

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

**5.1 Overall Conclusion**

The objective of this thesis was to demonstrate how one article from each of the Mexican editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* may construct gender ideology and identity via sexist discourse. The responses provided by the coders in regards to sexism in Mexico provide a limited perspective as to whether *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* are transmitting North American sexist ideologies. The coders stated that gender inequality is still present in where men continue to dominate woman. However, the ideology of women engaging in sexual liberation, experimentation and enjoyment are still foreign to Mexican society and thus may allow for a new perspective on the subject. Nevertheless, they may also reinforce stereotypical gender ideologies as was seen in *Juego de los números* (The number game).

The coders identified that *Juego de los números* (The number game) produced sexist gender ideologies in that women must be silenced by concealing their sexual history, perform the Madonna/whore identities simultaneously and should not have more sexual experience than the man or she is labeled as promiscuous or easy. *Lee entre los pliegues* constructs women as sexual objects for male sexual gratification that have no voice of their own, but rather must use their body for man to interpret her desires and personality. As was seen at a university in central Mexico, these sexist ideologies could be used to justify sexual harassment and violence towards women. The text argues the validity of these ideologies based on scientific studies that generalize women as those that purposefully provoke men by the clothing they wear. The intimate relationship that the text producer creates with the reader may also aid in the credibility. This form of

intimacy can allow the reader to feel that they are having a conversation with a trusted friend that has their best interest.

The magazines provide advice on topics that the text producer presupposes that the reader has no (or limited) knowledge of in their personal or social cognition and only one point of view may be discussed or argued (van Dijk, 2006). Therefore, the reader may not have the means to be able to judge objectively if they accept or reject the ideology that the text producer presents in some texts. I support this notion in *Lee entre los pliegues* (Read between the lines). The text producer presupposes that men do not possess the knowledge on how to interpret a woman's sexual desires by her attire. As a result this could be seen as manipulation. Thus, if the text producer is the only voice to represent women, there is no other source within the text that the reader may use in order to form his own opinion about these gender ideologies. However, although the text producer introduces studies to support their arguments, they are only vague portions. The text producer does not provide the source from where the studies derived. For this reason, I propose that if a text includes studies to support their arguments, that they should include the source from which the studies derived so that the reader may read them and form their own opinion.

I propose that magazines may hold a powerful and influential position in society because the companies that own them control a large portion of the written discourse that is produced nationally and internationally (McLoughlin, 2000; van Dijk, 2006). However, in this thesis I am unable to provide a percentage of the young adults that purchase these magazines in Mexico. Thus, I am only able to propose that they may hold a powerful and influential position.

### 5.1.2 Conclusion of Results

Here, I restate my research questions and answer each explicitly.

1) What are the lexical elements, sentence and discourse structures used that composite sexist discourse in the construction of stereotypical masculine and feminine ideologies of men and women in the two articles of the Mexican editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health*?

2) What are the gender identities and ideologies that the two articles construct via sexist discourse?

#### 5.1.2.1 *Cosmopolitan: Juego de los números (The number game)*

The lexical analysis (section 4.2.2) constructed three identities: (a) Men – sexual liberty and praise of promiscuity (b) the taboo of sexually active women and (c) the Madonna/whore double standard. The lexicon that constructs to identity (a) is the adjectives *supermachos* (super macho) and *sentementales* (stud, as in stud bull or horse). The lexicon that constructs identity (b) is the adjectives *fácil* (easy) and *promiscua* (promiscuous). In addition to these adjectives, (c) the Madonna/whore identity includes adjectives such as *sensual* (sensual), *osada* (daring), *aburrida* (boring) and *anticuada* (old-fashioned) and the noun phrase *chica buena* (good girl). These adjectives and noun phrase demonstrate how women are identified as those that must perform this dual identity for the psychological and physical satisfaction of the man. The imperative suggests the silencing women because they are told not to tell the truth about their sexual history because it may ruin the relationship.

The analysis of the sentence level (section 4.2.3) includes the two identities: (a) Men - sexual liberty and the praise of promiscuity and (c) the Madonna/whore double

standard: Silenced women. Identity (a) is constructed by a declarative sentence that states that it is okay for men to have a high 'score' of heterosexual sexual relations. Identity (c) is constructed through the sentence structures that include interrogative, metaphor, declarative, transitivity and imperative. The interrogatives express if the female reader should tell their male partner about their sexual history or what (how) they should tell them if they decide to do so. Either response may not be sufficient, either she is boring because she does not have an ample sex history or if she does she is considered untrustworthy or 'easy'. The metaphors compare a woman's sexual history to a curriculum in which a man may use to judge her. The declaratives express how a woman feels insecure if she possesses too little or too much sexual experience so that a man will accept her. The transitivity sentence states although men do not want to know about a woman's sexual history, she is supposed act in a daring or promiscuous manner.

The analysis at the discourse level (section 4.2.4) constructs one identity: (c) the Madonna/whore double standard: Silenced women. This identity is constructed through presupposition, argumentation and objectification. Presuppositions (b) and argumentation (as identified by C1) construct this identity by stating that women should not engage in sexual relations – or at least not as many as the man. Presupposition (c) expresses that although it is taboo for women to express daring and sensual identities in relation to sex, men expect that women perform these identities for their own sexual gratification. Yet at the same time they are socially punished for having done it. This perpetuates the Madonna/whore double standard. Evidence of this is seen in section 4.2.4 under the objectification discourse structure that states that women should feel guilty for having too many sexual partners.

In accordance to CDA methodology, I proposed that the title of the article to be changed to from *El juego de los números* (The number game) to *¿Qué juego de los números?* (What number game?). The latter title implies that women should be honest and unashamed of their sexual history. I also proposed from *sexual shame to sexual self-confidence* in that the magazine should use its international status as a tool to produce ideology that tells its readers that their worth is not based on their sexual history, but rather on their personality and intelligence. I suggest that it states that a woman should feel comfortable in expressing her sexual history and not placing her feelings second to that of the man.

#### **5.1.2.2 *Men's Health: Lee entre los pliegues (Read between the lines)***

The lexical analysis (section 4.4.2) constructed three identities: (a) the Genetic Loser, (b) Women as silenced sex objects and (c) Women in need to be desired. Identity (a) refers to the text's male readers. Its identity is constructed by the noun phrases *los hombres más capaces* (the most capable men), *hombre más maduro* (a more mature man) and *machos de alta calidad* (high quality males). It constructs the worth and maturity of a man based on his physique and by acting as a gentleman. Identity (b) and (c) are constructed by the following adjectives: *sexy*, *atractiva* (attractive), *sofisticado* (sophisticated), *bonita* (pretty), *voluptuosa* (voluptuous); adverbs: *provocativamente* (provocatively), *sexualmente* (sexually); and verbs: *atraer* (to attract), *mostrar* (to display). This lexicon describes the generalization towards all women that sexually objectify themselves so that men will be attracted to them.

The analysis at the sentence level (section 4.4.3) includes the two identities: (b) Women as silenced sex objects and (c) Women in need to be desired. These two

identities are constructed through declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and a metaphor. The declaratives state that based on certain items of women's apparel, this allows the man to know if the woman is willing to engage in sexual intercourse. The interrogatives, imperatives and metaphor demonstrate that a woman wants the man to fixate on her body. This shows how the text producer generalizes women as those that purposefully objectify themselves and want men to act upon them in a sexual manner.

The analysis at the discourse level (section 4.4.4) constructs three identities: (b) Women as silenced sex objects and (c) Women in need to be desired and (d) Women as reproductive objects. These identities are constructed through argumentation, fragmentation and presupposition. The argumentative discourse structures construct women as reproductive and silenced sex objects whose gender identity includes providing healthy children and sexual gratification. The fragmentation and presupposition discourse structures construct women as silenced sex objects.

In accordance to CDA methodology, I proposed that future texts on sex and relationships construct the female identity as not being passive individuals, but rather subjects with their own voice. I also proposed that for ethical purposes if the text presents academic studies, the text producer should describe them in fuller detail or provide information as to where the reader can obtain them. This will provide the reader the opportunity to critically analyze how these studies are performed and what they revealed. This may help to reduce the occurrence of manipulation.

## ***5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies***

As I previously mentioned in *Chapter Three* section 3.5 *Limitations of study*, the coders are non-habitual readers of the magazines and they only coded one article from each

magazine. Therefore, by asking the last question in section 4.6 *Sexism in Mexico* if they believe that the two magazines are transmitting sexist gender ideologies, they are only able to provide an opinion based upon the two texts that they analyzed. Thus, this limits the objectivity of their responses - in addition to the fact that I pre-selected the articles for sexist content. However, by providing their insight on the topic allows us to further explore sexism in Mexico, how it is changing (or not changing) and if these same ideologies are also being transmitted in magazines of Mexican origin.

The justification for this thesis is that there are not many CDA studies that critically analyze gender discrimination and even less in Mexican magazine discourse. The aim of this thesis was to demonstrate that there is evidence of sexist discourse in magazines and to lay the groundwork for other discourse and CDA analysts to build upon the limitations of this thesis and create new studies that critically analyze gender discrimination in magazine discourse.

I would be interested in continuing with this research project. If I continue, the next steps would consist including more coders (male and female), research the Mexican editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* over a longer chronological period (such as a year), compare the content of translated articles with that of non-translated articles, see how habitual readers negotiate the message of the texts and if they decide if it is sexist or not and if so, do they want to keep it or would they like to see a change. In addition to this list, I also provide recommendations for future studies in this area of gender and CDA studies:

- ***Mexican Magazines:*** There lacks CDA and gender discrimination studies done on magazine discourse in Mexico. Future studies in this area of Applied

Linguistics should use lifestyle magazines of Mexican origin that target adolescent and young adult audiences such as *Tu, 15 a 20*, *Ventitantos* and *Eres*. Nevertheless, these are women's magazines and I am currently unaware of other lifestyle magazines that target men and that are of Mexican origin. However, if discourse analysts have knowledge of these titles, I encourage that they be included for future studies.

- ***Texts and Versions:*** This thesis only realized two text analyses, one from each magazine. I recommend that future studies include the analysis of more texts from the same magazine and/or the analysis of an entire magazine over a series of months. This will allow for more stable conclusions and generalizations to be drawn on how magazine discourse discriminates gender.
- ***Including habitual readers in analysis:*** As I mentioned in *Chapter 3* section 3.5 *Limitations of Study*, one of the restrictions of this thesis is that I cannot claim how habitual readers negotiate the meanings and ideologies of the text. For future studies I recommend that researchers include how habitual readers of the magazines negotiate the meaning of the text(s). This is an important aspect of the analysis because it allows the researcher to take into account what type of an affect the discourse has upon the reader. It will also allow the researcher to see if the readers identify sexist ideology and whether they accept it or reject it. This component will allow critical discourse analysts to decide if there should in fact be a campaign against the eradication of sexist discourse in certain magazines.
- ***More coders:*** This study only incorporated three female coders. In order to obtain more objective results, I recommend more coders participate in the study.



I also encourage that male coders participate in the study where magazine discourse that is directed toward men is used. It will also be fruitful to obtain their perspective on sexist ideology and its existence (or non existence) within society that is directed towards both men and women.

- ***Sexism in Mexico***: Further research on sexism in Mexican society in order to see how it may be reproducing itself through magazine discourse.
- ***Digital editions***: Many magazines are now going digital and many of its subscribers are becoming net subscribers. In 2008, 1 out of 4 readers of *Cosmopolitan* in the United States was a net subscriber. Thus, it would be interesting to research how the content differs between the digital and carbon versions as well as how habitual readers and coders interact and negotiate its ideology.

I hope that this thesis has demonstrated the important role that discourse can play in reproducing gender ideologies. I hope that it encourages discourse analysts to take critical stance by presenting sexist ideologies found in magazine discourse that is reproduced at the national and international level. It will present the opportunity for individuals to observe and critically analyze two perspectives of gender: traditional (biased) and non-traditional. And based upon that analysis they may be able to judge whether they wish to continue to perform and support traditional gender ideologies or reject them. By presenting an example as to how magazine discourse is capable of producing biased gender ideologies and identities, it will help to reduce the possible manipulation that the magazine may intend to use.