

Purity, presumed displeasure and piety in the ‘big three’: A critical analysis of magazine discourse on young women’s sexuality

Abstract

The new millennium saw the emergence of two competing discourses in US pop culture on young women's sexuality: ‘girls gone wild’ and ‘new virgins.’ Feminists have seen these oppositional discourses - all women are either pressured to be either porn stars or chaste virgins - as being regressive and harmful, or have questioned how ‘empowering’ they really are. Levy’s (2006) research identified the ‘girls gone wild’ discourse from auditions at the offices of Playboy, whilst Valenti’s (2009) research identified the ‘new virgins’ discourse at conservative religious youth group meetings. Despite their identification we don’t yet know if/how widespread these discourses are. Previous studies (Garner & Adams 1998, Durham 1998, Carpenter 1998, Krassas et al. 1998) have found examples similar to the ‘girls gone wild’ discourse in examinations of media specifically targeting younger generations. Although the findings are revealing, we don’t yet know whether this is mirrored in other print media with readerships spanning other generations, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds, or whether the two contradictory discourses have any relation to each other. This paper aims to contribute to this absence by presenting the findings of an analysis of articles from ‘the big three’ U.S. newsweeklies (journalism.org, 2005).

Critical discourse analysis, feminism, news magazines, pop culture, sexuality

Porn Star: T-shirt slogan worn by feminist Ariel Levy to show the prevalence of a new cultural discourse of promiscuity around young women's sexuality (Levy 2006, p. 100).

Virgins Are Hot: T-shirt slogan worn by feminist Jessica Valenti to show the prevalence of a new discourse of celibacy around young women's sexuality (Valenti 2009, p. 38).

Introduction

From the 'Porn Wars'¹ to the 'Barnard Sex Conference' and the women who picketed it,² delineating what a 'feminist sexuality' encompasses has historically been a contentious arena among feminists. While scholars generally agree 'gender is a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated' (Scott, 1999, p. 45), the role sexuality plays in that articulation remains contested. Even among scholars who agree that sexuality is a realm to be taken seriously, there is disagreement about the desirability of various cultural manifestations and understandings of sexuality (see Beasley, 2005 for a more detailed discussion). While scholarly conceptualizations of sexuality have become ever more complex acknowledging a wide spectrum of differences in actions and desires, popular culture is still heavily influenced by more traditional notions of sexuality. The new millennium saw the emergence of two 'new' cultural discourses in pop culture that mirror the classic virgin/whore dichotomy (Tumanov, 2011): 'girls gone wild' and 'new virgins'.

The 'girls gone wild' discourse is what Siegel (2007, p. 144) terms 'feminist machismo'. Siegel argues that as the pornography industry becomes ever more mainstream young women are duped into believing that a promiscuous, superficial, and objectifying

¹ The 70s and 80s 'porn wars' created a historically significant division among/between feminists debating whether pornography was harmful and degrading to women, or conversely, if shutting down pornography was a way of closeting sexuality, thus keeping people, especially women, ashamed of their desires.

² The 1982 Barnard College conference on women's sexuality was billed as an exploration of women's sexuality. However, a number of prominent feminists involved in the anti-pornography movement picketed the conference. Protests of feminists by feminists were coined the 'sex wars'.

form of sexuality is not only 'cool' but 'feminist'. Levy (2006 p. 3) argues in *Female Chauvinist Pigs* that we live in a time where women are 'getting implants and wearing bunny logos as supposed symbols of our liberation'. She coined the term 'raunch culture' to account for this phenomenon but contends that there is nothing 'feminist' or 'empowered' about this, arguing instead that it is a hijacked form of 'feminism', one which harms women by forcing them into old misogynistic roles, while claiming to be 'new' and 'hip'. Conformists and supporters of this mode of sexual representation are labeled 'Uncle Toms' and viewed as traitors by Levy (2006, p. 105). In doing so, she echoes the picketers of the 1982 Barnard conference who charged: 'The conference's willingness to explore all varieties of women's erotic experience was... but a manifestation of the organizers' internalization of patriarchal messages and values' (Snitow, *et al.* 1983, p. 39). Thus contentions around 'raunch culture' continue a long-running argument among feminists.

In contrast, the 'new virgins' discourse centers on abstinence and is supported by modern USA laws, which provide federal money for public school sex education programs committed to abstinence-only education (Howell 2007). Here, women's chastity is arguably being used as a litmus test for moral 'goodness'. Valenti (2009) commenting on the virginity movement suggests it is:

...much more than just the same old sexism; it's a targeted and well-funded backlash that is rolling back women's rights using revamped and modernized definitions of purity, morality and sexuality (2009, p. 23).

According to Valenti, discourses such as 'girls gone wild' aren't damaging a generation of women, the promotion of a myth of sexual purity is (2009, p. 9). In other words, the 'new

virgins' discourse is regressive and harmful to young women, not because the choice to remain abstinent is harmful, but because making that the *only* acceptable choice available is.

Regardless of the oppositional nature of Levy's (2006) and Valenti's (2009) positions there are two important areas of overlap in their research. The first regards the demographics of the research data. Data in support of both discourses tends to draw on 'young, good-looking, straight and white' women (Valenti, 2009, p. 44). When black women are mentioned it is only to note their absence. This is not surprising as virginity in Western history has 'had a color, and that color has always been white' (Blank, 2007, p. 11). Stereotypes of black female sexuality and their assumed promiscuity make black women's relationship to any form of sexuality different (hooks, 1992). Yet, the relationship of black women factor to in 'raunch culture' is left largely unexamined.

Secondly, both sets are data premised are on an objectifying male to whom young women are supposed to appeal, something both authors find problematic. Levy (2006, p. 30) states, 'our interest is in the appearance of sexiness, not sexual pleasure'. Valenti (2009, p. 30) on the other hand notes 'the feminine ideal [is] the desirable virgin...and the desirable virgin is sexy, but not sexual'. The commonality in the two positions is, women are being asked to live up to an ideal that ignores their own sexual needs, instead catering for a male gaze. Yet contention emerges in that the supposedly 'wide-spread' ideals they are arguing against, the porn star and the virgin are direct opposites of each other.

To some degree this conflict is a methodological artifact. Levy's venues of research include the offices of Playboy and the set of a 'Girls Gone Wild' video shoot, while Valenti's include Purity Balls³ and conservative women's groups. Hence, both are working

³ Purity Balls are formal dances attended by fathers and daughters created to promote abstinence until marriage. It is often at these Balls that young girls 'pledge' their virginity.

within subcultural realms. What we don't know however is how these discourses are represented to, and transmitted for, a wider population beyond these specific cultural niches.

Previous studies have examined 'lifestyle' magazines targeted to young women and/or teenage girls (Garner & Adams 1998, Durham 1998, Carpenter 1998, Krassas *et al.* 1998) all showed a 'shift in the range and explicitness of topics relating to sexuality' implying that both men and women were likely to be sexually active (Garner & Adams 1998, p. 64). However, women are presented as refraining from 'sexual activity outside of committed relationships' (Carpenter 1998, p. 165). In contrast, recent studies of 'lad mags' (Krassas *et al.* 2003, Taylor 2005) identify enduring representations of men having multiple sexual partners. Both men and women are presented as agentic sexual beings, but framed differently within a model of 'androcentric sexuality' (Taylor 2005, p. 161). Whilst discourses on men's sexuality imply freedom of choice, women's tend to suggest they 'adapt themselves to male-defined sexual expression' (Garner & Adams 1998, p. 71). Overall, these previous studies would indicate support for Levy's argument, while showing no signs of a cultural move towards virginity. However, despite the merits of such research, this too was focused on a narrow audience, and we are only able to speculate whether such discourses exist in print media directed to a wider audience. This paper makes a contribution to this absence by examining mediated discourse of young women's sexuality in the three largest U.S. newsweeklies, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Data

Time, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* were known as ‘the Big Three’ due to their longevity, circulation numbers, diversity of topics and wide readership (journalism.org, 2005). The data range (2002-07) reflects the period Levy and Valenti identified the ‘girls gone wild’ and ‘new virgins’, while this makes the dataset somewhat dated, these years are chosen in service to what Chilton (1987) calls ‘critical discourse moments’. That is, specific historical moments when changes occur allowing for underlying discourses to become especially visible. The years marking the emergence of these two discourses are just such a moment. In addition, 2012 saw the release of Harmony Korine’s film *Spring breakers* with footage shot during an actual ‘spring break week’ in Florida, documenting the ‘raunch’ discourse; it also saw the release of TLC’s ‘The Virgin Diaries,’ and MTV’s casting call for its new reality show based on those who have chosen celibacy. Thus, both discourses are still quite present in, and relevant to, current U.S. popular culture.

Magazine articles were identified and collected using LexisNexis search engine⁴. General searches terms such as ‘young women’, ‘sex’, ‘sexuality’, ‘discourses’ etc were then narrowed to omit broader articles covering movies or books, adult retrospective, or non-US publications. In addition, magazines articles unrelated to gender, relating to pedophilia, men, women over 25 or living outside of the United States were also omitted. Initial selection of the remaining articles determined the article’s topic (e.g. physical health, editorial advice) and demographic information about the women presented (e.g. age, race, education attainment). Substantive themes were then specifically examined for discourses on sexuality. The remaining 62 were then analyzed with the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis.

⁴ LexisNexis is a commercial search engine chosen for this research project as it contained all of the ‘big three’ publications in full text format.

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA hereafter) is a methodological approach that focuses on how social power and inequality are deployed in the texts of social interaction. In other words, it focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in everyday interaction (van Dijk, 1993). Society and culture therefore, are constituted by discourse and by examining the talk and texts of social interaction these social issues can be identified. However, one of the key aspects of this approach is the role of the researcher. Science is not value-free and researchers are part of the research phenomenon they examine. In identifying inequalities and social powers abuses scholars are morally obliged to give voice to the marginalized. Such a perspective underlies this paper (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

In identifying social problems CDA focuses on texts such as everyday talk, on- and offline print, visual media sources and so on. These micro-texts are examined for group identities, actions, processes, structures, context, historical location and individual and social cognition (van Dijk, 1993). The identification of these discursive features are then explained in macrotextual terms. For example, Garner and Adams' (1998) study of micro-texts in 'lads mags' identified enduring features of wo/men sexuality premised on male promiscuity and female chastity. These microlevel observations therefore identify macrolevel social issues such as the potential control of some of women's sexual agency. Similarly, this paper aims to identify the microtextual feature of articles in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* with the aim of identifying how these operate to the

detriment of women. In other words, discourses reflecting Levy' (2006) 'girls gone wild' and Valenti's (2009) 'new virgins'.

Analysis

Of the 62 articles in the dataset discussing girls and women aged 9 to 25 most focused on 'health' or 'teen life'. While class and race were not always specified, when they did, it was almost entirely white and middle class. The demographics of those covered in the dataset did not mirror the 2011 US Census data (U.S. Census 2011) with only 2 articles covering lower socioeconomic groups and 5 covering ethnicities. Within these articles three discourses around young women's sexuality were identified. These discourses are similar to those that Michelle Fine identified in her 1988 study of high school sex education curricula. Therefore, their descriptions draw in part on her work. Surprisingly, 'raunch' and 'virginity' do not exist equally in the newsweeklies. Instead, the main discourses exhibited widespread support for chastity and present sexual activity as damaging to young women.

For ease of reference the narratives have been termed here as the discourse of 'purity', 'presumed displeasure' and 'piety'. 'Purity' presents young women (and girls) as innocent and pure. 'Presumed displeasure' portrays women who are sexually active as injured by this choice and 'piety' presents women who choose to remain celibate as content and in control of their lives. These are now shown in the following analysis:

Purity

The 'purity' discourse was evident in 12 of the magazine articles, which were largely health orientated and specifically about the vaccine Gardasil⁵. The following extract is from article in *Time* magazine (Sayre 2007, p. 19) published just after a Texas mandate was passed requiring middle-school girls to receive the vaccination Guardasil before entering school:

Yikes! An STD Vaccine for Sixth-Graders.

Sometimes an ounce of prevention can cause a ton of trouble. This month Texas became the first state to require that all girls entering sixth grade receive Guardasil, a new vaccine that protects against several strains of a sexually transmitted virus that causes 70% of cervical-cancer cases. But with the controversial goal of vaccinating young virgins against STD's, the Governor bypassed the legislature by issuing an executive order.

The title of the article begins with the exclamatory 'Yikes' indicating shock or alarm. Although the actual text is clear that the shock does not come from the benefit of the shot, which 'protects against several strains of a sexually transmitted virus that causes 70% of cervical-cancer cases,' but instead from the age of the women who are to receive the shot. While there were many potential arguments for why a state should not mandate a vaccine for school-attendance, as this was and is contested in many social arenas, the *Time* article chooses only one to highlight: that of 'vaccinating *young virgins* against STD's'. From this specific extract it is not clear if the alarm around the girls' age is because they are to receive a STD-prevention shot or because they are potentially already, or soon-to-be sexually active - as either one could be understood as the cause for alarm. However, in the context of the

⁵ A vaccine administered to teenage girls to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

other articles relating to this controversy, it becomes clear that the concern is not that they *are* yet sexually active, but that giving them the shot may *cause them* to. As *Newsweek* states, the concern is that ‘making an inoculation for an STD mandatory may encourage premarital sex...’ (Ramirez 2007, p. 10). Similarly, a separate *Time* article, discusses a pediatrician who supports giving the shot, but is also ‘willing to edit his discussion of HPV transmission for those who don’t want a child to hear it’ (Wallis 2007, p. 67), showing that it is not specifically the vaccination that will lead to sexual activity, but the information that the girls might get along with it.

In this presentation, not only are young girls presented as entirely innocent and ignorant of sexuality, but their innocence is presented as being so fragile that merely giving them information will potentially cause them to lose it and become sexually active. This discursive foundation relates to Fine’s discourse of ‘sexuality as violence.’ In her definition, this discourse venerates the naiveté of young girls and ‘presumes that there is a causal relationship between official silence and a decrease in sexual activity’ (2003, p. 40). According to Fine, this discourse implies exposing young women to information on sexuality damages their innocence and is thus inherently an act of violence. Its aim is therefore ‘protecting’ young women from knowledge about sex and sexuality, as their innocence is understood to be the basis for their chastity. Yet in spite of the ‘sexuality as violence’ metered by denying sexual agency, many who receive this vaccine will of course become sexually active. It is the discourse(s) in relation to this that are now explored:

Presumed displeasure

Only one article in the health category did not focus on either STIs or contraception. ‘A Summer Assignment’ (Baldauf 2007, p. 69) focuses instead on college students’ preventative healthcare needs, encouraging parents to be receptive to the idea that their children could be sexually active. The article culminates by presenting a specific perspective of college-age sexuality:

Daughters need to know that when a Doctor asks if she could be pregnant it’s not out of nosiness, and it’s not a value judgment, explains Lesley Sacher, director of the student health center at Florida State University. For the future they might benefit from a discussion of how to get out of a situation in which they are being pressured to have sex. Sons need to know about STDs and how to read a woman’s signals that no means no.

A gloss of the articles is simply Sacher’s opinion of how doctors and other health professionals should approach the issue of young girls and women sexual activity and the potential for unwanted pregnancy and the transmission of STDs. Yet what is also clear is that Sacher is identifying a trend in which these young women are being manipulated by boys and young men to into having what is presumed to be unwanted sex. After discussing the ‘value judgment’ that a young women might fear from questions implying she could be sexually active, the article immediately moves to a presentation of young women as victims of their sexual experiences, in need of negotiating skills to avoid being ‘pressured to have sex’. Within this presentation it is assumed that if a woman is sexually active, it is only because she is being pressured to do so. Alternately, the discussion for ‘sons’ centers on information about STD’s and correctly interpreting signals of women’s desires, thus

presenting not only male sexual drive and activity as a given, but also normalizing the relations in which ‘sons’ are the actors doing the pressuring. That is, boys and young men are represented as the ones with the greater sex drive that may lead to these problematic situations and unwanted outcomes (see Powell, 2010 for a more detailed discussion on this discourse and its variants).

This discourse of presumptive displeasure was the most prominent discourse regarding sexually active young women suggesting the existence of a ‘raunch culture’. However sexual activity as ‘empowering’ was not evident in the dataset thus relating to Fine’s second category, ‘sexuality as victimization’, wherein ‘female adolescent sexuality is represented as a moment of victimization in which the dangers of heterosexuality for adolescent women... are prominent’ (p. 41). In both the discourse of purity and presumptive displeasure, girls’ and women’s sexuality is something to be protected and in doing so sexual freedom is potentially denied or stifled (Powell, 2010).

Unlike the previous article, ‘Risky Business’ (Mulrane, 2002, p. 42) provides us with reproduced ‘talk’ whilst at the pizzeria:

‘Now that we’ve had sex, my boyfriend says I am being a tease if I’m too tired and just want to kiss’, says Kate, a pert blond in a hooded Abercrombie and Fitch sweatshirt. ‘Yes’, they all chime in. ‘I was just having that exact conversation with my boyfriend. Once you have sex, every time you hook up you have to have sex’, adds Laura, who also wonders whether ‘it’s normal, the way he talks to me. He does have a temper and stuff’.

In this extract Kate and her friends openly admit being in heterosexual relationships. However, unlike the previous extract, we are provided with the details of how sexual coercion is applied ‘my boyfriend says I am being a tease if I’m too tired and just want to kiss’, which may be backed with the threat of aggression ‘He does have a temper and stuff’.

Although not all articles in this dataset reference assault, the discourse of presumptive displeasure does manifest itself by explaining women’s active sexual decision-making and experiences as harmful even if women themselves are not making such claims. Indeed, a *Time* article directs our attention to, ‘a 150% increase in ‘unplanned’ sexual activities, date rape and sexual assault’ (Morse 2002, p. 58). The conflation of all three activities here implies they are highly correlated, but also essentially the same. By assuming women’s displeasure in sexual experiences, these articles erase the possible presentation of sexual choice.

Of all 62 articles, only one, a *Newsweek* article on juvenile prostitution, ‘This Could Be Your Kid’ (Smalley *et al.* 2003), presents a young woman speaking of her sexual activities as chosen and desired. This young woman is 17 year-old ‘Stacey’ who talks about men buying her clothing in exchange for watching her try them on. In her opinion ‘potentially good sex is a small price to pay for the freedom to spend money on what I want’ (Smalley *et al.* 2003, p. 44). The article overall, however, manages to uphold the presumed displeasure discourse by quickly moving to stories of pimps luring girls into their businesses with deceitful tricks and eventually kidnapping them, even though this is not Stacey’s story. While Stacey initially provides an alternate representation, the appearance of law enforcement officials talking about ‘pimps... increasingly targeting girls at the local mall’

(Smalley *et al.* 2003, p. 46) omits this alternative reading instead returning to the discourse of ‘presumed displeasure’.

Yet two *Time* articles seemed to challenge this discourse much like Fine’s (2003, p. 43) discourse of desire ‘the naming of desire, pleasure, or sexual entitlement’ as ‘a whisper’. ‘A Teen Twist on Sex’ (Lemonick 2005) points out that National Center for Health Statistics indicate that ‘more than half the adolescents surveyed...said they had engaged in oral sex’ and that, ‘although you may assume that girls mostly perform and boys mostly receive, the numbers show the give and take...is about equal’ (Lemonick 2005, p. 64). Similarly, ‘A Snapshot of Teen Sex’ presents results of a study that mapped the ‘elaborate sexual liaisons’ of teenagers in one town over an 18-month period (Wallis 2005, p. 58). The study identified fewer ‘behavioral differences between the sexes. There are promiscuous boys who prey on less experienced girls... and girls who are predators of boys’ (Wallis 2005, p. 58). The existence of this data suggests that individual actions are being replaced by social perceptions of what ‘ought’ to be.

In the next analytical section the discourse of ‘piety’ combines elements of both the ‘purity’ and the ‘presumed displeasure’ discourses. That is, abstaining from activity is favored given the problems associated in heterosexual miscommunication and its effects on girls and women.

Piety

This discourse centers on growing abstinence-only movement and is visible in the *U.S. News and World Report* article titled ‘Just Don’t Do It’ (Kelly 2005, p. 47):

Grass-roots abstinence organizations have advanced the movement and given abstinence a certain, if limited, cachet. Their video and live programs are as teen-friendly as MTV, encouraging teens to take a no-premarital-sex pledge or, if the teen has already had sex, to stop. Online, kids can ‘Take the Chastity Challenge’ and join a local Pure Love Club. Purity rings, designed to be worn as a reminder to self and proclamation to others, say virginity is chic, not geek. Some girls wear their belief not on their finger, or even their sleeve, but on their underpants. Among the slogans on WaitWear undies: ‘Virginity Lane. Exit when married,’ and ‘No vows. No sex.’ The worth-the-wait message was underscored by the well publicized news flash that pop singer-actress Jessica Simpson waited until her honeymoon to sleep with her boy-band husband, Nick Lachey. And, says Libby Gray Macke, director of Glenview, Ill.-based Project Reality: ‘when you bring in somebody like Miss America 2003, and she says, ‘Part of the way that I got where I am today is abstaining from sexual activity, drinking, and drugs,’ they love it! Teenagers are longing to hear it’s ok to be abstinent.’

A simple reading of this article is an exposé of a ‘grass-roots movement(s)’, which promotes the abstinence of pre-martial sex by marketing it as ‘chic, not geek’. What is clear is that the article focuses specifically on girls and young women’s non-sexual pre-martial activity. For example, it makes reference to how ‘Some girls wear their belief not on their finger, or even their sleeve, but on their underpants. Slogans on WaitWear underpants ‘Virginity Lane. Exit when married’ and ‘No vows. No sex’ reference girls and women’s abstinence but not boys and men. Indeed, it is only female role models (e.g. Jessica Simpson) that are cited as examples. As expected, this discourse places the onus on girls and women to take

control of their sexuality and in doing so fails to problematize the male sex drive (see Holland et al. 2004 for a more detailed expose).

This extract represents the first of two strands of the ‘piety’ discourse. Piety was seen to invoke ideas of religious devotion but also a general sense of dutiful goodness. Articles discussed issues such as how long young people should wait to have sex. For example, the article ‘Hey, parents: this won't hurt a bit’ in *U.S. News & World Report* says that while one mother ‘believes premarital sex is a sin...Others simply pray their kids will graduate from high school with their virginity intact. And then what?’ (Silver 2002, p. 46). Three other articles focus young people’s uncertainty as to whether all forms of sex ‘count’ (e.g. oral and anal) ‘in order to maintain their technical virginity’ (Mulrane 2002, p. 45). What is evident is that information about the risks involved are not presented. Similarly, four articles note that young people who take virginity pledges are less likely to use protection when they do have sex. This ‘sexuality as individual morality’ relates to Fine’s third discursive category, which ‘introduces explicit notions of sexual subjectivity for women’ and ‘values women’s sexual decision making as long as the decisions made are for premarital abstinence’ (p. 42). However, the breadth of this was not evident in the ‘big three’ dataset. In all 62 articles it was either implied or explicitly stated that sexual activities were harmful to young women. Therefore the discourse of piety specifically relates to the abstinence-only movement, and articles involving women who either consider themselves part of this movement, or self-identify as ‘waiting’.

The second strand of the ‘piety’ appears in a total of nine articles. However, this was not about the politics of abstinence but instead about ‘cultural shifts toward sexual restraint among young women’ (Sullivan 2005, p. 90). These articles have few adults speaking,

instead are filled with young people, mostly women, who serve as ‘real life’ examples of this discourse. For example Latoya, one of the few black women in any of the articles, described in *Newsweek*’s ‘Choosing Virginity’ (Ali & Scelfo 2002, p. 63):

Remaining a virgin until marriage is neither an easy nor a common choice in Latoya Huggins’s part of Patterson, N.J. at least three of her friends became single mothers while they were still in high school, one by an older man who now wants nothing to do with the child. ‘It’s hard for her to finish school,’ Latoya says, ‘because she has to take the baby to get shots and stuff.’

Latoya lives in a chaotic world: so far this year, more than a dozen people have been murdered in her neighborhood. It’s a life that makes her sexuality seem like one of the few things she can actually control. ‘I don’t even want a boyfriend until after college,’ says Latoya who’s studying to be a beautician at a technical high school. ‘Basically I want a lot out of my life. My career choices are going to need a lot of time and effort.’

Latoya, 18, could pass for a street-smart 28. She started thinking seriously about abstinence 5 years ago, when a national outreach program called Free Teens began teaching classes at her church. The classes reinforced what she already knew from growing up in Patterson – that discipline is the key to getting through your teen years alive.

Latoya’s celibacy is juxtaposed with other’s problematized pregnancies (see Stokeo, 2010 for a detailed discussion of social discourse on single mothers). Yet what the article centers on is the difficulty of remaining abstinence which both problematizes girls’ and young women’s sexual desires ‘neither an easy nor a common choice’ and teenage boys and young

men, but also the implied predatory behavior of the 'older man'. Yet in a 'chaotic world' women have at least some form of control and that is over their body as long as they don't have engage in heterosexual intimacy or even have a 'boyfriend until after college.' Additionally, by stating that 'discipline is the key to getting through your teen years alive' the article emphasizes the perceived stakes.

The young women in this discourse do not, like Latoya, live 'in a chaotic world' for the discourse of piety to be relevant. Another young woman presented in this discourse, (in the more common presentation of a middle-class, white woman) is 15 year-old Jennifer in 'Meet the Gamma Girls' who is presented as 'evidence that a teenage girl in 2002 can be emotionally healthy, socially secure, independent-minded, and just plain nice' (Meadows & Carmichael 2002, p. 44). When it comes to Jennifer's decision not to have sex, 'she was shocked when her dad recently told her that while he thought waiting was best, it was her own choice' while 'her friends tell her she's never going to make it to marriage'. Given these expectations Jennifer's response was, 'that just makes me more determined' (Meadows & Carmichael 2002, p. 49). These articles present Latoya, Jennifer, and their peers as happy and in control of their lives. Women who renounce sexual activity on their own terms, were presented as having more agency than women in the other discourses. As the *Newsweek* article 'Choosing Virginity' states in its introduction, young women decide to remain virgins to 'gain some semblance of control over their own destinies' (Ali & Sceflo 2002, p. 61). In contrast young women who chose to have sex apparently give up control of their destinies. Therefore the discourse of piety presents women as having the most authority over their lives.

Yet given the implied empowerment by this discourse, feminism and empowerment were surprisingly scarcely mentioned with the exception of a single quote in the article ‘The Strip is Back’, which aligns feminism with the ‘female chauvinist pig’. According to ‘Girls Going Mild(er)’, this framing of feminism is summed up as young women who ‘cover up, insist on enforced curfews on college campuses, bring their moms on their dates and pledge to stay virgins until marriage’ (Yabroff 2007, p. 50). A young woman in *Newsweek*, notes ‘one of the empowering things about the feminist movement... is that we’re able to assert ourselves, to say no to sex and not feel pressured about it’ (Ali & Scelfo 2002, p. 62). Thus, these articles celebrate a conservative and chaste form of feminism presented as a single route for young women to access control of their own lives.

Discussion

Identifying the ‘purity’, ‘presumed displeasure’, and ‘piety’ discourses and how they are reported in the ‘big three’ mirrors Valenti’s identification of virginity discourses. This suggests that more traditional discourses on teenage girls and young women sexuality are still readily available and influential. Non-sexual activity, as shown in both ‘purity’ and ‘piety’, was seen to be favored over those in heterosexual relationships, given the propensity for manipulation. Indeed, there was a strong suggestion that women may be damaged in such relationships. Yet what was also evident was that all three discourses place the onus for sexual relationship problems such as pregnancy and abuse on teenage girls and young women, even though some responsibility for sexual pressure was located with older teenage

boys and young men. However, expectations around the male sex drive remained unchallenged.

This favoring of virginity in the newsweeklies contradicts earlier studies of media aimed at younger generations. While all adhere to an androcentric model, this study negates women's sexual agency. Similarly, what was also evident was the relative absence of 'raunch' in the 'big three'. This was surprising given that others such as Levy (2006) had previously identified this discourse in popular culture. Even more so given this discourse still has currency today. For example, 'Girls Gone Wild' continues to make millions of dollars,⁶ Paris Hilton, Lindsey Lohan, and the Kardashians still fill entertainment magazine covers with their sexploits. Moreover, *MTV's* 'Spring Break', a show that 'glorifies heavy partying, what it calls 'bootylicious girls', erotic dancing, wet t-shirt contests, and binge drinking' (Schor, 2004 p. 55) has continued to air for more than a decade. Of course this analysis was limited to the 'big three' newsweeklies and one would presume 'raunch' along with other discourses would be prevalent in other on- and off-line mediated sources. Indeed, the media sources for younger generation examined in previous studies suggest a greater prevalence for 'raunch' suggesting a different generational perspective with more mature and educated audiences favoring 'virginity' - perhaps more so for those with youngsters.

Since promiscuity sits in an uneasy relationship with virginity by implying that girls are 'tame' before they can 'go' wild, future research could further explore this relationship. One such avenue could be the presumption that purity is associated with 'white'. As Blank (2007, p. 11) notes, historically 'virginity was an attribute of being civilized, which was to

⁶ The recent chapter 11 bankruptcy filing of the "Girls Gone Wild" company, appears at this writing to be an attempt by CEO Joe Francis to escape the rather large number of legal claims against him. It is reported that Francis has lost cases over everything from slander and unpaid gambling debt to inappropriate use of film showing underage women. While this has certainly caused trouble for the company, it is doubtful that this will actually be its end.

say Christian, European, and white' (11). The newsweekly dataset overwhelmingly presented young white girls and women. Future research could also examine the empirical relationship of 'raunch' and 'virginity' by examining changes over time in the presentation of youth sexuality in various other media avenues. What could be revealing is to examine whether the discourse of virginity emerged at the same time 'raunch' in youth culture, or if the favoring of non-sexual activity predates 'raunch'. Nevertheless, the virginity and chastity centered discourses as largely uncontested in these media sources are important for understanding popular culture discourse(s) on mature teenage girls and young women's sexuality. We therefore invite other scholars to join us in examining this important research avenue.

References

- Ali, L., *et al.* 2002, December 9. Choosing virginity. *Newsweek*, 61-66.
- Baldauf, S. 2007, June 11. A summer assignment. *U.S. News & World Report*, 68-69.
- Beasley, Chris. 2005. *Gender & sexuality: critical theories, critical thinkers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bell, A., & Garrett, P. (Eds.). 1998. *Approaches to media discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Blank, H. 2007. *Virgin: The untouched history*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Carpenter, L. M. 1998. From girls into women: scripts for sexuality and romance in *Seventeen* magazine, 1974-1994. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 35, 158-168.
- Chilton, P. 1988. *Critical Discourse Moments and Critical Discourse Analysis*. San Diego: University of California.
- Deveny, K., *et al.* 2007, February 12. Girls gone bad; Paris, Britney, Lindsay & Nicole. *Newsweek*, 40-47.
- Durham, M.G.. 1998. Dilemmas of desire: representations of adolescent sexuality in two teen magazines. *Youth and Society*, 29, 369-390.
- Fairclough, N. 2003. *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. 1995. *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Fine, M. 2003. Sexuality schooling and adolescent females: the missing discourse of desire. In: M. Fine & L. Weis (Eds.), *Silenced voices and extraordinary conversations* New York: Teachers College Press, 38-67.

- Garner, A., Stark H.M. & Adams S. 1998. Narrative analysis of sexual etiquette in teenage magazines. *Journal of Communication*, 48, 59-78.
- Grossman, L. 2003, July 14. People. *Time*, 79.
- Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S. & Thomson, R. (2004). *The male in the head: Young people, heterosexuality and power*. London: Tufnell Press.
- hooks, b., 1992. *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- Howell, M. 2007. *The history of federal abstinence-only funding*. Advocates for youth. Available from: [https:// http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/429](https://http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/429) [Accessed 8 Aug. 2013].
- Journalism.org. 2005. *2005 annual report: Introduction*. Retrieved from http://www.stateofthedia.org/2005/narrative_magazines_newsinvestment.asp
- Krassas, N. R., Blauwkamp J.M & Wesselink P. 2003. Master your johnson: sexual rhetoric in Maxim and Stuff magazines. *Sexuality & Culture* 7, 98-119.
- Krassas, N. R., Blauwkamp J.M. & Wesselink P. 2001. Boxing Helena and corseting Eunice: sexual rhetoric in Cosmopolitan and Playboy magazines. *Sex Roles* 44, 751-771.
- Lemonick, M. D. 2005, September 26. A teen twist on sex. *Time*, 64.
- Levy, A. 2006. *Female chauvinist pigs*. New York: Free Press.
- Locke, T. 2004. *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Macdonald, M. 2003. *Exploring media discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Masters, C., Park A. & Song S. 2005, December 5. The year in medicine. *Time*, 63-87.
- Meadows, S. & Carmichael M. (2002, June 3). Meet the gamma girls. *Newsweek*, 44-50.
- Mulrine, A. 2002, May 27. Risky Business. *U.S. News & World Report*, 42-49.

- Powell, A. 2010. *Sex, power and consent: Youth culture and the unwritten rules*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Querna, B., *et al.* 2006, June 19. Not good at saying (or hearing) no. *U.S. News & World Report*, 56.
- Ramirez, J. 2007, February 26. Injected into a growing controversy. *Newsweek*, 10.
- Sayre, C. 2007, February 19. Yikes! An STD vaccine for sixth-graders. *Time*, 19.
- Schor, J. B. 2004. *Born to buy*. New York: Scribner.
- Scott, J.W. 1999. *Gender and the politics of history*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Siegel, D. 2007. *Sisterhood, interrupted: From radical women to girls gone wild*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Silver, M.. 2002, May 27. Hey, parents: this won't hurt a bit. *U.S. News & World Report*, 46-47.
- Smalley S., *et al.* 2003, August 18. This could be your kid. *Newsweek*, 44-47.
- Snitow, A., Stansell C. & Thompson S. (Eds.). 1983. *Powers of desire*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Stein, J. 2003, April 28. Cue the tequila. *Time*, 68-69.
- Stein, J. 2004, July 26. The strip is back! *Time*, 22-34.
- Stokoe, E. 2003. Mothers, single women and sluts: gender, morality and membership categorization in neighbor disputes. *Feminism & Psychology* 13 (3), 317-344.
- Sullivan, A. 2005, March 7. The case for compromise on abortion. *Time*, 90.
- Taylor, L.D. 2005. All for him: articles about sex in American lad magazines. *Sex Roles*, 52, 153-163.

- Tumanov, Vladimir. 2011. Mary versus Eve: paternal uncertainty and the Christian view of women. *Neophilologus*, 95, 507-521.
- Tyrangiel, J. 2003, June 30. Destiny's adult. *Time*, 56-58.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2011. *Population Estimates*. Available from:
<http://www.census.gov/popest/data/> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2013].
- Valenti, J. 2009. *The purity myth*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. 1993. Principles of critical discourse analysis, *Discourse Society* 4 (2) 249-283.
- Wallis, C. 2005, February 7. A snapshot of teen sex. *Time*, 58.
- Wallis, C. 2007, March 19. Saying yes to the shot. *Time*, 96.
- Yabroff, J. 2007, July 23. Girls going mild(er). *Newsweek*, 50-51.