

“MASTER YOUR JOHNSON”¹: SEXUAL RHETORIC IN *MAXIM* AND *STUFF* MAGAZINES

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This article reports the results of a content analysis of sexual rhetoric in editorial photographs ($N = 994$) in 2001 issues of *Maxim* and *Stuff* magazines. Goffman's (1979) classifications of gender in advertisements were used to examine how this new generation of “lad” magazines uses images to provide readers with cues about sexuality and sexual practice. The findings reveal that both magazines construct sexuality in similar ways. However, as expected, the overall message about sexuality in the photos is different for men than for women. Women are more likely than men to be portrayed as sex objects, such as the common practice of photographing them in contorting or demeaning positions. Both magazines also depict white people as sexier than other races and assume heterosexuality.

Sexuality, sexual attractiveness, and sexual practice are often defined by the mass media. The media prescribe how we should look, with whom we should have sex, and how important sex should be in our lives. In popular magazines, these messages are communicated in a variety of ways: through the stories told in the articles, through the photos, and through the advertisements. In the last 30

years, the mass media have become progressively more overt in their efforts to dictate sexuality (Bordo, 1999). The photos and advice are more explicit, and the message appears to be gaining popularity. Magazines that were once hidden under mattresses are now proudly displayed on coffee tables. *Maxim* and *Stuff* are emblematic of a new generation of magazines, marketed to young men, whose content is largely aimed at defining sexuality and sexual practice. The purpose of this article is to examine the rhetoric generated by this new generation of men’s magazines through a quantitative analysis of the sexual imagery in the magazines’ editorial photographs and a discussion of the sexual themes in the magazines’ articles. It is our contention that these magazines depict sexuality, sexual attractiveness, and sexual practice in a limited way that reinforces the objectification in the male gaze while privileging white heterosexuality.

In the last 10 years, a new crop of what the industry calls “lad” or “men’s service” magazines (including *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM*) has been quite successful. *Maxim*, the first to be launched in the U.S. in 1997, was actually modeled on the British publications *Loaded* and *FHM* (Itzkoff, 2002). *FHM* broke into the U.S. market in the wake of *Maxim*’s success. Dennis Publishing, the founders of *Maxim*, launched *Stuff* to compete with *FHM*’s U.S. invasion and also launched a British version of *Maxim* (Itzkoff, 2002).

These magazines differ from other general-circulation men’s lifestyle magazines like *GQ* and *Esquire* in a number of ways. First, they contain more photos and articles with overt sexual content. Second, the new generation of magazines widely acknowledges this sexual focus. For example, *Maxim* subtitles itself “The Best Thing to Happen to Men since Women.” Third, these magazines have much higher circulations than their older counterparts (Itzkoff, 2002; Lambiase & Reichert, 2003). *Maxim* has a monthly circulation of about 2.6 million readers (Itzkoff, 2002; Lambiase & Reichert, 2003) and *Stuff* has a monthly circulation of about 1.1 million (Dennis Publishing Circulation Desk, Personal Communication, March 26, 2003). Fourth, there is increasing evidence that magazines like *Maxim* are having an effect on the covers of other men’s magazines including *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Rolling Stone* (Lambiase &

Reichert, 2003). Lambiase and Reichert's (2003) work demonstrates that women are more likely to appear on the covers of these magazines, and that women are more likely to be scantily clad or posed in sexually suggestive ways.

Magazines and Gender

Significant theoretical influence on the research into constructions of gender and sexuality is found in the work of postmodern theorists like Foucault (1979) and cultural critics like Bordo (1993; 1999). They argue that the act of looking can create a power dynamic in which the subject of the look is symbolically possessed by the looker. Many scholars argue that photographs that depict women as submissive and men as dominant normalize this sexual power dynamic and help to perpetuate it. Subjects of the male gaze are posed so that they appear to be "waiting for men to observe them" (Mason, 1992, p. 27). The male gaze frames heterosexuality as an existence where the male identity is not just different than the female identity but more valuable (Bird, 1996).

Extensive research exists on the constructions of gender and sexuality in magazines. The majority of this research examines depictions of women and men in advertising, beginning with Goffman's landmark 1979 study. There are fewer studies of feature articles and pictures. Magazine advertisements, while a good indication of the market audience and an important mass-mediated source of images and sexual rhetoric, do not represent the intent of the publishers of the magazine. If advertisements have a demonstrable effect on how we think about ourselves, as the prior research has amply demonstrated, the features of a magazine should have even more influence. After all, the advertisements, however appealing, do not sell the magazine. And while advertisements implicitly advise or instruct readers on how to look and act, magazine features often do so explicitly. Therefore, we focus our analysis on featured articles and photographs in these magazines, rather than on their advertisements. The research on magazine advertising does, however, inform our work on editorial components.

Magazine Advertising Research

Advertising research has covered the vast array of magazine genres. These studies frequently have examined constructions of gender and sexuality in magazine advertisements, and thereby provide a foundation upon which our research builds. Analyses of advertisements in both general interest and women’s or men’s magazines indicate that women are more likely than men to be depicted as sexual objects through pose and context (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Goffman, 1979; Kang, 1997; Sexton & Haberman, 1974; Venkatesan & Losco, 1975). The number and range of gender roles for women depicted in advertisements, however, has not remained stable over time but has become more diversified as a result of the women’s movement (Ferguson, Kreschel, & Tinkham, 1990; Klassen, Jasper, & Schwartz 1993; Ruggiero & Weston, 1985; Sullivan & O’Connor, 1988).

Klassen et al.’s (1993) study compared advertisements from different magazine genres, including *Ms.* Their analysis demonstrated that *Ms.* was less likely than other popular magazines to portray women as sexual objects. Other comparative analyses of ads in different types of magazines indicated that there was little variation across the magazines in the roles women were expected to play or the clothes they were expected to wear (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, & Paisley, 1976; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986). *Ms.* might once have constituted a “best case scenario” for non-sexist portrayals of women in advertising. But a 1990 study of advertising in *Ms.* concluded that, over the first 15 years of its publication (after which it no longer ran ads), *Ms.* magazine began more frequently to publish advertisements portraying women as sexual objects (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham, 1990).

Recent work indicates that men are depicted more frequently in advertising as sexual objects than in the past (Rohlinger, 2002). Susan Bordo (1999) argues that the trend toward portraying men as sexual objects should be understood in a different context than the sexual objectification of women. She conducted a comparative analysis of underwear ads, in which men in their underwear are shown with their pants around their ankles in one ad; in another ad,

women are similarly depicted. Bordo argues that the models “are not in equal states of undress because pants-around-the-ankles conveys something different on the bodies of men than they do on the bodies of women.... (T)he guys’ bodies ... do not seem stripped or exposed” (1999, p. 28). Although this prior research has examined different types of magazines, different time periods, and used different methodologies, the common conclusion is that women are more likely than men to be sexualized in magazine advertisements and presented in demeaning ways.

Editorial Research

Analyses of feature photographs and articles have been less extensive, but what research has been done reached similar conclusions. In their 1993 article on cover models, Rich and Cash observed that women with blonde hair were disproportionately featured. They argue that these depictions contribute to a construction of the beauty ideal which is unattainable for most women because they are not blonde or do not have pencil-thin figures. Another study of cover models found that the weight and body type of most cover models were remarkably similar and unattainable for most women (Malkin, Wornier, & Chrisler, 1999). The photography of women cover models, like most advertisements featuring women, reflected the male gaze, “tend[ing] to portray what women should *look like* and what men should *look for*” (1999, p. 650; emphasis added).

Research on the impact of these mass-mediated messages about body image has concluded that these messages have particularly harmful effects on girls and young women (Bissell, 2002; Bordo, 1993; Harrison, 2000; Pipher, 1994). Mary Pipher (1994, p. 184) argues that girls develop eating disorders because mass media images of beauty and sexual desirability cannot be obtained through healthy eating. Hyde and Jaffee’s (2000) work demonstrates that young girls are impacted by media messages in more ways than body image alone. Their study concludes that mass-mediated images also contribute to fostering anti-gay attitudes and increasing the appeal of traditional gender roles (Hyde & Jaffee, 2000).

Many of the previous studies on feature photography have focused on pornography and its cultural impact. This research considered the sexual messages conveyed through body pose and level of nudity (Bogaert, Turkovich, & Hafer, 1993), the level of violence in pornographic images (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Smith, 1976), and the long-term impact of viewing these images (Brannigan & Goldenberg, 1987; Fisher & Grenier, 1994; Linz, 1989; Mayerson & Taylor, 1987). While pornographic magazines tend to display less sexual violence than other forms of pornography, one study concluded that the frequency of violence is on the rise (Barron and Kimmel, 2000). Our previous work comparing *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* magazines demonstrated that the sexual objectification of women through the reinforcement of the male gaze was clearly the dominant rhetoric in both magazines, even though one was a pornographic magazine and the other was not (Krassas et al., 2001)

Maxim and *Stuff* magazines are not usually deemed pornography, but their content overlaps with the content of more obviously pornographic magazines such as *Playboy* in some respects. Each magazine has at least one section that contains fairly graphic descriptions of sexual encounters, and each magazine includes sexually suggestive photos of women. Women in these magazines are often so scantily clad that only creative photography prevents full exposure of their bodies. One October 2001 *Maxim* photo of actress Jolene Blalock depicts her sitting on a feather boa almost entirely nude. Her nipples are shielded from view by her long hair and she is in the process of pulling down bikini underpants. The lack of total nudity provides a veneer of acceptability that prevents *Maxim* and *Stuff* from being regarded as pornographic despite these commonalities.²

The prior research leads us to focus on how *Maxim* and *Stuff* construct sexuality and sexual practice. Our analysis will examine the roles assigned to male and female subjects, body pose as signaling submissiveness or domination, and nudity as an indicator of objectification. We expect to find that women are commonly portrayed in subordinate roles, posed in demeaning ways, and objectified through the use of partial nudity.

Magazine Analysis

Our sample consisted of six *Stuff* and six *Maxim* magazines from 2001 (see Appendix). Issues were chosen based on availability. We coded every photo that had a live adult human associated with written text (N=994). Excluded were duplicates³, tiny photo inserts of record album covers, tiny photo inserts of films, other photos that were so small that the actual content was unclear, drawings, photos of children, and photos of animals or inanimate objects. These exclusions were made to limit the cases included in our analysis to those relevant to the purpose of this study.

The coding scheme we developed relies on the classifications from Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979). In his study, Goffman assembled hundreds of magazine advertisements and classified various types of poses. In juxtaposing and grouping poses, he commented on the portrayals of men and women and their messages about appropriate roles, looks, and behaviors for the different genders. Goffman's choice of ads was purposeful, not random, and his conclusions have been challenged due to concerns about his methodology. Nonetheless, Goffman's categories for analysis of gender in images have been adapted by other scholars and used repeatedly to analyze the content of mass-mediated images (Kang, 1997; Klassen et al., 1993; Vigorito & Curry, 1998). We previously adapted Goffman's classifications in an article examining the sexual rhetorics of feature photography in *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines (Krassas et al., 2001).

For each photograph, we coded its content using a number of variables suggested by Goffman's classifications. Photographs were assigned at random and coded by two of the authors. The codes were pre-tested for inter-coder reliability using the photographs that appeared on the *Maxim* and *Stuff* web pages; reliability exceeded 0.90. Because the variables code body position, function, size, and other elements, our coding scheme does not rely on a subjective determination of whether or not a photograph is sexist, and thereby reduces bias in coding.

For each picture, we coded who was depicted: men or man alone, women or woman alone, or both sexes. This variable allowed us to

analyze the frequency with which each gender appears in the magazines' photography. Pictures that had both men and women in them were analyzed in terms of the relative size/height of the men and women as well as the relative functions of the people depicted. Goffman's analysis indicated that men almost always are pictured bigger or higher in the frame than women (Goffman, 1979, p. 28). Relative size or height may communicate differences in social status and dependency. A related variable considers the relative functions of the men and women in a picture. Goffman notes that men in advertisements are more often depicted as performing a function while women are merely decorative (Goffman, 1979, p. 32-35). This difference in what Goffman calls “function ranking” obviously relates to the gender roles assigned to men and women through such images.

The individual functions of the people in the photos also were coded by gender. Relying on Goffman's analysis, in which he noted that men more frequently had a specific function in the advertisements while women did not, we created a typology to measure whether the person/people were business professionals, a spouse/partner/parent, a sex object, or in another role. We added separate codes for entertainer/musician, criminal, and athlete because of the frequency with which those functions appeared in the pages of *Maxim* and *Stuff*, particularly in photographs featuring men. The categorization of people in the entertainment industries raised an important methodological problem to resolve, as many of the revealing photos of scantily clad women featured celebrities. In our classification, are these women appropriately coded in the function of entertainer or sex object? We distinguished between the “sex object” category and the “entertainer” category by considering the context of the article. The question was asked in each case: “Is this photo meant to depict an entertainer or is it meant to depict a sexual fantasy?”

The body position variable measured whether the models in the photos were standing, sitting, reclining, or contorting. Goffman observed that women were more likely to be placed in the reclining or contorting positions that depict “sexual availability” (Goffman, 1979, p. 41). Our variable to measure canting refers to the tilt of the

model's head that makes her (or him) appear to be inviting sexual conquest. In Victorian literature, canting might be referred to as a "come hither" look. Goffman describes canting as a posture that "can be read as acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement" (1979, p. 46).

Additional codes that measure aspects of pose include "feminine/masculine touch" (Goffman, 1979, p. 29) and "licensed withdrawal" (Goffman, 1979, p. 57). Feminine touch refers to the story told by the hands in the photo. Goffman (1979, pp. 29-31) found that women were more likely than men to be touching themselves (perhaps in a sexually suggestive manner), or gently touching an object rather than putting an object to use. By contrast, when men touch in advertisements, they touch in a utilitarian manner. Our variable measures whether the hands of the person were lightly caressing an object, touching him- or herself in a suggestive way, or engaged in a useful activity.

Goffman (1979, p. 57) refers to "licensed withdrawal" as a pattern in which the model is depicted as "removed psychologically from the social situation at large, leaving them unoriented in it, and presumably, therefore, dependent on the protectiveness and goodwill of others." Gestures suggesting licensed withdrawal include covering the face, sucking or biting fingers, averting one's head or eyes, shielding oneself behind an object or other person, and leaning for support against another person. We measured which of these gestures, if any, were used by the people featured in each photograph.

In addition to role/function and pose, we also coded the photos for the use of nudity. *Maxim* and *Stuff* stop just short of depicting female models in the nude, but contain a great deal of partial nudity. Kang (1997) also added nudity (or "body display") to Goffman's classifications in her study of advertising in women's magazines because, as she argued, nudity stereotypes women's sexual nature even if the pose itself is not demeaning. In an earlier study, we argued that "Nudity is a particularly prevalent form of stereotyping in features, more common in feature photos than in magazine advertisements, at least in the United States" (Krassas et al., 2001, p. 6). Bogaert et al.'s (1993) classification of nudity in

Playboy centerfolds served as the model for our measures. We coded exposure of breasts (or chest for men), buttocks, and faces.

Facial exposure was included not because it is a measure of nudity but because it is an important criterion for measuring objectification (Bogaert et al., 1997, p. 135). A model is depersonalized when the face is obscured or hidden while the body is exposed. We coded exposure of the model’s face along with other body parts and then constructed a variable that counted as objectification any picture that partially or fully concealed the model’s face while partially or fully exposing any other body parts: breasts/chest or buttocks.

Last, we noted the race of the models depicted, in order to test the claim in some scholarly works that norms of sexuality in popular culture are largely constructed through depicting the actions of white people (Bordo, 1999; Gabriel, 1998; Krassas et al., 2001). Prior research on race in advertising concluded that magazine ads are predominantly peopled with white men and women unless the magazine’s target audience is people of color (Thomas and Treiber, 2000). A study of the *Lucozade* advertising campaign in Great Britain (Jackson, 1994) evaluated the success of that campaign and concluded that success was more common for ads featuring white spokespeople or black athletes who were able to assume a traditionally white role because of their preexisting place in popular culture.

Findings: Sexuality and Sexual Practice

Our findings are consistent with existing research. Forty-seven percent of the photos in our sample depicted women alone, 42.7% depicted men alone, and 10.4% depicted men and women together. This result supports our assertion that, in these magazines, there is a prevailing emphasis on heterosexuality. Since *Maxim* and *Stuff* market themselves to men as lifestyle magazines about sexuality and sexual practice, the fact that women are depicted 57.4% of the time indicates a strong preference for heterosexuality.

Maxim and *Stuff* contain remarkably similar content, making a comparative analysis of the two magazines quite uninteresting.

Maxim contained more photos than *Stuff* (59% v. 41% of our sample), but that was the result of *Maxim*'s size: it contains more editorial pages so it includes more pictures. The distribution of photographs by gender in each magazine was similar. Measures of association identified no statistically significant difference between the two magazines for any variable. For this article, we therefore choose to report the combined frequencies for both magazines.

Men and women were rarely depicted together in the sample. When they were depicted together, a plurality of photographs showed men and women of equal size (38.6%), rather than placing the man bigger or higher in the frame (33.6%) or the woman bigger or higher in the frame (27.7%). Our analysis of function ranking shows that when women and men appeared together, both were likely to be depicted as decorative (68.3%). However, 20.8% of the photos depicted the men as functional and women as decorative, compared to only 2.0% with the reverse. So when any of the models were given something functional to do, the results supported Goffman's finding: women were more likely than men to be portrayed in magazine photography as merely decorative (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the individual functions of women and men in *Maxim* and *Stuff* strongly conform to our expectations. Women were more likely to be depicted as sexual objects (80.5%) than

Table 1

Relative Size and Function Ranking	
Relative Size	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>
Woman Bigger/Higher	27.7% (29)
Man/Woman Equal	38.6% (40)
Man Bigger/Higher	33.6% (34)
Total	100.0% (103)
Function Ranking	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>
Woman Functional/ Man Decorative	2.0% (2)
Both Functional	8.9% (9)
Both Decorative	68.3% (69)
Man Functional/ Woman Decorative	20.8% (21)
Total	100.0% (101)

Note: (#) indicates number in each category.

Table 2

Function	Female/Male Function			
	Female		Male	
Business Professional	1.2%	(7)	12.4%	(64)
Homemaker/Spouse/Partner	4.2%	(24)	3.2%	(17)
Sex Object	80.5%	(458)	33.3%	(176)
Entertainer	9.3%	(53)	29.7%	(157)
Athlete	1.4%	(8)	11.3%	(60)
Criminal	0.5%	(3)	4.5%	(24)
More Than One	0.2%	(1)	0.6%	(3)
Other	2.6%	(15)	5.3%	(28)
Total	100.0%	(569)	100.0%	(529)

Note: (#) indicates the number of pictures in each category for *Maxim* and *Stuff* combined.

men (33.3%). Men were more likely to be given specific roles as entertainers (29.7%), business professionals (12.4%), or athletes (11.3%).

When posed for pictures, men were more likely to be depicted standing (54.4%) than women (40.9%). (See Table 3.) Women were more likely to be depicted reclining (12.7%) or contorting (15.8%) than men (2.1% and 5.9% respectively). These results also strongly support our expectations. As Goffman observed (1979, p. 41), body positions of female models are frequently used to convey their sexual availability. In fact, 16.4% of the photos of men were head shots compared to 7.9% of women, so their bodies were not pictured at all. Our measuring of canting also shows the expected results: 44.8% of the photographs of women depicted this posture of sexual invitation, compared to only 2.6% of the photographs of men (see Table 3).

Maxim and *Stuff* are more likely to show more women than men decoratively touching objects (35.9% and 28.1% respectively). The photographs most commonly depict men making use of objects, like drinking from a glass, writing with a pen, or using a power tool (40.1% compared to women at 13.9%). As expected, women were more commonly depicted touching themselves (40.3% compared to men at 7.5%). Perhaps most notable is the overwhelming lack of self-touching when men are depicted in photos. This result suggests a deliberate effort to obscure male body parts and highlight female ones (see Table 4).

Table 3

Female/Male Body Position & Canting				
Body Position	Female		Male	
Standing	40.9%	(231)	54.5%	(289)
Sitting	20.7%	(117)	18.3%	(97)
Reclining	12.7%	(72)	2.1%	(11)
Contorting	15.8%	(89)	4.9%	(26)
Head Shot	6.9%	(39)	16.4%	(87)
Sitting + Reclining	1.1%	(6)	0.8%	(4)
Standing + Sitting	0.4%	(2)	1.9%	(10)
Standing + Reclining	0.4%	(2)	0.6%	(3)
Standing + Contorting	0.4%	(2)	0.6%	(3)
Sitting + Contorting	0.5%	(3)	0.2%	(1)
Reclining + Contorting	0.4%	(2)		
Total	100.0%	(565)	100.0%	(531)
Canting	Female		Male	
Yes	44.8%	(254)	2.6%	(14)
No	53.6%	(304)	97.0%	(514)
Yes + No	1.6%	(9)	0.4%	(2)
Total	100.0%	(567)	100.0%	(567)

Note: (#) indicates the number of pictures in each category for *Maxim* and *Stuff* combined.

Table 4

Feminine/Masculine Touch				
Type of Touch	Feminine		Masculine	
Utilitarian	13.9%	(79)	40.0%	(212)
Decorative	35.9%	(204)	28.1%	(149)
Self Touching	40.3%	(229)	7.5%	(40)
No Touch (Hands Missing)	8.1%	(46)	23.0%	(122)
Utilitarian + Self Touch	0.4%	(2)	0.2%	(1)
Decorative + Self Touch	0.7%	(4)	0.2%	(1)
Utilitarian + Decorative	0.7%	(4)	0.9%	(5)
Total	100.0%	(569)	100.0%	(529)

Note: (#) indicates the number of pictures in each category for *Maxim* and *Stuff* combined.

Among the variables that code pose, only the measure of licensed withdrawal fails to perform as expected (see Table 5). The majority of photos of both men and women show no gestures that are subsumed by this category. The distributions in the various categories

Table 5

Licensed Withdrawal				
Type of Licensed Withdrawal	Female		Male	
Covering Face	1.6%	(9)	3.2%	(17)
Sucking/Biting Finger	1.6%	(9)	0.4%	(2)
Head/Eye Aversion	23.3%	(132)	23.4%	(124)
Shielded Behind Object/Person	4.6%	(26)	4.2%	(22)
Snuggling or Arm Support	0.7%	(4)	0.2%	(1)
None	67.4%	(382)	67.5%	(358)
More Than One	0.9%	(5)	1.1%	(6)
Total	100.0%	(567)	100.0%	(530)

Note: (#) indicates the number of pictures in each category for *Maxim* and *Stuff* combined.

of licensed withdrawal are virtually identical for both men and women. The most common type of licensed withdrawal in *Maxim* and *Stuff* is head or eye aversion, seen in approximately one-quarter of all photographs of women and men.

As stated earlier, there were no depictions of full nudity in the magazines, but there were plenty of depictions of partial nudity, with women in much higher states of undress than men (see Table 6). Photos of women depicted partially exposed breasts in 62.0% of the pictures compared to 11.0% of male chests fully or partially exposed. There were lower levels of buttock exposure for both genders, but 12.0% of women had their buttocks partially or fully exposed, compared to less than 1% of men.

Table 7 reports the results for our measure of objectification. As expected, women were more likely than men to have their faces fully or partially concealed in photographs that partially exposed their breasts (chests for men) or buttocks. Women were objectified in 15.5% of the pictures which contained nudity, while men were objectified in only 3.4% of pictures which contained nudity. These photos make the models appear to be objects of sexual desire rather than full-fledged human beings.

Finally, our measure of the race of the models indicates that more than 80% of all the pictures of men and women depicted individuals who appeared white to the coders. Less than 10% appeared black, less than 2% Asian and about 6% were non-white of a race indeterminate to the coders. This result confirms prior research that

Table 6

Body Exposure		
Breast Exposure (Women)		
	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>	
Covered	38.0%	(216)
Partially Exposed	60.7%	(345)
Cov'd +Partially Exposed	1.3%	(7)
Total	100.0%	(568)
Chest Exposure (Men)		
	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>	
Covered	89.0%	(471)
Partially Exposed	5.7%	(30)
Fully Exposed	4.2%	(22)
Cov'd +Partially Exposed	1.1%	(6)
Total	100.0%	(529)
Female Buttock Exposure		
	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>	
Covered	87.7%	(497)
Partially Exposed	11.6%	(66)
Cov'd +Partially Exposed	0.4%	(4)
Total	100.0%	(567)
Male Buttock Exposure		
	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>	
Covered	99.2%	(525)
Partially Exposed	0.2%	(1)
Fully Exposed	0.2%	(1)
Cov'd +Partially Exposed	0.4%	(2)
Total	100.0%	(529)

Note: (#) indicates the number of pictures in each category for *Maxim* and *Stuff* combined.

Table 7

Objectification		
Objectification		
	<i>Maxim/Stuff</i>	
Woman Objectified	15.5%	(64)
Man Objectified	3.4 %	(14)
Nude but not Objectified	81.2%	(336)
Total	100.0%	(414)

Note (#) indicates number in each category.

popular cultural norms of sexuality are constructed through depictions of white people and that, like advertisements, feature photography in general audience magazines is dominated by white men and women.

Discussion and Conclusions

Kimmel argues that pornography is a kind of “gendered speech” in that it is produced for men by men (2000, p. 164). This type of hegemonic masculine communication system is very strongly evidenced in *Maxim* and *Stuff*. The women in the photos are clearly the focus of the male gaze. They are portrayed primarily as mere sexual objects, posed in ways that convey their sexually availability, and scantily clad, waiting to be ogled and possessed by the male viewer. This male gaze commodifies women, presenting their bodies as erotic objects to be displayed and remade according to the latest fashion (Forbes, 1996; McMahan, 1990; Pipher, 1994). By contrast, the men depicted in the magazines typically have an identity other than sex object and are posed in more natural, less sexualized ways. This result is consistent with Kuhn’s (1985) analysis that in pornography, women are more likely to be pictured looking into the camera and canting because that pose functions as an invitation to the male viewer.

Maxim and *Stuff* offer advice to men about how they should look in fashion sections located at the back of each magazine. Their advice to men about how women should look pervades the pages of each issue. Women should be scantily clad, have figures that are unattainable for the majority of the population, and be white, particularly in *Maxim* where only 11% of the photos depicted non-white women.

Each magazine issue we analyzed also had at least one article giving advice about sexual practice and more than one article creating sexual fantasies about the women featured. Some had sex surveys; others generated fantasies about potential sexual practice. Both magazines also depicted the feminist movement as having a negative impact on sexuality. There were 10 broad themes that emerged from the feature articles with sexual content:

1. The more sex and sexual partners a man has, the better. A good portion of the advice was aimed at helping men get more sex.
2. Please your partner. Men were given lots of advice on how to please their partners so that the women would then give them more sex.
3. Intoxication makes sexual conquest better.
4. Relationships are unnecessary. There were numerous articles or poll reports that labeled men who are married or in monogamous relationships as pitiful.
5. Kinky or unusual sex is better than conventional sex. A common topic in articles concerned unusual sexual positions or locations.
6. The appearance of sincerity is more important than actual sincerity. Advice about picking up women commonly included instructions on how to pretend to be sincere.
7. Vulnerable women are easier targets. Men who have trouble getting regular sex were advised to find either single women with children (who are portrayed as desperate) or women who have just ended relationships.
8. Strip clubs, pornography, and other sexual entertainment are important cultural phenomena in which to participate.
9. Threesomes between two women and a man are highly desirable. There was at least one fantasy of this nature presented in each magazine.
10. Heterosexuality is the norm men should adhere to. Sexual fantasies concerning threesomes clearly condemned lesbianism. The sexual contact between the two women was intended solely to titillate the man.

In providing context for the feature photography, these themes support our contention that *Maxim* and *Stuff* frame sexuality and sexual practice in limited ways that reinforce the objectification of women and privilege heterosexuality. Women are important as objects of sexual desire and conquest, these articles say, but their pleasure is a secondary consideration, intended only to ensure that men's supply of sex continues unabated. Men need a lot of sex with many female partners to be satisfied, and they should not be constricted by relationships or monogamy. A man who has difficulty finding sexual partners should feel free to manipulate or target vulnerable women, or seek sexual entertainment through strip clubs, pornography, or prostitution. Sating one's sexual appetite is the only important consideration. Men have sex with women, of course; and while it is a sign of virility to have more than one woman at a time, the women are there to please the man—just as when sex is one-on-one.

These magazines are equally clear in communicating to their male audience through both photographs and articles how men and women should behave with regard to sex. The partial nudity in which the immense majority of women in *Maxim* and *Stuff* are displayed contributes to its rhetoric of sexual conduct. Nudity, or the display of the body as an object to be admired and ogled, is different than nakedness, which is a state of being without clothes (Berger, 1977). Although the women in *Maxim* and *Stuff* are never completely nude, their bodies are displayed in virtually identical ways to those found in conventional pornography such as *Playboy* (Krassas et al., 2001). They are posed as sexually available: contorting or lying on a bed or floor; their hands cover their nipples, or their legs straddle a chair which conceals their genitals. They are on display as objects of desire and visual possession. The strategic use of hands and props to conceal nipples and pubic hair or genitalia separates these magazines from the genre of pornography. But, as Jane Ussher has argued, “Despite the absence of subtlety, pornography cannot be separated from every other representation of woman frozen in the masculine gaze” (1997, p. 144). Although *Maxim* and *Stuff* are not categorized as pornography, there is not a tremendous amount of subtlety here, either.

The purpose of this article has been to examine the sexual rhetorics of *Maxim* and *Stuff* and to place them within the context of existing research on magazines. As both magazines are published by the same publisher and have virtually identical content, we have focused our analysis on a comparison of their rhetorics of sexuality and sexual practice for men and women. Much of the prior research on constructions of gender and sexuality compare different genre of magazines. Thus, we conclude that a promising direction for future research would compare the rhetorics of *Maxim* and *Stuff* to other men’s magazines, including more conventional general interest men’s magazines like *GQ* or *Esquire* as well as pornographic magazines like *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. We contend that, apart from more limited use of nudity in *Maxim* and *Stuff*, there is little difference between the photos and articles in these magazines and in men’s pornographic magazines. That claim could be empirically verified through a systematic investigation.

Notes

1. This part of the title is the direct quotation of a headline from the December 2002 issue of *Maxim*.
2. Readers who have never seen a copy of *Maxim* or *Stuff* can look on their websites where most of the feature photos of women are accessible.
3. Frequently, photos in the table of contents were duplicates of photos attached to particular articles.

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Appendix

Magazines Included in Sample

Maxim:

February 2001

June 2001

July 2001

August 2001

October 2001

December 2001

Stuff:

February 2001

March 2001

April 2001

June 2001

August 2001

December 2001