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## **The Portrayal of Elements Historically Associated with Masculine and Feminine Domains in Lad and Metrosexual Men's Lifestyle Magazines**

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# The Portrayal of Elements Historically Associated with Masculine and Feminine Domains in Lad and Metrosexual Men's Lifestyle Magazines

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## Abstract

Differing presentations of masculinity exist that appear to differentially embody elements historically associated with masculine and feminine domains. Metrosexuality, for instance, has been associated with more feminine characteristics and lifestyle choices (Simpson, 1994a) while laddist masculinity was presumed to be more traditionally masculine given its focus on bachelorhood and hedonistic consumption. The present research investigated representations of stereotypical or hyper-masculine (sports, strength, cars) and stereotypical or hyper-feminine (fashion, beauty, dieting) content in a metrosexual and laddist men's lifestyle magazine. Qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that the magazines differed in the amount of hyper-masculine material related to sports and strength, but not cars, with laddist magazines portraying this information more than metrosexual magazines. In terms of stereotypical or hyper-feminine material, both laddist and metrosexual magazines depicted fashion frequently, but the metrosexual magazines did portray this information significantly more often. The magazines did not differ in the frequency of portrayals of beauty or dieting; however they did differ in how they portrayed these topics. Implications for masculinities are discussed.

**Keywords:** masculinities, metrosexuality, laddism, stereotypes, life-style magazine

# La Representación de Elementos Históricamente Asociados con los Dominios Masculinos y Femeninos de los Estilos de vida de los Chicos y Hombres Metrosexuales

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## Resumen

Existen diferentes manifestaciones de la masculinidad que incorporan elementos históricos asociados con los dominios masculinos y femeninos. La metrosexualidad, por ejemplo, se ha asociado con características y estilos de vida más femeninos (Simpson, 1994a), mientras que la masculinidad juvenil es tradicionalmente más masculina porque se centra en la soltería y el consumo hedonista. El presente artículo estudia las representaciones estereotipadas de contenido híper-masculino (deportes, fuerza, automóviles) o híper-femenino (moda, belleza, dietas) en revistas centrada en los estilos de vida metrosexual y de hombres jóvenes. Los análisis cualitativos y cuantitativos sugieren que las revistas difieren en la cantidad de material híper-masculino relacionado con el deporte y la fuerza, pero no con la relacionada con los coches. En las revistas juveniles esta información está más reflejada que en las de orientación metrosexual. En términos del material estereotipado o híper-femenino, las revistas juveniles y metrosexuales reflejan la moda metrosexual con menor frecuencia que las revistas de carácter metrosexual. Las revistas no se diferencian en la frecuencia que representan la belleza o las dietas, sin embargo sí que lo hacen en como retratan estos aspectos. El artículo plantea la relación de todo ello con las masculinidades.

**Palabras claves:** masculinidades, metrosexualidad, ladismo, revistas de estilos de vida

The view of gender as being socially constructed and impacted by social and historical contexts, as well as political and class structures, has now become widely accepted (Brittan, 1989; Hearn & Collinson, 1994; Hearn & Morgan, 1990; Kimmel, 1987; Segal, 1990). Theorists no longer adhered to the idea of one masculinity; they accepted that multiple masculinities co-exist (Messner, 2002). However, masculinities in mainstream culture are often still conceptualized as a single set of beliefs about what is masculine and what should be masculine—often in a dichotomous comparison to femininities and notions of what is feminine (Connell, 2005). This dichotomous view of gender is further challenged by the existence of multiple forms and understandings of masculinity—and even femininity. For example, metrosexual masculinity is perceived to incorporate components stereotypically associated with femininity (Simpson, 1994b), while laddist masculinity is viewed as embracing more stereotypically masculine qualities (Attwood, 2005). In this manuscript, we examined representations of content typically associated with femininities and masculinities in two different men’s lifestyle magazines (*GQ* and *Maxim*). These magazines target different audiences and suggest different understandings of what constitutes masculinity. Our objective is to determine how current representations of masculinity are portrayed and how hegemonic notions of masculinity have also evolved.

### Masculinities

Definitions of masculinities tend to be broad, focusing on experiences of men on a personal level (experiences in daily interactions) or a collective level (power relations in the gender order) (e.g., Brod, 1987; Clatterbaugh, 1998; Connell, 1995). There is no singular form of masculinity; it can take multiple forms and many subtypes have been identified (Connell, 1995). However, despite this reality, one form will always be dominant or hegemonic at any particular point in history, holding a position of power over other forms of masculinity and over femininity (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Pleck & Pleck, 1980).

Connell and Messerschmidt explained that hegemonic masculinity is “the currently honored way of being a man; it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it...” (2005, p. 832). But what is

“currently honored” is subject to ongoing change, ensuring masculinities remain unstable concepts. They vary according to cultural norms and social experiences. Hegemonic masculinity, in particular, takes on different manifestations across space and time (Connell, 1995). Furthermore, Ricciardelli, Clow, and White (2010) found that different subtypes of masculinities are not discrete alternatives to hegemonic masculinity, but rather different mechanisms through which hegemony could be expressed. Hegemonic masculinity remains dominant and powerful because of its ability to adapt and mold itself into new forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is not to be confused with hyper-masculinity. Hyper-masculinity refers to realities or characteristics (e.g., behaviors, beliefs, and actions) that are exceptionally masculine in nature; as defined by existing cultural and societal values (Schroeder, 2004). Hyper-masculine realities are characterized by exaggerated ‘traditionally’ masculine presentations, such as inflated presentations of toughness, heterosexuality and a focus on sports, cars, and fighting, whereas hegemonic masculinity incorporates understandings of relational issues in the context of power dynamics and interactional presentations.

Metrosexuality, a subtype of masculinity that developed in the late 1970s and early 1980’s alongside the gay liberation movement (Carrigan et al., 1985), re-shaped conventional understandings of masculinity by creating additional possibilities for change to occur in the gendered order (Connell, 2005). Men were given new venues for self-expression—including the use of fashion and beauty products to demonstrate their individuality (Simpson, 1994b). The growing expendable income of single men, due to decreased pressures on men to marry young and become “breadwinners” (Segal, 1993; Simpson, 1994b), along with the increasing availability of male grooming products and fashions, perpetuated the growth and social acceptance of metrosexualism among some communities. The metrosexual man is defined by his interest in fashion, grooming and the emphasis he places on self-presentation (Segal, 1993)—cultural elements that have historically been considered uniquely feminine. Given his open acceptance of his feminine side, the metrosexual has been called “the new man” (Segal, 1993) and his existence is thought to challenge some understandings of what constitutes masculinity.

A second subtype of masculinity, laddism, emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, but quickly spread to North America (Attwood, 2005). It is a consumerist model of masculinity that forsakes any sense of responsibility and encourages immaturity (Attwood, 2005; Whelehan, 2000). The lad lifestyle centers on youthfulness, hedonistic consumption, bachelorhood, and sexual conquest (Attwood, 2005). It is characterized by an emphasis on hyper-masculine interests, such as sports, cars, and video games, as well as more risky health behaviors, such as binge drinking, promiscuity, and drug use (Attwood, 2005; Jackson, Stevenson, & Brooks, 2001). Laddism has been viewed as a hostile response to feminism, where sexist attitudes and the objectification of women are encouraged rather than gender equality (Benwell, 2004). For example, lad publications focus on sexual conquest and are filled with images of scantily clad women (Attwood, 2005; Ricciardelli et al., 2010; Taylor, 2005). In this sense, male dominance over women is implied along with explicit heterosexuality which together illustrates the strong influence of hegemonic masculinity on lad masculinity (Ricciardelli et al., 2010).

### **Masculine versus Feminine**

Research has established that strength, cars and sports are stereotypical or even hyper-masculine domains (LeBlanc, 2006; Anderson, 2005; Messner, 2002; O'Connell, 1998; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). Strength has historically been representative of masculinity as men required physical strength to farm, trade, or create their livelihoods pre-industrialization (Wamsley, 2007). Yet, with industrialization and the trend toward more sedentary occupations, fewer men became muscular through their employment. As such, to achieve strength and muscularity, men have increasingly embraced a gym culture where they engage in bodywork to increase their muscle mass (Pope et al., 2000; Wienke, 1998). Correspondingly, some media images and celebrities in popular culture have come to emphasize bulging muscles and bodily strength—while men lacking muscularity have, at times, become the pun of jokes (e.g., Justin Bieber has been mocked publically for being more petit than his girlfriend). The association of strength (often symbolized by muscles) with masculinity has become so widespread

that Pronger (2002) declared muscles to be the ultimate indicator of masculinity—clearly hyper-masculine in nature.

Regarding sports, researchers have found that sports participation and viewing have long been associated with men and masculinity rather than femininity and women (e.g., Lee, 2007). Sports—specifically team sports—have been found to promote a hegemonic, more traditional form of masculinity that endorses sexist, misogynistic and anti-feminine attitudes (Messner, 2002; Young, 1993). As Young (1993) explained, male athletes are expected to live up to cultural expectations of manliness (e.g., being tough, aggressive, and powerful) and these expectations often encourage the use of performance-enhancing drugs and violent or aggressive behaviors. The link between some sports and masculinity is further demonstrated by researchers arguing that sports are used as advertising tools to sell products to men and to proscribe ideals of masculinity (e.g., Smith & Beal, 2007). Overall, sports, particularly violent or combative sports have been found to contribute to the gender order, where orthodox masculinity is valued above and beyond traditional femininity (Davis, 1997; Messner, 2002).

Cars and car culture have been well documented as a hyper-masculine domain (Hatten, 2007; LeBlanc, 2006; O'Connell, 1998). For example, cars as a leisure interest have been largely associated with the construction of masculine identities (Falconer & Kingham, 2007; Hatten, 2007). Moreover, car and vehicle-related practices are a means through which some young men display their masculinity, particularly men who are unemployed or in low paying jobs (Hatten, 2007). Moreover, in car culture women have largely held supporting or marginal roles (Best, 2006), such as girlfriends or passengers (Bengry-Howell & Griffin, 2007). These roles are generally subordinate to the position of the male participants—consistent with the hegemonic view of men and masculinities as superior to women and femininities (Connell, 2005). Lumsden's (2010) recent research investigating women as active participants in the subculture of car racing noted that female racers had to uphold the masculine doctrine of the subculture in order to be accepted into the group—rituals of car modification, driving styles, and views of other female participants as “bikini girls” or “babes”. Together, these findings lend converging evidence that strength, sports, and cars are stereotypical and hyper-masculine domains.



In contrast, researchers have claimed that aesthetics, fashion and dieting are feminine contexts that often work to oppress women (e.g., Bartky, 1990; Hesse-Biber, 1996, 2000; Pine, 2001; Wolf, 1991). For example, Bartky (1990) proposed that men's institutions and institutional power use beauty as a means to control women. She found that despite advancements in the women's movement, fashion and dieting remain central to the lives of women—often to their detriment (also see Wolf, 1991). Beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting are such stereotypical feminine domains that current research is focused on the consequences of these phenomena rather than their scope. Wolf (1991) noted that the aesthetic industry (i.e., the billions of dollars spent yearly on cosmetics, spa treatments, and other products to enhance appearance) was dependent on women's social anxieties about their beauty. Moreover, she discussed the long standing association between social worth and physical appearance for women, where women are made to feel as though their value as a person is heavily based on their beauty and appearance. In a similar realm, Davis (1995, 2003) noted the detriment and angst experienced by some women if they feel their true self is not reflected in their appearance. As a result, some women may turn to cosmetic surgery—further reinforcing the idea that appearance and body are reflective of “inner beauty” (Davis, 2003; Heyes, 2007).

Historically, interest in fashion has been largely associated with women (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Lorle, 2011). In the media, in particular, advertisements for fashion focused on attracting the female consumer. For example, Lee (2007) directly asked participants to rate how masculine or feminine participants understood particular topics to be and found that participants rated fashion as significantly more feminine than sports. Also, Umiker-Sebeok (1996) found that women in advertisements were often portrayed in exercises of self-absorbed grooming or as more static objects simply posed (e.g., not engaged in any activity) in unidentified environments or in bedrooms. Thus, fashion, or more generally beauty, was the focus in these advertisements—not the women. More recently, Lorle (2011, p. 48), in her investigation of how fashion and female friendships are portrayed in HBO's *Sex and the City*, noted that the only drawback of the characters' obsession with fashion “would be its probable stereotypical interpretation.” She explained that fashion, for women, has come to



measure wealth (e.g., the brands one can afford) and personal security (e.g., expressing your success and self-confidence via clothing and accessories). In addition, fashion facilitates female bonding (e.g., sharing in shopping or fashion choices) (Lorle, 2011) and, contrary to stereotypical interpretations, it has the potential to present women as being self-sufficient, independent, and wealthy. Despite this potential, representations of fashion fail to surpass feminine stereotypes given the characters remain dependent on men, spend their time seeking relationships for fulfillment, appear obsessed with beauty, and dress for men as much, or even more so, than their personal fulfillment.

Concern with body weight (and the desire to control body weight via dieting) has also been viewed as a typical hyper-female endeavor despite the value Western culture places on the thin ideal indiscriminately across genders (Hesse-Biber, 1996, 2000). A negative stigma associated with weight gain in women that can result in weight-based discrimination has also been noted by researchers (Saguy & Gruys, 2010). Indeed, women are the largest consumers of medical weight loss diets and drugs (Bish et al., 2005) and are more likely than men to develop eating disorders (Hesse-Biber, 1996, 2000). Even children appear to relate dieting with being a woman (Pine, 2001). For example, Pine (2001) found that children associated significantly more feminine traits to the thin rather than fat female body size, whereas masculine traits were not associated with any particular male body type. In addition, girls were more likely than boys to say they would diet and that they knew others who were dieting. For example, by age 11, 72% of girls said they would go on a diet (compared to 41% of boys). These findings lend converging evidence that beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting are viewed as being stereotypical and hyper-feminine.

### **The Current Study**

The findings from recent research have identified differing masculinities that appear, at least on the surface, to incorporate elements that were once considered hyper-feminine or hyper-masculine (Connell, 2005; Simpson, 1994b). To contribute to this literature, this study empirically tested whether men's lifestyle magazines, presenting diverse forms of masculinity geared toward dissimilar audiences, differed in their masculine and feminine content. We specifically investigated magazines

targeting metrosexual and lad audience because these two different subtypes of masculinity have made a niche in the market of men's lifestyle magazines. Thus, we investigated one metrosexual magazine (*GQ*) and one lad magazine (*Maxim*) and compared the portrayals within each publication that depicted hyper-masculine content (sports, cars, and strength) versus hyper-feminine content (beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting). Our interest was to see if a metrosexual lifestyle magazine actually portrayed more hyper-feminine content in comparison to a "supposedly" more hyper-masculine laddish publication. Based on the literature, we predicted that:

1. *Maxim* would have more hyper-masculine content in comparison to *GQ* (more articles and portrayals of sports, strength, and cars).
2. *GQ* would have more hyper-feminine content than *Maxim* (more articles and portrayals of beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting).

Men's lifestyle magazines were desirable for analysis for diverse reasons including how these magazines are promoting particular appearances and lifestyle choices that are viewed as appropriate for men and how lifestyles are 'advertised' in such publications (e.g., the readers are presented with images that correlate certain 'goods' with certain realities and personal fulfillment). Moreover, as hegemonic masculinity remains the form of masculinity that is dominant (Connell, 1995), the portrayals in the magazines should provide insight into how hegemonic masculinity is presented within subtypes of masculinities as represented in the publications.

## Methods

### Selection of Magazines

Magazines were selected on the basis of five main criteria: (1) the publication was distributed in Canada (where the research was conducted), (2) the publication was specifically a men's lifestyle magazine, (3) the publication was popular (based on readership statistics), (4) the readership of the publication was predominantly—if not exclusively—male and, most importantly, (5) the publication had to

be recognized in the academic literature as either subscribing to laddist or metrosexual lifestyle directives (Attwood, 2005; Benwell, 2004; Jackson et al., 2001; Ricciardelli et al., 2010). Ricciardelli et al. (2010) found that *FHM*, *Stuff*, and *Maxim* promote laddist masculinity, whereas *GQ*, *Details*, and *Esquire* promote metrosexuality. Other researchers agree that *FHM* and *Maxim* are laddist magazines (Jackson et al., 2001). Jackson et al. (2001) argued that laddist magazines are geared at slightly younger audiences, treat the reader more as an equal and a buddy, use an ironic tone, and lack serious discussions about relationships or health issues. In comparison, Jackson et al. (2001) labeled *GQ* and *Esquire* as upmarket magazines; more metrosexual in nature. These publications are aimed at slightly older men and discuss more serious topics (e.g., health, relationships, and finances). Based on these criteria one lad magazine, *Maxim*, and one upmarket metrosexual magazine, *GQ*, were selected for analyses. Next, we randomly selected three issues published in 2010 and included the same issue for each magazine. This resulted in a total of six publications (the March, April, and August issue of *Maxim* and *GQ*) for analysis.

### Data Coding

Our main categories of sports, strength, and cars represented hyper-masculine content (LeBlanc, 2006; O'Connell, 1998; Pope et al., 2000; Young, 1993), whereas beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting, represented hyper-feminine content (Hesse-Biber, 1996, 2000; Pine, 2001; Wolf, 1991) created a starting point for the data coding (see Table 1). Before initiating the analyses, one issue from each publication was coded to determine what images and articles were to be grouped into each of the categories. These preliminary analyses were used to construct a coding table where each category was divided into exhaustive and mutually exclusive sub-categories (see Table 1). Afterwards, images and articles in each issue were coded according to portrayals of each category on each page (e.g., for sports cars, each image of a sports car was coded such that if three sports cars were depicted across a two page spread each car would be counted independently—the count in this example would be three cars). If portrayals of different categories were found on a page, each portrayal

of each category was coded. Independent coders performed page-by-page, from images of fashion). Whenever coders disagreed about how a portrayal was to be categorized or if it should be included in the analysis, a discussion and secondary analysis occurred. The image was removed from the analyses if agreement was not achieved.

## Thematic Categories

The current paper is focused on hyper-masculine categories (sports, strength, and cars) and hyper-feminine categories (beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting). Within these categories, multiple sub-categories emerged from the data. The resulting subcategories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. If a sub-category did not appear in the analyses it was because information related to that sub-category was not present in any of the issues under study.

Table 1

### *Coding categories and emerging sub-categories*

| Type      | Category          | Sub-Category   |
|-----------|-------------------|--|
| Masculine | Cars              | Muscle Cars (Semis/SUV/Hummer)   |
|           |                   | Sport and Luxury Cars  |
|           |                   | Family Vehicles (All-purpose cars and vans)  |
|           |                   | Motorcycle   |
|           |                   | Working on cars  |
|           | Strength          | Body Strength (Working out images or articles)   |
|           |                   | Enhancing Strength (Energy/sports drink, diet to gain weight/muscle and protein supplements)                                     |
|           | Sports            | General Sports (Individual and team sports, car racing and instructions for playing sports/Improving game, sports fan)           |
|           |                   | High Risk Sports (Violent, fighting)   |
|           |                   | Video Games/Gaming (Playing or competing in gaming)  |
| Feminine  | Fashion           | Business Attire/Formalwear (formalwear, suits, , dress shoes)  |
|           |                   | Casual wear (Causal shoes, everyday clothing)  |
|           |                   | Sports Attire (Skater styles, sports attire, sport shoes)  |
|           |                   | Other Fashion (Rock star, etc.)  |
|           |                   | Accessories (Watches, wallets, men's bags, sunglasses, cufflinks, jewelry)   |
|           | Diet              | Diet for Weight loss or Health   |
|           |                   | Cardio Images or Articles about Exercise for Weight Loss   |
|           | Beauty & Grooming | Beauty Products (Smelling good, cologne, deodorant, skin products)   |
|           |                   | Cosmetic Concerns (Remove unwanted hair, add height, stop or prevent balding, increase hair on head, whiten or straighten teeth) |

*Hyper-masculine content.* All of the issues (n=6) did include content representative of the hyper-masculine realms of sports, strength, and cars (see Table 1 for an explanation of each theme and sub-category). The theme of sports was composed of three sub-categories: (1) general sports, (2) high risk sports, and (3) video gaming. The general sports category included articles and images that: (i) depicted team (e.g., baseball, soccer, etc.) or individual (e.g., surfing, golf, etc.) sports or athletes, (ii) provided instructions on playing sports, (iii) discussed different sporting events (e.g., Super-bowl party, hockey playoffs), or (iv) presented sporting merchandise and fan paraphernalia. The strength theme included two sub-categories: body strength and enhancing strength. The car theme was comprised of five sub-categories: muscle vehicles, sports & luxury cars, all-purpose vehicles, motorcycles, and working on cars. All of these thematic categories combined create the hyper-masculine content.

*Hyper-feminine content.* All of the issues included content that represented the hyper-feminine realms of beauty and appearance, fashion, and dieting (see Table 1 for an explanation of each theme and sub-category). The theme of beauty and appearance was composed of two different sub-categories: beauty products and cosmetic concerns. The theme of fashion was comprised of four sub-categories: business/formal wear, casual wear, sports attire and skater styles, and accessories. Finally, the dieting theme included two subcategories: diet and cardio. All of these themes and subcategories combined create the hyper-feminine topics.

## Quantitative Analyses

For the quantitative analyses, the frequency of each portrayal was computed into percentages (see Table 2). For each sub-category (e.g., general sports, high-risk sports), the number of portrayals was divided by the total number of portrayals coded in that entire issue and then multiplied by 100 (to create a percentage rather than a proportion). All of these percentages (e.g., general sports, high-risk sports) within a category (e.g., sports) were then summed to create the total percentage of portrayals per category. Independent t-tests were conducted on the resulting category's total percentage of portrayals, comparing *Maxim* to

*GQ* issues. As such, positive *t*-values indicate that *Maxim* contained more portrayals of a particular category than *GQ*, whereas negative *t*-values indicate that *GQ* contained more portrayals of a particular category than *Maxim*. Overall, the analyses consisted of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which allowed for a more comprehensive investigation. For example, the *t*-tests demonstrated significant differences in quantity of representation between the content of the different magazines, while the qualitative analyses more fully explained the nature of these differences and any subtleties in expression.

## Results

Across all publications, we found that the men pictured were attractive, lean, and often muscular—suggesting being physically attractive as a man was of value. Of all the men portrayed across issues and publications, only men in group photos or in satirical portrayals (and few even within these contexts) were overweight, had skin blemishes (four men pictured in *GQ*), or were bald (two men pictured in *Maxim* and two in *GQ*). Regardless of the magazine or issue the majority of men pictured were dressed fashionably, lean or muscular, lacked any skin blemishes, had styled hair, groomed facial hair or were clean shaven. In *GQ*, between 127 and 280 men were pictured per issue. In *Maxim*, 40-100 men were pictured per issue. Thus, male appearance seemed important across all issues and being well groomed was an underlying theme throughout—perhaps not always blatantly discussed or as a central focus, but always presented by each man portrayed.

### Masculine vs. Feminine

Referring to our predictions, the independent *t*-tests revealed that *Maxim* and *GQ* significantly differed in the number of portrayals of both hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine groupings. Specifically, *Maxim* ( $M = 39.16$ ,  $SD = 4.37$ ) was more likely than *GQ* ( $M = 7.10$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ) to portray traditionally masculine topics,  $t = 10.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was a statistically significant difference in the number of portrayals of sports within the magazines,  $t = 3.16$ ,  $p < .05$ , such that *Maxim* issues ( $M = 20.02$ ,  $SD = 8.78$ ) portrayed significantly more images of sports than did

*GQ* ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ). There was also a marginally significant difference between the magazines on portrayals of strength,  $t = 2.63$ ,  $p = .058$ , where *Maxim* issues tended to portray more images of strength ( $M = 9.71$ ,  $SD = 5.85$ ) in comparison to issues of *GQ* ( $M = 0.68$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ). Although, the magazines did not differ significantly in the amount of cars portrayed ( $t = 1.77$ , *ns*), we did find differences in how the cars were portrayed (see qualitative discussion below).

On the other hand, *GQ* ( $M = 92.90$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ) was more likely than *Maxim* ( $M = 60.85$ ,  $SD = 4.37$ ) to portray traditionally feminine topics,  $t = -10.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consistent with our predictions regarding men's fashion, there was a significant difference in the amount of male fashion portrayed,  $t = -23.48$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although there was a large portrayal of male fashion in both magazines, issues of *GQ* ( $M = 86.04$ ,  $SD = 0.21$ ) displayed fashion significantly more often than *Maxim* ( $M = 48.84$ ,  $SD = 2.74$ ). Although the magazines did not differ significantly in the amount of beauty and appearance ( $t = -1.75$ , *ns*) or dieting portrayals ( $t = 1.71$ , *ns*), there were differences in how these topics were portrayed (see qualitative analysis below).

Table 2

*Total percentage of portrayals per category for each issue*

| Magazine     | Issue  | Cars  | Strength | Sports | Fashion | Diet | Grooming | Masculine | Feminine |
|--------------|--------|-------|----------|--------|---------|------|----------|-----------|----------|
| <i>Maxim</i> | March  | 4.67  | 9.33     | 28.67  | 52.00   | 1.33 | 4.00     | 42.67     | 57.33    |
| <i>Maxim</i> | April  | 7.41  | 15.74    | 11.11  | 47.22   | 1.85 | 16.67    | 34.26     | 65.74    |
| <i>Maxim</i> | August | 16.22 | 4.05     | 20.27  | 47.30   | 0.00 | 12.16    | 40.54     | 59.46    |
| <i>GQ</i>    | March  | 1.13  | 0.23     | 5.64   | 86.23   | 2.48 | 4.29     | 7.00      | 93.00    |
| <i>GQ</i>    | April  | 4.73  | 1.82     | 3.64   | 85.82   | 1.45 | 2.55     | 10.18     | 89.82    |
| <i>GQ</i>    | August | 3.09  | 0.00     | 1.03   | 86.08   | 3.61 | 6.19     | 4.12      | 95.88    |



## **Stereotypically Masculine Topics**

*Sports.* Consistent with our predictions, *Maxim* had significantly more portrayals of sports in comparison to *GQ*. *Maxim* tended to emphasize the “dirty”, “rough” and “violent” side of sports, whereas in *GQ* the portrayals tend to focus on the “real person” behind the athlete, the story behind the game, and the fashion associated with the sporting lifestyle. Sport portrayals and articles in *Maxim* tended to include more high-risk sports and images of men actively engaging in sporting behaviors in comparison to *GQ*, whereas celebrity athletes or athletic men were portrayed in fashion spreads with sporting equipment more commonly in *GQ* than *Maxim*.

In *Maxim*, general sports portrayals and articles included images of individual and team sports, instructions for improving sports play, and information for fans about sports news and events. For example, an article “previewing” the 2010 baseball season by giving “fearless expert (and not so expert) predictions, a foolproof fantasy cheat sheet ...baseball’s hottest honeys and a bat! (No seriously)” (April 2010, p. 54-59). Unlike in *GQ*, where sports stars were fashionably posed, the article was accompanied by images of men in dirty or worn uniforms actively playing baseball. On the other hand, beyond men presented with sporting equipment, general sport portrayals in *GQ* focused on images of either individuals or teams modeling, more often than participating in, sports. Portrayals that included sports focused on fashion and the person or lifestyle, rather than the actual sport itself. For example, a Tommy Hilfiger fashion spread presented a tanned male model water-skiing while wearing a suit jacket with a handkerchief in the breast pocket, a white shirt, and white cotton shorts with sunglasses (*GQ*, March 2010, p.33). The advertisement appeared to be more about having the lifestyle where you could spontaneously decide—and afford—to go water-skiing in a suit rather than about the sport of water-skiing. Also, images of athletes tended to follow the same pattern: focusing on the fashion and lifestyle more than the sport. For example, images of Kobe Bryant, an NBA player, dressed in crisp jeans, a white tank top, and accessories span pages where he is posing with a basketball rather than playing the sport (*GQ*, 2010, March, p. 166-171). One of the accompanying articles read:

Even if Kobe Bryant weren't runway-model handsome, even if he weren't six feet five, even if he weren't one of the five or six most famous people on earth, he'd still inspire this kind of dumbfound gawking, because he's not dressed like just any air traveler. Diamond earrings the size of a filbert. Sunglasses the size of two small skillet. Flowing white Gucci corduroy blazer, extra-long. Lastly—as if one more shiny, eye-catching thing were needed—he's cradling a big box with a pretty beige bow (Moehringer, 2010, March, p. 168).

Thus, *GQ's* interest in sports tends to be focused on the celebrity sports star, lifestyle, or the inclusion of sport as a component in fashion spreads—not surprising given that self-presentation and appearance are central to metrosexuality (Segal, 1993; Simpson, 1994b).

High risk sport portrayals and articles were in all the issues of *Maxim* analyzed. The focus here was on the drama and risk posed to the athletes. Images tended to suggest the sport was dangerous, often involving the potential for pain or suffering. Also, there tended to be fanfare and drama surrounding the high-risk sport athletes, suggesting a sort of macho heroism in being, for example, the fighter or racer portrayed. High-risk athletes and sports were glorified, such that the men were viewed as having “superhuman” strength or “infinite” power—implying a positive association with violence or being “powerful.” This was particularly evident when the power or “invincibility” of a high risk sport athlete was challenged; it was countered as though it could not be possible for someone “all powerful” to actually be human or “weak” in anyway. For example, in a *Maxim* article, (Greenber, 2010, March, pp. 88-93) entitled: “To the death: Arturo “Thunder” vs. Amanda “The Stripper”, the subheading read:

Arturo “Thunder” Gatti was one of the toughest fighters the boxing world has ever seen, renowned for enduring superhuman amounts of pain in the ring. So why would a man, who so loved cheating death, decide to take his own life? Many believe he didn't” (p.88)

This was accompanied by an image of a very beat up and bloody Gatti directly under the headlines. The author of this article argued that the “superhuman” Gatti could not have been fragile enough to take his

own life. Mental instability or perceived “weakness” was inconsistent with the hyper-masculine image of Gatti (and perhaps boxers in general) and, thus, not only unacceptable but rather impossible. These findings suggest that hyper-masculine ideologies remain prevalent in *Maxim*.

In *GQ* high-risk sports were only evident in one of the three issues analyzed. The article was about a boxer, Manny Pacquiao, but he was pictured with styled hair, perfect skin, and trimmed facial hair. He did not have any bruises and was not bleeding (unlike the photo of Gatti described earlier in *Maxim*). The subsequent photos that accompanied the article were of banquets, receptions, and celebrations—not altercations or action ‘shots’ of Pacquiao actively fighting in the ring. Moreover, the article was not about the drama and angst of the boxing world, rather it explored Pacquiao’s path from living in absolute poverty in the Philippines to becoming an international boxing legend (Corsello, 2010, April, pp. 138-141). Thus, the emphasis in *GQ* was not on the perceived dominance of the athlete or the “manliness” of the sport; it focused on the celebrity status and wealthy lifestyle—consistent with existing conceptualizations of metrosexualism (MacKinnon, 1992). Nonetheless, the emphasis on the life story of the celebrity stressed how an individual—someone who once was an “ordinary” person with whom the reader can identify—acquired status, wealth, and power. In other words, *GQ* still promoted the dominance and power associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), although it was portrayed in a less oppressive and less “macho” way in comparison to portrayals in *Maxim*.

Another noteworthy difference between *Maxim* and *GQ* was the absolute lack of video gaming portrayed or discussed in *GQ*. Gaming and advertisements for video games were only found in issues of *Maxim* and as a part of a regular column (i.e., Rated Games in *Maxim* 2010) where new games were reviewed or discussed. Video gaming is typically associated with youthfulness and bachelorhood, thus such advertisements, reviews, and articles further exemplify the culture and practices of laddism (e.g., March 2010, p.9).

*Strength.* All issues of *Maxim* analyzed included at least one portrayal or article about working out (e.g., an image of a man lifting weights (March 2010, p.45), whereas only one issue of *GQ* included such portrayals. Moreover, only *Maxim* issues included information and

advertisements on supplements used to increase weight gain and muscle mass, whereas advertisements for sports drinks (e.g., Gatorade, Smart Water) were found in both *GQ* and *Maxim*—yet they did differ somewhat in their presentations. Although both magazines had the same Gatorade advertisement (*Maxim*, April 2010; *GQ*, March 2010) depicting a basketball player about to make a basket under the caption “Float like a butterfly, sing like a bird” (p. 1-2), other sports drink advertisements differed between the magazines. In *Maxim*, these advertisements portrayed sweaty men in the depths of athletic activity. *GQ* advertisements, however, seemed to take a different approach. For example, a Smart Water advertisement showed a perfectly groomed post-workout Jennifer Aniston with a slight glistening of sweat on her bare abdomen above the caption “My workout partner. Working out feels great... afterwards. That’s why I drink smart. It’s hydration I can feel. (And it’s one part of my routine I never sweat)” (August 2010, p.28). Thus, unlike in *Maxim* where drinks are presented as essential for a man who works out ‘hard,’ *GQ* takes a different approach—depicting a woman rather than a man—and a less strenuous type of exercise (e.g., yoga instead of football).

*Cars.* In terms of car portrayals, *GQ* and *Maxim* did not significantly differ in the frequency of portrayals and articles about vehicles (although the types of vehicles portrayed and how they were portrayed did differ). *Maxim* portrayed more motorcycles (10 versus 1 across the three issues), more muscles cars (2 versus 0 across the three issues) and more articles and portrayals about working on cars (8 versus 0 across the three issues) than *GQ*, whereas *GQ* portrayed more sports and luxury vehicles (25 versus 17 across the three issues) in comparison to *Maxim*. Also, all purpose vehicles were not frequently portrayed in either publication (only one presentation across the six issues).

In *Maxim*, motorcycles were portrayed as rough, “manly,” and tough. For example, a Harley Davidson advertisement read: “About six bucks a day. Cheaper than your smokes, a six pack, a lap dance, a bar tab, another tattoo, a parking ticket, a gas station burrito, cheap sunglasses, bail, more black t-shirts, a lip ring” (March 2010, p.109). Generally, the presentation of motorcycles in *Maxim* suggested they were associated with boyish immaturity, social status, heterosexual conquest, “bad boy” imagery, and power for men. These representations are hyper-masculine

in orientation.

In contrast, *GQ* often presented motorcycles as accessories in fashion spreads advertising clothing (e.g., April 2010, p.133). They were associated with style and fashion rather than a “bad boy” hyper-masculine culture or lifestyle. Thus, motorcycles were used to indicate a different sort of power: one of status and prestige. The portrayals in *GQ* appeared to suggest that the metrosexual man could use motorcycles to rise above their competition—in love, at work, in play—making the man in possession of the motorcycle even more successful than others. The motorcycle in *GQ* is a status symbol and a luxury item rather than a necessity. Whereas in *Maxim*, motorcycles were presented as a common vehicle, a method of transportation representative of a lifestyle choice, for the “Everyman” (whether he was broke, wealthy, on parole, tattooed, pierced, or just any other guy).

Also in *GQ*, sports and luxury cars were often advertised across multiple pages presenting the sleek lines of the cars, which were always silver rather than colored. The bylines suggested the luxurious nature of the vehicle: “finessed and furious” (Camaro, *GQ*, March 2010). Articles on cars also implied that extravagance and status were associated with these vehicles. For example, a review of the Mercedes SLS AMG headlined: “No, it technically can’t fly: But after a half-century hiatus, the legendary Gullwing Mercedes is back, ready to make drivers of supercars with regular old doors feel downright lame” (*GQ*, April 2010, p.68). These luxury cars were presented as accessories to complete a masculine image centered on appearance and style—traits more stereotypically feminine in nature (Connell, 2005; Wolf, 1991), but used in *GQ* to suggest power and status. Unlike feminine portrayals of appearance, where a well groomed appearance is expected of women and often considered a tool used by women to attract men for protection (Hesse-Biber, 1996; Wolf, 1991), *GQ* sells appearance as a statement of financial and personal success. Thus, the metrosexual man driving a luxury car is not doing so to seek attention or attract women; they are informing the world of their superiority. As the Gullwing Mercedes advertisement suggested, cars are used by metrosexuals as status symbols, indicating their superiority over other less privileged and successful men.

Car advertisements in *Maxim* depicted less expensive (e.g., the 2011 mustang, August 2010, p.1) and more colorful (e.g., red, bronze) cars, with an emphasis on their specifications (e.g., torque, horsepower, engine) rather than their interior or the history of the brand. The cars were also feminized or sexualized, such as “Like a brainy supermodel, the new Ferrari’s got smarts and a sexy silhouette. But this one only smokes when you want her to” (March 2010, p.40). In addition, the cars were pitched as tools for sexual conquest. Lastly, only *Maxim* had advertisements for muscle cars and spreads about working on or fine tuning vehicles. Being able to fix cars, improve cars, talk cars and know cars was presented as important. This again demonstrates the difference between the metrosexual emphasis on vehicles as material status symbols and the more hyper-masculine macho focus found in laddist representation of masculinity.

### **Stereotypically Feminine Topics**

*Beauty and appearance.* Overall, both *Maxim* and *GQ* equally emphasized beauty and appearance. This finding contradicts the idea of *GQ* as more feminine in content when compared to *Maxim*. Yet, interestingly, in *GQ* the emphasis was more on beauty products and grooming, while in *Maxim* there was a greater focus on removing unwanted hair, whitening teeth, and other cosmetic interventions designed to improve appearance.

In *Maxim* advertisements for beauty products focus on their functionality: the removal of body odor. For example an old spice advertisement depicted an island growing out of a man’s underarm with the caption: “Rub and Sniff: to remind your nose that a tropical honeymoon is not just for married couples” (April 2010, p.27). Women, often half naked, were prevalent in the beauty product advertisements (e.g., *Maxim* April 2010, p.5). Thus, *GQ* sexualizes the male body and the man using the products to make him more desirable to women. *Maxim*, however, emphasizes that if a man uses the product women will find him more attractive or, at minimum, the product will stop him from having body odor and other unpleasantness—essential to satisfy his yearning for sexual conquest.



Regarding cosmetic concerns, all issues of *Maxim* had advertisements about removing unwanted hair (this was only in two issues of *GQ*) and reducing hair loss (only found in one issue of *GQ*). Moreover, only *Maxim* magazines had multiple advertisements for teeth whitening and gaining height with the use of insoles in shoes. Thus, although expressed differently, it appears that appearance and grooming make up an important element of the content of both publications. This finding further suggests a movement toward the acceptance of what can be called stereotypically feminine concerns (see Bordo, 1999; Davis, 2003) for men. Said another way, grooming and appearance were once regarded as solely or primarily the concerns of women but now they seem to be concerns for men as well.

*Fashion.* The magazines differed in the type of fashion portrayed, how fashion was displayed, and how much fashion was depicted. Regarding fashion portrayals, *GQ* was filled with fashion photo spreads and advertisements (on average, 39% of the pages in a single issue of *GQ* was dedicated to fashion advertisements or spreads) for both formal (on average 39% of the fashion pages) and casual attire (on average 61% of the fashion pages). In this magazine, designer fashion was blatantly presented as a status symbol. Brand names were clearly and boldly displayed on fashion spreads. For example, a baseball player, Mariano Rivera, is pictured in a fashion advertisement wearing a sports jacket where “CANALI” is written in bold, uppercase letters across half the page, while in the bottom left corner of the page it states he is wearing “the new Kei Jacket” (March 2010, p.39). This further emphasizes the focus on fashion in the magazine as the designer and clothing are central to the advertisement. Outside of the actual fashion spreads or advertisements, *GQ* was laden with images of men (e.g., male models, celebrities) that were fashionably tailored by professional stylists. Thus, fashion is clearly an essential element of *GQ*’s content.

Notably, the models in the *GQ* fashion spreads were often posed in unidentified environments and were not engaged in any activities or actions. For example: a four page Hugo Boss fashion spread pictured a male model three different times wearing different suits or a button up dress shirt posed in an unidentifiable environment—with a calm body of water and some abstract shapes in the background (March 2010, p.45-48). These findings are consistent with Umiker-Sebeok’s (1996)



findings regarding how women were portrayed in advertisements as obsessed with grooming or in static inactive poses (e.g., staring into space, or lying on some piece of furniture). The objectification of the male body and emphasis on appearance was more blatantly emphasized in *GQ* than in *Maxim*, perhaps indicative of an objectification of the male body in ways previously restricted to the female form (see Davis, 2003).

Unlike *GQ*, fashion spreads and advertisements were less common in *Maxim* (on average, 6.2% of the pages of an issue). These fashion advertisements were only for casual attire (e.g., jeans, t-shirts, khakis), whereas considerable formal fashion could be found in the pages of *GQ*. Despite there being fewer pages in *Maxim* that incorporated fashion advertisements or spreads, there were 163 portrayals of men's fashion and seven pages of articles about fashion in the three issues analyzed. These articles were often about how to dress, what to wear to attract women, and what was fashionable. Thus, although fashion may be less blatant in *Maxim* (i.e., fewer fashion only spreads), fashion was still an important part of the magazine's content. Consistently across the issues, the men pictured were always professionally styled, fashionably dressed, and the professional stylist responsible for choosing the clothing choices is credited—reinforcing the importance of fashion to the readers.

*Dieting.* Contrary to our predictions, we did not find a greater focus on cardio and dieting in *GQ* in comparison to *Maxim*. Although one might expect to find images and articles portraying dieting and cardio in *GQ*, our findings suggest otherwise. There were not any articles about food in relation to dieting per se, although there was one article that did discuss the challenges of weight loss in a column called "The Fitness Challenge" (March 2010, p.116). Given the metrosexual emphasis on grooming and appearance (Segal, 1993; Simpson, 1994a) it is surprising that dieting is not more evident in *GQ*. Although, we can note that in both publications the models and men presented were rarely overweight or unfit, diet and cardio were not focal points in the magazines. Instead, the importance of being slim and fit appeared to be more subtle underlying themes.

## Discussion

Although we found that all of the publications depicted sports, strength, cars, beauty and grooming, and fashion, the different magazines promoted these topics in differing ways. Whether an advertisement was selling fashion or cars, the brand and symbols associated with the products differed across magazines. Furthermore, even if a traditionally feminine domain was being depicted, it was not portrayed in a hyper-feminine manner—regardless of the type of magazine. Nonetheless, elements of hegemony, of hierarchy, and dominance (Connell, 2005) were evident throughout both publications. Hegemonic power and dominance were promoted in *GQ* through status, wealth, and style, whereas *Maxim* endorsed power and dominance through more traditional hyper-masculine ideologies that expressed sexual conquest, strength, grit, and toughness.

*GQ* seemed to promote the accomplishment and power of the business tycoon or “Daddy Warbucks” in an attractive package. The masculinities endorsed were not overtly oppressive; rather they were indicative of the superiority of the accomplished and stylish male as expressed through his possessions and wardrobe. The stereotypically feminine concern with fashion was omnipresent in *GQ*, but it was depicted as power rather than as feminine or emasculating. *GQ* seemed to express that the metrosexual man is beyond physical competition with other men as his polished look and superior possessions automatically place him above others on the hierarchy of masculinities by demonstrating his success, status, and prestige. The idea was simply that other men *should* feel envious and subordinate. In contrast, *Maxim* seemed to sell a more hyper-masculine masculinity, one that embraced “manliness” and appeared to define itself through physical power and defying social niceties (through rudeness, crudeness, lack of responsibility, and physical conflict). The laddist male was in competition with other men and objectified women, perhaps suggesting that superiority emerged via opposition.

Consistent with our prediction, the lad magazine did portray more sports and strength (but not cars) than the metrosexual magazine. The stronger emphasis on these hyper-masculine topics (strength and sports), as well as the “macho” portrayals of vehicles (and even grooming

products), leads us to argue that *Maxim* and lad masculinities may promote more stereotypical and traditional masculinities in comparison male models. Rarely was an un-styled unkempt man presented (if an un-styled or unkempt man was pictured he was in a sporting uniform actively playing a sport). Thus, it is possible that all forms of masculinity incorporate elements that used to be stereotypically feminine—and perhaps these elements are slowly becoming viewed as more masculine in nature.

Researchers have found that many men are struggling to deal with the pressures of embracing domains that are now promoted as masculine but still thought of as feminine (e.g., Davis, 2003; Gill et al., 2005; Pope et al., 2000). It is important to remember that, even though all of the men's lifestyle magazines promoted fashion, Lee (2007) found that participants rated fashion as a more feminine topic. Thus men are receiving mixed messages: looking good leads to success and power, but being concerned with fashion is feminine. In this sense, men may feel pressures to confirm to societal norms that may appear to include being fashionable, while trying to simultaneously prevent being or feeling emasculated. Clearly, in North American society, the boundaries between what is thought to be hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine in character are slowly dissipating. Despite the 'progress' this may present, the possibility to further the challenges men experience as they try to negotiate contradictory messages about what is masculine or feminine and how they can meet the benchmark signifying the dominant or hegemonic understanding of masculinity in their lived realities is apparent. This is further intensified by the media messages that can fuel consumerism and lead individuals to believe that they can achieve some idealistic, romanticized fantasy if the right products are purchased (Featherstone, 1991). It appears that these men's lifestyle magazines (*Maxim* and *GQ*) are equally bombarding men with images of a masculine ideal to be bought and consumed, in the hopes of achieving the forms of masculinity depicted throughout the publications.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This research was designed to begin an investigation into how previously hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine domains are being

portrayed in men's lifestyle magazines. Future research may wish to examine other operationalizations of hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine domains, incorporate multiple methodologies, and make direct comparisons between men's and women's publications in order to more fully understand the intricacies of current day masculine and feminine stereotypes and the intended or unintended messages they stress to their audiences. Moreover, researchers should also examine if the inclusion of more feminine content in men's lifestyle publications has a negative or positive influence on the attitudes of readers towards men and women, as well as the complexities of these attitudes.

We noted that *GQ* sexualizes the male body and the man using the products, whereas *Maxim* is more about women finding the men using the product more attractive (or the product stopping a nasty odor and other unpleasantness, which would inhibit their ability to attract women). This may suggest that the editors' vision for *GQ* is progressive, or more progressive than the vision of the *Maxim* editors, in terms of the gendered representations they incorporated into issues. This is evident in the movement away from hyper-masculine gender presentations and the decision to stray from uniquely heteronormative understanding of sexuality. Our current analysis was not designed to adequately examine this phenomenon, but we feel this is an area worthy of future investigation, as *GQ* contained a variety of images of the sexualized male body, whereas these images did not appear in the issues we examined of *Maxim*.

## **In Conclusion**

To conclude, we did not find that some forms of masculinity embrace hyper-feminine practices and understandings while others do not. Instead, both the metrosexual and the laddist magazines frequently portrayed appearance and fashion, suggesting a movement toward content previously thought to be uniquely feminine in nature. Where the magazines did seem to differ was in their method of emphasizing these different realms and the extent that they seemed to promote explicit aspects of masculinities and femininities. *Maxim* promoted sports and strength as ideals for their audience more so than did *GQ* and did so in a more hyper-masculine way. In contrast, *GQ* had a greater emphasis, at

least on the surface, on the hyper-feminine domain of fashion—evident in how even sports celebrities were professionally styled in fashionable clothing and accessories representative of wealth and status. Overall, it appears that some forms of masculinity are incorporating elements that used to be largely, even only, associated with femininity—albeit, embracing these realms in a new and potentially more masculine way. Masculinities are evolving and gender ‘boundaries’ are becoming increasingly blurred however there remains a dominant masculinity—a powerful idealization—that continues to create a benchmark for all to strive to achieve.

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