the lack of attention to emotional and psychological aspects of sex stems from an apparent gap between what young women know about sex and its consequences, and their actual sexual behavior. Some researchers maintain that their findings “do not support contentions that the knowledge of sex and birth control gained through sex education ... leads to greater sexual activity and thus more teenage pregnancies and births,” but that such increases in activity occur in spite of increased education.<sup>6</sup> A 1984 study of teenage girls’ sexual decision-making behavior by Blum and Resnick found that the number of pregnancies among teenage girls rose 13 percent between 1974 and 1984, and only a third of sexually active teenagers consistently used birth control, even though knowledge of contraception, adoption and abortion had improved. As the authors observed, “In so many instances it’s heartbreaking—they have the knowledge, the awareness and the understanding, but somehow it doesn’t apply to them.”<sup>7</sup>

This gap between knowledge and behavior has become a major challenge facing sex educators. While sex education is a very important part of the sexual decision-making

process, Resnick emphasized it must be “more than just an organ recital.”<sup>8</sup> In 1987, Hanson et al. made a distinction between the effectiveness of knowledge of specific sexual facts versus support of responsible attitudes in reducing the rate of out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies. The researchers observed that, “Explanations for early births among unwed women often allude to a lack of factual knowledge about sex and birth control,” but added that, “Without a complementary and supportive set of attitudes that stress the notion of responsibility, knowledge about sex and birth control is not likely to affect behavior.”<sup>9</sup> A 1970 survey of readers of Seventeen magazine revealed that young women did in fact have a desire for more “ethical and emotional guidance in handling a part of their lives that is central to their well-being and to their development into happy, healthy, responsible women.”

Though the poll shows that you are curious about sex techniques and gratification, you seem even more concerned with ‘the real meaning of sex,’ ‘the connection between our biological functions and our emotions,’ and ‘the causes and consequences of premarital sex.’ Even when you ask for the hard facts about birth control, it is apparently not in order to be free to run wild but in order not to be irresponsible ... Even more than concrete facts, you want to learn about ‘the meaning of sex in and out of marriage’ and ‘the relationship between sex and love.’<sup>10</sup>

According to the findings:

Most girls consider sex connected with deep emotional feelings and bound up with important human values. They feel that these matters should be a part of their sex education. Indeed, 96 percent of them said, in reply to another question, that sex education in schools should include the psychological and emotional aspects of sex—an indication of their liberation from traditional American puritanism, which pointedly avoided any talk that made sex sound pleasurable and, instead, dealt with it in terms of cold physiology.<sup>11</sup>

Onyehalu called for a comprehensive sex education program “in the turbulent second decade of the human life cycle” that would attempt to provide accurate scientific information about a) the physiology of human reproduction, b) the common venereal diseases, c) various contraceptive devices pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each, and d) appropriate sex roles for male and female adolescents.<sup>12</sup> Others also acknowledged the

importance of factual sexual information, but considered it inadequate in itself and not likely to affect behavior “without a complementary and supportive set of attitudes that stress the notion of responsibility.”<sup>13</sup>

A worthwhile program of sex education, Onyehalu said, should also stress the hazards of irresponsible activity, and suspend the attitude that sex education merely serves to promote adolescent promiscuity and premature sexual involvement. Onyehalu suggested “A realistic approach would be to accept the fact that if youth necessarily seek information about human procreation, such information should be supplied by competent, knowledgeable persons.”<sup>14</sup>

### / Sources of Sex Information /

In 1906, sex educator E. Keyes contemplated the potential demythologization of sex he thought might occur if “education upon sexual matters was offered to youth,” saying:

Perhaps it is better so, I know not. But it is less lovely, and life will be much less worth living when all the transformation shall have been accomplished. But, as I said before, this condition of things is in the air and we must face it and make the best of it. Knowledge comes to children and to our youth and that it should be accurate and not distorted knowledge is most desirable.<sup>15</sup>

But as members of a society tangled in conflicting sexual messages, young people often get caught in the cross-fire, unsure whether to “just say no” or to “just do it.”

Premarital sex relations ... are widely believed to be bad, silly and pointless; *but* thoroughly enjoyable; *but* normal and natural; *but* necessary for healthful living; *but* smart, gay, and sophisticated; *but* romantically permissible and thrilling; *but* adventurous and exciting; *but* inevitable in this all-too-fleshy world.<sup>16</sup>

“Our society presents sexuality as simultaneously good and bad,” concluded a 1985 study. “For example, sexual attractiveness is highly valued, and the media exploit sexual attractiveness. But actual sexual interaction by an unmarried individual is not accepted by many individuals.”<sup>17</sup> “Sexually schizoid” is what another researcher dubbed this

contradictory environment in which young adults are forced to make important personal decisions:<sup>18</sup>

The result is a tug and pull on the individual and especially on the girl as to what is “right” in the area of sexual intimacy ... the young woman is pulled in two directions at the same time, one way by residual Victorianism and leftover Puritan ideals, the

other way by contemporary hedonism and the emphasis on the healthful fulfillment of love.<sup>19</sup>

Table 2--Degree of accuracy of initial sexual information.\*

| Topic          | Highly Accurate | Accurate | Distorted | Highly Distorted |
|----------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|------------------|
| Abortion       | 45.7%           | 48.9%    | 5.0%      | 0.4%             |
| Conception     | 50.5            | 33.1     | 8.7       | 7.7              |
| Contraception  | 19.8            | 47.0     | 30.1      | 3.1              |
| Ejaculation    | 20.1            | 47.1     | 27.4      | 5.4              |
| Homosexuality  | 26.1            | 50.0     | 20.1      | 3.8              |
| Intercourse    | 41.0            | 41.5     | 12.8      | 4.7              |
| Masturbation   | 20.9            | 56.3     | 19.4      | 3.4              |
| Menstruation   | 49.4            | 35.1     | 7.9       | 7.6              |
| Petting        | 30.2            | 50.3     | 15.8      | 3.7              |
| Prostitution   | 30.6            | 54.3     | 7.5       | 7.6              |
| Seminal Emiss. | 20.8            | 45.1     | 25.7      | 8.4              |
| V.D.           | 36.6            | 43.7     | 12.0      | 7.7              |

n=1,152 subjects

\*source: Hershel D. Thornburg, “Adolescent Sources of Information on Sex,” The Journal of School Health 51(April 1981) : 276.

Amidst this tug and pull, just where do young women turn for sexual information?

In a review of studies on sources of adolescents’ sexual information, Hudson found peers to be the source cited most often by women ages eighteen to twenty-one. Ironically, the sexual concepts understood least accurately by young women were also those learned primarily from peers.

Tables 2 and 3 show results from a study of 1,152 high school students grades nine through twelve, in which Thornburg found that out of twelve sexual terms, those understood least accurately were contraception and ejaculation, and first information about

both topics was learned primarily from peers. One-third of the respondents said the initial information they received concerning contraception was either distorted, or highly distorted. Thornburg found the results “especially problematic in light of the high incidence of adolescent sexual intercourse and pregnancy.”<sup>20</sup> And a 1989 report on the health of America’s youth found 54 percent of adolescents surveyed would talk first to a friend if they thought they had an STD.<sup>21</sup>

Table 3--Sources of first sex information\*

|                | Mother | Father | Peers | Lit.  | School | Minister | Physician | Experience |
|----------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Abortion       | 21.5%  | 1.0%   | 20.0% | 32.0% | 23.7%  | 1.0%     | .3%       | .5%        |
| Conception     | 49.4   | 1.2    | 27.4  | 3.2   | 16.4   | .9       | .7        | .8         |
| Contracept.    | 13.1   | 2.4    | 42.8  | 23.8  | 16.7   | .0       | .2        | 1.0        |
| Ejaculation    | 8.9    | 2.6    | 38.9  | 22.1  | 20.7   | .7       | .9        | 5.2        |
| Homosexu.      | 7.5    | 4.3    | 50.6  | 19.4  | 16.1   | .0       | .0        | 2.1        |
| Intercourse    | 23.8   | 3.9    | 39.7  | 15.2  | 7.6    | 1.0      | 1.3       | 7.5        |
| Masturbation   | 11.1   | 1.3    | 36.3  | 25.0  | 17.5   | .0       | .8        | 8.0        |
| Menstruation   | 41.5   | 1.1    | 21.5  | 11.2  | 15.7   | .7       | .7        | 7.6        |
| Petting        | 4.5    | 2.2    | 59.7  | 10.0  | 9.0    | .2       | .4        | 14.0       |
| Prostitution   | 7.5    | 1.0    | 49.7  | 26.8  | 11.7   | 1.0      | .3        | 2.0        |
| Seminal Emiss. | 4.2    | 1.4    | 35.2  | 37.4  | 21.1   | .0       | .0        | .7         |
| V.D.           | 9.4    | 2.1    | 28.2  | 21.2  | 36.8   | .0       | 1.2       | 1.1        |
| Totals         | 17.4%  | 2.2    | 37.1  | 21.9  | 15.2   | .5       | .3        | 5.4        |

n=1152 subjects, \*source: same as above.

Studies by Onyehalu and Kisker agreed that “during adolescence<sup>\*</sup> most information about sex comes from the peer group and often brings with it many misconceptions.”<sup>22</sup> As one Chicago woman said, “Your friends don’t always know what’s right. Sometimes they don’t even have sex and they think they know it all. They think they can tell you everything, you know. ‘Oh, you won’t get pregnant standing up.’ You think you know so much when you are younger.”<sup>23</sup>

Young adults in Kisker’s focus group study claimed that they were either too embarrassed or too scared to ask their parents questions about sex or contraception. Some

feared initiating such discussion would “get them into trouble” by revealing that they had become sexually active. Kisker pointed out, that the reluctance to talk about such topics was mutual in many cases, and by the time some parents mustered the courage to initiate discussions about sex and contraception, their efforts came after their child had already become sexually active.<sup>24</sup> Such timidity and procrastination on the part of adults,

Onyehalu said, is not atypical:

It is not only tempting but customary for the society to adopt one of two attitudes, both of which are negative and unsatisfactory, toward adolescents' sexuality. The first is the apparently utopian attitude that the problem does not exist. The second is one in which it is admitted that the problem exists but it is hoped that youths will somehow magically resolve it in an acceptable manner by themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Onyehalu pointed to the decline of the home as a mediator of adolescents' sexual behavior, and said, “The traditional social cohesion as well as time-honored social institutions such as the extended family system which hitherto produced lasting checks and balances on human conduct, are now of questionable effectiveness.”<sup>26</sup> A shift toward “outside information sources” such as community educational services and school systems, and away from parents and peers was suggested by Hudson as a way to get correct information about human sexuality “to as large a part of the teenage population as possible,” since information received from peers as well as parents may be insufficient or inaccurate.<sup>27</sup> “This change in approach to outside information sources,” said Hudson, “would be in line with the recent view that adolescents no longer consider parents their major source of sexual information.”<sup>28</sup>

According to a 1970 Seventeen magazine survey, 82 percent of women readers were in fact learning about sex from their mothers. Books and magazines were the second most common source of sexual information reported, with 79 percent of respondents saying printed media were responsible for at least part of their sexual education. Girl friends and teachers ranked third and fourth respectively as sources of sexual information. But while

mothers and teachers were considered the most respected and reliable sources, they were not entirely without flaw, and teenagers were wary of information received from books, magazines and peers. The magazine's editors observed that:

All in all, it seems that most of you are very doubtful of the value of sex information gleaned from pop culture—published or filmed—or from your peers of either sex. Moreover, it would appear that the sources you do trust are either helping very little (fathers, doctors) or leaving large gaps in sex education (mothers, teachers).<sup>29</sup>

As the “time-honored social institutions” were failing as sources of sexual information for many young people, Onychalu said mass media had become an increasingly popular alternative information source. The pervasive role of media in American culture was too powerful an influence to deny, he said, adding that if the destructive sexual images spread by some media were not countered by more constructive ones, young people would inevitably form misconceptions about sexual behavior based on misinformation:

The current role of technology in disseminating pornography through movies, television and the press [cannot] be convincingly denied or ignored. It is against the background of these new developments of the human social order and the need and desire of youth to conform to peer standards even in sexual matters, that the greater experimentation by contemporary adolescents with sexuality must be critically and objectively reassessed. The problem is further compounded by the fact that unfortunately, there is no corresponding effort by the mass media to distribute informative scientific literature which focuses on the biological facts of human reproduction and mental hygiene. The result is that youths' sexual knowledge and actions are based, at best, on potentially dangerous half truths and misconceptions.<sup>30</sup>

Among women surveyed by Hudson, subjects cited television as an available media source of sexual information more often than magazines or movies. However, as Table 4 shows, more subjects also indicated they had actually acquired sexual information from magazines than from television or movies. After peers, Davis and Harris found adolescents cited school, books and magazines, and parents most frequently as sources of sexual information.<sup>31</sup>

Hayes criticized television for its lack of information about contraception, which she

said "is almost never mentioned or referred to, and the negative consequences of an unintended pregnancy are rarely portrayed."<sup>32</sup> She said broadcasters' neglect of advertising for nonprescription contraceptives did nothing to counteract the sexual misinformation young women were receiving from other sources, and that a potentially valuable source of information was not being utilized:<sup>33</sup>

Historically, television networks and radio stations have been resistant to advertising contraceptive methods. Yet studies of factors affecting attitudes and contraceptive behavior in European countries suggest that contraceptive advertising may be one means of increasing teenagers' awareness of contraceptive methods and making them feel that these methods are accessible. There is no evidence to suggest that advertising alone will directly alter behavior; however, the potential of the media through programming and advertising to influence teenagers' attitudes about desirable models for behavior, including sexuality, is significant.<sup>34</sup>

Table 4--Media sources of sexual information for the non-pregnant (np) and unwanted pregnant (up) groups.\*

| Sources    | Groups          | Available | <u>Acquired</u> |    | %  |
|------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|----|----|
|            |                 |           | yes             | no |    |
| Television | np <sup>a</sup> | 26        | 23              | 3  | 86 |
|            | up <sup>b</sup> | 30        | 22              | 8  | 73 |
| Books      | np              | 25        | 23              | 2  | 92 |
|            | up              | 30        | 23              | 7  | 77 |
| Magazines  | np              | 23        | 20              | 3  | 87 |
|            | up              | 27        | 23              | 4  | 85 |
| Movies     | np              | 20        | 15              | 5  | 75 |
|            | up              | 29        | 21              | 8  | 72 |

<sup>a</sup>34 subjects

<sup>b</sup>35 subjects

\*source: Ruth A. Hudson, "Sexual Knowledge, Attitudes and Sources of Information Among Adolescents," (M.A. thesis, Texas Women's University, 1985), 107.

### Contraception

Prior to the development and wide availability of medically prescribed methods of contraception, condoms were the most often used contraceptive among many American men and women.<sup>35</sup> But by the mid-60s, the new “intercourse independent” contraceptives were being used by women. The contraceptive pill and the IUD, for the first time in history, made it possible for women to control their own fertility.<sup>36</sup>

But in 1971, a study conducted by Zelnik and Kantner provided data concerning contraceptive practices of sexually active adolescent women aged fifteen to nineteen, and found a remarkably high percentage of young women eschewed the use of contraceptives for up to a year after the initiation of sexual activity. A later, similar study examined sexual activity, contraceptive use and pregnancy among young women between 1971 and 1979, and found continued neglect of birth control use. As one journalist reported in 1980, “For all their carnal knowledge ... teenagers are surprisingly ignorant about the hazards of freebooting sex. Many girls find it less troubling to get into bed with a boy than to prepare for the act with a contraceptive.”<sup>37</sup>

Results from a nationwide survey conducted in 1971 by Zelnik, Kantner and Shah showed that four-fifths of sexually experienced never-married women aged fifteen to nineteen had engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse. Furthermore, about three in ten of those who reported premarital sexual experience had become pregnant out of wedlock.<sup>38</sup>

In their research, Zelnik and Kantner found that many women who understood the risks of becoming pregnant through unprotected intercourse practiced unprotected sex anyway. That they “didn’t expect to have intercourse” was the dominant reason for the not using contraception. Apparently, if she does not expect to have intercourse, a young woman is not likely to be prepared with contraception because, “If you come prepared, it appears that you’re easy and available.”<sup>39</sup>

Among other reasons given by respondents, more than half attributed their

unprotected intercourse to the belief that there was no risk of pregnancy if they had intercourse during a time of the month when they thought they were unlikely to conceive, even though few were certain when their infertile time was.<sup>40</sup> Difficulties in obtaining contraception, lack of knowledge about available methods, the belief that young age and infrequent sexual activity made pregnancy improbable and the desire to become pregnant were also cited as reasons for contraceptive nonuse among adolescents. About one-quarter of the teenagers surveyed admitted having a hedonistic objection to contraception, saying it interfered with the pleasure, spontaneity or convenience of sex, and a few reported moral or medical objections to contraception.<sup>41</sup>

In light of their findings, the authors concluded “that regular contraception is not easy to establish when sex is episodic, as it tends to be among teenagers, and when the act of planning in such matters is in conflict with the high valuation placed on spontaneity in sexual encounters.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1981, Zelnik and Kantner again found a marked lack of regular contraceptive use among sexually active teenagers, and again cited the low frequency and sporadic nature of intercourse among never-married women as factors contributing to the high levels of unprotected intercourse.<sup>43</sup> Miller (1980) made a similar observation in his study of sexual and contraceptive behavior of unmarried women aged seventeen to twenty-six. After first intercourse, Miller found that:

Frequently, their second intercourse was delayed weeks or months or took place with an entirely different partner ... In most cases ... intercourse continued on a sporadic basis for the first several months and years of these women's sexual careers.<sup>44</sup>

The study explained that the regularity of sex in a married relationship provides the stable context needed for making decisions regarding regular contraceptive use,<sup>45</sup> but that the sexual patterns of young women make them poor candidates for currently available contraceptive methods, especially medical methods, that “might not be the most suitable for

young unmarried couples, unlike married couples for whom regular sex is a reasonable assumption."<sup>46</sup>

Choice of contraceptive methods by never married women aged eighteen to forty-four were ranked by Bachrach (1982) (see Table 5) who found that never married women aged fifteen to nineteen relied very heavily on the pill (62 percent), less so on the condom (22 percent), and very little on other methods.

Table 5--Percentage distribution of never married contraceptive users aged 15-44 by contraceptive method\*, 1982.

|           | steril. | pill | IUD  | diaph. | condom | other <sup>†</sup> | all methods |
|-----------|---------|------|------|--------|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| All women | 5.0     | 53.2 | 5.5  | 13.5   | 11.7   | 11.1               | 100.0       |
| 15-19     | 0.4     | 62.3 | 0.9  | 6.4    | 22.2   | 7.8                | 100.0       |
| 20-24     | 3.8     | 56.1 | 4.9  | 13.8   | 8.3    | 13.0               | 100.0       |
| 25-44     | 10.9    | 41.1 | 10.3 | 19.7   | 6.2    | 11.8               | 100.0       |

\*source: Christine A. Bachrach, "Contraceptive Practice Among American Women, 1973-1982," Family Planning Perspectives 16( Nov./Dec. 1984): 253.

<sup>†</sup>includes foam, periodic abstinence, withdrawal, douche, suppositories and other methods.

Table 6--Percentage distribution of women aged 15-19 who ever used a contraceptive method, by most recent method used, 1979 and 1976\*

|      | pill | IUD | diaph. | condom | foam | douche | withdraw | rhythm | total |
|------|------|-----|--------|--------|------|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1976 | 47.8 | 3.2 | .9     | 22.9   | 3.8  | 2.8    | 14.6     | 3.8    | 100.0 |
| 1979 | 40.6 | 2.0 | 3.5    | 23.3   | 3.9  | 2.1    | 18.8     | 5.8    | 100.0 |

\*source: M. Zelnik and J.M. Kantner, "Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan-area Teenagers: 1971-1979," Family Planning Perspectives 12 (Sept/Oct, 1980): 230-237.

Among older contraceptive users (aged twenty-five to forty-four), 41 percent used the pill, 20 percent relied on the diaphragm, 11 percent depended on sterilization, 10 percent on the IUD and 6 percent on condoms.<sup>47</sup> Earlier findings by Zelnik and Kantner (see Table

6) showed an increase in pill use among unmarried teenage women after 1979, with 47.8 percent of unmarried women aged fifteen to nineteen in 1976, and 40.6 percent in 1979 reporting the pill as their most recently used method of contraception, followed by condom and withdrawal.<sup>48</sup>

A decline in the condom's popularity after the advent of the pill was noted by Scales and Beckstein.<sup>49</sup> The pill, they said, caused many to regard birth control as a "women's issue," and the condom fell out of fashion. In 1987, however, Hayes described an increased promotion of condom use by family planning providers and public health officials concerned about pregnancy prevention and the reproductive health of adolescents. Hayes cited two factors that may have been especially relevant to the renewed interest in condom use by teenagers:

(1) recognition that the vulnerable period between first intercourse and first use of prescription contraception methods by adolescent girls is frequently as long as a year and (2) concern about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, especially genital herpes and more recently the acquired immune deficiency virus.<sup>50</sup>

Hayes said that, given the current contraceptive technology, the pill and the condom are the most promising methods for adolescents, whose menstrual cycles may be irregular and whose patterns of sexual activity may be sporadic, and that minor side effects from pill use and condom failure rates are significantly smaller risks than those associated with unintended pregnancy and childbirth.

Hayes pointed out, however, that adolescents are frequently deterred from use of both the pill and condom "by misunderstandings about their unintended consequences, including exaggerations of the health risks and unpleasant side effects associated with the pill and of the diminution of pleasure from condom use."<sup>51</sup>

### Pregnancy

Birth rates among unmarried women aged fifteen to thirty-four rose from 152.5 per

thousand births in 1971, to 234.9 per thousand births in 1989. Birth rates were consistently highest among women aged eighteen to twenty-four years, with nearly 120 births per thousand in 1989.<sup>52</sup> As was mentioned earlier, the rise in out-of-wedlock pregnancies and inconsistent use of birth control among teenage women continues despite teenage girls' improved knowledge about contraceptives, adoption and abortion , and availability of more sex education and birth control options than ever before.

Statistics from 1990 showed that one out of ten girls aged fifteen to nineteen become pregnant every year, that five out of six of those pregnancies are unintended, and that about 40 percent of them end in abortion. Half of teenage mothers never complete high school. Many of the dropouts end up on welfare. Girls who have babies at fifteen or sixteen are likely to have at least one other child before they are twenty. And given the stresses on their families, many of these children are at risk of being abused or ending up in foster care.<sup>53</sup>

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STDs have turned sex into a medical minefield. As the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed in the early 1980s, the free-wheeling sex of the "swinging Seventies" gave way to "safe sex" in the "age of AIDS." Young womens' sexual decisions have become less a matter of morality, and more a matter of life and death.

The exact prevalence of STDs is difficult to assess because many carriers have no symptoms. However, it is estimated that each year 2.5 million teenagers are infected with an STD. Furthermore, over the next several years, today's teens will be entering the highest risk group (ages twenty to twenty-nine) for all types of STDs, and the women in the age groups targeted by the magazines in this study are also the highest risk groups for syphilis and gonorrhea.<sup>54</sup>

In 1979, eleven "Objectives for the Nation" were established to address STDs. Of the

eleven objectives, five involved national priority areas: syphilis, gonorrhea, gonococcal pelvic inflammatory disease, provider proficiency, and student awareness. When progress toward these objectives was evaluated through 1988 by the Centers for Disease Control, two were deemed “unlikely to be met,” one of which was the objective that, “By 1990, every junior and senior high school student in the United States should be receiving accurate, timely education about sexually transmitted diseases.” According to unpublished CDC data, only 77 percent of teenagers surveyed in 1988 reported receiving STD education by age eighteen. In addition, awareness by students of STD symptoms, signs and approaches to prevention was considered “low.” The report also said in 1988 that a larger percentage of teenagers were initiating sexual intercourse at younger ages than in 1982, despite the emergence of “a new sexually transmitted agent, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV),” which had become a major contributor to STDs after the objectives were developed.<sup>55</sup>

The results of a 1989 National Adolescent Student Health Survey revealed that many students were still unsure about how to avoid STDs, how to identify common signs of STDs, and how and where to seek treatment for STDs. According to the survey’s findings, three out of every ten students did not know that most people get STDs by having sex. Two out of three students were not sure or believed that washing after sex is effective in avoiding STDs. More than half of the students did not know that taking birth control pills is ineffective in avoiding STDs, and one-quarter of them did not know that using condoms is effective in avoiding STDs. One-third did not know that a sore on the sex organs is a common early sign of STD. More than four out of ten students did not know that abnormal discharge from sex organs or pain during urination are common early signs of STD or that it is harmful to wait to see if the signs of STD go away on their own before seeking treatment. Approximately two-thirds of teenagers did not know that it is harmful to take medicine only until the signs of an STD go away. About three-fourths of the students were either unsure or mistakenly believed that the Public Health Department must inform parents about STD in patients under age eighteen.

Nearly eight out of ten said they were either unsure or mistakenly believed that most clinics must have parental permission to treat patients under eighteen for STDs, and 39 percent said they would not know where to go for medical care if they thought they had an STD.<sup>56</sup>

In general, the survey found students were better informed about AIDS than other STDs, which was attributed to the intensive informational campaigns at the national, state and local levels to combat the spread of the disease, and to the current emphasis on AIDS education and the corresponding lack of instruction about other STDs in many school districts. Despite the heightened awareness about AIDS, however, students still did not seem to understand basic concepts about communicable diseases, which apply to AIDS as well as other STDs. This final point was echoed in Ms. magazine in 1991:

While public awareness of sexually transmitted disease (STD) has focused on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in recent years, many other STDs rage virtually unnoticed. This attention has grave implications for women, who are infected with STDs more readily than men, yet are harder to diagnose. STDs can lead to a higher risk of cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, ectopic pregnancy, increased risk of infection with HIV, the infection of fetuses and newborns, and fetal death.

The World Health Organization estimates that at least 250 million new STD cases appear each year ... Safe-sex education has not been effective enough or STDs would not be spreading so fast.<sup>57</sup>

### Women and Magazines

In addition to research on adolescent sexual behavior, this study examined literature on how young women use the information they find in magazines, and how magazine content has related to social trends.

A 1982 study by Prisco showed how portrayal of women's roles in Mademoiselle magazine reflected not only changes in 1970s fashion trends, but more significant social changes as well. The study relied on the theory that major fashion magazines played a significant part in the socialization of women to discover "acceptable" societal roles.

Through content analysis, Prisco found Mademoiselle magazine to be an accurate chronicle of women and their society during the 1970s. By tracing the changing social role of women in a popular magazine, Prisco observed that by openly discussing certain “drives,” (i.e. ambitious, competitive, career-oriented goals), the magazines provided justification for certain behavior and thus “legitimated them for millions of women.”<sup>58</sup>

In an analysis of two other women’s magazines, Ladies’ Home Journal and Redbook, Geise found a marked increase in the number of articles related to sex and morality between 1955 and 1976. The belief that women were as interested and active in sexual activities as men, and that unmarried couples had sexual relationships or lived together, appeared in six items before 1967 and in thirty-one items in the next decade. Small increases in support were found for the belief that premarital sex was acceptable and that abortion was acceptable at least in certain instances.<sup>59</sup>

Another student of women’s roles in relation to contemporary culture as found in popular magazines is Newkirk, who examined the roles of women in the non-fiction articles of Mademoiselle, Ms. and Redbook between 1966 and 1974. Results of her study showed that changes in the three magazines, though gradual, did in fact reflect women’s changing roles in relation to changing social sentiment surrounding those roles.<sup>60</sup>

The ways in which women use information in magazines was studied by Sonenschein and Ross, who examined the sexual information available in the content of “romance” and “confession” magazines. While the content and audience demographics of romance magazines undoubtedly differ from those of traditional women’s magazines, the authors’ conclusion that “the analysis of these magazines can tell us a good deal concerning our cultural values about sex and gender roles” seems applicable to the more traditional magazines as well.<sup>61</sup> In the articles analyzed, the authors found a common theme that did not emphasize the story itself so much as the idea that the story contained valuable information to be conveyed to the reader.<sup>62</sup> Through analysis of reader response columns,

the authors found the magazines played a distinct role as a source of information and advice for women readers and concluded that:

The mass media serve a large number of people in this fashion, a kind of “lay referral system” that offers the authority of the printed word through the medium of an artifact that speaks the language of the readers.<sup>63</sup>

From their study, Sonenschein et al. showed how magazines could play a significant role in some women’s psychosexual development and socialization, and could conceivably be relied upon as sources of information on sexual topics.

Eskridge found “romantic/sexual interests” were the second most frequent subtopic of content, accounting for 29.6 percent of the total articles in her study of women’s magazines. Each magazine studied contained at least one article with a romantic/sexual primary theme, and Cosmopolitan and Seventeen contained the majority of such articles, with 48.1 and 29.6 percent of total content respectively.<sup>64</sup>

### History

An historical look at the content of women’s magazines is necessary to effectively analyze the content of contemporary magazines. Neither the time nor space constraints of this study will allow a complete historical portrait of women’s magazines, but it will allow a brief sketch with special attention to the historical role of women’s magazines as purveyors of sexual information. A glance back at the “pioneers” of women’s periodicals, their goals, achievements and legacy will provide the background and perspective necessary for understanding the contemporary periodicals in this study.

In discussion of early women’s magazines, three names come up noticeably more often than any others: Louis A. Godey, Edward W. Bok, and Helen Gurley Brown. Louis Godey was publisher of Godey’s Ladies Book, which had appeared in 1828 under the title, Ladies’ Magazine and set the stage for many of today’s women’s periodicals including

Ladies' Home Journal which appeared in 1883. Shortly after Godey's ceased publication in 1898, Edward W. Bok assumed editorship of the Journal, and by 1903 the magazine became the first women's magazine to reach a million in circulation following Bok's simple formula: men belonged in the business world, and women in the home.<sup>65</sup> Bok's philosophy would certainly be considered outdated and unpopular by today's standards, but in early 1900 it "probably expressed the opinions held by many, especially those reading the nation's magazines."<sup>66</sup>

In the January 1889 issue of the Journal, Bok published his first "Side Talk to Girls" advice column, which he wrote under the pseudonym "Ruth Ashmore." Bok began the column after he had "divined the fact that in thousands of cases the American Mother was not the confidante of her daughter, and reasoned if any inviting human personality could be created on the printed page that would supply this lamentable lack of family life, girls would flock to such a figure."<sup>67</sup> Implementing this belief, Bok, writing as Ruth Ashmore, advised girls to:

"Learn to say no. There is in that little word much that will protect you from evil tongues." He circumspectly warned his young readers not to give their photographs to every Tom, Dick and Harry. In February, "Ruth Ashmore" wrote about "The Girl Who Hints," the wearing of jewelry, neatness in dress, and when dancing is wrong. "It's all very well to say that there is no harm in dancing. There isn't. But there is harm in having about you, a sweet, pure girl, kept as much as possible from the wickedness of the world, the arm of a man who may be a profligate, and not possess the first instinct of a gentleman."<sup>68</sup>

In 1906, Bok went beyond jewelry, dancing and saying "no," and published an editorial on venereal disease. Despite protests from readers, cancelled subscriptions and threats from offended advertisers, Bok persisted and eventually gained support for his fight against VD. Despite opinions to the contrary, Bok insisted "that the time had come when women should learn the truth, and that, so far as it lay in his power, he intended to see that they did know,"<sup>69</sup> and "the Journal published article after article" at a time when such subjects were not openly discussed, especially among women.<sup>70</sup> As one historian

observed:

Though completely open discussion of venereal disease did not become common for perhaps another 25 years, the Ladies' Home Journal made the facts known, made a forbidden topic a possible subject of open and sensible discussion in the press, in schools and colleges. A woman's magazine was the first periodical to discuss sex frankly."<sup>71</sup>

Frank discussion of sex was alive and well in 1962 when Helen Gurley Brown published Sex and the Single Girl, a non-scientific celebration of being single, female, and sexual. The book introduced millions of women to a "new morality" where sex was "more than the act of coitus," and was completely in the woman's control to do with as she wished. According to Brown, sex was natural, and not sleeping with the man one might eventually marry was "complete lunacy:"

Perhaps you will reconsider the idea that sex without marriage is dirty. This is not a plea to get you into bed—your moral code is *your* business—but if you are already involved, you might remember that sex was here a long time before marriage. You inherited your proclivity for it. It isn't some random piece of mischief you dreamed up because you're a bad, wicked girl.<sup>72</sup>

Brown addressed her book to any young women who "may not marry, but who are not necessarily planning to join a nunnery,"<sup>73</sup> and helped to break a barrier that permitted many other sex-oriented books to follow.<sup>74</sup>

In 1965, three years after the publication of her book, Brown assumed editorship of Cosmopolitan. The magazine's circulation was dismal at the time, less than 800 thousand, and Cosmopolitan faced failure. But Brown had a new editorial formula in mind, and within a few years had revived Cosmopolitan by simply recognizing the needs of young women, married and single, and directing the magazine to them.<sup>75</sup> Said one observer:

Obviously, Brown has carved out the "Cosmo Girl" into a devoted client group for her messages, recommendations, and suggestions concerning daily living. And with a circulation approaching three million, death is no longer a threat around Cosmo's New York headquarters.<sup>76</sup>

While womens' "daily living" was once confined to the home, the kitchen and the

children, over time it expanded to include careers, politics and social issues, and sexuality. In 1970, Ladies' Home Journal editor John Mack Carter's office was invaded by more than one hundred women's liberation advocates, demanding his resignation and calling for magazine space to convey their views to the public. They demanded "an immediate stop to the publication of articles that are irrelevant, unstimulating and demeaning to the women of America."<sup>77</sup> As a result of the confrontation Carter granted permission for the women to use eight pages in the following August edition of the magazine to express the views of the feminist movement. Three years later Lenore Hershey was editor of the Journal, and promised to "amplify, enlarge and illuminate" the lives of readers, and to provide guidance and help in all aspects of life, "from the world of the home to the world of business to the wider world of ideas and values."<sup>78</sup>

In 1972, the first nationwide edition of Ms. magazine appeared and the two-month supply of magazines (300 thousand copies) sold out in eight days.<sup>79</sup> Publisher Pat Carbine's goal was "to make Ms. a necessity for readers rather than a luxury." Even McCall's magazine, in early 1971, departed from its traditional food, cooking, fashion and beauty topics and featured articles on "Your Legal Rights as a Woman," and "Sexual Problems of Single Women."<sup>80</sup>

In May 1973, a magazine for teenage women titled New Ingenue was published by Twenty First Century Communications to replace Ingenue, which had been previously published by the Dell Publishing Corporation. The purpose of the revamped magazine was to "present new trends in young women's reading material, to stimulate their thinking and give them a magazine that is relevant to their changing needs."<sup>81</sup> Whereas Ingenue had sought "general topical articles treated with an analytical ... approach," New Ingenue was more avant-garde, soliciting articles about "current trends in activities, attitudes, interests and achievements of teenagers, their lifestyles and relationships. Topics included problems and solutions dealing with personal identity, health, drugs, and sex."<sup>82</sup>

Ironically, it was a particularly frank article on teenage sex published under the old editorship in one of the final issues of Ingenue that caused a storm of protest and angry parental letters that killed New Ingenue. Despite its ambitious goals, New Ingenue issued its last monthly copy in April, 1975, less than two years after the magazine began.<sup>83</sup> A form letter printed in the final issue informed subscribers about the unfavorably received sex article published under the previous management that had caused to the magazine's demise.<sup>84</sup>

Ironically, while parents protested sexual content in New Ingenue, readers of Seventeen clamored for more. In its July, 1970 issue, Seventeen published results from a "Special Sex Education Survey" that told readers "Here's how you currently learn about sex and how you'd *like* to learn about it." The survey was based on fifteen hundred questionnaires completed by thirteen to nineteen-year-old readers of Seventeen, and assessed readers' attitudes about sex and sex education.

The editors of Seventeen seemed surprised at the responses elicited by their survey. "Nearly all of you now see sex as a decent, healthy activity and sexual pleasure as normal and good, and feel that the subject can be taught frankly and freely in the classroom," the article said. Teens' responses showed they were even willing to discuss such nefarious subjects as masturbation or sexual perversions, "astonishing as it may seem to adults."<sup>85</sup>

The editors of the magazine vowed to take their readers' interests to heart, and promised "Since so many readers have expressed a strong interest in such subjects as premarital ethics and birth control, future issues of Seventeen will cover these themes in greater detail."<sup>86</sup>

Whether there was an actual change in sexual content would require a content analysis of Seventeen in years prior to 1970. But regardless of whether the magazine expanded its coverage of sexual topics, the potential consequences of doing so were tempered by something Seventeen had that New Ingenue did not: a strong reputation to fall back on.

Since it was first published in 1944, the magazine has been a perennial favorite among young women who generally begin reading it at age thirteen, and continue reading it well into their college years.<sup>87</sup> Its appeal to generation after generation is a testimony to the Seventeen's ability to adapt to the changing needs of its readers. In 1971, the magazine was subtitled "young America's favorite magazine," and as such, according to one of the magazine's editorial assistants, Seventeen could "afford an occasional controversial article now and then, whether on sex, drugs, politics or even lesbianism."<sup>88</sup>

Mademoiselle magazine is aimed at college-educated, unmarried working women aged eighteen to thirty-four, and is positioned roughly between Seventeen and Cosmopolitan in age-appeal. According to the magazine's editors, the nonfiction selections in Mademoiselle are "of interest to the intelligent young woman, including personal relationships, health, careers, trends, and current social problems."<sup>89</sup> As Taft observed, since its founding in 1935, Mademoiselle has been "ahead of the times" in some areas, "such as a series on the 'new morality' in the 1960s when such topics were not too generally discussed in the open."<sup>90</sup>

Prisco's analysis of Mademoiselle looked at "women's issues" and "current issues/personalities" which tied for fifth place in coverage behind fashion, personal improvement, education, and poetry/fiction/photography categories. Combined, the two "issues" categories covered a range of topics that included controversial sexual topics and contraception. Mademoiselle's coverage of such issues, Prisco concluded, was an indication that the magazine was "in touch with the contemporary woman."<sup>91</sup>

### Research Questions

With the foregoing findings and ideas in mind, the following research questions were developed to determine the extent to which selected women's magazines, from 1971 to

1991, had published information which female readers could have used to make informed decisions about their sexual behavior (assessing if and how they used the information, however, would require another study beyond the scope of this one):

1) Between 1971 and 1991, did the extent of coverage about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy and STDs in the three magazines increase, decrease or remain the same?

2) Which specific topic area, sexual relationships/sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs, received the most attention from the magazines between 1971 and 1991?

3) Between 1971 and 1991, did items concerning sexual topics more often discuss the emotional and responsibility aspects of sex, or were they more likely to include physiological/factual information about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy and STDs?

4) How does coverage of sexual topics in the three magazines compare with young womens' sexual behavior, contraceptive practices, pregnancy rates and prevalence of STDs as presented in statistical and survey data from 1971 to 1991?

5) What, if any, effort did the magazines make to dispel myths and incorrect sexual information perpetuated by other media and by the peer groups of young women?

Throughout the analysis, comparisons will also be drawn between the individual magazines' relation to these five research questions.

### NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>Hadley Cantril, "Sex Without Love," The Nation, 10 October 1953, 296-297.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth A. Hudson, "Sexual Knowledge, Attitudes and Sources of Information Among Adolescents," (M.A. thesis, Texas Women's University, 1985), 197.

<sup>3</sup>Catherine S. Chilman, Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society (Bethesda, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978), 17.

<sup>4</sup>Hudson, 79.

<sup>5</sup>Chilman, 103.

<sup>6</sup>Sandra L. Hanson, David E. Myers, and Alan L. Ginsberg, "The Role of Responsibility and Knowledge in Reducing Teenage Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing," Journal of Marriage and the Family 49 (May 1987): 250.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Blum and Michael Resnick quoted in "Teenage Girls' Sexual Decision-Making," USA Today, 1 December 1984, 3.

<sup>8</sup>"Teenage Girls' Sexual Decision-Making," 3.

<sup>9</sup>Hanson, et al., 242.

<sup>10</sup>Morton Hunt, "Special Sex Education Survey," Seventeen, July, 1970, 133.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 95.

<sup>12</sup>Anthony S. Onyehalu, "Inadequacy of Sex Knowledge of Adolescents: Implications for Counselling and Sex Education," Adolescence, 18(Fall, 1983): 627-628.

<sup>13</sup>Hanson et al., 242.

<sup>14</sup>Onyehalu, 628.

<sup>15</sup>E. Keyes, "If Education Upon Sexual Matters is to be Offered to Youth, What Should be its Nature and Scope, and at What Age Should it Commence?" New York Medical Journal, 83 (1906): 274-275.

<sup>16</sup>Albert Ellis, The Folklore of Sex (New York: Grove City Press, 1960), 60.

<sup>17</sup>Hudson, 43

<sup>18</sup>Robert R. Bell, Premarital Sex in a Changing Society (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), 51.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 166.

<sup>20</sup>Keyes, 277.

<sup>21</sup>American School Health Association, Association for the Advancement of Health Education, and Society for Public Health Education, Inc., "The National Adolescent Student Health Survey: A Report on the Health of America's Youth," (Oakland, California: First Impression, 1989): 125.

<sup>22</sup>Onyehalu, 627.

<sup>23</sup>Elaine Eliason Kisker, "Teenagers Talk About Sex, Pregnancy and Contraception," Family Planning Perspectives, 17 (March/April, 1985): 85.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 86.

<sup>25</sup>Onyehalu, 628-629.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 629.

<sup>27</sup>Hudson, 16.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Hunt, 97.

<sup>30</sup>Onyehalu, 629.

<sup>31</sup>Sally Davis and Mary B. Harris, "Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Interests, and Sources of Sexual Information of Rural and Urban Adolescents From Three Cultures," Adolescence, 66 (Summer 1982): 478.

<sup>32</sup>Hayes, 91.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 276.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 166.

<sup>36</sup>Chilman, 82.

<sup>37</sup>David Gelman, Diane Weathers, Lisa Whitman, Pamela Abramson, Terrence Maitland and Jeff B. Copeland, "The Games Teenagers Play," Newsweek, 1 September 1980, 48.

<sup>38</sup>Farida Shah, Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner, "Unprotected Intercourse Among Unwed Teenagers," Family Planning Perspectives 7(January/February 1975): 39.

<sup>39</sup>Melvin Zelnik, John F. Kantner and Kathleen Ford, Sex and Pregnancy in Adolescence (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981), 126.

Gelman, et al. 48.

<sup>40</sup>Shah, et al., 39.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 44.

<sup>43</sup>Zelnik, Kantner, Ford, 87.

<sup>44</sup>Warren B. Miller, "Sexual and Contraceptive Behavior in Young Unmarried Women," Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology (1980): 215.

<sup>45</sup>Zelnik, Kantner, Ford, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>47</sup>Christine A. Bachrach, "Contraceptive Practice Among American Women," Family Planning Perspectives, 16 (Nov./Dec., 1984): 258.

<sup>48</sup>Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner, "Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan-Area Teenagers: 1971-1979," Family Planning Perspectives 12(September/October 1980): 237.

<sup>49</sup>Hayes, 166.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 272.

<sup>52</sup>National Center for Health Statistics, Supplement to Monthly Vital Statistics Report 35 (14) July, 1986: Table 19.

Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, Supplement to Monthly Vital Statistics Report 40 (8) December, 1984 Table 17.

<sup>53</sup>Barbara Kantrowitz, "High School Homeroom," Newsweek (Special Edition: The New Teens), Summer/Fall, 1990, 50.

<sup>54</sup>"The National Adolescent Student Health Survey," 50.

<sup>55</sup>"Progress Toward Achieving the 1990 Objectives for the Nation for Sexually Transmitted Diseases," Journal of the American Medical Association, 263(23 February 1990): 1057.

<sup>56</sup>The National Adolescent Student Health Survey, 50-51.

<sup>57</sup>The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, "STDs on the Rise," Ms., (March/April, 1991); 76.

<sup>58</sup>Dorothy D. Prisco, "Women and Social Change as Reflected in a Major Fashion

Magazine," Journalism Quarterly, 59(Spring, 1982): 134.

<sup>59</sup>L. Ann Geise, "The Female Role in Middle Class Women's Magazines from 1955 to 1976: A Content Analysis of Nonfiction Selections," Sex Roles, 5 (1979): 59.

<sup>60</sup>Carole Ruth Newkirk, "Female Roles in Non-Fiction of Three Women's Magazines," Journalism Quarterly 54 (Winter, 1977): 781.

<sup>61</sup>David Sonenshien and Mark J.M. Ross, "Sex Information in the 'Romance' and 'Confession' Magazines," Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality (August, 1971): 136.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 140.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 149.

<sup>64</sup>Melissa J. Eskridge, "How the Psychology of Women is Presented in Women's Magazines: An Examination of Selected Articles from Ms., Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, Ladies' Home Journal, and Working Woman" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1986), 40.

<sup>65</sup>William H. Taft, American Magazines for the 1980s (New York: Hastings Press Publishers: 1982): 102.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>James Playstead Wood, Magazines in the United States: Their Social and Economic Influence (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1979), 109.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 119.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Helen Gurley Brown, Sex and the Single Girl (New York: Random House, 1962), 257.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 28.

<sup>74</sup>Taft, 106.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 58.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 107.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid, 103.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid, 111.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, 104.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>82</sup>Lynne Ellinwood and Jo Anne Mosher, eds., Writer's Market '71 (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest, 1971), .

<sup>83</sup>M. George Haddad, "A Study of Three Teenage Magazines," (M.S. thesis, San Jose State University, 1976), 1.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, quote from New Ingenue editor Joanne Brown.

<sup>85</sup>Hunt, 95.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, 133.

<sup>87</sup>Taft, 134.

<sup>88</sup>Haddad, 63.

<sup>89</sup>Glenda Tennant Neff, ed., 1991 Writer's Market (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1990), 596 .

<sup>90</sup>Taft, 117.

<sup>91</sup>Prisco, 132.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHOD

After formulating the foregoing research questions, a coding instrument including twenty variables and accompanying operational definitions was developed with which to code each individual item for its treatment four sexual topics. The coding instrument is in Appendix A.

The first research question includes four specific sexual topics which were derived from areas frequently studied by researchers of adolescent sexual behavior.

To answer the question, “Between 1971 and 1991, did the extent of coverage about sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy and STDs in the three magazines increase, decrease or remain the same?” items were coded based on the following: (1) main topic, which had to be one of the four predetermined sexual topics; (2) the length of each item; (3) the type of item; and (4) the total number of items, sexual or otherwise, in each selected issue of the magazines. The following coding questions helped determine the magazines’ extent of coverage about sexual topics:

- This item is primarily, but not necessarily exclusively about:
  - 0= a sexual relationship, the physiology of sex or sexuality in general
  - 1= contraception
  - 2= a sexually transmitted disease
  - 3= pregnancy
- What is the total number of individual items listed in the magazine’s table of contents?
- How long is the item?
  - 0= very short (less than one half of one page)
  - 1= short (one half to one full page)
  - 2= medium (between one and two full pages)
  - 3= long (longer than two full pages)

- Which of the following best describes this type of item?
  - 0= a regular column
  - 1= a non-fiction, feature article
  - 2= and advice column where readers' specific questions are answered
  - 3= a news item about a recent development or event
  - 4= a survey, quiz or poll, or a report of results from a survey, quiz or poll conducted by the magazine or other source
  - 5= other

The second research question asked which specific topic area, sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs received the most attention from the magazines between 1971 and 1991. The question was asked to determine the balance struck by the magazines in their coverage of sexual topics. The first coding question listed above, regarding item main topic, was used to answer this research question.

Research question three was asked in response to researchers' cries for more balance between the factual, informational aspects of sexuality and those aspects related to responsibility, emotions and values. Three coding questions were designed to answer this question, and asked:

- Does this item address any emotional or psychological aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STDs? Yes or no?
- Does this item address any responsibility aspects of sex, pregnancy or STDs? Yes or no?
- Does this item address any physiological or factual aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STDs? Yes or no?

Emotional and psychological aspects of sex were considered present if an item discussed the non-physical feelings related to sex, feelings such as joy, sadness, emptiness, fulfillment, accomplishment, confusion, self doubt, loneliness, relief, fear, ecstasy, nervousness, passion or love.

Responsibility aspects of sex were considered present in the magazines' content if an

item addressed young womens' ( or mens') acceptance or denial of accountability for their own sexual activity and the potential consequences it could have on themselves or others, such as their partner(s), children, family members or friends.

The physiological and factual aspects of sex were considered present if an item included information about the physical, biological, medical, health or technical aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STDs.

The fourth research question compared aspects in coverage of sexual topics in the magazines with the actual sexual behavior of unmarried young women in the United States population. To help answer the question in relation to womens' contraceptive practices, items were analysed for mention of contraception. If mentioned, then identification of any specific contraceptive methods was recorded. The ages of particular women involved in sexual acts or decision, when explicitly mentioned, were divided into the following categories: sixteen and under, seventeen to twenty-two, twenty-three to thirty, over thirty, and variations of "teenage." Marital status and womens' relationships to sexual partners were recorded when mentioned, whether couples were lovers, friends, engaged, married, or casual acquaintances.

Whenever possible during the time frame studied, United States Census data and Statistical Abstracts were used to determine conception and birth rates among unmarried women. Marital status of women, the ages at which they marry, and statistics on prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases were also derived from census data.

The final research question asked what, if any, effort was made by the magazines to dispel myths and misconceptions perpetuated by peers or media. As was discussed in the literature review, peers are a popular, and often unreliable source of sexual information for young women. In addition, media, especially television and movies, are often criticized for their negative and unrealistic portrayals of sexual relationships. To evaluate the three magazines' efforts to combat the misinformation perpetuated by these sources, the

following coding questions were asked:

- Does the item make an effort to dispel any popular myths or misconceptions about sexual relationships or sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs?
- Does the item point to media such as television, movies, novels, books, newspaper, music or magazines as sources of information or pressure regarding sexual relationships or sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs?
- Does the item state anywhere that “real life” sexual relationships or sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs might be different from these things as depicted by media?
- Does the item point to peers as sources of information or pressure regarding sexual relationships or sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs?
- Does the item state anywhere that “real life” sexual relationships or sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs might be different from how peers said they would be?

Women’s magazines comprising the sample group for this study included Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Cosmopolitan. The magazines in this sample have reached millions of American women aged thirteen to thirty-five monthly for decades and are circulation leaders among their target audiences. These particular magazines were selected for this study precisely because of their high circulation rates (circulation figures from 1971 to 1991 are listed in Appendix B), their longevity, and because they span the critical age period during which young women make many important choices about their sexual lives. Fashion magazines such as Vogue and Glamour, and women’s service magazines such as McCall’s, Redbook and Ladies’ Home Journal were not included as potential sources of sexual information because of their heavy focus on fashion and advertising (the fashion magazines), and their target audience of older, married readers (the “ladies” magazines).

The representative sample was drawn from three randomly selected months of nine selected years between 1971 and 1991, for a total of eighty-one magazines. Months were drawn blind separately for each of the three magazines using slips of paper marked with each of the twelve months:

Items from Cosmopolitan were selected from the following issues:

|                                                |                                  |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1972: January, February, December <sup>1</sup> | 1985: February, July, December   |
| 1973: July, August, November                   | 1987: January, February, October |
| 1976: April, August, November                  | 1988: March, April, May          |
| 1979: January, August, September               | 1991: April, July, August        |
| 1981: January, March, April                    |                                  |

Items from Seventeen were selected from the following issues:

|                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1971: January, March, June      | 1985: June, August, September    |
| 1973: February, March, December | 1987: February, April, September |
| 1976: May, September, December  | 1988: January, June, July        |
| 1979: August, October, December | 1991: January, April, August     |
| 1981: January, March, August    |                                  |

Items from Mademoiselle were selected from the following issues:

|                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1971: February, April, May       | 1985: March, June, August     |
| 1973: January, February, July    | 1987: May, August, December   |
| 1976: August, September, October | 1988: February, May, November |
| 1979: May, July, September       | 1991: February, April, June   |
| 1981: February, April, June      |                               |

The years of study were chosen for the following reasons:

1971: the point at which much of Zelnik's survey data was collected, and the starting point of this content analysis.

1973: Supreme Court decision made abortions legally possible in all States, and allowed Federal funds to help defray the costs.

1976, 1979: both years in which Zelnik et al. collected abundant data concerning the sexual activity and contraceptive habits of unmarried women.

1981: AIDS was first recognized as a disease by the Center for Disease Control.

1985: All three major networks refuse to place public service announcements on teenage pregnancy (although they do subsequently with no negative public response).<sup>2</sup>

1987: All three networks reject a public education message about oral contraceptive use as too controversial.<sup>3</sup>

1988: Public health service messages on condom use to prevent AIDS were aired on network television.<sup>4</sup>

1991: The most current possible full year available for study, and a year in which media coverage of teenage sexual activity burgeoned, perhaps due to the rapid spread of AIDS.

The content analysis followed a two-step process. First, the magazines were screened for appropriate non-fiction “items” (articles, columns, stories or departments) with any of the four predetermined categories (sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy, and STDs) as a their focus. The appropriate items were then analyzed according to twenty content categories. Content categories were applied consistently to the text. The content analysis protocol, coding instrument, response form and definitions are included, in their entirety, in Appendix A. The unit of analysis was the entire magazine, and the recording unit was each item about a sexual topic.

### Pretest

A pretest of the coding categories was conducted to test the reliability of the coding instrument and operational definitions. The pretest involved the coding of fifteen items of varying length. Five items were selected from each of three the magazine, from issues not included in the study sample. Items were coded by the author and one other independent coder according to nineteen variables (the question asking the date of each magazine was not relevant to the pretest, so it was omitted). A goal of 85 percent agreement was set forth in the proposal.

Percent agreement was derived using a simple formula where the number of times the two coders agreed on each variable was divided by the total number of items ( $n=15$ ), and then multiplied by one hundred. As Table 7 shows, 100 percent agreement was achieved on two variables, coders agreed 93.3 percent of the time on nine variables, and 86.6 percent of the time on seven variables.

Table 7--Data from pretest

| Variable     | % agreement | Variable | %agreement |
|--------------|-------------|----------|------------|
| v1           | 93.3        | v11      | 80.0       |
| v2           | 86.6        | v12      | 86.6       |
| v3           | 93.3        | v13      | 93.3       |
| v4           | 93.3        | v14      | 93.3       |
| v5           | 93.3        | v15      | 86.6       |
| v6           | 86.6        | v16      | 86.6       |
| v7           | 100.0       | v17      | 100.0      |
| v8           | 93.3        | v18      | 93.3       |
| v9           | 86.6        | v19      | 93.3       |
| v10          | 93.3        |          |            |
| n = 15 items |             |          |            |

The two coders failed to reach 85 percent agreement on only one question in the pretest, achieving 80 percent agreement on the question which sought to identify the relationship between the sexual participants. The specificity and directness of the question should have lent itself to the same high percentage of agreement as the other variables since it asked coders to identify information that had to be implicit in the content in order to be counted. After reconsideration of the question, the operational definition explaining it, and a look back at the content, it was decided that disagreement was due to in part to coder carelessness, and in part to an unclearly phrased question. As a result, variable 11 was modified in an attempt to clear up any confusion in the wording of the question or its interpretation.

During the pretest, questions and definitions were refined slightly and minor inconsistencies were remedied.

## NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup>Throughout the study, issues of Cosmopolitan from 1972 are included in place of 1971 issues, due to the absence of the 1971 volume from the Michigan State University magazine collection.

<sup>2</sup>Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Frank F. Furstenburg Jr., "Adolescent Sexual Behavior," American Psychologist 44 (February 1989): 255.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER FIVE

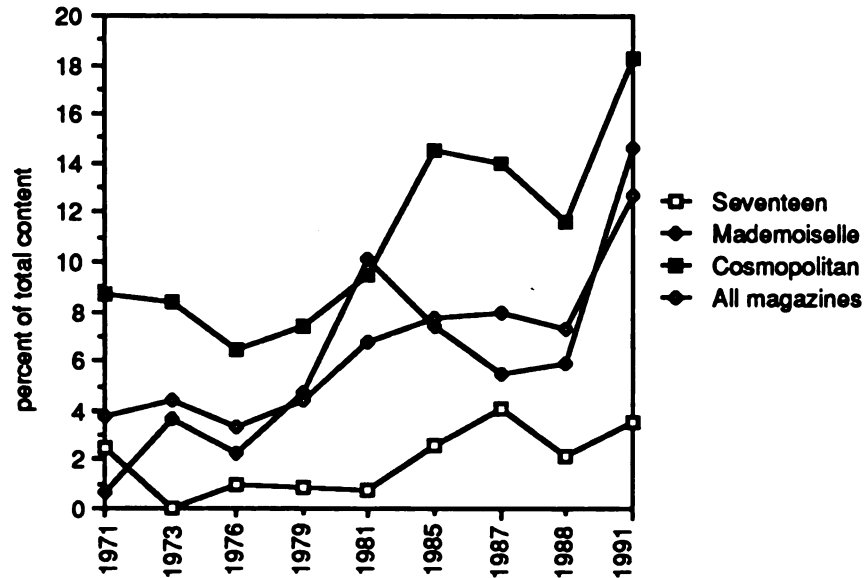
### RESULTS

In response to the first research question, which sought to evaluate the extent of coverage of sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy and STDs in magazine items between 1971 and 1991, data showed that the percentage of total non-fiction, non-advertising magazine items in four selected sexual topic areas in the combined content of Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Cosmopolitan followed a general increase, as can be seen in the “all magazines” line in Figure 1. In 1971, items about sexual relationships/sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy and STDs accounted for just 3.81 percent of total number of items in the three women’s magazines combined. But a gradual increase over the next nineteen years, with only slight dips in 1976 and 1988, brought the figure up to a more substantial 12.7 percent by 1991.

Of the three magazines, Cosmopolitan consistently included the highest percentage of non-advertising, non-fiction items devoted to sexual topics, surpassed only by Mademoiselle in 1981 when 10.41 percent of the total items for the year focused on sexual topics, compared to Cosmopolitan’s 9.42 percent. The low and high percentages for Cosmopolitan came in 1976, when 6.45 percent of the total items addressed sexual topics, and 1991, when 18.31 percent of the total items addressed sexual topics.

Like Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle reached its peak in 1991 with 14.62 percent of its items being non-fiction, non-advertising items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs. The lowest percentage of sexual items for Mademoiselle was .67 percent in 1971 when a lone item in the April issue addressed “the nature of female sexuality.”

Figure 1: Percent of non-fiction/non-advertising sexual content, 1971-1991



The sample group of magazines drawn from Seventeen produced the lowest overall percentage of sexual items, with no coverage of sexual topics in 1973, and less than one percent in four other years, including 1976, 1979, 1981 and 1988. The highest percentage of sexual items for a single year in Seventeen was 4.07 percent in 1987.

For all of the years and all the magazines combined, 6.5 percent of the total items were non-fiction, non-advertising items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, pregnancy, contraception or STDs. Individually, Cosmopolitan focused on sexual topics in 11.12 percent of its items, Mademoiselle in 6.02 percent, and Seventeen in 1.94 percent of its items between 1971 and 1991.

The increase in sexual items between 1971 and 1991 for all magazines combined was 8.89 percentage points. Mademoiselle showed the greatest increase in sexual items over the twenty year period, rising 13.95 percentage points between 1971 and 1991. Seventeen showed the smallest increase, only 1.5 percentage points, and Cosmopolitan's coverage of sexual topics increased by 9.58 percentage points during the twenty year period. Changes in percentage points from year to year are included in Table 19, Appendix C).

While an identical number of issues from each of the three magazines was selected for analysis (three issues of each magazine from nine selected years, for a total of twenty-seven issues of Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Cosmopolitan) the content of the magazine's yielded three very different total numbers of sexual items. In Cosmopolitan, 133 items focused on at least one of the four selected sexual topics between 1971 and 1991. Mademoiselle included seventy-eight such items, and Seventeen produced only twenty items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs. Per issue, Cosmopolitan averaged 4.93 sexual items, Mademoiselle averaged 2.89 items, and Seventeen averaged less than one item (.74) per issue between 1971 and 1991. For a complete table of item topics for each magazine and each year, see Table 20 in Appendix C.

Statistical analysis of the number of sexual items in the four categories in all three magazines resulted in a chi square just short of that required for statistical significance at the .05 level of probability. Another chi square comparison of the magazines in pairs revealed that Seventeen magazine was significantly different from the other two magazines in number of sexual items from 1971 to 1991.

Based on percentage and number of items alone, Seventeen would appear to be the least adequate of the three magazines in its coverage of sexual topics. But the length of items was also considered in this analysis, and in terms of item length Seventeen emerges as the magazine that devoted more editorial space to each individual non-fiction item it included with a sexual topic.

As Table 8 shows, the highest percentage of Seventeen's sexual items (33.33 percent) were in the "long" category, meaning they covered more than two full pages. Seventeen also included a higher percentage of "medium" length items (items between one and two full pages in length) than did the other two magazines. Medium length items accounted for 23.81 percent of Seventeen's sexual content, 15.04 percent of

Cosmopolitan's and 14.1 percent of Mademoiselle's.

Table 8--Length of items

| magazine      | very short | short  | medium | long   |
|---------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Seventeen     | 14.28%     | 28.57% | 23.81% | 33.33% |
| Mademoiselle  | 44.87      | 20.51  | 14.10  | 20.51  |
| Cosmopolitan  | 49.62      | 3.01   | 15.04  | 32.33  |
| all magazines | 44.83      | 11.21  | 15.52  | 28.45  |

n=231 items (20 in Seventeen; 78 in Mademoiselle; 133 in Cosmopolitan)  
 $\chi^2=4.88$ ,  $p<.10$ , d.f.=2

The smallest percentage of Seventeen's sexual items fell into the "very short" category, which contained items less than one half of one page in length. In contrast, both Cosmopolitan and Mademoiselle produced more "very short" items than it did items of any other length. Of all Cosmopolitan's non-fiction, non-advertising sexual content, nearly half (49.62 percent) was concentrated in items less than one half of one page in length, and 44.87 percent of Mademoiselle's sexual content was concentrated in the "very short" category. Chi square analysis shows that this relationship is significant at the 10 percent probability level, but falls short of the 5 percent level. This may be due to the difference found between Seventeen and the other magazines as was discussed earlier.

The type of individual items was also considered in assessing the extent of coverage of sexual topics. The five item types included regular columns, non-fiction feature articles, advice columns, news items and surveys or quizzes.

Between 1971 and 1991, six of Seventeen's sexual items appeared as regular columns, four as non-fiction feature articles, six as advice columns, one news item and two reader surveys or quizzes. None of Cosmopolitan's sexual items appeared as regular columns, but fifty-nine were non-fiction feature articles and fifty-six were advice columns where specific questions were answered. Cosmopolitan included eleven news items and three surveys or quizzes. Like Cosmopolitan, the majority of Mademoiselle's sexual items

appeared as non-fiction feature articles, of which there were twenty-five. The magazine included seventeen regular column, eighteen advice columns, fifteen news items, and one survey or quiz. Overall, 23 in regular columns, 88 non-fiction feature articles, 80 advice columns, 27 news items and 6 surveys or quizzes.

Table 9--Types of items

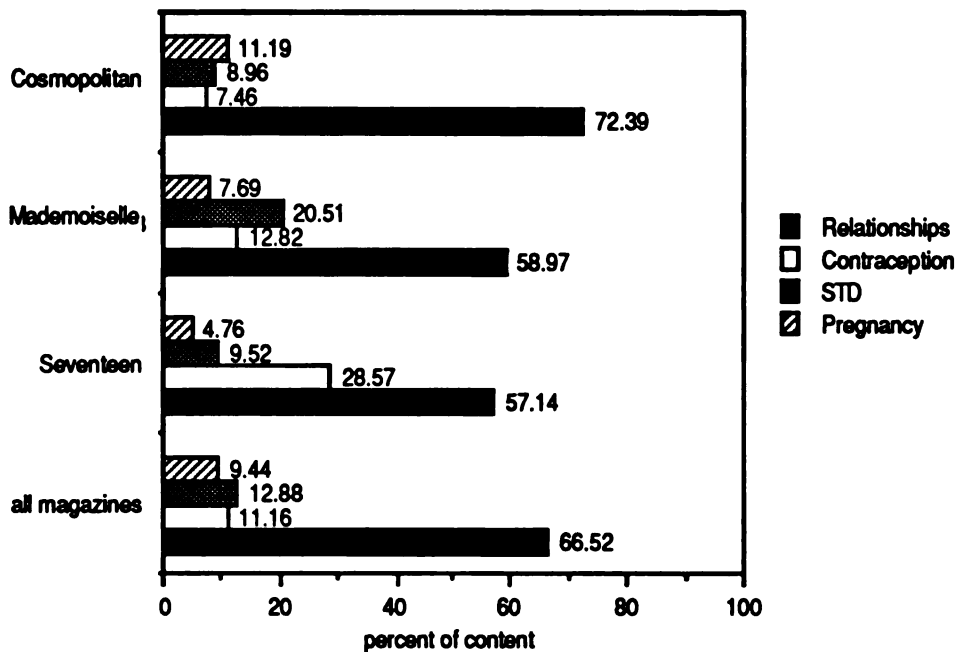
| magazine  | regular<br>column | advice<br>column | feature<br>article | news<br>item | survey/<br>quiz | other     |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Seven.    | 30.00% (6)*       | 30.00% (6)       | 20.00% (4)         | 5.00% (1)    | 10.00% (2)      | 5.00% (1) |
| Mmle.     | 79.00 (21)        | 23.07 (18)       | 32.05 (25)         | 19.23 (15)   | 1.28 (1)        | 2.56 (2)  |
| Cosmo.    | 0.00 (0)          | 42.11 (56)       | 44.36 (59)         | 8.27 (11)    | 2.26 (3)        | 3.01 (4)  |
| all mags. | 9.96 (23)         | 34.63 (80)       | 38.10 (88)         | 11.69 (27)   | 4.51 (6)        | 3.03 (7)  |

\*actual number of items in parentheses

Although not included as a question on the coding instrument, it may be worth noting that only Seventeen and Mademoiselle included regular columns reserved for sexual topics. While the columns generally addressed specifically sexual topics, other subjects were occasionally addressed. Seventeen's "Sex and Your Body" column first appeared in the sample group in the June, 1985 issues with an article titled "Is There Really a New Chastity?" Mademoiselle's "An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Sex" appeared earlier in the sample group, in the January 1973 issue, and discussed the validity of information found in "sex books," particularly The Joy of Sex, Sex and the Teenage Girl, and John and Mimi. Unlike the magazines for younger audiences, Cosmopolitan did not include a regular column or department for sexual topics. These columns were usually written by the same writer month after month.

The second research question in this study asked: which specific topic area, sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs received the most attention from the magazines between 1971 and 1991?

Figure 2: Frequency of occurrence of four item topics, 1971-1991



Far and away, the bulk of each magazine's non-advertising, non-fiction sexual items was in the category of sexual relationships and sexuality in general, as is shown in Figure 2. For all years and all magazines combined, 66.52 percent of the sexual items between 1971 and 1991 were in this category. Individually, 57.14 percent of sexual items in Seventeen were about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, along with 58.97 percent of sexual items in Mademoiselle, and 72.39 percent of sexual items in Cosmopolitan.

For all magazines combined, STDs were the second most featured sexual topic, accounting for 12.88 percent of the sexual content overall. Mademoiselle gave the most attention of the three magazines to the topic of STDs, with 20.51 percent of its items in this category, compared with Cosmopolitan's 8.96 percent and Seventeen's 9.52 percent.

Among individual magazines, Seventeen included the highest percentage, 28.57 percent, of items about contraception. Items about contraception accounted for 12.82

percent of Mademoiselle's and 7.46 percent of Cosmopolitan's total items. The overall percentage of sexual items about contraception in the three magazines combined was 11.16 percent, making it the third highest category of sexual content featured between 1971 and 1991.

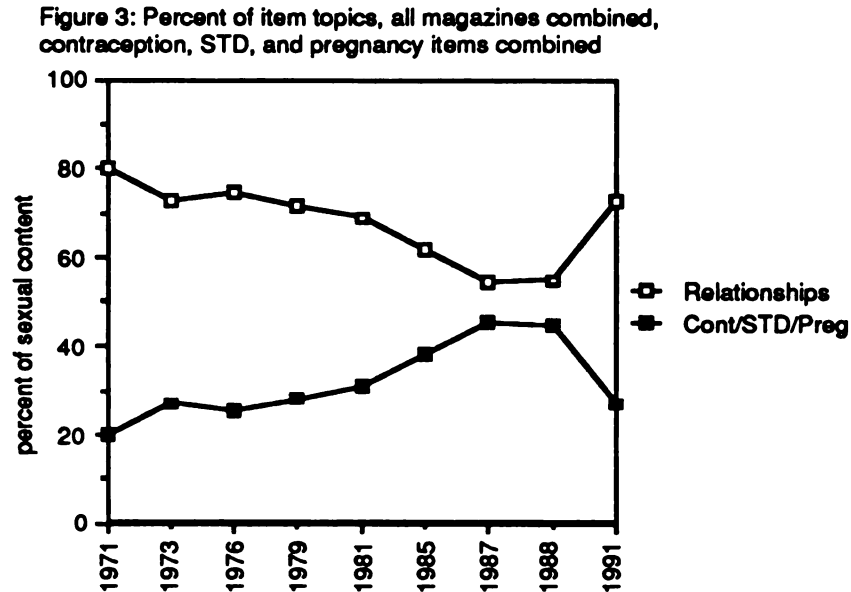
Pregnancy was the least frequently featured sexual topic in both Mademoiselle (7.69 percent of items) and Seventeen (4.76 percent of items). Pregnancy, overall, was the least frequently counted sexual topic, accounting for 9.44 percent of total sexual items in the three magazines combined. Pregnancy was the second most frequent sexual topic in Cosmopolitan, accounting for 11.19 percent of sexual items in the magazine.

Items about pregnancy, contraception and STDs were engaged in a continual battle for second place behind items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general between 1971 and 1991. This obvious separation of one category from the other three indicates the sexual relationships and sexuality in general category may have been too general in relation to the other three more specific categories for an accurate assessment of the balance the three magazines displayed in treatment of diverse sexual topics.

Therefore, by combining items about contraception, STDs and pregnancy into a single category representing the "body-centered" aspects of sex, the percentage of sexual content they fill compares perhaps more accurately to the percent of sexual content occupied by items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general, the more person-centered aspects of sex.

Figure 3 helps illustrate how, combined in this way, the magazines' coverage of sexual relationships and sexuality in general rose and fell between 1971 and 1991 while their coverage of the other three sexual topics combined fell and rose inversely. Coverage of the two came closest together in 1987 and 1988 when items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general occupied 54.55 and 55.17 percent of the sexual content, and items about contraception, pregnancy and STDs combined occupied 45.45 and 44.83 percent of

the sexual content respectively.



The frequency with which various methods of birth control were mentioned in these items is illustrated in Table 10. The condom was the most-often mentioned method, appearing in 48.28 percent of the items that mentioned contraceptives, followed by the diaphragm (34.48 percent) and then the pill (28.74 percent). Roughly the same order--condom, diaphragm, pill--held true for the magazines individually as well. In Seventeen, the condom was mentioned in 76.92 percent of the items that mentioned contraception, and spermicides were mentioned in 53.85 percent. The diaphragm and pill were each mentioned in 46.15 percent of the items.<sup>1</sup> In Mademoiselle, the condom was mentioned in 50 percent of the items, the diaphragm in 43.75 percent, followed by spermicides (31.25 percent), and the pill (25 percent). In Cosmopolitan, the condom was mentioned in 38.1 percent, the diaphragm in 23.81 percent, and the pill in 26.19 percent of the items that mentioned contraception.

Table 10--Number of times contraceptive methods were mentioned, 1971-1991\*†

| Method           | Seventeen                | Mademoiselle | Cosmopolitan | Total       |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| condom           | 76.92% (10) <sup>§</sup> | 50.00% (16)  | 38.10% (16)  | 48.28% (42) |
| diaphragm        | 46.15 (6)                | 43.75 (14)   | 23.81 (10)   | 34.48 (30)  |
| pill             | 46.15 (6)                | 25.00 (8)    | 26.19 (11)   | 28.74 (25)  |
| foam/jel/cream   | 53.85 (7)                | 31.25 (10)   | 14.29 (6)    | 26.44 (23)  |
| IUD              | 30.77 (4)                | 12.50 (4)    | 19.05 (8)    | 18.39 (16)  |
| abortion         | 15.38 (2)                | 18.75 (6)    | 14.29 (6)    | 16.09 (14)  |
| sponge           | 30.77 (4)                | 12.50 (4)    | 4.76 (2)     | 11.49 (10)  |
| other            | 30.77 (4)                | 6.25 (2)     | 11.90 (5)    | 12.64 (11)  |
| generic terms    | 30.77 (4)                | 9.38 (3)     | 11.90 (5)    | 13.79 (12)  |
| FAM/rhythm       | 38.46 (5)                | 3.13 (1)     | 2.38 (1)     | 8.05 (7)    |
| withdrawal       | 30.77 (4)                | 3.13 (1)     | 4.76 (2)     | 8.05 (7)    |
| cervical cap     | 15.38 (2)                | 0.00 (0)     | 4.76 (2)     | 4.60 (4)    |
| hormonal implant | 15.38 (2)                | 3.13 (1)     | 2.38 (1)     | 4.60 (4)    |
| sterilization    | 0.00 (0)                 | 0.00 (0)     | 4.76 (2)     | 2.30 (2)    |

\*Sums of percentages exceed 100% because many items mention multiple methods of birth control.

†Figures on this table are based on 13 items in Seventeen, 32 in Mademoiselle, and 42 in Cosmopolitan mentioning contraception.

§Actual number of items in parentheses

Abstinence from sexual intercourse was not included as a birth control option in this study, but it was considered in the question, "Is abstinence mentioned as an alternative to sexual activity?" Abstinence was not always mentioned as birth control and was often discussed in relation to a young woman's decision whether to have sexual intercourse or not, or as a defense against contracting an STD. In a few instances, brief periods of abstinence were suggested as a way to heighten the pleasure of subsequent sexual intercourse.

Not one of the thirteen items mentioning abstinence in Mademoiselle considered abstinence as a form of birth control, and it was only referred to once as birth control among the twenty-four Cosmopolitan items that mentioned abstinence.

Of the three magazines, Seventeen was most likely to discuss abstinence from sexual intercourse as birth control with statements such as:

The only 100 percent effective method of birth control, of course, is abstinence (not having intercourse), which you may need to do if you truly don't have access to any method of birth control and you find it impossible to go to your parents, a doctor, or a clinic for help. You can share love without sex, or you can give each other pleasure without having intercourse.<sup>2</sup>

A third reason given for abstinence, aside from birth control and as sex therapy, was as a precaution against STDs, particularly AIDS. And abstinence was sometimes discussed simply as a woman's right to a choice. Just as she had a right to say "yes" in the 1970s, a woman in the 1980s and 1990s had a right to choose "the new chastity" or the "no of the '90s."

The only instance in which abstinence was spoken against, was in the February, 1981 issue of Mademoiselle. An item titled, "Living without sex" discounted sex "faddists" and "quacks" who prescribed celibacy as a reaction to the "overhyping of sex in America" and as a "new elixir" to "hawking open marriage, group sex, brutality chic and kiddie porn." According to the article, sex didn't deserve the bad rap it was getting, and called "vows of celibacy:"

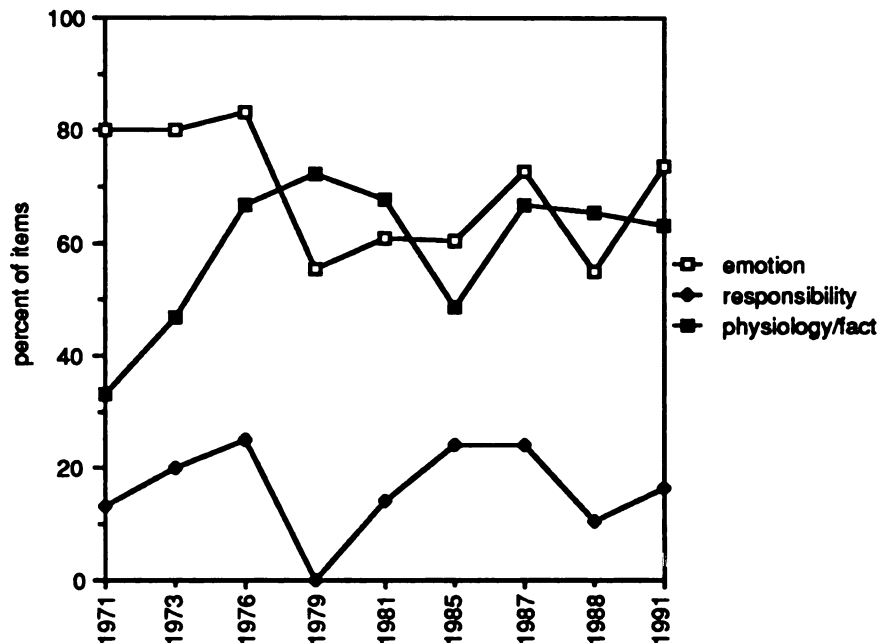
... just a symptom of the hype, not a cure-all. Celibacy can be just a frightened retreat from the conflict between our need for traditional commitment and our newly-awakened appetite for sexual freedom. Celibacy is actually the flip side of the coin from promiscuity. Neither promises transcendence or the full life.<sup>3</sup>

In an attempt to identify the women's magazine's attempts to be "more than just an organ recital," by providing a "complementary and supporting set of attitudes," this study asked the question: between 1971 and 1991, did items concerning sexual topics more often discuss the emotional, psychological and responsibility aspects of sex, or were they more likely to discuss the factual and physiological aspects of sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STDs?

Figure 4 illustrates mention of these aspects as they occurred in the magazines over time, and Table 11 enumerates them as they apply to individual sexual topics. Statistical

analysis showed that the magazines' mention of these aspects of sex was significant at the .05 level of probability with 4 degrees of freedom. For a complete table of these aspects as they were mentioned individual magazines, see Table 15 in Appendix C.

Figure 4: Percent of sexual content mentioning emotional, responsibility and physical/factual aspects of sex (all magazines combined), 1971-1991



On the subject of sexually transmitted diseases, nearly all (93.33 percent) of the magazine items mentioned some factual and physiological aspects of STDs. In 100 percent of items about STDs in Seventeen and Cosmopolitan, and in 87.5 percent of items about STDs in Mademoiselle, factual and physiological aspects were mentioned. The emotional and psychological aspects of STDs were included in 50 percent of Seventeen's, 31.25 percent of Mademoiselle's and 41.67 percent of Cosmopolitan's items about STDs. Responsibility was discussed in 50 percent of Seventeen's, 25 percent of Mademoiselle's and 16.67 percent of Cosmopolitan's items about STDs.

Table 11--Distribution of psychological/emotional, responsibility and physiological/factual aspects of sex among item topics

|                             | Sexual relat./<br>sex in gen. | Contrac.    | STDs        | Preg.       |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b><u>Seventeen</u></b>     |                               |             |             |             |
| •emotion                    | 91.67% (11)*                  | 83.33% (5)  | 50.00% (1)  | 100.00% (1) |
| •responsibility             | 41.67 (5)                     | 100.00 (6)  | 50.00 (1)   | 100.00 (1)  |
| •phys/fact                  | 41.67 (5)                     | 100.00 (6)  | 100.00 (2)  | 100.00 (1)  |
| <b><u>Mademoiselle</u></b>  |                               |             |             |             |
| •emotion                    | 87.23 (40)                    | 0.00 (0)    | 31.25 (5)   | 33.33 (2)   |
| •responsibility             | 10.64 (5)                     | 0.00 (0)    | 25.00 (4)   | 33.33 (2)   |
| •phys/fact                  | 42.55 (19)                    | 100.00 (10) | 87.50 (14)  | 83.33 (5)   |
| <b><u>Cosmopolitan</u></b>  |                               |             |             |             |
| •emotion                    | 84.54 (82)                    | 10.00 (1)   | 41.67 (5)   | 26.67 (4)   |
| •responsibility             | 9.28 (9)                      | 10.00 (1)   | 16.67 (2)   | 26.67 (4)   |
| •phys/fact                  | 48.45 (47)                    | 80.00 (8)   | 100.00 (12) | 86.67 (13)  |
| <b><u>all magazines</u></b> |                               |             |             |             |
| •emotion                    | 85.90 (133)                   | 40.00 (6)   | 36.67 (11)  | 31.82 (7)   |
| •responsibility             | 12.18 (19)                    | 64.00 (7)   | 23.33 (7)   | 31.82 (7)   |
| •phys/fact                  | 46.15 (71)                    | 92.00 (14)  | 93.33 (28)  | 86.36 (19)  |

\*actual number of items in parentheses

$\chi^2=15.91$ , d.f.=4,  $p<.01$

Items about contraception in all three magazines were also more likely to include factual and physiological information than either emotional or responsibility aspects. Ninety-two percent of items about contraception in the three magazines combined included physiological and factual information. Sixty-four percent mentioned responsibilities associated with contraception, and 40 percent mentioned the emotional and psychological aspects of contraceptive use. One hundred percent of contraception items in Seventeen and Mademoiselle, and 80 percent of contraception items in Cosmopolitan mentioned the physiological, biological, medical, health or technical aspects of birth control.

Notable differences between the individual magazines were, however, revealed in their attention to the emotional, psychological and responsibility aspects of contraception.

While Seventeen mentioned responsibility in 100 percent and emotional and psychological aspects in 83.33 percent of its six items about contraception, Mademoiselle gave no mention of either responsibility or emotional aspects in any of its ten items about contraception. Cosmopolitan mentioned both responsibility and emotional aspects, but in only 10 percent of its ten items about contraception.

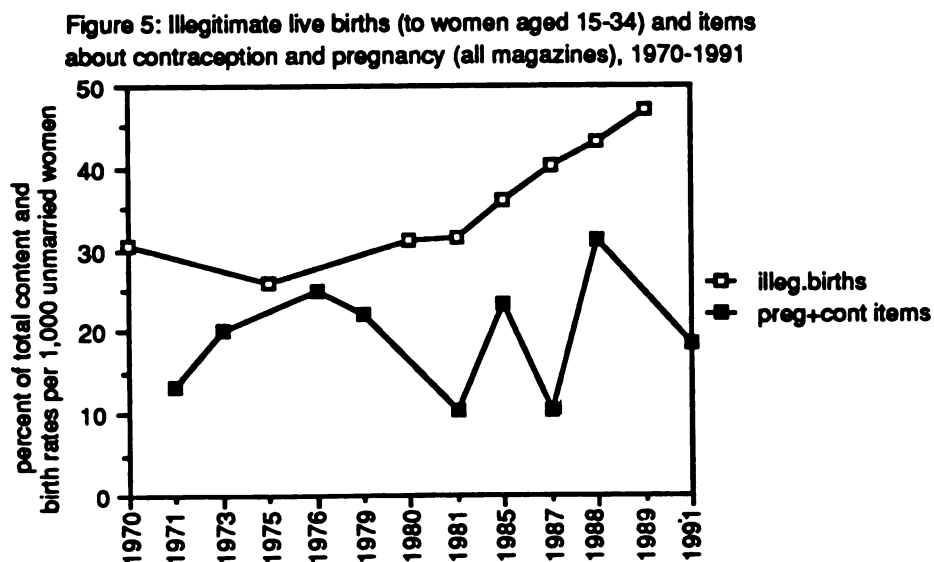
As with STDs and contraception, items about pregnancy also were more likely to mention physiological and factual aspects than either emotional or responsibility aspects. Combined, 86.3 percent of pregnancy items in the three magazines mentioned physiological and factual aspects of pregnancy. Equal attention was paid to both the responsibility and emotional aspects of pregnancy, with each being mentioned in 31.82 percent of all items about pregnancy from 1971 through 1991.

Emotional and psychological aspects were dominant only in items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general. Seventeen mentioned emotional aspects in 91.67 of its twelve items about sexual relationships, with 41.67 percent of these items mentioning physiological and factual and responsibility aspects of sexual relationships. Mademoiselle mentioned emotions in 87.23 percent, physiological and factual aspects in 42.55 percent, and responsibility in 10.64 percent of its 46 items about sexual relationships and sexuality in general. And distribution in Cosmopolitan included 84.54 percent emotions, 48.45 percent physiological and factual, and 9.28 percent responsibility. Complete data for mention of aspects for each year studied is presented in Table 15, Appendix C.

The fourth research question in this study sought to compare coverage of sexual topics in the three magazines with young womens' sexual behavior, as presented in survey and statistical data, from 1971 to 1991. As the percentage of teenage women who were experiencing sexual intercourse increased nearly twenty-five percentage points between 1971 and 1988, the combined percentage of non-fiction, non-advertising items in Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle and Seventeen increased as well, but much less

dramatically, less than nine percentage points.

Figure 5 shows that attention to pregnancy and contraception in the three women's magazines showed no clear relationship to this steady increase in out-of-wedlock births among women aged fifteen to thirty-four between 1970 and 1989. While the steady upward trend in births is evident, there is no clear pattern in corresponding percentage of items about pregnancy and contraception to indicate the magazines' attempts to counter the trend. (More detailed data on birth rates is included in Table 17, Appendix C).



Coverage of STDs in Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Cosmopolitan included 6.67 percent of sexual item topics in the three magazines combined in 1971 and 1973. In 1976, there were no items about STDs in any of the magazines. Then, between 1976 and 1987, coverage of STDs increased, with only a slight dip in 1985, from zero to nearly 25 percent of sexual items. But despite increasing prevalence of STDs, especially AIDS, among American women, coverage of STDs declined after 1987, to 13.79 percent in 1988 and 10.42 percent in 1991.

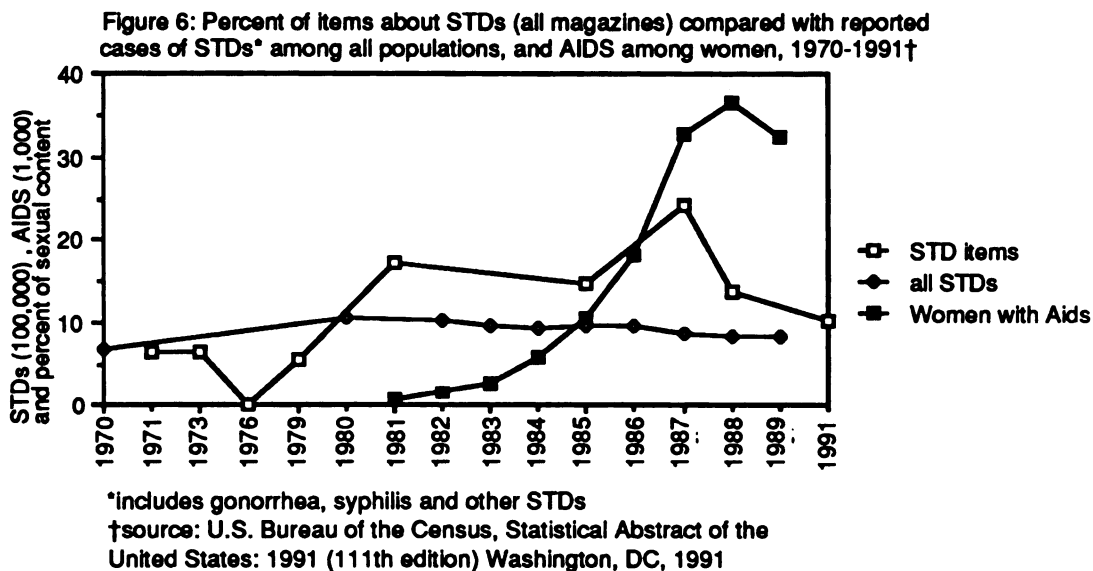


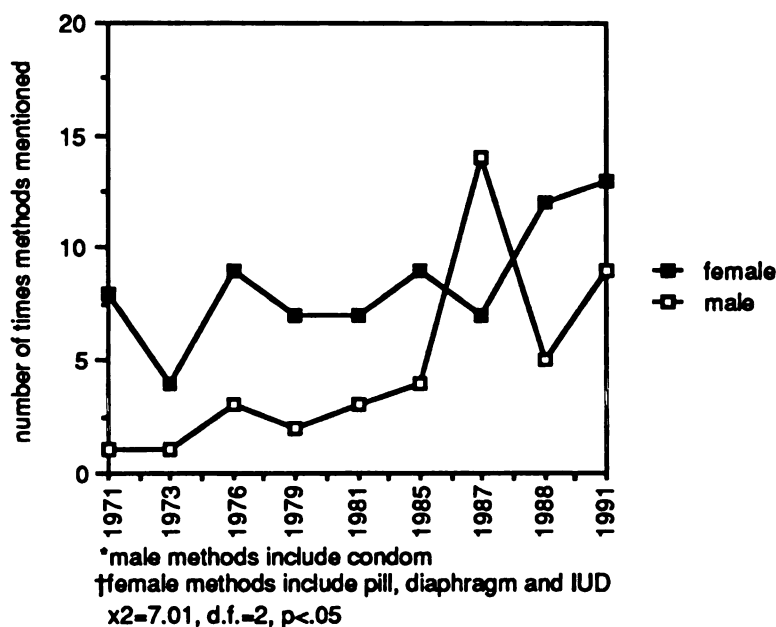
Figure 6 illustrates how the magazines' coverage of STDs compared to national trends in reported cases of AIDS and other STDs from 1971 to 1991. While cases of syphilis, gonorrhea and other STDs (not including AIDS) remained relatively stable over the twenty year period, and even declined slightly (see detailed data in Table 18, Appendix C). Cases of AIDS have risen sharply since they were first reported in 1981. The drop in coverage of STDs in the magazines is especially interesting in light of the rapid increase in AIDS cases among women.

With the development of prescribed methods of birth control, contraception became a "women's issue." The woman was responsible for procuring and using her own pills, diaphragm or IUD. If she did not, then the man had to assume responsibility and wear a condom. The dawning of the "age of AIDS" seems to have made the issue of contraception less gender-specific. Contraception no longer only means prevention of fertilization, it means prevention of infection as well. Since pills, diaphragms and IUDs cannot stop STDs, women who want to protect themselves have begun to furnish the condoms. Condom manufacturers have even begun marketing their product toward women with package designs in pastel colors and names such as "Lady Trojans."

As Figure 7 shows, mention of traditionally “male” and “female” forms of contraception in womens’ magazines seem to reflect this trend as well. While mention of the three prescribed contraceptives has increased from eight mentions in 1971 to thirteen mentions in 1991, mention of condoms has as well, from two mentions in 1971, to nine mentions in 1991, including a brief jump to a high point of fourteen mentions in 1987.

Statistical analysis shows that treatment of the three designated aspects of sex is statistically significant at the one percent level of probability. Thus, the sample drawn is an accurate representation of magazine content for the time period studied.

Figure 7: Male\* vs. female† methods of contraception, 1971-1991, all magazines



The final research question in this study pertained to the magazines’ efforts to dispel myths or misconceptions about sexual relationships or sexuality in general, pregnancy, contraception or STDs.

In the three magazines combined, 11.21 percent of the items with sexual topics made some attempt to dispel sexual myths or misconceptions. Table 12 shows that individually, Seventeen magazine had the highest percentage of attempts (35 percent), with seven of its

twenty items addressing a specific myth or misconception about sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STDs. Six of Mademoiselle's seventy-nine items (12.77 percent), and thirteen of Cosmopolitan's 133 items (9.77 percent) made such an attempt. Of the years from which magazine issues were selected, 1985 showed the highest incidence of items with attempts to dispel sexual myths and misconceptions, with eight items, five of which came from Cosmopolitan, one from Mademoiselle, and two from Seventeen.

Table 12--Attempts to dispel myths and misconceptions

| year                                                                                           | Sevent.   | Madem.     | Cosmo.     | totals      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1971                                                                                           | 2         | 0          | 0          | 2           |
| 1973                                                                                           | 0         | 0          | 2          | 2           |
| 1976                                                                                           | 1         | 0          | 1          | 2           |
| 1979                                                                                           | 0         | 0          | 2          | 2           |
| 1981                                                                                           | 0         | 3          | 0          | 3           |
| 1985                                                                                           | 2         | 1          | 5          | 8           |
| 1987                                                                                           | 0         | 1          | 1          | 2           |
| 1988                                                                                           | 0         | 1          | 1          | 2           |
| 1991                                                                                           | 2         | 0          | 1          | 3           |
| Totals                                                                                         | 7 (35.0%) | 6 (12.77%) | 13 (9.77%) | 26 (11.21%) |
| n=232 items (20 in <u>Seventeen</u> ; 79 in <u>Mademoiselle</u> ; 133 in <u>Cosmopolitan</u> ) |           |            |            |             |

Myths and misconceptions addressed by the magazines ranged from the seemingly-naïve, such as the belief that douching with soda after intercourse could prevent pregnancy, to mistaken notions about causes of impotence and how STDs are spread. To illustrate this variability, some specific examples of myths and misconceptions addressed by each of the magazines are included here. From Seventeen:

**“Despite the persistent myth that you can tell a homosexual by appearance and mannerism, only about 15 percent of homosexuals show effeminate characteristics (and only about 5 percent of female homosexuals are obviously mannish). The rest have no recognizable outward differences.”<sup>4</sup>**

**“Some ... have the mistaken notion that if they do not have an orgasm during intercourse, pregnancy cannot follow ... A few believe the untrue gossip that**

swallowing a handful of contraceptive pills just before or after intercourse will protect them ... Many are frightened of effective methods like the pill by rumors about its dangers.”<sup>5</sup>

“Which of the following statements are true, and which are false?

1. If you have sexual dreams or fantasies about someone of the same sex, it means that you’re gay.
2. The first time you have sex is the best time you’ll ever have.
3. Guys suffer from terrible pain and may even become sterile if they don’t have sex after becoming sexually aroused.
4. It’s safe to have sex without birth control in the days just before your period.
5. You can get a sexually transmitted disease even if you have one partner.
6. You can get pregnant the first time you have sex.
7. If a boy has sexual intercourse or masturbates too much when he is young, he’ll use up all his sperm and be unable to father children later on.
8. Planning for sex and using birth control is unromantic.
9. If you’re sexually active but have no symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease, you have nothing to worry about.
10. There is only one right way to make love.”<sup>6</sup>

From Mademoiselle:

An article titled “Five myths about the big ‘o,’” the following myths about orgasm: “All orgasms are pretty much alike,” “Orgasm is a sign of love,” “If he loved me, he’d know how to make me climax,” “If you can’t have a vaginal orgasm, it means you’re neurotic,” and “Some women just can’t have orgasms.”<sup>7</sup>

“I have heard that uncircumcised men have a greater chance of contracting and passing on sexually transmitted diseases than circumcised men do. Is this true?”<sup>8</sup>

“Q: True or false: Wearing tight jeans makes you prone to urinary-tract infections. A: False. And you also won’t get an infection from downing lots of coffee, using tampons or urinating infrequently, according to a myth-busting new study.”<sup>9</sup>

And from Cosmopolitan:

“One of our culture’s most absurd double standards is the value judgment placed on rapid orgasms: if a woman comes quickly, she’s considered a passionate lover, one to be admired, whereas a *man* with the same facility is considered incompetent and to be pitied! (Actually, believing a woman is somehow more ‘female’ if she has quick orgasms is one other myth to be discarded.)”<sup>10</sup>

“I never imagined the problem [impotence] could *hit* younger men. That may sound naive, but I don’t think I’m the only woman to buy the myth that most men—healthy, younger men anyway—can spring into action at the mere sight of a good body.”<sup>11</sup>

“Q: My husband is a professional baseball player and refuses to make love the night before a game; he says it will weaken him. Is this true or just a silly myth? A: It’s the latter—and one that goes back at least as far as the story of Samson and Delilah.”<sup>12</sup>

"Though a mere three decades ago popular opinion pivoted on the premise that men were basically more sexual than women, scientific research has begun to overturn this myth."<sup>13</sup>

"Q: What do you consider to be today's biggest sexual myth? A: If he loved me he would have an erection."<sup>14</sup>

Of all the items coded, 42.49 percent included mention of peers or media as sources of sexual information or pressure. Table 13 shows peers were mentioned in thirty-eight items between 1971 and 1991, and media was mentioned in sixty-one items as a source of sexual information.

Table 13--Peers and media as sources of sexual information regarding sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STDs, 1971-1991

|                          | # of items<br>mentioning<br>media as a<br>source of<br>sexual<br>information | #of items<br>indicating<br>sex may be<br>different than<br>as depicted by<br>media | # of items<br>mentioning<br>peers as a<br>source of<br>sexual<br>information | # of items<br>indicating<br>sex may be<br>different than<br>as depicted<br>by peers |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Seventeen<br>(n=21)      | 33.33% (7)*                                                                  | 14.29% (3)                                                                         | 66.67% (14)                                                                  | 19.05% (4)                                                                          |
| Mademoiselle<br>(n=78)   | 26.92 (21)                                                                   | 8.97 (7)                                                                           | 6.41 (5)                                                                     | 3.85 (3)                                                                            |
| Cosmopolitan<br>(n=134)  | 24.63 (33)                                                                   | 5.22 (7)                                                                           | 14.18 (19)                                                                   | 5.97 (8)                                                                            |
| all magazines<br>(n=233) | 26.18 (61)                                                                   | 7.30 (17)                                                                          | 16.31 (38)                                                                   | 6.44 (15)                                                                           |

$\chi^2=11.12$ , d.f.=2,  $p<.01$

\*actual number of items in parentheses

Seventeen and Cosmopolitan were responsible for most of the peer references, with fourteen and nineteen items respectively. Mademoiselle mentioned peers in only five items. Media was mentioned most frequently in Cosmopolitan as well, with thirty-three items referring to some form of media as a source information on sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STDs. Mademoiselle featured twenty-one items with reference

to media, and Seventeen had seven such items between 1971 and 1991.

Of the magazines combined, 32.32 percent of items mentioning peers or media also said the depiction given by either of those sources was somehow inaccurate. Information from peers alone was deemed incorrect in 39.47 percent of the items where it was mentioned. Sexual information from media was questioned in 27.87 percent of the items where it was mentioned.

An example of a statement contrary to media depiction of sex comes from an item in Seventeen titled "Your right to say no!" which stated, "Sexual innuendo is standard fare on television and in the movies. Magazines, books, and popular songs urge us to be sexy," and then said readers should not "be fooled by TV shows or movies into thinking that sex is just one more fun experience, like going to a disco. It's not: It's big and personal and deep, a real giving of yourself."<sup>15</sup> An example of incorrect peer information is described by a Seventeen reader who, in 1991, wrote about her boyfriend who "constantly pressures" her to have sex. "He says I won't get pregnant, but he doesn't use protection," she said, asking, "Is it true that if the guy pulls out before he ejaculates, you won't get pregnant?" In response, the author explained the inaccuracy of the boyfriend's claim, saying:

For starters, when a boy gets an erection, droplets of pre-ejaculatory fluid appear: This fluid *does* contain sperm and *can* get you pregnant ... Another problem is that a guy may promise to pull out before he ejaculates, but when he's really excited he may not have the self-control ... Even if he does ... you can get pregnant if he winds up ejaculating next to your vagina. Sperm are powerful swimmers ... If you're going to have sex, you must use birth control to prevent pregnancy.<sup>16</sup>

Examples from Mademoiselle include a 1973 item that critiqued some popular "sex books" and concluded that they "either don't tell you enough or they give you incorrect information."<sup>17</sup> An item titled "Making love for the first time" described how "Cynthia and Jackie tried to live up to what they perceived as society's expectations of them and ended up abandoning themselves." The young womens' sexual perceptions, the author

explained, were formed by their contact with peers and media:

Pressure—from the media and from friends—can cause enormous anxiety at a time when we're just beginning to discover who we are as individuals and when the desire to *belong*, to *fit in*, often seems the most important thing in the world. But we really can only discover ourselves by listening to our own feelings.<sup>18</sup>

In 1988, Mademoiselle blamed media for promoting inaccurate sex images. In an item titled "You were wonderful (and other big bed lies)," the author explained that some women fake orgasm because they "are feeling enormous pressure to have magical orgasms. In movies, novels and sexual self-help books, orgasm has become the only goal of lovemaking." Later in the item, a sex therapist emphasized the inaccuracy of media portrayals of sex, saying:

When you watch most mainstream movies, sex always involves the man getting on top of the woman and ramming it in. They don't use their hands and rarely perform oral sex—and yet in real life, this is how most women reach orgasm.<sup>19</sup>

Media references in Cosmopolitan were often allusions to instructional "sex books" that supported statements made by the author. For instance, a 1979 item titled "The new chastity," included quotations from "the forthcoming The Joy of Touching." A 1976 item about "The male orgasm: what every girl should know," discussed information in a book titled The New Sex Therapy.

Cosmopolitan did not refrain from criticizing media, however. An item about illegitimate children born to celebrities described how the glamorized vision of Hollywood children seen on television and in news media is an unrealistic vision for real life single parents.

News of the stars ... the glamorous life ... makes for interesting reading ... a pretty story, but easiest to believe when one is sitting in a brainless daze at the hairdresser. In more rational moments, most of us realize that even in Hollywood the fantasy life is not possible for just *any* unwed mother."<sup>20</sup>

In a 1985 Cosmopolitan advice column, the unreliability of peers as sources of

sexual information was illustrated by a woman who said a friend told her that taking certain vitamins could actually increase sex drive. In response, the doctor who wrote the column mentioned the hazards of taking megadoses of vitamins, and said the only foundation for the friend's claim was "that you must be healthy and well nourished to function at your best in all areas—sex included."

## NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup>The frequency with which spermicides were mentioned could be due to the fact that they are frequently used in conjunction with condoms.

<sup>2</sup>Kathy McCoy, "Sex and Your Body," Seventeen, (April, 1987): 56, 58.

<sup>3</sup>Judith Coburn, "Living Without Sex," Mademoiselle, (February, 1981): 78.

<sup>4</sup>Abigail Wood, "How Should You Feel About a Homosexual?" Seventeen, June, 1971, 161.

<sup>5</sup>Alice Lake, "Questions You Ask Most About Birth Control," Seventeen, January, 1971, 114.

<sup>6</sup>Kathy McCoy, "Test Your Sexual I.Q.," Seventeen, September, 1985, 40

<sup>7</sup>Lonnie Barbach, "Orgasm: Five Myths About the Big O," Mademoiselle, February, 1981, 145, 200, 202.

<sup>8</sup>Maj-Brit Rosenbaum, M.D., "Body and Soul," Mademoiselle, May, 1987, 116.

<sup>9</sup>Maria Sandmaier, "The Cystitis-Sex Connection," Mademoiselle, February, 1988, 102.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Shephard, M.D., "Do-it-Yourself Sex Therapy," Cosmopolitan, November, 1973, 156.

<sup>11</sup>Jane Margold, "How to Love and Cure Your (Occasionally) Impotent Male," Cosmopolitan, November, 1973, 182.

<sup>12</sup>Susan Okie, "Your Body," Cosmopolitan, July, 1985, 74.

<sup>13</sup>Katharine Merlin, "When Men and Women Think About Sex; Ways They Differ," Cosmopolitan, February, 1987, 179.

<sup>14</sup>Ralph Gardner, Jr., "Cosmo Talks to Helen Singer Kaplan, Pioneering Sex Therapist," Cosmopolitan, March, 1988, 162.

<sup>15</sup>Sally Helgesen, "Your Right to Say No!" Seventeen, August, 1981, 336.

<sup>16</sup>Debra Kent, "Pregnancy Myths," Seventeen, February, 1991, 63.

<sup>17</sup>Lillian Roxon, "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Sex," Mademoiselle, January, 1973, 20.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Grant, "The Other Side of Innocence: Making Love for the First Time," Mademoiselle, April, 1981, 181.

<sup>19</sup>Ellen Kunes, "You Were Wonderful (and Other Big Bed Lies)," Mademoiselle, February, 1988, 149, 206.

<sup>20</sup>Suzanne McNeer, "The Case Against the Illegitimate Child," Cosmopolitan, July, 1973, 82.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Historically, American attitudes toward premarital sex seem to have been filtered through a centuries-old Puritan ethic that says sex before marriage is wrong, and that educating young people about sexuality will only serve to encourage their early participation in premarital sexual activity. Despite the perceived social taboos and society's efforts to protect the innocence of the young by keeping them uninformed, landmark research by Alfred Kinsey helped reveal that, for decades, young women have been making choices about their own sexual behavior and moral codes. Furthermore, researchers since Kinsey have maintained that providing sexual information does not promote sexual promiscuity, and withholding information can only result in young women who are unequipped educationally and emotionally to deal with the responsibilities of sexual activity and its consequences.

Village Voice senior editor Ellen Willis called sex before marriage "a taken-for-granted part of growing up" for most teens.<sup>1</sup> Sex educator Carol Cassell called no sex before marriage an outmoded and unrealistic message. "We owe it to young people to own up to the fact that sexual feelings are normal, and that desire can be very strong because sex is pleasurable," she said,<sup>2</sup> echoing Bell's observation that:

For the married population, some forms of sexual outlet are approved, but for the unmarried *no* outlets are given complete social approval. Yet the sexual needs of the unmarried individual do not lie dormant until his [or her] wedding day and then for the first time suddenly burst forth ... Often it is assumed that the sexual needs of the unmarried individual can be ignored, conditioned, or transferred, but in reality, they usually find expression.<sup>3</sup>

As was stated at the outset of this study, the overriding purpose here has been to examine the nonfiction, non-advertising content of three popular women's magazines over

a twenty year period, to evaluate their potential as a source of sexual information for the young women who may have read them during that time. By dividing sexual content into four topic areas deemed by researchers to be of primary importance in sexual education of young people, the magazines were analyzed as a whole, and individually, to answer five research questions. The research questions were designed to determine the extent of the magazines' attention to sexual topics, their balance in treatment of physical, emotional and responsibility aspects of sex, their efforts to dispel myths perpetuated by peers and media, and their relationship to trends in young womens' sexual behavior between 1971 and 1991.

By addressing sexual topics in their pages, the three women's magazines in this study have openly acknowledged the sexual activity of their readers. By making editorial promises to provide information that is relevant to the daily lives of young women, the magazines have assumed the responsibility of providing such information in regard to sexuality. They have also opened themselves up to scrutiny from mass media researchers who wish to evaluate their performance in this area.

The regular presence of items with a variety of sexual topics indicates that, overall, the three magazines have been a source of sexual information since 1971. But the results in no way indicate that the magazine content has preceded trends in sexual activity, pregnancy, contraceptive practices or prevalence of STDs. Although the magazines may have been responding to trends, that response was unaggressive and did not always seem to coincide with the real needs of the public. The imbalance between items about sexual relationships and sexuality and general, and items about contraception, pregnancy and STDs illustrates this frequent lack of attention to the more serious consequences of premarital sex. And when the content is compared to social trends in pregnancy and STDs, the magazines' treatment of these topics seems especially weak.

For instance, after the first cases of AIDS were reported in the early 1980s, one might expect a reaction in the magazines' coverage of STDs and contraceptives, especially

condoms since they are the only form of birth control that can also protect against the spread of STDs. Such a reaction did appear in the content of the three magazines between 1985 and 1987 as items about STDs increased nearly 10 percentage points. During the same time, items mentioning condoms nearly tripled, from five items in 1985 to fourteen items in 1987. But in the course of the next year, coverage of STDs and mention of condoms fell to or below their 1985 levels. Items mentioning condoms did rally slightly by 1991, but items about STDs continued to fall to their lowest point since 1979. Meanwhile the problem of heterosexual AIDS continued its rapid growth.

Likewise, though the number of illegitimate teenage births continued to rise during the time period studied, the sample drawn from Seventeen magazine did not produce an item about pregnancy until February, 1991. And in items about contraception, Mademoiselle never once mentioned the emotional or responsibility aspects of birth control. Cosmopolitan did not fare much better in its mention of emotions and responsibilities involved in contraception. Only 10 percent of items about contraception mentioned emotional aspects, and only 10 percent mentioned responsibility.

This neglect of the responsibility aspects by the magazines is one of the most perplexing findings of this study. As out-of-wedlock and teenage pregnancies increased, and the number of women with AIDS grew, mention of the responsibilities for actions with the potential for physical or emotional consequences remained low. If the AIDS epidemic has taught us anything, it is that the disease knows no social or economic boundaries. If at least one sexual partner is not careful, premarital sex can be deadly, and a reaction to this reality did not seem to have hit the women's magazines in this study as of 1991. Whether they will respond more aggressively in years to come remains to be seen.

Attempts to dispel sexual myths and misconceptions were not overly abundant in the content of the three women's magazines included in this study. And even though 42.49 percent of sexual items mention peers or media as sources of sexual information, less than

one-third of those items indicated that peers or media could be unreliable sources of sexual information.

The intent of this study is not to exalt one women's magazine over the others. Instead, it has been a look at what potential women's magazines might have as sources of sexual information for young women based on their sexual content over the past two decades. However, obvious differences between the three selected magazines cannot be ignored.

While Cosmopolitan and Mademoiselle undoubtedly produced the largest volume of sexual items, the more occasional items in Seventeen tended to be longer, more balanced in attention to the four topic categories, as well as more balanced in attention to the physiological, emotional and responsibility aspects of sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy and STDs. The low number of non-advertising, non-fiction sexual items could indicate room for improvement in Seventeen's potential role as a source of sexual information for its readers, especially since its readers make up the youngest age group of the three magazines and are undoubtedly in the earliest stages of sexual activity when many difficult sexual decisions are made. But, as one magazine editor has pointed out:

Fashion is the "meat" of female juvenile periodicals. At this age range, readers are still finding themselves, and it's much easier to define oneself in terms of clothes and looking like one's peers than in terms of personal convictions and philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, an increase in the number of sexual items and continued care and attention to thoroughness of explanation could enhance the magazine's potential as a source of sexual information for young women.

While not included as part of the formal analysis, the presence of regular sex-oriented columns in later issues of Seventeen and Mademoiselle could be noted as a positive effort by the magazines to develop a sense of trust or rapport with regular readers, similar to what

Edward Bok was attempting to achieve as Ruth Ashmore more than a hundred years ago.

In light of all that has been said with regard to women's magazines as information sources, one must nevertheless keep in mind that the magazines studied here are sources of entertainment first and foremost. In a society where sex is used to sell everything from soft drinks to power tools, it is no surprise that magazines include sexual material to attract readers as well. To rely on popular magazines for the sexual education of our young people would be simply irresponsible. But viewing them as supplements to home, church and school-based sexual education may be a more realistic approach. The magazines are written in the language their readers understand, they are not condescending or preachy, and they may be able to reach young women with correct sexual information when the more traditional sources and other media fall short.

The responsibility to help readers sort through the conflicting sexual messages they may receive from peers and media belongs at least partially to the magazines. That is not to suggest that the entire burden for the sexual education of young women should be shouldered by popular magazines, for that is not their mission. But certainly these long-lived periodicals could use their popularity to provide solid, timely, correct sexual information in a society where women are continually inundated with stereotypical, sensational and secondhand messages.

Implications for further research arising from this study might include evaluation of the extent to which women actually do rely on the content of popular magazines for information on sexual matters, and whether their personal values and moral standards are shaped at all by the content of the magazines they read and whether they consider women's magazines a good source of information about sexual topics.

The magazine industry should have a vested interest in the findings of studies such as this, and should be supportive of attempts to determine the nature and effect of magazine content when used as a "lay source" of information by the public in general, and the female

public in particular.

## NOTES: CHAPTER SIX

<sup>1</sup>Ellen Willis, "Teen Lust," Ms., July/August 1987, 193.

<sup>2</sup>Lynn Crawford Cook, "Girls Just Say 'Not Now,'" Psychology Today, April 1989, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Robert R. Bell, Premarital Sex in a Changing Society (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), 92.

<sup>4</sup>M. George Haddad, "A Study of Three Teenage Magazines," (M.S. thesis, San Jose State University, 1976), 51.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING PROTOCOL

#### Universe

Publications selected for this study are Seventeen, Mademoiselle, and Cosmopolitan. A content analysis of these magazines will be conducted to determine their potential as sources of sexual information for young unmarried women from 1971 to 1991.

All content, to the exclusion of advertising, horoscopes and fashion will be potential content for analysis. Items about, food, sports, beauty, entertainment and celebrities will not be subject to analysis unless they, in some way, address one of the following sexual issues: sexual relationships/sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy, or sexually transmitted disease. When identified as containing at least one of the above subjects as its focus, the item will be further analyzed according to 21 specific questions, and coded onto a response form. Reader response letters commenting on previous issues of each magazine will not be included in the formal analysis.

#### Coding Procedures

Any item in a magazine which discusses a sexual topic as its main focus will be counted, regardless of the length of the item. Code answers according to the questions onto the response form. Use only one response form per item and refer to the operational definitions as often as necessary to help you understand the questions. Please read the entire question and all possible answers before marking an answer on the coding sheet. If multiple answers seem applicable, choose the best one.

This study is concerned only with non-fiction, non-advertising items relating to the sexual activity of young women, which will include items about: 1) sexual relationships

and sexuality in general, 2) pregnancy, 3) contraception, and 4) sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). To determine whether an item fits into one of these categories, refer to the definitions of each.

A few miscellaneous coding precautions include:

1. An item is considered “sexual” and should be coded if it deals anywhere with sexual relationships and sexuality in general, contraception, pregnancy or STDs.
2. If an item is part of a series appearing in more than one issue of the magazine, count it as a separate item each time it appears.
3. Do not count any advertising content, even if it is an advertisement for products or services that could be considered sex-related, such as contraceptives, douches, in-home pregnancy tests, pregnancy crisis hot-lines and the like.
4. Items about sexual abuse will not be included in the final analysis since young women who are sexually abused do not generally engage in the activity willingly. This study is concerned with young womens’ conscious choices to participate in or abstain from sexual intercourse and other sexual behaviors prior to marriage.
5. Refer to the list of definitions as frequently as necessary to ensure content is identified accurately.
6. Do not count any fiction content.
7. Use a single response form for each item.

## APPENDIX A (Continued)

### CODING QUESTIONS

v1: This item is primarily, but not necessarily exclusively about :

- 0= (a) sexual relationship(s), the physiology of sex, or sexuality in general
- 1= contraception
- 2= a sexually transmitted disease/sex related illness
- 3= pregnancy

v2: Which magazine is this item from?

- 0= Cosmopolitan
- 1= Seventeen
- 2= Mademoiselle

v3: Record the month and date of the magazine.

v4: What is the total number of individual items listed in the magazine's table of contents?

v5: How long is the item?

- 0= very short
- 1= short
- 2= medium
- 3= long

V6: Which of the following best describes this type of item (choose the most specific answer):

- 0= a regular column
- 1= a non-fiction, feature article
- 2= an advice column where readers' specific questions are answered
- 3= a news item about a recent development or event
- 4= a survey, quiz or poll, or a report of results from a survey, quiz or poll conducted by the magazine or other source
- 5= other

v7: Does this item address any emotional/psychological aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STD?

- 0= yes
- 1= no

**v8: Does this item address any responsibility aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STD?**

**0= yes**

**1= no**

**v9: Does this item deal with the physiological or factual aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception or STD?**

**0= yes**

**1= no**

**v10: Is contraception mentioned in the item? (If no, circle 14 in v12 below):**

**0= yes**

**1= no**

**v11: If yes, what method(s)? (Circle all that are mentioned. If none are mentioned, circle 14. Circle 12 only if no other specific methods are mentioned)**

**0= pill**

**1= diaphragm**

**2= condom**

**3= withdrawal**

**4= IUD**

**5= contraceptive sponge**

**6= spermicidal foam/jelly/cream**

**7= cervical cap**

**8= fertility awareness method (FAM or "rhythm method")**

**9= sterilization (vasectomy in male, tubal ligation in female)**

**10= Norplant (hormonal implant)**

**11= abortion**

**12= generic terms, such as "protection," "precautions," "contraception" or "birth control"**

**13= other**

**14= n/a**

**v12: If the ages of particular women involved in a sexual act or decision are specified, what are their ages? (Circle all that apply):**

**0= 16 or under**

**1= 17 to 22**

**2= 23 to 30**

**3= over 30**

**4= "teen," "teenager," or "teenage"**

**5= age not specified**

**v13: If indicated, what is the relationship between any sexual partners (actual or potential) in this item? (Circle all that apply):**

0= boyfriend/girlfriend or lovers

1= fiancé/fiancée

2= husband/wife

3= roommates/housemates

4= relationship not specified; generic terms such as “partner,” “man,” “woman,” “boy,” “girl,” “guy,” “mate” or “date”

5= other

6= n/a

v14: Does the item mention or question the social acceptability of the sexual activity, pregnancy, STD or contraceptive practice in question?

0= yes

1= no

v15: Is abstinence mentioned as an alternative to sexual activity?

0= yes

1= no

v16: Does the item make an effort to dispel any popular “myths” or misconceptions about sexual relationships/sexuality in general, contraception, STD’s or pregnancy?

0= yes

1= no

v17: Does the item point to media such as television, movies, novels, books, newspaper, music or magazines, as sources of information or pressure regarding sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STD’s?

0= yes

1= no

v18: Does the item state anywhere that “real life” sexual relationships/sexuality, contraception, pregnancy, or STD’s might be different from these things as depicted by the media?

0= yes

1= no

v19: Does the item point to peers (sexual partner/friends/siblings) as sources of information or pressure regarding sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy or STD’s?

0= yes

1= no

**v20: Does the item state anywhere that “real life” sexual relationships/sexuality, contraception, pregnancy or STD’s might be different from how peers said they would be?**

**0= yes**

**1= no**

APPENDIX A (Continued)

RESPONSE FORM

v1: 0 1 2 3

v2: 0 1 2

v3: 1

v4:         

v5: 0 1 2 3

v6: 0 1 2 3 4 5

v7: 0 1

v8: 0 1

v9: 0 1

v10: 0 1

v11: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

v12: 0 1 2 3 4 5

v13: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

v14: 0 1

v15: 0 1

v16: 0 1

v17: 0 1

v18: 0 1

v19: 0 1

v20: 0 1

APPENDIX A (Continued)

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

To the fullest extent possible, the following definitions have been derived from scholarly and professional sources. Please refer to them often to ensure accurate coding.

**Sexual relationship/**

**sexuality in general:** items that focus mainly on the people in the relationship and their sexual (emotional and/or physical) involvement with one another. Items for this category may also address more general aspects of “sexuality,” such as sexual emotions and feelings or specific sexual activities, as they apply to one or both of the partners in the relationship.

**Sexually transmitted disease (STD)/**

**sex related illness:** an item is about a sexually transmitted disease or illness if it addresses any sex related ailment as life-threatening as AIDS, or as seemingly minor as a yeast infection. Some of the most common names of STD's include: syphilis, venereal disease, gonorrhea, Chlamydia (vaginitis), venereal warts, genital lice (crabs), Herpes Simplex Virus Type II (HSV-2, herpes progenitis, or genital herpes), cytomegalovirus, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

**Contraception:** any item dealing with some aspect or method of birth control. Specific examples of birth control include: the pill, diaphragm, condom (rubber, prophylactic), withdrawal(coitus interruptus), intrauterine device (IUD), sponge, spermicidal foam/jelly/cream, cervical cap, fertility awareness method (FAM or “rhythm method”), sterilization (vasectomy or tubal ligation/“tubes tied”), hormonal implant (Norplant), and abortion.

**Sexual behavior:** for the purposes of this study is not restricted to heterosexual intercourse and may include kissing, petting, masturbation, oral sex and homosexual activity.

**Item length:** is the combined amount of space taken up by item copy, photographs, diagrams or other graphics. For items that are nested within some unrelated, nonsexual content, such as on news pages or question and answer columns, consider only the length of the sexual section of the item. Do not include advertising copy in the length of the item. Categorize length according to the following definitions:

- very short= less than half of one page
- short= one half to one full page
- medium= between one and two full pages
- long= longer than two full pages

**Regular column:** a section of the magazine that appears on a monthly or other regular basis, address the same general category of content each time and is often written by the same author every time. Since only random issues of each magazine are being coded, it may be difficult to determine if a column appears regularly or not, so column headings, the lists below and contents pages should be used as guides. Items in this category usually include the regular column name as a heading. Some of the regular columns listed below can be subcategorized into “advice” or “news” items. When the item fits best into one of the more specific categories defined below, place it there. Some examples include:

Mademoiselle: “The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Sex,” “Man Talk,” “Health,” “An Opinion,” “His,” “Body Talk,” “Body and Soul,” “Health News,” “News,” “The Private Eye,” “The Drs. Frank Talk About ...,” “What Every Single Girl Should Know,” “Medical Express,” “Health Express,” “Doctor, Doctor,” “Scruples,” “Feeling Good”

Seventeen: “Sex and Your Body,” “Him,” “Relating,” “Talk,” “New Voices,” “Your Words,” “Your Opinion,” “Body Talk,” “Mini-Mag,” “You Said It,” “Frankly Speaking,” “Free For All,” “What’s New,” “Young Living,” “Hot Talk”

Cosmopolitan: “What’s New--What it Does for You,” “Your Body,” “Analyst’s Couch,” “Speakeasy,” “COSMO Tells All,” “Irma Kurtz’s Agony Column,” “On My Mind,” “Health Memo: News From the Medical World,” “His Point of View”

**Non-fiction feature article:** Items listed by the table of contents as an article or feature. Does not include regular/monthly columns or departments. Specific headings under which such items are listed include:

Mademoiselle: “Features and Fiction,” “To Read,” “Articles”

Seventeen: “Articles,” “You and Others”

Cosmopolitan: “Nonfiction Book Exerpts,” “Articles,” “Features,” “Articles and Features

**Individual items:** using the table of contents as a guide, count the number of items that are assigned their own page numbers.

**Q&A advice column:** appears regularly and may address questions pertaining to one particular subject or a combination of unrelated subjects. In this type of column, questions are submitted by readers who may or may not be identified. Questions are usually answered by a single author or expert, or by a panel of individuals each specializing in a specific area.

**News pages:** are often a mix of short unrelated timely informational items, usually restricted to a single page, that are of particular importance to the lives of young women. These pages are popular places for news items on new forms of birth control, or other health related sexual topics such as STDs.

**Advertising:** is that portion of the magazine devoted to display advertising, and copy

identified as advertising. This includes classified ads and house ads, and beauty and fashion sections that promote and list prices and sales locations of specific products or clothing. Do not include any advertising in the coding procedures.

**Emotional and psychological aspects of sex:** stress the non-physical feelings related to sex, such as joy, sadness, emptiness, fulfillment, accomplishment, confusion, self doubt, loneliness, relief, fear, ecstasy, nervousness, passion and love.

**Responsibility aspects of sex:** address young womens' (or mens') accepting or or denying accountability for their own sexual activity and the potential consequences that the activity may have on the self, or others such as their partner, their child, other family members or friends.

**Physiological and factual aspects of sex:** information about the physical, biological, medical, health and technical aspects of sex, pregnancy, contraception and STD's fall into this category.

**"Primarily, but not necessarily exclusively":** refers to an item that may touch on all three of the above aspects of sex, but which has a particular one of the aspects as its focus. Mention of emotional, responsibility, or biological/informational aspects in the title, in pull quotes, in the lead paragraph(s) of the item are indicators of this focus, as is the amount of space allocated to one aspect over others.

**Sexual partner:** includes any individual(s) with whom a woman has sexual relations; may include male or female partners.

**Abstinence:** to refrain from sexual intercourse; celibacy; chastity

**Social acceptability:** refers to any mention of whether or not the sexual activity would or would not be approved of by some member(s) of society, ranging from family and friends, to co-workers, neighbors and other men and women in general.

**Myths and misconceptions:** refers to ideas about sexual activity which are popularly believed, but not grounded in scientific fact.

## APPENDIX B

Table 14--Circulation Figures, 1971-1991\*

|      | Cosmopolitan | Mademoiselle | Seventeen |
|------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1971 | 1,231,094    | 675,536      | 1,489,320 |
| 1972 | 1,428,279    | 671,203      | 1,389,688 |
| 1973 | 1,644,800    | 731,201      | 1,431,309 |
| 1974 | 1,804,304    | 809,687      | 1,447,806 |
| 1975 | 1,881,835    | 807,352      | 1,502,160 |
| 1976 | 2,014,208    | 873,878      | 1,445,215 |
| 1977 | 2,214,655    | 873,686      | 1,450,105 |
| 1978 | 2,501,983    | 850,019      | 1,467,322 |
| 1979 | 2,658,571    | 854,747      | 1,457,871 |
| 1980 | 2,766,627    | 930,184      | 1,372,994 |
| 1981 | 2,812,507    | 922,049      | 1,455,561 |
| 1982 | 2,750,516    | 1,065,659    | 1,470,369 |
| 1983 | 2,802,494    | 1,173,633    | 1,471,579 |
| 1984 | 2,983,979    | 1,112,622    | 1,523,451 |
| 1985 | 2,987,970    | 1,163,189    | 1,695,382 |
| 1986 | 2,820,109    | 1,194,404    | 1,737,622 |
| 1987 | 2,935,488    | 1,204,027    | 1,803,752 |
| 1988 | 2,873,071    | 1,297,938    | 1,853,314 |
| 1990 | 2,778,497    | 1,141,271    | 1,173,440 |
| 1991 | 2,778,497    | 1,141,271    | 1,750,000 |

\*1971-1986 circulation figures from *Ayer's Directory*.  
 1987-1991 figures from the *Gale Directory of Publications*  
 (formerly *Ayer's*).

APPENDIX C  
ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table 15--Emotional , responsibility and physiological/factual aspects of sexual topics

|                            | number of<br>items | items mentioning<br>emotion | items mentioning<br>responsibility | items mentioning<br>physiology/fact |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Seventeen</u></b>    |                    |                             |                                    |                                     |
| 1971                       | 3                  | 3                           | 2                                  | 1                                   |
| 1973                       | 0                  | —                           | —                                  | —                                   |
| 1976                       | 1                  | 1                           | 1                                  | 1                                   |
| 1979                       | 1                  | 1                           | 0                                  | 1                                   |
| 1981                       | 1                  | 1                           | 0                                  | 0                                   |
| 1985                       | 3                  | 3                           | 1                                  | 1                                   |
| 1987                       | 5                  | 5                           | 4                                  | 4                                   |
| 1988                       | 2                  | 0                           | 0                                  | 2                                   |
| 1991                       | <u>4</u>           | <u>3</u>                    | <u>3</u>                           | <u>2</u>                            |
|                            | 20                 | 17 (85%)                    | 12 (60%)                           | 13 (65%)                            |
| <b><u>Mademoiselle</u></b> |                    |                             |                                    |                                     |
| 1971                       | 1                  | 1                           | 0                                  | 0                                   |
| 1973                       | 5                  | 5                           | 0                                  | 2                                   |
| 1976                       | 3                  | 1                           | 0                                  | 2                                   |
| 1979                       | 7                  | 4                           | 0                                  | 4                                   |
| 1981                       | 14                 | 7                           | 2                                  | 11                                  |
| 1985                       | 12                 | 6                           | 4                                  | 6                                   |
| 1987                       | 8                  | 4                           | 3                                  | 6                                   |
| 1988                       | 9                  | 5                           | 1                                  | 6                                   |
| 1991                       | <u>20</u>          | <u>15</u>                   | <u>1</u>                           | <u>11</u>                           |
|                            | 79                 | 48 (60.76%)                 | 11 (13.92%)                        | 48 (60.76%)                         |
| <b><u>Cosmopolitan</u></b> |                    |                             |                                    |                                     |
| 1972                       | 11                 | 8                           | 0                                  | 4                                   |
| 1973                       | 10                 | 7                           | 3                                  | 5                                   |
| 1976                       | 8                  | 8                           | 2                                  | 5                                   |
| 1979                       | 10                 | 5                           | 0                                  | 8                                   |
| 1981                       | 13                 | 9                           | 2                                  | 8                                   |
| 1985                       | 18                 | 11                          | 3                                  | 9                                   |
| 1987                       | 20                 | 15                          | 1                                  | 12                                  |
| 1988                       | 18                 | 11                          | 2                                  | 11                                  |
| 1991                       | <u>25</u>          | <u>18</u>                   | <u>3</u>                           | <u>17</u>                           |
|                            | 133                | 92 (69.17%)                 | 16 (12.03%)                        | 80 (60.15%)                         |
| Totals                     | n=232              | 157 (67.67%)                | 39 (16.81%)                        | 141 (60.78%)                        |

$\chi^2=14.23$ , d.f.=4,  $p<.05$

# APPENDIX C (Continued)

Table 16-- Marital status of women (in thousands), 1971-1988

|       |      | Single<br>(%) | Married<br>(%) | Divorced<br>(%) |
|-------|------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 18-19 | 1971 | 77.5          | 22.2           | .2              |
|       | 1975 | 77.7          | 21.6           | .6              |
|       | 1979 | 83.1          | 16.1           | .9              |
|       | 1983 | 87.0          | 12.5           | .6              |
|       | 1986 | 88.4          | 11.0           | .7              |
|       | 1987 | 89.8          | 9.9            | .3              |
|       | 1988 | 89.3          | 9.3            | 1.3             |
| 20-24 | 1971 | 36.8          | 60.5           | .2              |
|       | 1975 | 40.3          | 55.9           | 3.5             |
|       | 1979 | 49.4          | 47.3           | 3.2             |
|       | 1983 | 55.5          | 40.6           | 3.7             |
|       | 1986 | 57.9          | 38.9           | 3.1             |
|       | 1987 | 60.8          | 36.0           | 3.2             |
|       | 1988 | 61.1          | 35.7           | 3.0             |
| 25-29 | 1971 | 12.0          | 83.0           | 4.3             |
|       | 1975 | 13.8          | 79.3           | 6.5             |
|       | 1979 | 19.6          | 72.1           | 7.8             |
|       | 1983 | 24.8          | 66.2           | 8.6             |
|       | 1986 | 28.1          | 63.8           | 7.6             |
|       | 1987 | 28.8          | 63.3           | 7.6             |
|       | 1988 | 29.5          | 62.2           | 7.8             |
| 30-34 | 1971 | 6.9           | 86.8           | 5.3             |
|       | 1975 | 7.5           | 84.5           | 7.1             |
|       | 1979 | 9.5           | 79.6           | 10.2            |
|       | 1983 | 13.0          | 75.3           | 11.0            |
|       | 1986 | 14.2          | 73.5           | 11.5            |
|       | 1987 | 14.6          | 73.4           | 11.2            |
|       | 1988 | 16.1          | 72.4           | 10.9            |

\*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census,  
Current Population Reports

## APPENDIX C (Continued)

Table 17--Birth rates per 1,000 unmarried women, 1970-1989

|      | 15-17 | 18-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1970 | 17.1  | 32.9  | 38.4  | 37.0  | 27.1  |
| 1975 | 19.5  | 32.8  | 31.6  | 27.5  | 17.9  |
| 1980 | 20.6  | 39.0  | 40.9  | 34.0  | 21.1  |
| 1981 | 20.9  | 39.9  | 40.9  | 34.7  | 20.8  |
| 1982 | 21.5  | 40.2  | 41.4  | 35.1  | 21.9  |
| 1983 | 22.1  | 41.0  | 42.0  | 35.6  | 22.3  |
| 1984 | 21.9  | 43.0  | 43.2  | 37.0  | 23.2  |
| 1985 | 22.5  | 46.6  | 46.8  | 39.8  | 25.0  |
| 1986 | 22.9  | 48.9  | 49.7  | 42.0  | 26.9  |
| 1987 | 24.5  | 49.9  | 53.1  | 44.3  | 29.3  |
| 1988 | 26.5  | 52.7  | 56.7  | 48.1  | 31.7  |
| 1989 | 28.8  | 57.4  | 62.0  | 52.3  | 34.4  |

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\*source: National Center for Health Statistics, 1986. Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1984. Supplement to Monthly Vital Statistics Report 35 (4) July: Table 19.  
and  
Supplement to Monthly Vital Statistics Report 40 (8) December: Table 17.

# APPENDIX C (Continued)

Table 18--Morbidity and rates (females) per 100,000 population by age group, United States, 1971-1984

| Age   | year | <u>Syphilis</u><br>cases | rates | <u>Gonorrhea</u><br>cases | rates   |
|-------|------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------|---------|
| 15-19 | 1971 | 1,998                    | 20.5  | 73,666                    | 757.0   |
|       | 1973 | 1,989                    | 19.5  | 124,773                   | 1,225.5 |
|       | 1975 | 1,833                    | 17.5  | 151,109                   | 1,446.4 |
|       | 1977 | 1,308                    | 12.4  | 148,185                   | 1,402.5 |
|       | 1979 | 1,478                    | 14.1  | 150,765                   | 1,438.9 |
|       | 1981 | 1,906                    | 19.1  | 137,807                   | 1,379.7 |
|       | 1983 | 2,104                    | 22.4  | 131,598                   | 1,401.8 |
|       | 1984 | 1,580                    | 17.2  | 126,585                   | 1,375.9 |
| 20-24 | 1971 | 2,541                    | 28.2  | 76,512                    | 849.5   |
|       | 1973 | 2,513                    | 27.4  | 127,928                   | 1,394.8 |
|       | 1975 | 2,263                    | 23.5  | 155,196                   | 1,610.8 |
|       | 1977 | 1,694                    | 16.8  | 155,407                   | 1,538.4 |
|       | 1979 | 1,778                    | 17.0  | 156,646                   | 1,493.9 |
|       | 1981 | 2,550                    | 23.6  | 154,076                   | 1,428.1 |
|       | 1983 | 2,829                    | 26.4  | 141,373                   | 1,320.0 |
|       | 1984 | 2,646                    | 25.1  | 141,530                   | 1,340.4 |
| 25-29 | 1971 | 1,373                    | 19.5  | 25,152                    | 356.4   |
|       | 1973 | 1,374                    | 17.4  | 44,203                    | 558.7   |
|       | 1975 | 1,272                    | 14.7  | 57,424                    | 664.1   |
|       | 1977 | 992                      | 10.9  | 59,064                    | 646.4   |
|       | 1979 | 1,043                    | 10.9  | 60,983                    | 637.1   |
|       | 1981 | 1,493                    | 14.9  | 64,068                    | 637.4   |
|       | 1983 | 1,758                    | 16.7  | 57,883                    | 550.2   |
|       | 1984 | 1,754                    | 16.5  | 58,851                    | 552.4   |
| 30-34 | 1971 | 817                      | 13.5  | 9,043                     | 149.9   |
|       | 1973 | 817                      | 12.3  | 15,498                    | 233.1   |
|       | 1975 | 720                      | 10.0  | 18,971                    | 264.6   |
|       | 1977 | 421                      | 5.3   | 18,916                    | 238.7   |
|       | 1979 | 583                      | 6.8   | 21,413                    | 249.8   |
|       | 1981 | 861                      | 9.1   | 23,231                    | 245.5   |
|       | 1983 | 990                      | 10.3  | 20,493                    | 213.8   |
|       | 1984 | 934                      | 9.5   | 21,339                    | 216.2   |

\*source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Statistics. 1984. Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia.

# APPENDIX C (Continued)

Table 19--Percent of magazine content devoted to sexual topics

| year | <u>Sevent.</u> | %<br>change* | <u>Mmle.</u> | %<br>change | <u>Cosmo.</u> | %<br>change | Total | %<br>change |
|------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| 1971 | 2.01           |              | .67          |             | 8.73          |             | 3.81  |             |
| 1973 | 0.00           | - 2.52       | 3.62         | +2.95       | 8.40          | -.33        | 4.40  | +.59        |
| 1976 | .93            | + .93        | 2.24         | -1.38       | 6.45          | -1.95       | 3.29  | -1.11       |
| 1979 | .81            | - .12        | 4.76         | -2.52       | 7.46          | +1.01       | 4.46  | +1.17       |
| 1981 | .74            | - .07        | 10.41        | +5.38       | 9.42          | +1.96       | 6.80  | +2.34       |
| 1985 | 2.55           | +1.81        | 7.45         | -2.69       | 14.52         | +5.10       | 7.69  | +.89        |
| 1987 | 4.07           | +1.52        | 5.44         | -2.01       | 13.99         | -.53        | 7.99  | +.30        |
| 1988 | 2.20           | -1.87        | 5.96         | +.52        | 11.61         | -2.38       | 7.30  | -.69        |
| 1991 | 3.51           | +1.31        | 14.62        | +8.66       | 18.31         | +6.70       | 12.69 | +5.39       |

Totals: 233 total sexual items (21 items in Seventeen; 78 items in Mademoiselle; 134 items in Cosmopolitan)

\*indicates change in percentage points from preceding year

# APPENDIX C (Continued)

Table 20—Item topics

|                            | year | sex relat./<br>sex in gen. | contrac. | STDs     | preg.    | totals    |
|----------------------------|------|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b><u>Seventeen</u></b>    | 1971 | 2                          | 1        | 0        | 0        | 3         |
|                            | 1973 | 0                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         |
|                            | 1976 | 0                          | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1         |
|                            | 1979 | 1                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1         |
|                            | 1981 | 1                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1         |
|                            | 1985 | 3                          | 1        | 0        | 0        | 4         |
|                            | 1987 | 1                          | 3        | 1        | 0        | 5         |
|                            | 1988 | 1                          | 0        | 1        | 0        | 2         |
|                            | 1991 | <u>3</u>                   | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>4</u>  |
|                            |      | 12                         | 6        | 2        | 1        | 21        |
|                            |      | (57.14%)                   | (28.57%) | (9.52%)  | (4.76%)  | (100%)    |
| <b><u>Mademoiselle</u></b> | 1971 | 1                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1         |
|                            | 1973 | 5                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 5         |
|                            | 1976 | 1                          | 1        | 0        | 1        | 3         |
|                            | 1979 | 4                          | 1        | 1        | 1        | 7         |
|                            | 1981 | 9                          | 1        | 3        | 1        | 14        |
|                            | 1985 | 6                          | 2        | 3        | 1        | 12        |
|                            | 1987 | 3                          | 0        | 4        | 1        | 8         |
|                            | 1988 | 4                          | 3        | 2        | 0        | 9         |
|                            | 1991 | <u>13</u>                  | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>19</u> |
|                            |      | 46                         | 10       | 16       | 78       | 78        |
|                            |      | (58.97%)                   | (12.82%) | (21.51%) | (7.69%)  | (100%)    |
| <b><u>Cosmopolitan</u></b> | 1972 | 9                          | 1        | 1        | 0        | 11        |
|                            | 1973 | 6                          | 1        | 1        | 2        | 10        |
|                            | 1976 | 8                          | 0        | 0        | 0        | 8         |
|                            | 1979 | 8                          | 1        | 0        | 1        | 10        |
|                            | 1981 | 10                         | 0        | 2        | 1        | 13        |
|                            | 1985 | 12                         | 2        | 2        | 2        | 18        |
|                            | 1987 | 14                         | 0        | 3        | 3        | 20        |
|                            | 1988 | 11                         | 4        | 1        | 2        | 18        |
|                            | 1991 | <u>19</u>                  | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>26</u> |
|                            |      | 97                         | 10       | 12       | 15       | 134       |
|                            |      | (72.39%)                   | (7.46%)  | (8.96%)  | (11.19%) | (100%)    |
| <b>Totals</b>              |      | 155                        | 26       | 30       | 21       | 233       |
|                            |      | (66.52%)                   | (11.61%) | (12.88%) | (9.44%)  |           |

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