

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this section I describe the methodology of the thesis. The section is divided into five sections: *3.1 Research Questions* *3.2 Summary of Population* *3.3 Summary of the Materials and Description of Material* *3.4 Codifying Procedure* and *3.5 Study Limitations*.

3.1 Research Questions

- 1) What are the linguistic elements, sentence and discourse structures used to create sexist discourse in the construction of stereotypical masculine and feminine gender ideologies of men and women?
- 2) What are the gender identities that the two magazines construct via sexist discourse?

In the following sections, I discuss the methodology of the thesis that allows me to answer the above questions.

3.2 Summary of subject/population selection

I analyze one article from the Mexican editions of two international magazines, *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health*, which target the young adult Mexican population (18-30 years of age). I have chosen magazines as the medium to be analyzed because it is one of the most popular forms of literature for young adults in Mexico. I base this notion on the fact that almost every street corner has a stand that contains a large variety of magazine titles. Thus, based on the popularity of magazines I argue that they may have a powerful influence in reproducing stereotypical gender ideology.

This thesis focuses on lifestyle magazines. Lifestyle magazines, as previously mentioned in the *Chapter One: Introduction*, are those that address topics such as love,

relationships, fashion, beauty and celebrities. I have chosen to focus on this genre because they reinforce gender ideologies during the adolescent and young adult years. It is a time when an individual begins to construct their identity, which is strongly influenced by the gender that is attributed to their biological sex (Rice, 2002). Thus, I propose that magazines play an important role in the social construction of gender identity at this moment of psychological maturity.

The majority of lifestyle magazines that target adolescent and young adult audiences in Mexico are marketed towards women such as: *Ventitantos*, *15 a 20*, *Tu*, *Eres*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* to name a few. Women's lifestyle magazines have an extensive production history along with numerous titles. However, in regards to the adolescent and young adult male populations, there is neither an extensive production history nor numerous magazine titles that fall under the lifestyle genre. Traditionally, the majority of magazines targeted towards the male population are those of hobbies and recreation. However, *Men's Health* has adopted the lifestyle genre that has long been dominated by women's magazines.

In order to objectively justify and obtain a general idea as to which magazines are the most popular amongst the young-adult Mexican population, I distributed a questionnaire at an affluent university in central Mexico. I explain this in the following section.

3.3 Summary of materials

3.3.1 Survey of Most Popular Magazines

In order to have a general idea of the most popular magazines that Mexican young adults read, I distributed a questionnaire that can be found in *Appendix I*.

3.3.1.1 *The Pilot and First Surveys*

The first survey that I piloted asked: “¿En tu opinión cuáles son las revistas más populares entre la población femenina/masculina mexicana entre la edad de 18-30 años?” (In your opinion, what magazines are the most popular within the Mexican female/male population between the ages of 18-30?). I distributed this questionnaire to twenty males and twenty females. I later re-worded the second survey that asked: “En tu opinión ¿cuáles son las revistas (en español) que se leen más entre la población femenina/masculina mexicana entre 18-30 años?” (In your opinion, what magazines {in Spanish} are read mostly within the Mexican female/male population between the ages of 18-30?). I added *en español* (in Spanish) because in the first survey results, one of the most popular magazines listed was *Maxium* – an American magazine written in English. For this thesis, I was looking for a magazine in Spanish, thus needed to re-write the question.

3.3.1.2 *The Second Survey*

I changed the wording with the first question by inserting the phrase *en español* (in Spanish) and added a second question: “¿En tu opinión cuáles son las revistas (en español) que se leen más entre la población mexicana de ambos sexos entre 18-30 años?” (In your opinion, what magazines {in Spanish} are read mostly within the Mexican female/male population between the ages of 18-30?). The results are:

- Men: *Men's Health*
- Women: *Cosmopolitan*
- Men and Women: *Muy Interesante*

Due to the fact that *Men's Health* and *Cosmopolitan* are lifestyle magazines and *Muy Interesante* is not, I decided that I would not be able to compare the content of the latter magazine with the first two. Thus, I have excluded it from the thesis and only analyze *Men's Health* and *Cosmopolitan*.

3.3.1.3 Description of the Materials: Cosmopolitan and Men's Health

Cosmopolitan and *Men's Health* are international magazines that originated in the United States. *Cosmopolitan* is translated into forty-four different languages and distributed to fifty countries that are produced bi-monthly. I attempted several times to contact the *Cosmopolitan* editorial staff that produces the Latin American versions to ask them questions about the production of the Mexican edition. Nevertheless, my efforts proved fruitless. I only received one reply from an editor of the Hearst Corporation (the owners of *Cosmopolitan*). She stated that the editorial staff that produces the Latin American versions of the magazine are located in Miami, Florida and are all of Hispanic decent (Golchin, personal communication, January 6, 2009). Based on this response, I had more questions than answers such as 1) *Are these writers and editors fluent in Spanish?* 2) *What Hispanic heritage (country) is the most predominant of the editorial staff?* 3) *Are they US-born or were they born and raised in the country of their heritage?* and lastly 4) *How do they gather data to know what material to present in each edition?* These questions were not answered. Therefore, although there is an 'all Hispanic' staff, it must be taken with a grain of salt. Through my own review of the magazine under investigation, I suggest that the majority of the articles appear to be translations. I base this judgment on the names of the individuals that take credit in writing the articles such as Kimberly Goad, Myatt Murphy, Tracy Ramsden, Lesleigh Kivedo and Glynis

Horning. However, I was unable to find the English translations and I cannot support that these articles are translations. I can only suggest that they are.

As a result, the translation of the articles may affect the results in that the Mexican female coders may not comprehend the ideology of the article's content or there may be parts of the article that are not translated properly either grammatically or pragmatically. Therefore, the coders may not understand *what* ideology the text is trying to transmit. Also, they may negotiate the ideology of the message differently from what the North American text producer 'intends'. Thus, as I mentioned in the *Chapter One* section 1.10 *Outline of Research Strategy*, it is possible that the coders may negotiate the ideology of these messages as non-sexist.

In regards to *Men's Health*, I contacted the editor-in-chief to ask him what percentage of the material was translated and what original material was written by the Mexican staff. He said that 70% of the magazine is translated and 30% is original material. He said that the magazine contains thematic material that does not require adaption to Mexican culture such as sex and "algunas rutinas" as he put it (A. Felix-Díaz, personal communication, November 11, 2008). However, topics such as nutrition, health and work are more difficult to adapt, thus these articles are written by Mexican columnists.

3.3.1.3.1 Data Analyzed in Both Magazines

Due to the time constraints, I only analyze one article from each of the two October 2008 editions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health*. I chose this month because this is the month in which I received the data from the surveys. As I previously mentioned, *Cosmopolitan* is produced bi-monthly. In regards to choosing which of the two October *Cosmopolitan*

editions I would use, I chose the second. I chose the second because I had previously written on the first *Cosmopolitan* and could not find another copy. Therefore, I reviewed the second and the content applied to the criteria that I was looking to analyze.

In relation to how I chose the articles to analyze, I base my decision on two factors: 1) content that expresses sexist ideology and 2) number of words. I chose *Juego de los números* (The number game) from *Cosmopolitan* and *Lee entre los pliegues* (Read between the lines) from *Men's Health*.

- *Content:*
 - *Cosmopolitan:* I chose *Juego de los números* because it expresses content that I consider to be discriminatory against women in regards to their sexuality. As a result, I am already expecting that the coders identify sexist discourse. However, although I believe that the article contains sexist discourse, the coders may not. They may also identify certain elements as sexist that I would not. I also chose this article, because I believe that it contradicts the *fun, fearless female* ideology and identity which describes a single, successful and sexually independent woman.
 - *Men's Health:* I chose *Lee entre los pliegues* because it was the article that demonstrates the most evidence of sexist discourse towards women and men in the entire magazine.
- *Number of words:* I also needed to choose an article that had more or less the same amount of words as to not influence the results by stating that one article demonstrated more sexist discourse over the other. Thus, in

order to check the word count of each article I downloaded the program ABBYY Fine Reader 9.0 Professional Edition so that it could convert the scanned jpg. pictures of the articles into a Word text. I then fed the Word text into the program TextSTAT that counted the amount of tokens (words) in each of the articles. The difference in word count is 675 words, which is a large difference: *Men's Health*: 1,839 and *Cosmopolitan*: 1,164. Nevertheless, I decided not to change the two articles because they provided the evidence as to what I felt to be sexist discourse and being the closest in word length. Therefore, I am fully aware that there is a difference in the quantity of sexist discourse data in this thesis. Thus, based on this difference, I cannot generalize that there is more sexist discourse in either of the two magazines. This thesis only realizes one article from each magazine, which also prevents generalized conclusions.

3.3.2. Table and Analysis

In order to analyze and identify sexist discourse in the data, I coded each of the two texts to create a table that is based on specific discourse structures that I borrowed from van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman and Troutman (1997), Mills (1995) and McLoughlin (2000). I piloted the table with the coders and made the necessary alterations, see *Appendix II*. I designed the pilot and the actual instrument in Spanish because the data are in Spanish and the first language of the coders is Spanish. I believe that the coders (that all possess a high level of English competency) can express themselves better in Spanish, thus justifying its use as language of the instrument. A professor in the MA Applied Linguistics department, whose first language is Spanish, in addition to being

Mexican, aided me in correcting the grammatical, semantic and pragmatic components of the instrument so that it was more comprehensible to the coders. I discuss the codifying procedure below.

3.4 Codifying the Data

My Mexican colleagues codified the data on the grounds that I am not Mexican and my first language is not Spanish. Thus, in order to reduce my linguistic and cultural bias, I have asked my three (female) Mexican colleagues, which have studied in the MA Applied Linguistics program, to codify the data and they agreed. The codifying procedure took place the last two weeks of February 2009. One of the reasons that I did not include habitual readers is due to time constraints. Although this may display biased results, if habitual readers had been the only individuals to analyze the data it is possible that they would not have found any sexist discourse. Therefore, there would be no data to analyze.

3.4.1 Codifying Procedure: Training and Piloting of Table

The traditional method in training discourse coders is to do it with all of the coders present. However, due time constraints of the three coders, I had to train them separately during the training period. I explained the entire instrument to the coders. The instrument includes four parts of analysis:

- 1) Analysis of the discourse: (a) Lexical Elements (b) Level of the Sentence (c) Level of the Discourse.* I adopted these three levels of discourse analysis from Mills (1995). As can be seen in *Appendix II*, after the coder identifies a lexical term, sentence or discourse structure she will then identify how it constructs gender and how it is sexist.

- 2) *Analysis of the interaction between the text producer and the reader.* This is to understand how the coders feel they are being directed by the text producer and how this may influence the way a habitual reader allots credence to the text.
- 3) *Questions to answer after having analyzed the data.* I adopted these questions by Mills (1995). I included the portion *context of production* in order to avoid a pure *closed-reader analysis*.
- 4) *Questions in regards to sexism in Mexico.* The coders answered these questions after coding the two sample texts. I asked these questions in order to have a perspective on how they viewed sexism in Mexico. This helps to understand why they coded certain items as sexist and the possible influence these texts may have in reproducing sexism. The coders are from three different states in central Mexico and this may reflect in their interpretations.

The coders piloted the table using two sample texts from each of the October 2008 magazines. These texts are not used nor related to the actual analysis. They completed their training in the GILA² and I was nearby to answer their questions and clarify any doubts that they had. I trained Coders 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) in the GILA on the same day. They piloted the instrument by hand and did not have copies of the two training articles to write on while Coder 3 (C3) (that trained the day after) wrote her responses via computer and had two color copies of the articles to write on. This is explained in further detail in the following section.

² GILA stands for *Grupo de Investigación de Lingüística Aplicada* (Applied Linguistics Research Group). It is located in the Applied Linguistics department for undergraduate and graduate students conducting research in this field.

3.4.2 Modifications of instrument

As previously stated in 3.2 *Table and Analysis*, I modified the instrument in accordance to their responses and recommendations. I mentioned in the previous section that C1 and C2 wrote their responses by hand and did not have color copies of the same articles to write on (however, they did not write on the magazine). I believed these articles to be short and adequate that would not require a computer or copies of the articles to be marked upon. They stated that writing by hand was a strenuous task and asked that for the actual coding to use a computer and to provide color copies of the articles so that they could write and make comments on them. They mentioned that it was difficult to analyze the texts by not being able not write on the articles because they would lose their place or forget specific elements in which they wished to code. I agreed to this since it would make the coding process more efficient and it would provide a more fruitful analysis. In regards to C3, she completed her training the day after C1 and C2. She was only able to do her training in the evening and from having learned about how long and strenuous the coding was by hand with the two other coders, I decided to train her on the computer and provide her with color copies of the two sample articles so that she could write on them. This method proved to be more productive and was employed in the real coding procedure with all three coders. They also recommended that the *Part I* of the analysis be in the format of a table in order to analyze and organize the data more efficiently. Therefore, I modified the instrument from an essay format to that of a table.

I changed the *yes/no* questions into *how* questions. I noted in the training results that they only listed what they thought was sexist but not *how* or *why*. Therefore, I added two extra columns: *¿Cómo construyen estos elementos el género de los hombres y/o las*

mujeres? (**How** do these elements construct gender for men and/or women?) and *¿Cómo son sexistas hacia los hombres y/o las mujeres?* (**How** are the sexist towards men and/or women?)

I added a new section in *Part 3, Questions to answer after having analyzed the data: The Context*. Due to the fact that I am following Mills's (1995) method in analyzing the discourse above the level of the lexical elements, it was important for the coders to know a brief *Context of Production* about each magazine in order to avoid a pure closed data analysis. Knowledge of the sociohistorical factors of the magazine, its affiliations and publishing practices allows them to have a better understanding as to why the text is written and can be interpreted in various ways. This may however also cause bias in the analysis. During the training session I told them to only answer the questions that they wished and when I analyzed their responses I noticed that they did not all answer the same ones. Thus, I could not make a proper assessment and in the actual coding I required that they answered all the questions in order to compare their responses. I also inserted a question in regards to repetition to see if there is reinforcement of an ideology through the lexical item, sentence or discourse structure.

In regards to *Part 4, Questions in regards to sexism in Mexico*, I emailed the questions to the coders two days after they coded the last article which was *Juego de los números* from *Cosmopolitan*. I chose two days instead of one as to attempt to prevent a biased opinion based upon the last article that they analyzed. I felt that two days would provide sufficient time to allow for a more 'objective' opinion as to not be strongly influenced by the last article.

3.4.3 *Coding Cosmopolitan and Men's Health Articles*

At the time that each of the coders began to codify the two texts, I re-explained the instrument as well as the modifications that I made. The coders analyzed the data *separately* in the GILA and I remained with them (however, did not interact with them) in the event they needed clarification on any part of the instrument or procedure.

I had originally planned that the coders would analyze the two articles in one week in order to obtain their first reactions to the text. That is to say, the coder would codify the two articles (all four parts) on two separate days in order to prevent mental exhaustion. However, I noticed that the codifying procedure took longer than I anticipated and therefore decided to extend the codifying procedure from one week to two weeks. I decided to do this because one of the coders addressed to me that she felt tired and need to rest. Therefore, they were able to rest when they needed. I did this to prevent fatigue in the coders that may influence how they coded the data. As a result, the negotiations of their responses are subject to a change versus it being their first reaction.

3.4.4 *Method to find agreement*

The method that I use to determine if they found agreement is based on a two out of three or 66% percent agreement amongst the coders. I base agreement on the word/sentence/discourse structure the coder identifies, along with their explanation as to *how* they find it to construct gender and *how* it is sexist.

3.5 *Limitations of Thesis*

In every study there are limitations. This thesis is not exception. Below are a list of limitations and a brief explanation:

- a) *Limit of articles*: In this thesis, I make no generalizations that every edition and the entire content of *Cosmopolitan* or *Men's Health* produce sexist discourse. This is because the analysis includes only one text of each magazine. Thus, there is not enough data to support generalizations that the entire discourse of these two magazines is sexist in nature. The motivation for this study is to provide an idea and make aware that sexist discourse is present in some of the content found in lifestyle magazines directed towards young adult audiences. Another motivation for this thesis is that there needs to be further investigative work on sexist discourse in the Mexican editions of the two magazines and others of Mexican origin. This will help to support (or un-support) the existence of sexist discourse in magazines as well as to propose new theses.
- b) *Sex of the coders*: This thesis is limited because the coders are women and their personal and social cognitions are in some part influenced by their sex. The reason for not having male coders was due to time constraints in regards to training them in discourse analysis. Therefore, training Mexican male participants in sexist discourse and critical discourse analysis would have proved difficult. In addition, there is only one male in the Masters program that is from the United States. As a result, he is not eligible to participate in the analysis. Therefore, I have chosen three MA Applied Linguistics students in their fourth semester that have been educated in discourse analysis. Thus, the coding of sexist discourse in the text from *Men's Health* is not negotiated from the perspective of men, but of women. This may have an affect on the results. For future studies in this area, I

recommend that male coders participate in the coding analysis to see how they negotiate sexism in discourse.

- c) *Reception portion not included*: In relation to the time constraints of the thesis, I cannot analyze the reception portion that Mills (1995) and Philo (2006) propose. The closest I can approach the reception portion is from the three coders. Nevertheless, they are not habitual readers of either magazine, thus their perspective may be different from those that actually purchase them. Also, I do not have the perspective of the habitual readers in regards to 1) if they detect sexist discourse and 2) if they accept it or reject it. Therefore, if there is sexist discourse detected within the two texts, I cannot claim that it be eliminated.

Based on the methodological description above, I now discuss *Chapter Four: Results & Discussion*.