

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL SOCIALIZATION AND TEEN MAGAZINES

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**A Cross-National Study between
the United States and the Netherlands**

Suchi P. Joshi



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*Adolescent Sexual Socialization and Teen Magazines:
A Cross-National Study between the United States and the Netherlands*

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To my partner Sunil with love.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is commonly viewed as one of the most important periods of sexual development (e.g., Bay-Cheng, Robinson, & Zucker, 2009; Tolman & McClelland, 2011). Consequently, scientific researchers have devoted a great deal of attention to adolescent sexual socialization – that is, “the process by which knowledge, attitudes, and values about sexuality are acquired” (Ward, 2003, p. 348). Topics that are important to adolescent sexuality which researchers have focused on include, but are not limited to, the dangers associated with sex, condom and contraceptive use, unplanned pregnancy, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), the positive aspects of sex such as desire and pleasure, and the emergence of a hook-up culture (e.g., Carpenter, 2001; Elliott, 2010; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Tolman, 2002). While some researchers have focused on the moral, physical, and psychological ramifications of these topics, others have focused primarily on where and what young people learn about sex and sexuality. Even though many adolescents learn about sex-related topics from parents, peers, and sex education programs, no source is perhaps more pervasive in educating young people about sex than the media.

The media have consistently been recognized as one of the most prominent information sources for adolescent sexual socialization (for a review, see Ward, 2003). Considering that young people (ages 8 to 18 years) spend almost 8 to 10 hours a day consuming entertainment media (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), it is no surprise that the media have been referred to as a ‘sexual super peer’ for adolescents (Brown, Halpern, & L’Engle, 2005). In fact, while parents and peers are important sources for sexual information, teenagers themselves have cited the media as one of the most vital sources for information about sex (Ward, 2003). Media such as television, movies, magazines, and the Internet offer young people a plethora of information about romantic relationships, sex, and sexual health (Brown et al., 2005).

Of the media sources available for information about sex, teen magazines have been recognized as being particularly popular among adolescents, especially for teenage girls (e.g., Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004; Roberts & Foehr, 2004). The dominant role of teen magazines as an information source for sex and romantic relationships is hardly unexpected. Teen magazines are read by millions of adolescents worldwide (Walsh-Childers, Treise, & Gotthoffer, 1997). Teen magazines also place a heavy emphasis on sex (Wright, 2009), and the focus on sex-related topics within teen magazines has only grown over the years (Carpenter, 2001; Clarke, 2009; Garner et al., 1998). Moreover, teen magazines are tailored to cover a variety of sex-related topics that are directly relevant to young people, and the coverage of these topics is notably more in-depth in teen magazines than in other media (APA, 2007; Durham, 1996, 1998; Garner et al., 1998; Walsh-Childers, Gotthoffer, & Lepre,

2002; Ward, 2003). In addition, the sexual information in teen magazines is easily available to young people as they can be found at supermarkets, magazine stands, public libraries, or sent directly to a subscriber's home (Ward, 2003). Due to this accessibility, many teen readers rely on magazines as a "sounding board" and "close confidant," especially when it comes to sex-related topics (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004, p. 2).

Given the importance of teen magazines in the sexual socialization of adolescents, they remain an understudied medium. Three major gaps in the literature still exist. First, although some sex-related topics in teen magazines have been studied through various content analyses (Carpenter, 2001; Clarke, 2009; Farvid & Braun, 2006), our knowledge base of these topics is on the surface level and is therefore severely limited. Second, the majority of studies on how teen magazines cover sex-related topics have been conducted from a single-country perspective (e.g., Carpenter, 1998; Clarke, 2009; Garner et al., 1998). Consequently, as of late, the need to study the cultural contingency of adolescent sexuality has been emphasized (Halpern, 2010; Tolman & McClelland, 2011), especially because it has been well-documented that the experience of sex and sexuality varies by country (e.g., Ford & Beach, 1951; Frayser, 1985; Gregersen, 1986; Hofstede, 1998). Third and lastly, no study to date has directly linked the sex-related content of teen magazines to how young people think or feel about sex. As a result, we have yet to know if and how the sex-related content from teen magazines is linked to young people's views about sex.

In response to these three lacunae, this book has three main goals. The first goal is to delve deeper into important sex-related topics by content analyzing sex-related material in teen magazines. For instance, two of the most popular themes that past studies have identified in teen and women's magazines are sexual desire and the dangers associated with sex (e.g., Carpenter, 1998; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Schalet, 2000, 2004; Tolman, 2002), but no research to date has examined the gender- and culture-specific nature of sexual desire and danger coverage in teen magazines in one single study. Moreover, despite the important role of virginity loss and pregnancy to adolescent sexuality, our knowledge of how teen magazines cover these two topics is scarce. For instance, while the coverage of virginity loss in teen magazines has been studied (Carpenter, 2001), it remains unclear how often and with what tone virginity loss appears in teen magazines. In addition, pregnancy has never been studied in its own right but only in the broader context of the dangers associated with sex (e.g., Clarke, 2009; Garner et al., 1998; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Furthermore, research in the last decade has suggested that young people increasingly engage in more casual forms of sex through 'hook-ups,' where committed relationships and love are not necessarily present (e.g., Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010). Nevertheless, no study to date has investigated how teen magazines cover issues related to a hook-up culture.

The second goal of this book is to investigate the teen magazine coverage of the above-mentioned topics of sexual desire, sexual danger, virginity loss, pregnancy, and a hook-up culture from a cross-national comparative perspective. The majority of content analyses of the sex-related material in magazines have been exclusively from the United

States (US); however, it is commonly accepted that issues related to sex and sexuality are for a large part dependent on culture (Ford & Beach, 1951; Gagnon & Simon, 1973). As a result, findings from research conducted in one country may not be applicable to another country. Cross-national research is therefore acknowledged to be an “essential antidote to naive universalism” (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, p. 308) and a crucial “escape from ethnocentrism” (Dogan & Pelassy, 1984, p. 5). More importantly, cross-national research helps to establish differences between cultures and explain those differences through meaningful factors in which two cultures may vary (Przeworski & Teune, 1970). To initially fill the gap of cross-national comparative research in the field of adolescent sexual socialization research, this book focuses on the coverage of the aforementioned topics in the most popular teen girl magazines from the US and the Netherlands. The US and the Netherlands were chosen because these two countries are similar in terms of wealth, education standards, and are democratically governed, highly developed nations (Schalet, 2000); however, the US and the Netherlands differ substantially on sex-related issues (Hofstede, 1998; Schalet, 2000). Therefore, these two countries lend themselves to a meaningful cross-national comparison of sex-related content in teen girl magazines. Teen *girl* magazines were chosen because out of all the teen magazines available on the market, the top three teen magazines in each country are teen girl magazines, which are teen magazines specifically targeted at a female readership.

The third and final goal of this book is to link the sex-related content from US and Dutch teen girl magazines to the sexual attitudes of young people in the US and the Netherlands. By doing so, we are able to examine whether the reading of teen magazines is linked to young people’s sexual socialization. Moreover, this book is able to indicate whether the associations found between teen magazine reading and young people’s sexual attitudes are culturally contingent. After all, the role of teen magazines in young people’s sexual socialization of a particular country cannot be fully grasped without comparing it to the role that such magazines play in the sexual socialization of youth of another country (Ford & Beach, 1951; Gagnon & Simon, 1973).

While this book primarily addresses researchers of adolescent sexual socialization, it also has practical benefits for parents, health educators, government officials, and magazine editors. In terms of scientific research, the combination of content analysis and survey research allows for a more in-depth understanding of teen girl magazines and their association with the sexual attitudes of young people. Not only are we able to understand what sex-related content is present in US and Dutch teen girl magazines and how this content is culturally contingent, but we are also able to comprehend how this content is linked to the way that US and Dutch young people think and feel about sex. Practically speaking, parents, health educators, government officials, and magazine editors are better able to understand how cultural factors influence the ways in which adolescent sexuality is covered in the media, and how sex-related content for adolescents varies by country. Furthermore, parents, health educators, government officials, and magazine editors may be able to gain insight into how teen magazines are linked to the sexual attitudes of US and

Dutch young people today. Ultimately, the findings from this book can help facilitate more meaningful sex talks between parents and teens, provide valuable information for health educators and government officials when developing sex education programs, and allow magazine editors to create more teenager-relevant publications.

Outline of Book Chapters

The chapters of this book are written as individual studies and can also be read in this fashion. In a consecutive manner, each chapter builds upon the next and contributes to the overall research aim of studying adolescents and sexualized media from a cross-national comparative perspective through the medium of teen magazines. More specifically, the four chapters of this book address two important issues. The first important issue addressed is the type of sex-related content within the most popular US and Dutch teen girl magazines. The second important issue is how these teen magazines may be linked to any fear of sex held by US and Dutch young people.

Chapter 1: Sexual Desire and Danger in US and Dutch Teen Girl Magazines

The first chapter focuses on the depiction of sexual desire and danger in US and Dutch teen girl magazines. Sexual desire and the dangers associated with sex are two of the most popular themes identified in teen and women's magazines (for a review, see Ward, 2003). *Sexual desire* refers to strong, embodied, passionate feelings of sexual wanting, as well as knowing, listening to, and taking into account one's own bodily sexual feelings through pleasure (Tolman, 2000). *Sexual danger* is conveyed through sexual risks and the negative physical/health consequences of sex, such as men's aggression, women's sexual victimization, unwanted pregnancy, STDs, and rape (e.g., Garner et al., 1998; Johnson, Gotthoffer, & Lauffer, 1999; Kim & Ward, 2004). While the gender-specific nature of sexual desire and danger have been investigated (e.g., Carpenter, 1998; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Tolman, 2002), no research to date has examined the extent to which the coverage of desire and danger in teen girl magazines is both gender- and culture-specific. This lack of research is striking because the experience of sex and sexuality are known to vary by gender (e.g., Schlenker, Caron, & Halteman, 1998; Taylor, 2005; Willemesen, 1998) and by country (e.g., Ford & Beach, 1951; Frayser, 1985; Gregersen, 1986; Hofstede, 1998).

In response to these shortcomings, the study in Chapter 1 examines, through a cross-national comparative quantitative content analysis of US and Dutch teen girl magazines, whether sexual desire is mentioned more for boys and sexual danger is portrayed more for girls. Furthermore, this study investigates whether sexual desire is depicted more often in the Dutch teen girl magazines than in the US magazines, and if sexual danger is mentioned more often in the US teen girl magazines than in the Dutch magazines. Finally, this chapter probes further by investigating how differences in sexual desire and danger vary for boys and girls by country. The study in this chapter relies on the sexual scripts framework and Hofstede's cultural dimension of masculinity/femininity as theoretical bases.

Chapter 2: Virginity Loss and Pregnancy in US and Dutch Teen Girl Magazines

The second chapter of this book investigates two topics which are extremely relevant to adolescent sexuality: virginity loss and unplanned pregnancy. Virginity loss is almost universally recognized as a turning point for teenagers as they enter adulthood (Carpenter, 2005) because a teenager's first coital experience often shapes successive sexual experiences and attitudes (Billy, Landale, Grady, & Zimmerle, 1988; Carpenter, 2001). Moreover, pregnancy is often considered a negative consequence of virginity loss (Carpenter, 2001, 2005). In fact, in countries such as the US, the importance of maintaining one's virginity is often stressed to teenagers, especially to teenage girls, in order to prevent the risk of pregnancy (Tolman, 2002). Despite the importance of these two topics to adolescent sexuality, content analyses of virginity loss and pregnancy-related coverage within teen girl magazines remain scarce. The only cross-national study to date has shown that German teen girl magazines approach virginity loss positively while US teen girl magazines often take a negative stance toward virginity loss (Carpenter, 2001). All the while, little is known about the coverage of pregnancy in teen magazines.

To address these two important topics, this chapter delves deeper into Hofstede's cultural dimension of masculinity/femininity by using specific factors derived by Hofstede to explain the differences between the coverage of virginity loss and pregnancy in US and Dutch teen girl magazines. Specifically, this study uses the factors of (a) sex education, (b) accessibility to contraceptives, and (c) parental attitudes about teenage sex to address questions related to the occurrence, tone, and association with negative consequences for both virginity loss and pregnancy in US and Dutch teen girl magazines.

Chapter 3: The Hook-Up Culture in US and Dutch Teen Girl Magazines

The third chapter is devoted to a topic which has recently attracted both public and scholarly attention in the US: the so-called 'hook-up culture' (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010). In a hook-up culture, the predominant form of engaging in sexual relations is through casual sexual encounters with 'no strings attached' (Stinson, 2010). Although hooking-up as a relational form of sex among young people is not something new (e.g., Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2009; Bogle, 2008), scholars tend to agree that the progressively normative character of US young people engaging in casual sex marks the trend of hooking-up as a sub-cultural practice to hooking-up as the sexual mainstream culture of today (Bogle, 2008; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010).

One reason that is often cited for the advent of a hook-up culture is the way sexual relations are depicted in the media (Heldman & Wade, 2010). It is striking, then, that we have limited knowledge about the frequency with which casual sex is featured in the media. Much of the existing research focuses exclusively on the hook-up culture among college students (Bogle, 2008; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010), and no studies have investigated how the hook-up culture is depicted in media that are specifically targeted at teenagers, such as teen magazines. This lack of research is surprising because casual sex not only occurs amongst college students, but also among adolescents (e.g., Levinson, Jaccard, & Beamer, 1995; Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2005; Manning, Giordano, &

Longmore, 2006). Moreover, existing research on the hook-up culture focuses almost exclusively on the US. Therefore, we have no way of knowing whether hooking-up is strictly a US phenomenon or one that transcends countries.

To address these shortcomings, the first goal of this chapter is to analyze the extent to which the hook-up culture (i.e., the relational context of sex, emotional context of sex, specific sexual activities, and contraceptives) is presented within teen girl magazines. The second goal of this study is to examine the coverage from a cross-cultural comparative perspective. In order to do this, Hofstede's dimension of masculinity/femininity was used through two specific factors: (a) sex education and (b) the distinction between sex and love. More specifically, this study asks whether sex within a casual relational context is mentioned more often in US teen girl magazines and if sex within a committed relational context is mentioned more often in Dutch teen girl magazines. This study also investigates whether sex within the emotional context of love occurs more often in Dutch teen girl magazines than in US teen girl magazines, and how often sexual activities such as petting, oral sex, anal sex, and coital sex are mentioned. Lastly, this study investigates the occurrence and tone towards condoms and birth control pills in both US and Dutch teen girl magazines.

Chapter 4: Teen Magazine Reading & Fear of Sex for US and Dutch Young People

The fourth and final chapter of this book examines the link between reading teen magazines and fear of sex. Specifically, this study aims to find out whether fear of sex is differentially related to reading teen girl magazines in the US and the Netherlands by investigating (a) the general reading of teen magazines, (b) sexual risk and sexual pleasure content in teen magazines, and (c) young people's religiosity. In order to do so, this study concentrates on linking the cross-national content analysis data from Chapter 1 (Joshi, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2011) to cross-national survey research data of US and Dutch young people's teen magazine reading and fear of sex.

This chapter responds to several gaps in the field of adolescent sexual socialization research. Existing research typically focuses on cognitive aspects such as adolescents' sexual beliefs and attitude, whereas more emotional aspects like adolescents' fear of sex have not been investigated. Moreover, most of the current research has taken place in the US, making the existing knowledge base rather culturally biased. Various researchers have also indicated that more attention needs to be paid to individual differences (i.e., an individual's religiosity level) in the link between media coverage and young people's sexual socialization (Brown, 2009; Malamuth & Huppin, 2005; Ward, 2003).

Using cultivation theory, this chapter asks several important questions. Specifically, the study in Chapter 4 examines whether a cultural conditionality of cultivation is present regarding teen girl magazines and fear of sex for US and Dutch readers. Furthermore, this study examines whether specific messages about sexual risk or sexual pleasure are linked to any fear of sex that may occur for US and Dutch young people. Lastly, this chapter investigates whether individual differences such as religiosity play a factor in young people's fear of sex when reading teen magazines, and if this varies by country.

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CHAPTER 1

Scripts of Sexual Desire and Danger in US and Dutch Teen Girl Magazines

Abstract

The comparative quantitative content analysis in this chapter examines how US and Dutch teen girl magazines cover sexual desire (i.e., sexual wanting, and pleasure) and sexual danger (i.e., sexual risk, and negative physical/health consequences of sex). Relying on the sexual scripts framework and Hofstede's cultural dimension of masculinity/femininity, the following points were investigated: (a) how the coverage varies for boys and girls, (b) how it differs between the United States and the Netherlands, and (c) how gender differences vary by country. The sample comprised 627 sex-related feature stories from all 2006-2008 issues of three US (i.e., *Seventeen*, *CosmoGirl!* United States edition, and *Teen*) and three Dutch teen girl magazines (i.e., *Fancy*, *CosmoGirl!* Netherlands edition, and *Girls!*). Overall, sexual wanting occurred more frequently in the US magazines than in the Dutch magazines. In the US coverage, boys' sexual wanting received more attention than girls' sexual wanting, whereas in the Dutch coverage sexual wanting was depicted equally often for boys and girls. The depiction of sexual pleasure did not vary by gender in either country's magazines, but was generally more visible in the Dutch magazines than in the US magazines. Content about sexual risks and the negative consequences of sex were associated with girls more than with boys, and were primarily depicted in the US magazines rather than in the Dutch magazines. Implications are discussed in terms of US and Dutch teen magazine coverage of sexual desire and danger, and the cultural contingency of the Heterosexual Script.

The media are consistently acknowledged as an important influencer of adolescents' sexual socialization (APA, 2007; Brown, L' Engle, Pardun, Guo, Kenneavy, & Jackson, 2006; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Prinstein, Meade, & Cohen, 2003; Ward, 2003). Of the media adolescents refer to as sources of information about sex and sexuality, teen magazines are particularly important (Carpenter, 1998; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; Ward, 2003) because they offer a variety of easily accessible information about sex. As a result, various content analyses of topics related to sex and sexuality in popular teen and women's magazines have been conducted in numerous countries, such as the United States (US), Germany, New Zealand, Australia, and the Netherlands (Carpenter, 1998, 2001; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Firminger, 2006; Garner et al., 1998; Hust, Brown, L'Engle, 2008; Schlenker, Caron, & Haltzman, 1998; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Willemse, 1998). Two of the most popular themes that past studies have identified in teen and women's magazines are sexual desire and the dangers associated with sex (for a review, see Ward, 2003). According to Tolman (2000), sexual desire refers to strong, embodied, passionate feelings of *sexual wanting*, as well as knowing, listening to, and taking into account one's own bodily sexual feelings through *pleasure*. The notion of sexual danger is conveyed through *sexual risks* and *negative physical/health consequences of sex*, such as men's aggression, women's sexual victimization, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and rape (e.g., Garner et al., 1998; Johnson, Gotthoffer, & Lauffer, 1999; Kim & Ward, 2004).

Past research has studied the gender-specific nature of sexual desire and danger through content analyses of teen magazines in the US, New Zealand, and Australia, and through interviews with parents and teenagers in the US and the Netherlands (e.g., Carpenter, 1998; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Schalet, 2000, 2004; Tolman, 2002). However, no research to date has investigated, in one single study, the extent to which the coverage of desire and danger in teen girl magazines is both gender- and culture-specific. This lack of research is striking because it is well-documented that the experience of sex and sexuality varies both by gender (e.g., Schlenker et al., 1998; Taylor, 2005; Willemse, 1998) and by country (e.g., Ford & Beach, 1951; Frayser, 1985; Gregersen, 1986; Hofstede, 1998a). Therefore, the main goal of this chapter is to investigate, with a cross-national comparative quantitative content analysis, how the coverage of sexual desire and danger in teen girl magazines may differ by gender and between countries. By comparing the coverage in the US and the Netherlands, two countries that differ in their approach to adolescent sexuality, this study may help put earlier, single-culture research into perspective. Specifically, our comparative approach may help us to understand whether current conclusions about sex-related coverage in teen magazines may be culturally biased.

Gender Differences for Desire and Danger

Many previous content analyses have used the sexual scripts framework to investigate the representation of adolescent sexuality in teen magazines and other media (e.g., Carpenter, 1998, 2001; Kim & Ward, 2004). The sexual scripts framework posits that sexual matters are not universal, but are shaped by sociocultural processes. Sociocultural

processes determine what is considered sexual and how individuals behave sexually (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). As a result, what is considered sexual for adolescents may vary according to social groups (e.g., gender) and/or cultures (e.g., countries). The sexual scripts framework thus provides the conceptual basis for expecting the depiction of desire and danger in teen magazines to differ by gender and country.

The sexual scripts framework distinguishes between three types of scripts: cultural scripts, which correspond to the collective level of society; interpersonal scripts, which relate to small-group interactions; and intrapsychic scripts, which are associated with individual dimensions of society (Bowleg, Lucas, Tschann, 2004; Hynie, Lydon, Coté, & Wiener, 1998). Because teen magazines exist at the collective level of society, they create and maintain cultural scripts (Carpenter, 2001) by informing adolescents about when, where, with whom, why, and how to engage in sexual interactions (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Micheals, 1994). One of the most important cultural scripts, especially in the US, is the Heterosexual Script which outlines romantic encounters and sexual interactions for boys and girls (e.g., Hyde & Oliver, 1993; Kim et al., 2007; Tolman, 2002). Two crucial parts of the Heterosexual Script are sexual desire and danger.

Studies from the US, Australia, and New Zealand indicate that sexual desire in the Heterosexual Script has been framed with a strong emphasis on men's and boys' sexual ability and performance (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Kilmartin, 1999). Men are positioned as actively pursuing sexual relationships, guided by their sexual wants, and treating women as sexual objects (e.g., Diamond, 2005; Fine, 1988; Lerum & Dworkin, 2009). In contrast, women's sexuality is typically portrayed as passive, with women not prioritizing their own sexual wants (e.g., Clarke & Hatfield, 1989; McCormick, 1979; McCormick, Brannigan, & LaPlante, 1984; Tolman, 1994, 2002). This is also true for girls' sexuality. US-based research has shown that girls' experience of sexual wants and pleasure is often considered deviant behavior (Tolman, 1994, 2002).

Within research on sexual desire, pleasure is an important concept because it is inherent to experiencing and acting out one's own sexual desire (Tolman, 2002). Consequently, researchers have increasingly paid attention to the experience of pleasure in sexual relationships (Kim & Ward, 2004; Tolman, 2002; Walsh-Childers, Gotthoffer, & Lepre, 2002). For example, in-depth interviews with US teenage girls have revealed that the absence of pleasure during sex is normal, and the experience of pleasure is a problem (Tolman, 2002). Moreover, Australian girls attested to faking orgasms regularly to appease their partners (Roberts, Kippax, Waldby, & Crawford, 1995), while acknowledging the importance of their male partner experiencing pleasure. These findings echo what Michelle Fine (1988) calls "the missing discourse of desire," which highlights that dominant notions of adolescent sexuality often avoid girls' sexual wants and pleasure (Tolman, 2002).

Content analyses of women's magazines on sexual desire have accordingly revealed an emphasis on men's sexuality. For example, an analysis of six consecutive issues of the Australian edition of *Cosmopolitan* and the New Zealand edition of *Cleo* has shown that men's pleasure during sex was prioritized (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Farvid & Braun, 2006).

This prioritization of men's sexual pleasure is often linked to the lack of women's sexual desire. As a content analysis from the US has shown, young women are taught by magazines to subordinate their own interests (Kim & Ward, 2004).

Sexual danger usually arises within the Heterosexual Script through the "male sexual drive" (Hollway, 1989). This notion implies that when the male sexual drive takes precedence, men's sexuality becomes uncontrollable, and dangerous situations can occur for women and girls (Kim, et al., 2007). In US magazines, women are positioned simultaneously as sex objects and as victims of men's uncontrollable sexual urges (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Men do not appear to be as endangered as women, creating a double-standard within US magazines, which is consistent with stereotypical and traditional gender roles (Taylor, 2005).

In the discussion of sexual danger, the risks and negative consequences of sex play a central role. It is therefore important to note gender differences for these risks and negative consequences of sex. For example, content analyses of US teen girl magazines have revealed that STDs are portrayed as a sexual risk mainly for girls, even though boys and girls are equally susceptible to contracting diseases (Carpenter, 1998; Hust et al., 2008; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Moreover, US magazines stress the negative consequences of sex from a women's point of view (Hust et al., 2008). As Carpenter (2001) found in her content analysis of US and German teen magazines, sex is treated as something physically painful for girls, for instance by focusing on the negative physical aspects of virginity loss. In addition, unwanted pregnancies are portrayed as a negative consequence of women's sexuality (Hust et al., 2008). Boys, in contrast, are generally not depicted as experiencing or being responsible for the negative consequences of sex (Kim et al., 2007; Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005).

Country Differences for Desire and Danger

The logic of cross-national comparative research requires that, when little is known about a particular subject, similar countries be chosen (e.g., Mackie & Marsh, 1995). Generally, if differences between similar countries occur, they can only logically result from characteristics in which the countries differ. Thus, when little is known about a subject, and differences occur between dissimilar countries, more potential explanations exist than when differences occur between similar countries.

As outlined above, we know little about how, in a cross-national comparative perspective, teen girl magazines cover the topics of desire and danger. Consequently, when the coverage of desire and danger is compared, two similar countries should be chosen. The US and the Netherlands are two countries similar in terms of wealth, as well as education standards, and are democratically governed, highly developed nations (Schalet, 2000). Moreover, in terms of more abstract cultural differences outlined in Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national culture, the US and the Netherlands score closely on four of the five dimensions (i.e., individualism vs. collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance; and long-term vs. short-term orientation). However, the US and the Netherlands differ in terms of the masculinity/femininity dimension, with the US being a rather masculine society and

the Netherlands being a rather feminine society (Hofstede, 1998b, 2001).

In a masculine society, men are supposed to be “assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede, 1998a, p. 6). Conversely, in a feminine society, “both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede, 1998a, pp. 6-7). Because the masculinity/femininity dimension is related to the definition of gender roles and to the cultural construction of (adolescent) sexuality (Hofstede, 1998b), two countries that differ in this dimension, such as the US and the Netherlands, offer adequate comparison units for the purpose of this study.

In an attempt to categorize different sexual norms and behaviors along the masculinity/femininity dimension, Hofstede (1998b) has suggested that masculine and feminine societies differ, amongst other things, in the moral values attached to sex and how sex is experienced. Masculine societies often hold moralistic attitudes toward sexuality and associate sex with guilt and negative outcomes rather than with pleasure and positive outcomes. Conversely, feminine societies approach sex and sexuality in a matter-of-fact way and highlight the enjoyment and positive experiences of sex. For example, conservative populations within the US often emphasize sex as something a man and woman should experience within a marriage (Luker, 2006). Moreover, sex before marriage and/or promiscuity is frequently discouraged by emphasizing the dangers associated with sex. Sex is often portrayed as a risky or disease-ridden activity (Luker, 2006; Schalet, 2000). This moralistic approach towards sex and the emphasis on danger also applies to how adolescent sexuality is approached in the US. The risks of sex are often used in sex education programs as a reason not to have sex or to remain abstinent (Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, & Fitzgerald, 2008). Similarly, US parents consider teen sexuality to be disruptive and emphasize the negative consequences of sex (Carpenter, 2001; Herzog, 2008) by drawing comparisons between teen sex and drug use, excessive drinking, and vandalism (Luker, 2006; Schalet, 2000).

In the Netherlands, by contrast, sex is largely approached as a normal part of life, which holds true for adolescents as well (Schalet, 2000). Dutch parents do not usually view teenage sex as dangerous. Although teenagers are educated and made aware of the risks associated with sex, negative consequences are rarely used as a reason not to have sex. Moreover, sexual maturation does not tend to elicit fear among teens, parents, healthcare providers, and policy-makers in the Netherlands (Schalet, 2000). Dutch adults tend to believe that adolescents have their own sexual desires and are able to express them by engaging in responsible sex, usually within loving, committed relationships (Schalet, 2000).

Because teen girl magazines reflect cultural differences in how adolescent sexuality is approached (Carpenter, 2001), the differences between masculine and feminine societies may also affect how magazines cover sexual desire and danger. As a result, it is expected that adolescents’ sexual desire is portrayed more often in the Dutch teen girl magazines than in the US coverage. In contrast, sexuality will more often be associated with danger in US teen girl magazines than in Dutch teen girl magazines.