Negotiating the "Lavender Whiff":
Gay and Straight Masculinities in Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 1990-2010

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Communication)
in the University of Michigan
2012

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In loving memory

Tommy Draper

1980-2010

Acknowledgements

Throughout the past few years it became a running joke among some of my friends how much *Speed*, a 1994 movie about a bus that will blow up if it dips below 50 miles per hour, marked my dissertation process. Since I cannot write in silence but am easily distracted when working in public spaces, I frequently wrote at home while that DVD played—looped two, even three times in a row—and have now seen it literally hundreds of times. Its three-act structure functioned perfectly as background noise, so familiar that I did not bother to pay close attention but fast paced enough that it seemed to help keep me alert and motivated. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, I often felt like Sandra Bullock's character when sitting at my desk, trying to move the dissertation forward as quickly as possible even as my productivity occasionally seemed on the verge of slowing to the point of explosive failure. So I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many people who—as the collective Keanu Reeves figure in this *Speed*-themed anecdote—helped me succeed with their advice, guidance, encouragement, and friendship. I could not have finished this project without them.

First and foremost I thank my committee. I am particularly fortunate that Amanda Lotz agreed to be my adviser and chair as her unwavering investment in my progress and her prompt and incisive feedback were integral to the development of this dissertation. Amanda expressed interest and enthusiasm in my studies even before taking on the role of my adviser, and her knowledge, insight, and generosity guided me through the completion of this project as well as my graduate school experience as a whole. She inspired me to be more rigorous in my work, offered me opportunities to collaborate that pushed me to think about media studies in new ways, and instilled greater

confidence in me that I can succeed as a scholar. I feel equipped for a career in academia largely thanks to her engagement with my research and writing, and it has been an honor to be her student. Susan Douglas believed in me all the way back to my undergraduate years as my honors thesis adviser, and her enthusiasm, detailed comments, and thoughts on transitioning the dissertation into a book have been enormously helpful. Aswin Punathambekar showed genuine interest in my academic progress since he came to Michigan and has always been willing to offer helpful suggestions regarding my research, the job market, and academia broadly. As the cognate member of my committee, Anne Herrmann had great ideas for new lines of inquiry as I move forward with my project, and I thank her for her willingness to engage so thoughtfully with my ideas.

I would also like to thank other faculty in the Department of Communication Studies with whom I have worked in various capacities, including Robin Means Coleman, Paddy Scannell, Derek Vaillant, and Sean Jacobs. I have also greatly enjoyed talking with Megan Sapnar Ankerson and Shazia Iftkhar. All of these faculty members, along with those on my committee, have been gracious mentors and truly informed my approaches to research and teaching. I cannot thank them enough.

Further, I am grateful to the patient and knowledgeable staff of Communication Studies, without whom I would have been entirely lost the past six years: Amy Eaton, Chris Gale, Cornelius Wright, Cheryl Erdmann, Jessica Brown, Orlandez Huddleston, and Hilary Conlisk. I also owe considerable thanks to Shevon Desai for helping me locate countless sources and archives, and for never mocking my incompetence in navigating the UM library system.

I have met so many great graduate students in Communication Studies that I will always consider colleagues and friends. Katie Brown has been my grad-school confidant and helped keep me

grounded and laughing (actually, JOL-ing) through coursework, prelims, the job market, and many evenings spent playing Mario. Megan Biddinger, Brad Jones, Emily Chivers Yochim, and Sarah Crymble helped me acclimate to grad school early on and I am lucky to count these smart, funny, and inspiring people among my friends today. My early years in the program were also more enjoyable thanks to Erica Denise Williams, Andrea McDonnell, and Catherine Mullalond and, more recently, I am happy to have found kindred Comm Studies spirits in Candice Haddad, Kitior Ngu, and Seyram Avle. Beyond my department, I am fortunate to know and to have the support of Hollis Griffin, Jamie Small, Afia Ofori-Mensa, Ron Becker, Candace Moore, Jennifer Solheim, Urmila Venkatesh, Kerry Dennehy and Maya Poran, Erin Smith, Emily Barbee, Ryan Murphy, Darci Dore, and Melissa Beck. I owe extra thanks to Kristen Hatfield, Betsy Bruner, Nicole Eiseler, Sara "TB" Eiseler, Nicola Curtin, Ritu Radhakrishnan, the inner circle of Mes Destin of Jomo Thorne, Wendy Sung, and Jina Kim, all of whom enriched my life in Ann Arbor in immeasurable ways throughout graduate school. I am undoubtedly a smarter and happier person because of these friends.

I owe many thanks and a round of drinks at Old Town to my writing group, JJAM, which began in 2008 with Jamie Small, Megan Biddinger, and Afia Ofori-Mensa, and at times later included Rachel Afi Quinn, Sarah Gould, Wendy Sung, Jina Kim, and Sara Crider. The group was as fun as it was productive: its interdisciplinary nature forced me to constantly clarify and focus my arguments, and everyone's camaraderie, humor, and feedback encouraged me to be more open to writing as a process and to not fear sharing my ideas before they are fully formed.

I also thank the following units at the University of Michigan for funding support while I completed my doctoral degree requirements: Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies; the Institute for Research on Women and Gender; Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing; and the Department

of Communication Studies. I thank my home department, in particular, for being relentless supporters and for always making me feel valued by the program.

Finally, I thank my family. My parents have always been endlessly supportive, loving, and generous, and I have greatly enjoyed being able to visit home more frequently than when I lived in California. My brother, Tommy, unexpectedly passed away January 30, 2010, the month after I defended my prospectus. It took a great deal of time to find motivation to write again and he occupied my thoughts far more often than even this dissertation did throughout the nearly three years since. For me, my dissertation process was not marked most by *Speed* but rather by thoughts of my brother. I dedicate this to him.

November 2012

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Abstract

Negotiating the "Lavender Whiff":
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This dissertation analyzes the construction of masculinities in U.S. men's lifestyle magazines at the turn of the twenty-first century. As media focused on providing audiences with notions of normative male identity, these publications are a productive site to make sense of cultural negotiations of masculinities during this era of pronounced shifts in attitudes about and discourses of sexual difference. I specifically consider the conditions of gay inclusion in *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details* through examination of these magazines' editorial content, trade discourses, and production processes to assess changing configurations in the co-constitutive relationship between straight and gay men. In contrast with historical strategies of gay exclusion that were intended to avoid what an editor once described as the "lavender whiff" associated with fashion-based consumption, in the 1990s and 2000s editors did not seek to distance their magazines from gay men and editorial content included discourses of gay equality. Although this suggests progress toward the construction of straight masculinities less disciplined by homophobia, the conditions of inclusion in fact reinforced heteronormativity and straight privilege, functioned to operationalize and "protect" straight masculinities by demarcating gay-straight boundaries, and were utilized to distinguish between straight readerships. Through the introduction and theorization of the term "discerning savvy," I further explain how the magazines' editorial possibilities regarding male identity are limited by

organizational structures, informal knowledge, and departmental cultures rather than by editorial policy or conscious efforts by editors. This dissertation extends existing work at the intersections of media studies, masculinities, and critical media industry studies, particularly in theorizing issues of sexual difference in media as well as cultures of media production more broadly.

Introduction

Men's Lifestyle Magazines and Gay/Straight Masculinities

On March 26, 2007, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation held the first of four ceremonies that collectively constituted its 18th annual Media Awards. As it had done each spring since 1990, the media watch group convened that evening in New York to honor various individuals, publications, films, and television programs that it believed presented "fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and the issues that affect their lives."[1] Given such criteria, one Media Award recipient—*Details*, the honoree for Outstanding Magazine Overall Coverage—seemed a curious choice. Just three years earlier, GLAAD publicly criticized the magazine for a column that drew on gay and Asian stereotypes by asking whether it could be determined if someone were, as the title put it, "Gay or Asian?" based simply on his appearance. Further rankling some readers and bloggers on LGBT-targeted websites, *Details* had more recently visually depicted a gay man as an actual fairy as well as published articles defending the use of *gay* as a slur and lamenting the so-called oppression of straight men that resulted from the idea that gay men are, in contrast, sophisticated tastemakers.[2] Yet editor-in-chief Dan Peres had also claimed to embrace gay readers and his magazine published articles such as "All Men Are Created (Not So) Equal," which discussed America's treatment of gay men as second-class citizens—developments that likely gained GLAAD's approval.[3] Given the magazine's contradictory

[1] "GLAAD: 18th Annual Media Awards." Retrieved from http://glaad.org/mediaawards
[2] Dominick Wimple, "It's Okay To Say… Gay," *Details*, Apr. 2006, 136-139. Simon Dumenco, "Heterophobia: Has the Straight Man Become the Victim?" *Details*, Sept. 2006, 160(4).
[3] Augusten Burroughs, "All Men Are Created (Not So) Equal," *Details*, Oct. 2006, 204(2), 215.

editorial approach to gay-related topics, it is unsurprising that *Details*' Media Award raised eyebrows and, when Peres stepped onstage to accept the award at the ceremony, a guest repeatedly shouted, "Gay or not?!"[4] The heckler never made his motivation clear, but his comment reflected an anger, confusion, and frustration among some readers over the magazine's general treatment of gay men in the mid-2000s.

The Media Awards have not only raised questions about *Details*. GLAAD's decision to honor another men's lifestyle magazine, *GQ*, for Outstanding Magazine Article the following year, and then to nominate it again in the same category in 2009 suggested a shift in the entire relationship between men's lifestyle magazines and gay men. After all, such recognition was at odds with men's lifestyle magazines' longtime reputation for excluding gay men from their pages and thus from the "complete package of expectations about the nature of masculinity" that Tom Pendergast argues they present for readers.[5] As monthly publications intended primarily to give straight men advice about how to embody a certain way to live, men's lifestyle magazines—or as they are also known, men's general interest magazines—present readers with articles about romance, sex, sports, politics, entertainment, careers, grooming, and fashion. Because of historical associations between femininity and the consumption of domestic goods and services such as those promoted in these magazines, scholars argue these publications have long distanced themselves from gay men (who are often stereotypically linked with femininity) in both editorial content and readerships in an attempt to protect their straight audiences against accusations of effeminacy or homosexuality.[6] To accomplish

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[4] Stephanie D. Smith, "Memo Pad," *Women's Wear Daily*, Mar. 28, 2007, retrieved from http://wwd.com

[5] Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 223.

[6] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*. Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," *Signs 20*, no. 1 (1994), 1-22. Bill Osgerby, "A Pedigree of the Consuming Male: Masculinity, Consumption and the American 'Leisure Class'" (pp. 57-86),

this, editors excluded coverage of gay-themed stories or issues; included sexualized images of the female form, homophobic commentary, and other "manly" content (e.g., sports, outdoors); and specifically reassured advertisers that their readers were, in fact, heterosexual. Arnold Gingrich, founding editor of *Esquire*, the premier men's lifestyle magazine that launched in 1933, even claimed to specifically create his magazine with the intent to "deodorize the lavender whiff coming from the mere presence of fashion pages."[7] More than seven decades later, however, GLAAD's decisions to honor *Details* and *GQ* indicate that simple exclusion is no longer the primary representational strategy with regards to gay issues in men's lifestyle magazines.

This dissertation analyzes the conditions of gay inclusion and their relationship to straightness in U.S. men's lifestyle magazines, specifically the upscale titles *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, at the turn of the twenty-first century. As a media form that seeks to construct normative notions of masculinity and to provide readers with, according to the president of *Esquire*'s corporate division, a "tool kit for living," these publications are a productive site to make sense of cultural negotiations of male identity—particularly at times of pronounced shifts in attitudes and discourses regarding sexual difference.[8] The 1990s and 2000s saw a significant increase in societal acceptance of gay people: the Gallup Organization found that while public acceptance of homosexuality rose only four percentage points between 1982 and 1992, it increased from 38% to 54% between 1992 and 2004.[9] Support for equal employment rights and belief in the legality of homosexual relations also rose considerably during this time, while the attitude that homosexuality is morally acceptable rose above the 50%

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in Bethan Benwell (ed.), *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

[7] Arnold Gingrich, *Nothing But People: The Early Days at Esquire—A Personal History, 1928-1958* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), p. 81.

[8] Bruce Handy, "Are We Not Men's Magazines? How *GQ*, *Esquire* and *Men's Health* Help Make the World Safe for Moisturizers," *Time*, Jun. 9, 1997, 87.

[9] David W. Moore, "Modest Rebound in Public Acceptance of Homosexuals," Gallup Organization, May 20, 2004, retrieved from http://www.gallup.com

threshold for the first time in 2010—a notable statistic given that the change in the latter half of the 2000s was primarily driven by men under 50 years of age.[10] Of course, this trend toward acceptance has not been without widespread struggles as the heated debates surrounding legal decisions such as 2003's *Lawrence v. Texas*, political policies (e.g., Don't Ask Don't Tell, marriage equality), and tragedies like the murders of Matthew Shepard (1998) and Lawrence King (2008) suggest that homosexuality can occupy, perhaps counter-intuitively, a *more* contentious cultural position as society increasingly accepts gay people. As demonstrated by the aforementioned ambivalence with which *Details* dealt with issues of gayness in the 2000s, the media are a site that registers the tensions, contradictions, anxieties, and new sensibilities associated with large-scale ideological change regarding sexual difference as gay representations and discourses of sexuality appeared in ways previously unseen across popular culture.

Men's lifestyle magazines certainly were not the only mainstream media—that is, media typically available through large distribution channels and targeting a "general" audience that is straight as a default—to turn their attention to gay men around the turn of the twenty-first century. Whereas these media historically tended to exclude gay men or present them in purely stereotypical ways, gay men increasingly appeared across popular culture throughout the 1990s and 2000s in ways that complicated longtime cultural understandings of them and their roles in society. Television, in particular, expanded how it featured them: no longer predominantly reduced to one-dimensional guest spots in shows that utilized them for comic relief or as narrative "problems" to be resolved, gay men became in many instances multi-faceted recurring characters in daytime soap operas as well as in primetime network dramas, comedies, and serials such as *My So-Called Life* (ABC, 1994-95),

[10] Lydia Saad, "Americans at Odds Over Gay Rights," Gallup Organization, May 31, 2006, retrieved from http://www.gallup.com. "Gallup Poll Social Series: Values and Beliefs," Gay_Or_Lesbian_Legal_May_25_2010.pdf. Lydia Saad, "Americans' Acceptance of Gay Relations Crosses 50% Threshold," Gallup Organization, May 25, 2010, retrieved from http://www.gallup.com

Dawson's Creek (The WB, 1998-2003), *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006-10), *Brothers and Sisters* (ABC, 2006-11), *Glee* (Fox, 2009-), and *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009-), among many others. Perhaps the most landmark case of inclusion is *Will and Grace* (NBC, 1998-2006), which featured gay men as two leading characters and placing in the top 20 most-watched programs for half of its eight-season run.[11] Reality-based programming also opened doors of visibility: following the lead of MTV's *The Real World*, which set the precedent for contemporary gay inclusion by casting a gay or lesbian person in almost every season since its 1992 debut, competition shows such as CBS's *Survivor* (2000-), *Big Brother* (2000-), and *The Amazing Race* (2001-) frequently include gay contestants—a trend Larry Gross argues has resulted in the presence of gay men becoming "a necessary guarantor of realism," particularly for shows in the genre aimed at teenagers and young adults.[12]

At the same time, institutional developments in the television industry have further broadened the range of representations on cable. Not only do regulations allow for more nuanced and frank depictions of gay men and gay life on cable than on broadcast networks, as seen on shows such as *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-05), *True Blood* (HBO, 2008-), and *United States of Tara* (Showtime, 2009-11), but the search for niche audiences in television's multi-channel transition and post-network eras has also resulted in entirely gay-centered programs such as *Queer As Folk* (2000-05), which doubled Showtime's average primetime viewership to become the network's highest rated program, and various reality series on the Sundance Channel, Planet Green, Lifetime, and Bravo

[11] Ron Becker provides an account of gay and lesbian representations on 1990s network television in *Gay TV and Straight America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006). He notes that while representations "crystallized" in the 1990s, they began to emerge in the 1970s (p. 236).

[12] Larry Gross, "The Past and the Future of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies," *Journal of Communication, 55*, no. 3 (2005), 508-528, p. 520. Joshua Gamson also argues that talk shows have long offered opportunities for visibility in *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

networks.[13] In fact, Bravo entirely rebranded itself in the mid-2000s as a hip cable destination particularly through reality programs that relied heavily on contributions from gay men, including *Boy Meets Boy* (2003), *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-07), and *Project Runway* (2004-08), among others. These developments indicate a revaluation within the television industry regarding how gay men may feature in network as well as in basic- and premium-cable programming in order to appeal to different segments of the national audience. Ron Becker argues that gay men now feature so frequently in programming that he characterizes the current era of gay ubiquity on television as "post-closet" to describe their "virtually banal" presence—a claim that somewhat overstates their presence given the scarcity of gay lead characters and gay worlds on display but that nonetheless points to the immense expansion of representation that has occurred in a relatively short amount of time.[14]

Similar though less extensive revaluations occurred across other media industries during this era. Hollywood increasingly incorporated gay men into high-profile productions such as *The Birdcage* (1996) and *In and Out* (1997), although often limited their roles to small supporting characters or as the best friends of straight women in films like *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997), *As Good As It Gets* (1997), *The Object of My Affection* (1998), and *The Next Best Thing* (2000). Meanwhile, *Philadelphia* (1993), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), and *Milk* (2008) collectively won seven Academy Awards and grossed nearly $200 million at the box office with their depictions of same-sex male relationships as well as their personal, political, and legal struggles. In the music industry, gay acts the Scissor Sisters and 2009 *American Idol* runner-up Adam Lambert received major-label recording contracts that

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[13] Amanda D. Lotz identifies the multi-channel transition and post-network eras in *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: New York University Press, 2007). For *Queer As Folk* statistics, see Lynn Elber, "Solid Crossover Appeal Bolsters *Queer As Folk*," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 4, 2002, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

[14] Ron Becker, "Guy Love: A Queer Straight Masculinity for a Post-Closet Era?" (pp. 120-140), in Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (eds.), *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 126.

enabled them to depict same-sex attraction in songs, videos, and live performances for nationwide and international audiences, with the latter becoming the first openly gay act to top *Billboard*'s U.S. album charts, while popular singers such as Madonna, Pink, and Katy Perry integrated depictions of same-sex male intimacy into their videos. Elsewhere, entertainment news and tabloid media extensively covered coming-out announcements in the mid to late 2000s by prominent television and music figures Neil Patrick Harris, T.R. Knight, Lance Bass, Clay Aiken, and Ricky Martin, while portrayals of gay men have also begun to appear more commonly in comic books and video games. Finally, across a number of media industries, conglomerates and major media corporations broadened their audiences through the creation or acquisition of LGBT-targeted outlets, such as AOL, Inc.'s QueerSighted.com, Viacom's Logo television network, and the Regent Entertainment Group's close alignment with Here Media, Inc., which publishes *Out* and *The Advocate* magazines and holds the here! premium television network.

These developments by no means suggest a complete break from the symbolic annihilation of gay men that was so rampant in mainstream media prior to the 1990s.[15] Representations still circulate that depict gay men "as 'not really men' at best, and sick and depraved at worst," as Fred Fejes has characterized their dominant historical portrayal, while media such as sports- and youth-oriented programming continue to overwhelmingly exclude gay men.[16] The successes of *Will and Grace* and *Queer As Folk* have also not led to a surge in scripted television programming that centers primarily around gay men's lives. Moreover, this new visibility is largely possible due to media industries' discovery of the lucrative "gay market" and, as illustrated by Becker and Katherine Sender, their ability to use gay representations to attract not only gay viewers but also certain

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[15] Exclusion and stereotyped inclusion are part of a strategy characterized as *symbolic annihilation*. See George Gerbner and Larry Gross, "Living with Television," *Journal of Communication, 26*, no. 2 (1976), 172-194.

[16] Fred Fejes, "Making a Gay Masculinity," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 17*, no. 1 (2000), 113-116, p. 115.

segments of the straight audience that are desirable to advertisers.[17] Many scholars have thus heralded this visibility not as the arrival of a vast array of non-normative possibilities or even overwhelming acceptance of gay people but rather as a new means to reinforce heteronormative values.[18] These scholars point out that gay representations still largely appear within "straight worlds" rather than within gay communities, and that media welcome only a certain type of apolitical, affluent, and white gay man, who is not representative of the diversity of gay lives. Others argue that depictions of gay men in shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* do not confront historically stereotypical gay representations but rather encourage consumption of domestic products by straight men through promotion of gay-informed but distinctly straight lifestyles such as metrosexuality.[19] These scholars collectively assert that new representations, despite their potential to usher in new ideas about sexual identities, ultimately function to secure heteronormativity.

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[17] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*. Katherine Sender, "Dualcasting: Bravo's Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences" (pp. 302-318), in Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas (eds.), *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

[18] See, for instance, Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow, "Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: *Will and Grace* and the Situation Comedy Genre," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 19*, no. 1 (2002), 87-105. Robert Alan Brookey and Robert W. Westerfelhaus, "Pistols and Petticoats, Piety and Purity: *To Wong Foo*, the Queering of the American Monomyth, and the Marginalizing Discourse of Deification," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 18*, no. 2 (2001), 141-156. Bonnie Dow, "*Ellen*, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 18*, no. 2 (2001), 123-140. Fred Fejes and Kevin Petrich, "Invisibility, Homophobia, and Heterosexism: Lesbians, Gays, and the Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication 10* (1993), 396-422. Helene A. Shugart, "Reinventing Privilege: The New (Gay) Man in Contemporary Popular Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 20,* no. 1 (2003), 67-91. Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix, "Seeing 'Straight' Through *Queer Eye*: Exposing the Strategic Rhetoric of Heteronormativity in a Mediated Ritual of Gay Rebellion," *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 23*, no. 5 (2006), 426-444.

[19] See, for instance, Jay Clarkson, "Contesting Masculinity's Makeover: *Queer Eye*, Consumer Masculinity, and the "Straight-Acting" Gays," *Journal of Communication Inquiry 29*, no. 3 (2005), 235-255. Joshua Gamson, "The Intersection of Gay Street and Straight Street: Shopping, Social Class, and the New Gay Visibility," *Social Thought and Research, 26* (2005), 3-18. Tania Lewis, "He Needs to Face His Fears with These Five Queers!": *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, Makeover TV, and the Lifestyle Expert," *Television and New Media 8*, no. 4 (2007), 285-311. Katherine Sender, "Queens for a Day: *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and the Neoliberal Project," *Critical Studies in Media*

This dissertation approaches the new, broader media visibility of gay men as part of a larger social and cultural negotiation with male identity around the turn of the twenty-first century. These representations may certainly be about media corporations' profit motives rather than attempts to create a world that values gay experiences and cultures, and are undoubtedly circumscribed in a number of significant ways, but they have nonetheless reconfigured how gay men are allowed to participate in popular culture and have helped to reframe society-wide dialogues about gay men and, by extension, all men. In the early to mid 2000s, for instance, scholars and media pundits alike debated the implications of the relationship between gay visibility and the metrosexuality phenomenon for straight men. This discussion coalesced around the summer 2003 arrival of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, which inspired much cultural commentary in the popular media not only about whether the show's gay cast was stereotypical but also whether straight men now needed the help of gay men in order to succeed in life, and what it meant if they did.[20] The ABC program *Good Morning America* even staged a "challenge" to the show's premise by pitting gay men against straight men in a makeover competition that asked viewers to vote whether they believe that "most straight men are hopeless" in style—a clear illustration of how gay representations have as much to do with cultural ideas about gay identity as they do about straight identity.[21] So while Fejes argues that this explosion of gay representations in the media "reflects a major project of cultural redefinition" of what it means to be a gay man in American society, I contend that it also reflects a major project of cultural redefinition of what it means to be a straight man.[22]

Communication 23, no. 2 (2006), 131-151. Helene Shugart, "Managing Masculinities: The Metrosexual Movement," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies 5*, no. 3 (2008), 280-300.

[20] See, for instance, Nicholas Fonseca, "Gaydar-lings," *Entertainment Weekly*, Aug. 1, 2003, retrieved from http://www.ew.com. Bernard Weinraub and Jim Rutenberg, "Gay-Themed TV Gaining a Wider Audience," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2003, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[21] "Straight Guy Challenge to Queer Eye Series," *ABC News*, Aug. 12, 2003, retrieved from http://abcnews.go.com

[22] Fejes, "Making a Gay Masculinity," p. 115.

This dissertation specifically examines the contributions of men's lifestyle magazines to these redefinitions of gay and straight male identities, as well as the co-constituted relationship between them, in the industry's contemporary era of the 1990s and 2000s. It focuses on how these magazines, which occupy a distinct media space in their specific focus on the construction of modern masculine norms, have produced knowledge about the nature of masculinity for their readers during a time of profound societal change in attitudes about sexual and gender difference among men. The questions at the center of this dissertation, then, focus on how these magazines contributed to this shifting cultural milieu. How did gay men and gay-related discourses feature in these magazines? What might these representations and discourses reveal about the constructed relationship between gayness and straightness? And how can we account for these discourses through editorial routines and changing dynamics in the industry? By examining the ideological messages about masculinities in terms of the industrial practices and logics that produce them, the dissertation grounds its analysis in "the opportunities and constraints associated with *particular institutional settings*" that Joshua Gamson argues are rarely considered by sexuality scholars who instead tend to proceed "as if sexual categories and meanings exist in free-floating 'discourse.'"[23] In doing so, it argues that representations of gay and straight men must always be understood in relation to each other, and cannot be divorced from the cultural norms or from the institutional routines, conditions, and economics that limit, often unwittingly, the possibilities for their depictions.

Theorizing Men's Lifestyle Magazines

[23] Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back*, p. 20. Gamson argued this in 1998 but, aside from Becker and Sender, media studies scholars still largely neglect industrial conditions when examining discourses of sexuality.

Men's lifestyle magazines are overlooked in the contemporary study of masculinities in U.S. media, yet both their focus and their formalistic qualities make them a particularly productive site to explore shifting conceptions of male identity.[24] They are notably rare homosocial spaces in mainstream media: women may comprise as much as one-third of individual magazines' readerships and make limited contributions to the editorial content, but editors of the magazines—the vast majority of which are men—insist that they write and edit only for male readers. However, these magazines are ultimately distinguished from other male-targeted media by their exclusive focus on the construction of male identity. Unlike outlets that focus on particular hobbies, interests, or entertainment perceived to be relevant to men, such as *Sports Illustrated* and Spike TV, men's lifestyle magazines incorporate wide-ranging content that specifically provides instruction on how men should engage with the world and behave in all aspects of life. By presenting certain cultural practices, knowledge, and values as normal while deeming others inappropriate or deviant, they help shape cultural expectations of men and set "acceptable" boundaries of male identity for total readerships that ranged from one to nearly 12 million readers per magazine in 2010. Moreover, other media such as morning talk shows, television news magazines, and daily newspapers look to them as reflections of trends in contemporary gender relations, often discussing these magazines' editorial content as "a

[24] As Chapter One describes, scholars have explored the early decades of U.S. men's lifestyle magazines, focusing on the 1930s into the 1960s. However, decades since the 1970s have gone largely unstudied. The upscale titles at the center of this dissertation, *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, have gone entirely overlooked although the health-driven magazines and lad magazines have received minimal scholarly attention with the cultural and effects traditions of media studies. See Susan M. Alexander in "Stylish Hard Bodies: Branded Masculinity in *Men's Health* Magazine," *Sociological Perspectives, 46*, no. 4 (2003), 535-554. For examples of more quantitative approaches to the study of men's magazines, see Nicole R. Krassas, Joan M. Blauwkamp, and Peggy Wesselink, "'Master Your Johnson': Sexual Rhetoric in *Maxim* and *Stuff* Magazines," *Sexuality and Culture, 7*, no. 3 (2003), 98-119. Laramie D. Taylor, "All for Him: Articles About Sex in American Lad Magazines," *Sex Roles*, *52*, nos. 3/4 (2005), 153-163. Laramie D. Taylor, "College Men, Their Magazines, and Sex," *Sex Roles, 55*, nos. 9/10 (2006), 693-702.

demonstration of how men are changing," as *The New York Times* has put it.[25] Written *for* men *about* men and given privileged positions by other media in the assessment *of* men, then, these magazines function—as Angela McRobbie argues of women's magazines and femininity—as powerful and highly ambivalent spaces for the construction of normative masculinities.[26]

However, these homosocial sites are not monolithic in the cultural knowledge that they produce about male identity. The men's lifestyle magazine industry is comprised of a small number of magazines, generally less than a dozen, each of which fits into one of three general categories: the aggressively macho "lad" magazines such as *Maxim*, "upscale" and more style-driven titles (e.g., *GQ*, *Esquire, Details*), and those like *Men's Health* that primarily emphasize fitness and health. While these broad categories help to segment the market, the magazines within each category must also distinguish themselves from their immediate competitors in order to attract and maintain a sizable readership that is desirable to advertisers, their primary source of revenue. This does not suggest that advertisers dictate magazines' audiences but rather that a magazine's editor-in-chief must keep the advertisers' interests in mind when conceiving of a readership, and the publisher and publishing executives must convince advertisers that their readership is distinctive and worth pursuing. Competition for both advertising dollars and readers, then, has expanded the types of men that the industry targets. Yet this expansion has been primarily psychographic rather than demographic: because advertisers desire so-called "quality" audiences that are sophisticated, high-income, and likely to associate their products with upscale lifestyles, the magazine readerships have remained similar in terms of income, age, and education but varied along lines of tastes, attitudes, interests, and values. It is thus notable that magazines' attempts to construct distinctive readerships have

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[25] Robin Pogrebin, "Magazines Reassess What It Is Men Really Want," *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1996, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[26] Angela McRobbie, "*More!* New Sexualities in Girls' and Women's Magazines," in *Cultural Studies and Communications* (pp. 172-194), eds. James Curran, David Morley, and Valerie Walkerdine (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 172.

resulted in editorial content that, through the range of cultural touchstones, types of guidance, and other information they present to readers, offers varying rather than monolithic ideological messages about gender across the industry.

Still, the magazines utilize similar conventions across the three categories. Their covers invariably feature a public figure, either a female model or celebrity intended to sexually appeal to readers or, as is far more common in the cases of the upscale and health titles, a male actor or athlete that readers are encouraged to find aspirational and that represents the magazine's brand of masculinity. Alongside the cover figure are headlines, seemingly interchangeable month after month, that promise advice and general information on topics such as fashion, health, fitness, sex, relationships, sports, the workplace, popular culture, family, and general well-being. Yet the degree to which, and the tone with which, magazines emphasize each topic depends on who the editors conceive as their target readership and how they appeal to them; headlines on *Maxim*'s covers play up the editorial mix's sex-themed content, for instance, while those on *GQ* and *Men's Health* emphasize fashion and ways to improve one's body, respectively. Inside, the magazines also follow the same formula with some variation: the front half is more lifestyle-driven as it features a variety of sections such as letters both to and from the editor-in-chief, style columns, trend pieces, product and health guides, cultural commentary, and entertainment information presented in short, service-oriented packages. The second half tends to include a fashion spread and lengthier articles, which most commonly include celebrity profiles, investigative reporting, political stories, and the occasional fiction piece. Through these shared conventions the magazines aim to present readers with well-rounded content on how men should look, behave, think, feel, consume, and otherwise conduct their daily lives.

As suggested above by the cover figures that tend to feature on the magazines, one dominant convention shared across the three categories is a default heterosexual address—even

though, as Chapter Two explains, editors insist that they do not consciously think about sexual identity when conceptualizing, writing, and editing articles. Heteronormativity is so pervasive within, and central to, the magazines that it informs virtually every aspect of their editorial content. This is most obvious in the depictions and discussions of women, who are typically presented as scantily clad objects of sexual desire in ongoing features such as *Esquire*'s "Women We Love" and in headlines like *GQ*'s "We Saw Cristiano Ronaldo's Girlfriend Naked. You'll Want To, Too" and *Maxim*'s "Atomic Sex! Drop the Big One on Her Tonight."[27] Though partially clothed male bodies appear in content, most frequently in fashion spreads and layouts depicting men engaging in health- and fitness-related activities, they are not rhetorically positioned as sexual objects but rather intended to display, for instance, forms of exercise and products such as swimsuits. Through images of their workout routines and the clothing and style products they wear, the male bodies on display are forms that men are encouraged to aspire to emulate or be—not to sexually appreciate. Editorial content frames such displays of male bodies through heterosexuality, making obvious that readers should look at them in order to learn how to appeal to women: "Don't miss these looks—she won't," from *GQ*'s January 2002 issue, is typical of how the magazines present fashion in headlines and photo captions. Further, presumptions of heterosexuality as well as heteronormative perspectives invariably mark the advice offered to readers on topics such as entertainment, relationships, and sex with guides like "Movies That'll Move Her" and "How to Look at Naked Women."[28] Just as the magazines do not intentionally present male bodies for sexual appreciation, then, editorial content fails to acknowledge that some male readers sexually desire other men—even though editors know that gay men read the magazines.

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[27] These headlines appeared on *GQ*'s Sep. 2010 and *Maxim*'s Oct. 2002 respective covers.
[28] These headlines appeared on *Esquire*'s Feb. 2000 and Dec. 1993 respective covers.

Beyond offering a unique opportunity to study the concentrated constructions of straight masculinity, men's lifestyle magazines demand scholarly attention as their format allows for commentary on masculinity in ways that are largely unavailable in other media. Typical sites of media analysis with regards to men and masculinities include television series, films, and music videos, which generally utilize wide-ranging storylines or situations involving characters or real people that scholars study for ideological messages about male gender. These studies tend to parse out how discrete texts' genre conventions or narrative resolutions reinforce "hegemonic masculinity," which R.W. Connell argues sets ideal standards for masculinity in a given culture at a given time.[29] These studies are a useful means to understand how hegemonic notions of gender are ultimately secured, often in unnoticed or unexpected ways, but their privileging of narrative closure generally prevents them from fully attending to the struggles with and between masculinities that occur *throughout* narratives. I argue that such emphasis on storylines' conclusions in assessing ideological messages regarding media discourses and representations of masculinity can obfuscate how ideas about masculinities circulate within media texts in ways that, while perhaps not upending hegemonic ideals of masculinity, are nonetheless meaningful as they can reflect or depict smaller shifts and struggles of change within gender relations that ultimately highlight the nature of gender as a process. A few scholars have begun to theorize how to better account for these negotiations in television and to not insist on assessments of texts as always reinforcing or resisting dominant ideologies, but this

[29] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities: Knowledge, Power and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For examples of this type of work, see Robert Hanke, "The 'Mock-Macho' Situation Comedy: Hegemonic Masculinity and Its Reiteration," *Western Journal of Communication, 62*, no. 1 (1998), 74-93. Mary Douglas Vavrus, "Domesticating Patriarchy: Hegemonic Masculinity and Television's 'Mr. Mom,'" *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 19*, no. 3 (2002), 352-75.

endeavor must also extend to media forms, such as magazines, that appeal to readers in ways that forgo the types of fictional storylines found in other media forms.[30]

This dissertation argues the formalistic qualities that are somewhat specific to magazines demand analysis that approaches these publications as dynamic and sustained negotiations between men. Although men's lifestyle magazines occasionally feature fiction stories as one component of their editorial mix and include long-form narrative features, the primary means of communication is through advice columns, informational guides, and articles written to an articulated or otherwise implied "you." This direct address does not endeavor to tell one or even a few central stories, as is generally the case in television series, films, and music videos, and each issue is not connected to prior or subsequent issues beyond a generalized attempt to appeal to the same readership. These formal attributes thus underline the continuous and often contradictory processes of negotiation involved in the construction of gender. Indeed, as evidenced by the aforementioned ambivalence with which *Details* included gay-themed content in the 2000s, the messages about male identity in each magazine can lack ideological consistency as editorial sections and discrete articles may navigate topics in different and even competing ways. This is particularly the case over time as magazines do not work toward a predetermined endpoint, a quality that allows their stance on any aspect of men's lives (e.g., relations with women, gay-straight anxieties) to change in response to shifting cultural, economic, political, and industrial forces without need for editors to consider how these changing stances fit into a larger narrative. In this way, the continuing, non-narrative nature of these magazines *as a media form*—repetitive in types of content but not necessarily consistent in ideological valence or trajectory—ultimately avoids closure, emphasizing that cultural meaning can never be fixed and that men's lifestyle magazines must thus be examined as "an ongoing ideological process,

[30] See Becker, "Guy Love." Jimmy Draper and Amanda D. Lotz, "'Working Through' as Ideological Intervention: The Case of Homophobia in *Rescue Me*," *Television and New Media, 13*, no. 6 (2012), 520-534.

[implying] constant contradiction, change, and renegotiation," as Gail Bederman usefully characterizes gender.[31] As a media form, then, men's lifestyle magazines speak directly to the notion of gender as highly contested and perpetually in flux, and thus they challenge conventional approaches to critical media studies by resisting consistent or uniform assessment with regard to their relationship to hegemonic masculinity.

Further, this dissertation is grounded in the belief that the attempt to simply locate ideals or characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines, as Nick Trujillo has done with sports media, is not the most productive endeavor in the first place.[32] As these publications target niche segments of the male population, particularly those that are highly affluent so as to attract advertisers, some editors likely do not see it as "good business" to pursue audiences overwhelmingly associated with characteristics of hegemonic masculinity such as blatant misogyny and physical aggressiveness—these audiences may not be the most desirable to high-end marketers, for instance. Thus, some of these characteristics of hegemonic masculinity may only be minimally present or may even be lampooned in some magazines such as *Details*. Yet this does not mean these particular hegemonic notions of masculinity have lost their dominance in society more broadly, as other media might infer when looking to men's lifestyle magazines as a reflection of contemporary trends in male identity. Rather, the potential lack of these characteristics in some magazines simply suggests that these qualities or expressions are not deemed useful to reach a specific desired audience. Conversely, editors of other magazines, such as *Maxim*, may openly embrace representations of hegemonic masculinity as their intended audience may closely align with those characteristics. In the case of either type of magazine, however, scholars who focus on hegemonic masculinity would likely argue

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[31] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 11.

[32] Nick Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *8*, no. 3 (1991), 290-308.

that these magazines reinforce hegemonic ideals in some ways but perhaps undermine it in others—an approach that reveals little about the nuanced and unfixed discourses of masculinity that otherwise appear in their pages.

This dissertation is thus not concerned with identifying characteristics of hegemonic masculinities that appear in these publications but rather with understanding how expressions of masculinity work hegemonically, with making sense of the relations and struggles for power that comprise what Connell has characterized as a gender-based hierarchy among men that renders some masculinities illegitimate or otherwise subordinate to others.[33] This hierarchy is not one-dimensional, however. Tony Coles as well as Connell and James W. Messerschmidt have elaborated that structured relations between men exist in a number of settings and, accordingly, they may have their own hierarchies that work with and alongside the hierarchy that Connell describes as determined by hegemonic masculinity.[34] For instance, Coles explains that a gay man in the U.S. may be subordinated to hegemonic masculinity, which prioritizes heterosexuality, while also maintaining a privileged or hegemonic position within a specific gay culture that has its own hierarchy.[35] This dissertation's approach to studying masculinities, then, conceptualizes the gender-based hierarchy as comprised of interwoven and overlapping relations among men that are dynamic and differently structured depending on context. Such an approach allows for flexibility and nuance in the analysis of gender across and within men's lifestyle magazines that, because they do not all target the same men or necessarily utilize the same means to appeal to them, circulate different discourses about normative male identity that may or may not fully align with hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, this

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[33] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 79.

[34] Tony Coles, "Negotiating the Field of Masculinity: The Production and Reproduction of Multiple Dominant Masculinities," *Men and Masculinities, 12*, no. 1 (2009), 30-44. R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society, 19*, no. 6 (2005), 829-859, pp. 847-848.

[35] Coles, "Negotiating the Field of Masculinity," p. 42.

approach takes into account that discourses and representations of normative masculinity shift according to larger cultural and institutional changes regarding male identity.

Consider, for instance, the reassessments of straight identity that revived and expanded the men's magazine industry in the late twentieth century. After the trade press and news media pronounced it all but dead in the late 1970s, the industry bounced back in the 1980s and then saw a virtual explosion of new male-targeted lifestyle titles in the U.S. around 1990, including *Men's Life*, *Smart: For Men*, *M Inc.*, and *Details*, among others, which prompted *The New York Times* to announce, "In Magazines, It's a Man's World Once Again."[36] Unlike women's magazines, which had already enjoyed considerable success for more than a century, U.S. men's lifestyle magazines found only intermittent popularity and for decades had been considered economically unviable due to the perception in the magazine industry and in culture more broadly that men had no interest in (or felt self-conscious about) reading how to "be" a man. These new titles at the turn of the 1990s began to change this industry assumption by building on strides made by *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *M* in the 1980s. The popularity of those men's lifestyle magazines, which paralleled a similar phenomenon in the British magazine industry, has been attributed to the trend toward greater social acceptance for straight men to consume their own masculinity that had been escalating throughout the twentieth century but intensified in the 1980s.[37] This mobilization of consumer-driven straight masculinities continued to grow in the 1990s and 2000s, expanding the number of titles as well as the range of

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[36] Deirdre Carmody, "In Magazines, It's a Man's World Once Again," *The New York Times*, Mar. 26, 1990, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[37] Tim Edwards, *Men in the Mirror: Fashion, Masculinity, and Consumer Society* (London: Cassell, 1997). Nick Stevenson, Peter Jackson, and Kate Brooks, "The Politics of 'New' Men's Lifestyle Magazines," *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 3*, no. 3 (2000), 366-385, p. 367. Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1983). Diane Barthel, "When Men Put on Appearances: Advertising and the Social Construction of Masculinity" (pp. 137-153), in Steve Craig (ed.), *Men, Masculinity, and the Media* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992). Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America* (New York: Berg, 2001). Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man.*

men targeted by magazines as it became increasingly socially acceptable, and even desirable, for more men to concern themselves with cultivating aspects of their masculinity through consumption. Moreover, as editors and advertisers deemed particular types of men more desirable, magazines often changed their standards of masculinity to appeal to those men. I thus conceive of relations among men not only as structured by interwoven and overlapping social and cultural hierarchies but also by industrial practices and logics.

Men's continued immersion in the sphere of consumption has prompted much of the "crisis" rhetoric surrounding masculinity. Academics and journalists alike have pointed to advances made by the feminist, multicultural, and gay movements as the causes of increasing disadvantages for straight, white, middle- to upper-class men (as this is the implicitly constructed category of men who are allegedly in crisis) in domains such as education, politics, the law, and the workplace since the 1960s. Yet much of the anxiety about these men's status revolves around the changing nature of their work and the notion that normative masculinity is now defined more by consumption and style than by production, leading cultural commentators to describe contemporary masculinity as "ornamental," "branded," or otherwise determined by commercial culture.[38] For instance, in 2005 *Advertising Age* argued that increased marketing and the rise of men's magazines since the 1980s offered "convincing evidence that contemporary young men have forgotten how to act 'natural.' And that collective memory lapse amounts to an identity crisis for the American man."[39] Of course, scholars such as Bederman and Michael S. Kimmel have pointed to the historical inaccuracy of such

[38] See, for instance, John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002). John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998). Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1999). Susan M. Alexander, "Stylish Hard Bodies."

[39] Greg Lindsay, "Man Vs. Man," *Advertising Age*, Jun. 13, 2005, p. 1.

"crisis" claims given that constructs of normative masculinity have always been contested.[40] This dissertation thus does not approach men's lifestyle magazines as a symptom of a new "crisis" and it specifically refuses David Gauntlett's ahistorical argument that, "In the past, men didn't need men's lifestyle magazines because it was obvious what a man was," and that "men have started to need magazines about how to be a man" only because of recent developments in feminism and consumer culture.[41] Because anxiety about male identity is not new, the emergence of men's lifestyle magazines in the 1930s should be seen as the arrival of a *new site* in which ideas, insecurities, and assumptions about male gender can be negotiated—constructed, contained, elaborated—for particular audiences at specific sociocultural moments.

This dissertation's conceptualization of men's lifestyle magazines as a gendered negotiation differs from previous approaches to studying these magazines as it does not ultimately see them as functioning to provide either a space of static ideological retrenchment or of progressive change in male gender. These either/or assessments have been the primary approach by scholars of these magazines in the 1990s and 2000s, which have focused on U.K. lad magazines. Bethan Benwell argues these men's lifestyle magazines attempt to "preserve masculine values in the face of a disapproving world," while Peter Jackson, Nick Stevenson, and Kate Brooks contend that they eliminate doubts about men's identities by giving readers a sense of false social stability via a return to more traditional patriarchal relations.[42] In contrast, Gauntlett points to aspects of lad magazines such as their humor as indications that they "really show men to be *insecure* and *confused* in the

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[40] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization.* Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[41] David Gauntlett, *Media, Gender, and Identity: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 170.

[42] Bethan Benwell, "Is There Anything 'New' About These Lads? The Textual and Visual Construction of Masculinity in Men's Magazines" (pp. 149-174), in Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland (eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis: Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2002), p. 170. Peter Jackson, Nick Stevenson, and Kate Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 129-130.

modern world, and seeking help and *reassurance*, even if this is (slightly) suppressed by a veneer of irony and heterosexual lust."[43] Although Gauntlett allows that these magazines may both enable and constrain certain notions of masculinity at various moments, he ultimately posits that this acknowledgement of insecurity is indicative of offering new forms of masculinity or inviting a "fluidity of identities," though he does not explain why or how.[44] This dissertation's findings agree with Gauntlett's claim that these magazines expose anxieties of some straight men but, as demonstrated in subsequent chapters, contends that *how* they attend to anxieties often underscores a *lack* of fluidity in masculinity allowed at any one moment—although over time the strategies that aim to deal with anxieties can evolve. Unlike those who argue that men's lifestyle magazines produce static cultural knowledge about male identity, I contend that these magazines continuously negotiate and work through aspects of masculinity by providing a forum through which readers may consider "what it means *to be* a man in these frantically changing years," as *Esquire* editor-in-chief Lee Eisenberg has characterized the purpose of his magazine.[45]

Theoretical Considerations

Media and Cultural Studies

My approach to this conceptualization of men's lifestyle magazines as engaged in gendered negotiation emerges from the neo-Marxist tradition of media studies that theorizes culture as a site of social and political struggle. This approach rejects simple economic determinism and the notion of cultural artifacts such as magazines merely as products of a capitalist system that indoctrinate people into that system and its values, instead drawing on the work of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. The former argued that ideological state apparatuses such as the law, education, and media

[43] Gauntlett, *Media, Gender, and Identity*, pp. 166-167.
[44] Gauntlett, *Media, Gender, and Identity*, p. 180.
[45] Lee Eisenberg, "The World According to Gingrich," *Esquire*, Nov. 1990, 37

are just as important as economic factors in conceptualizing how power is maintained in a society; the latter introduced the possibility of resistance by arguing that power is secured through the constant struggle—hegemony—of dominant forces to have their discourses, values, and ideas accepted as "natural."[46] This struggle for consent emphasizes the ongoing efforts of powerful and less powerful groups to be heard and validated and, as such, Stuart Hall characterizes media as a site of ideological contestation that operates in complex and contradictory ways.[47] Because representations and discourses are never objective, men's lifestyle magazines engage in this struggle through depictions and discussions of male identity that construct—not merely reflect—expectations of masculinity. By classifying practices, behaviors, styles, and interests in ways that mark difference and limit the possibilities of "appropriate" male expressions, they naturalize some expressions of gender at the expense of others. Consequently, a central concern here is how these magazines' representations and discourses engage in this struggle, negotiating heteronormative and homophobic ideologies around the turn of the twenty-first century.

Yet the operation of hegemony necessarily suggests that cultural meaning can never be guaranteed and so analysis must situate men's lifestyle magazines within a larger cultural circuit to account for the various meaning-making processes involved in their production of knowledge about masculinities. This dissertation thus specifically draws on Julie D'Acci's circuit of media study, which updates models offered by Richard Johnson and the Open University in its emphasis on the interconnections between a cultural artifact and its production, reception, and sociohistoric

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[46] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Book Reviews, 1971). Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

[47] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems" (pp. 15-47), in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, and Language* (London: Hutchison, 1980), p. 33.

contexts.[48] D'Acci argues that meaning is generated within the "conjunctures of economic, social, and subjective discourses" mobilized by each site and that scholarly attention to these discursive practices and their articulations to one another can illuminate how meaning is generated as well as changed, negotiated, and displaced.[49] The knowledge that men's lifestyle magazines produce about masculinities is never simply a given, then, but is rather the product of various negotiations that occur throughout the circuit. As a result, scholars must acknowledge these four sites, if not take all of them as their focus, as the discursive practices within one necessarily affect the practices of the others. This dissertation specifically locates its analysis in the interconnections between men's lifestyle magazines and their production processes and the U.S. cultural milieu of the 1990s and 2000s. It explores how and why certain discourses of male identity, particularly the articulations of "gay" and "straight," circulated and achieved dominance as the industry responded to shifts both institutional (e.g., audience imperatives, editorial practices and logics) and cultural (e.g., increasing acceptance of gay people as well as different types of straight masculinity).

The scope of this project does not focus on reception but also does not assume that readers wholly embrace the masculinities in these magazines as the most appropriate expressions of masculinity. In line with cultural studies work on active audiences, scholars have shown through audience reception studies of non-U.S. lifestyle magazine formats that men respond in varying and even contradictory ways to their editorial content.[50] For instance, Frederico Boni found through

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[48] See Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text 16* (1986/1987), 38-80. Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997).

[49] Julie D'Acci, "Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in the Humanities" (pp. 418-446), in Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (eds.), *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 433-435.

[50] Cultural scholars have shown active audiences decode media messages in complex, ambivalent, and oppositional ways. Hall introduced the notion of negotiated readings with his encoding/decoding model, proposing that ideological messages are encoded into media content as "meaningful discourse" that must be decoded by media audiences. He argues that the moments of

focus group research that while some men see images of male bodies in Italy's *Men's Health* as representing an ideal that they should strive to live up to, others reject the images as unrealistic and unhealthy.[51] Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks also found that readers adopted a range of discursive positions in relation to U.K. men's magazines, including championing them, dismissing them, acknowledging their allure without taking them at face value, and so forth.[52] However, the possibility of negotiated or oppositional readings does not render the dominant messages within editorial content meaningless. As John Fiske argues, a media text's polysemic potential is not infinite as the text "delineates the terrain within which meanings may be made and proffers some meanings more vigorously than others."[53] Readers thus may exploit the polysemic potential of men's lifestyle magazines, but their readings of the editorial content must engage in a power relationship with the ideological readings preferred by the text. So readers may not always fully embrace the magazines' messages about how to interact with the world as men, but the ways in which the magazines discuss and depict masculinities are nonetheless important as they set the terms with which readers must negotiate.

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encoding and the decoding are not necessarily equivalent as an unfixed, unguaranteed "articulation" exists between them. See Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" (pp. 128-138), in eds. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 137. For research on the ambivalence and complexity with which readers make sense of men's magazines, see Bethan Benwell, "'Lucky this is anonymous.' Ethnographies of Reception in Men's Magazines: A 'Textual Culture' Approach," *Discourse and Society, 16*, no. 2 (2005), 147-172. Bethan Benwell, "New Sexism? Readers' Responses to the Use of Irony in Men's Magazines," *Journalism Studies, 8*, no. 4 (2007), 539-549. Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines.* Nick Stevenson, Peter Jackson, and Kate Brooks, "Reading Men's Lifestyle Magazines: Cultural Power and the Information Society" (pp. 112-131), in ed. Bethan Benwell, *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).

[51] Frederico Boni, "Framing Media Masculinities: Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Biopolitics of the Male Body," *European Journal of Communication, 17*, no. 4 (2002), 465-478.

[52] Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*, p. 145.

[53] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 16.

Gender and Queer Theory

This dissertation is further grounded in the work of scholars such as Judith Butler, Bederman, Kimmel, and Connell who move away from essentialist notions of gender as fixed and monolithic, and emphasize how institutions such as the law, education, the family, the workplace, and the media discursively construct a range of gender-based identities at particular historical moments.[54] These constructions do not exist in isolation but are rather relational (given meaning via constructed differences *between* men and women as well as *among* men and *among* women), situational (different contexts reward and punish different expressions of gender), and engaged in constant struggles for dominance within gender-based hierarchies. Despite the existence of a plurality of masculinities and femininities that are socially rather than biologically determined throughout history, Bederman argues that gender is often perceived as "an unchanging, transhistorical essence, consisting of fixed, naturally occurring traits" as its contradictory and dynamic nature is ignored or camouflaged—indeed, as *Esquire* has argued, "men have always been as they are now."[55] This process of concealment happens through the operation of hegemony as the masculinities that achieve dominance in a particular culture—characterized by Connell, again, as hegemonic masculinities—are positioned as "natural" and "commonsense," thus setting normative standards for masculinity even though not many men actually meet them.[56] Following Bederman, this dissertation unmasks how

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[54] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*. Connell, *Masculinities*. Just as scholars have argued of gender, Michael Warner, Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and John D'Emilio, among others, have explained sexuality is socially constructed. See Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United Statesm 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[55] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 7. See also Anonymous, "Esky," *Esquire*, Oct. 1999, 105.

[56] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 79.

men's lifestyle magazines participate in this concealment through their normative constructions of masculinity and the institutional practices that produce them.

Such an endeavor must necessarily attend to how straight and gay masculinities are relationally constructed through the hetero/homosexual binary that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues organizes prevailing thinking about sexuality in Western society.[57] The binary not only limits understandings of the nature of sexuality as either straight or gay but also situates those understandings within relations of power, producing heteronormative and homophobic ideologies through heterosexuality's hegemonic position in the binary. Scholars such as Michael Warner and Diana Fuss argue that basic cultural conceptualizations presume and perpetuate paradigmatically heterosexual positions, and that these privileged positions are secured by constantly defining heterosexuality against "the continual predatory encroachments of its contaminated other, homosexuality," as Fuss puts it.[58] Sedgwick argues the line between hetero- and homosexualities is particularly precarious for men as they must partake in same-sex relations such as "male friendships, mentorship, admiring identification, bureaucratic subordination, and heterosexual rivalry" in order to reap the benefits of male privilege, but they also need to ensure that these relations are not stigmatized as gay, which has been socially and culturally constructed as incompatible with heterosexual male identity.[59] This need to constantly protect homo*sociality* from homo*sexuality* is anxiety-ridden as homosexual impulses can be hidden and distinctions between same-sex platonic and romantic relations are often slippery; Sedgwick argues the result is a "chronic modern crisis of homo/heterosexual definition" that she characterizes as a homosexual panic intended to stabilize

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[57] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 68.

[58] Michael Warner, "Introduction" (pp. vii-xxxi), in Michael Warner (Ed.), *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Diana Fuss, "Inside/Out" (pp. 1-10), in Diana Fuss (Ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 2.

[59] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 186.

boundaries between sexual categorizations through homophobia.[60] Homosexual panic demonstrates the inextricably relational nature of homo- and heterosexualities and emphasizes that, as this dissertation explores through the men's lifestyle magazine industry, one can only be understood in terms of the other.

Indeed, this dissertation is entirely predicated on the co-constituted relationship between hetero- and homosexual identities. In 1993, sixty years after Arnold Gingrich founded *Esquire* through the homophobic exclusion of gay men so as to protect and reinforce its readership's heterosexuality, the magazine's editor-in-chief Terry McDonnell explained that men's magazine editors continued to avoid gay issues not because he believed they were homophobic but instead because they had an "inability to understand that gay issues have a profound effect on how all American men see themselves and function in society."[61] I argue that, on the contrary, the gay-themed content that editors avoided for so long—and the types that they went on to include as well as those that they continued to exclude in the 1990s and 2000s—reflect a marked understanding, if not always a conscious one, that gay-related issues and other associations with gayness *very much* inform straight identities. Analysis of the aspects of gay identities and experiences that are accepted and unaccepted in these magazines at particular sociocultural moments sheds light on the limitations imposed on, as well as the steps towards new configurations in, gay-straight relations between men. The years under examination here specifically illuminate developments in these relations during an era in which Becker argues homosexual panic gave away to (or at least was joined by) straight panic,

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[60] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. 11. Michael S. Kimmel similarly argues that homophobia is a central organizing principle of American manhood in "Masculinity as Homophobia" (pp. 103-109), in Estelle Disch (Ed.), *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology, 3rd ed.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), p. 103.

[61] Terry McDonnell, "Backstage with Esquire," *Esquire*, Dec. 1993, 30.

which he defines as "what happens when heterosexual men and woman, still insecure about the boundary between gay and straight, confront an increasingly accepted homosexuality."[62]

Whiteness and Class

Although its central focus is the relationship between straight and gay identities, this dissertation also draws on theories of whiteness and class to situate men's lifestyle magazines in terms of other intersections with gender and sexual politics. As previously noted, the acknowledgment of multiple masculinities demands that attention is paid to the relations between them and how they work hegemonically to naturalize particular expressions and embodiments of masculinity at the expense of others; these relations are not confined to the hetero/homosexual binary but also to, among other axes of identity, racial and class-based differences. To that end, scholars such as Richard Dyer, George Lipsitz, and Fiske provide useful approaches to considering these magazines' privileging of whiteness, theorizing that whiteness gains its representational and societal dominance through its invisibility—or, as Dyer argues, its paradoxical ability "to be everything and nothing" as it positions itself as a color- and ethnicity-less stand-in for the human condition that "both defines normality and fully inhabits it."[63] Lipsitz similarly argues that by functioning as "the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations."[64] Such approaches to whiteness not only endeavor to dismantle essentialist notions of whiteness as monolithic and "natural" but also to illuminate how it intersects with other identity axes to maintain power. Bederman, for instance,

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[62] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 23.

[63] Richard Dyer, "White" (pp. 457-467), in Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (eds.), *Visual Culture: The Reader* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 458. Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 9.

[64] George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," *American Quarterly, 47*, no. 3 (1995), 369-387, p. 369.

argues that constructs of whiteness and masculinity around the turn of the twentieth century were imagined together in order to uphold the power of white men.[65]

Though the upscale men's lifestyle magazines do not often directly address matters of race, they largely situate masculinity within the bounds of whiteness both representationally and discursively. For instance, because editors widely believe cover figures represent each magazine's brand and determine an issue's success on the newsstand, the infrequent appearance of men of color on the cover signals an articulation between whiteness and the magazines' identities (see Appendix 1). Further, in the rare instance that racial difference is intentionally addressed, it is primarily written to and/or from a position of whiteness. Consider *Esquire* and *GQ*'s framing of the efforts of the feminist, gay and lesbian, and multicultural movements as encroachments on straight white male privilege in the early to mid 1990s. This backlash was epitomized by *Esquire*'s June 1993 cover story "Single White Male, Seeks Clue," which argues that these men were an "an endangered species" at a time when "every group [was] gunning for the Straight White Male."[66] By not concerning itself with the various inequalities that have long affected men of color—and in fact framing their demands for equality and recognition as part of the problem for straight white men—this article demonstrates Fiske's argument that whiteness strategically makes itself visible at times when its privileged status as the norm through which to view the world is challenged. He explains that whiteness "can withdraw into its self-constructed normality and never question its assumption that the abnormal—that is, that which threatens whiteness—is what must change in order to resolve the crisis."[67] Such overt backlash is uncommon in the magazines but it is an explicit demonstration of how the magazines implicitly construct masculinity through whiteness more generally. This norm is reinforced by the

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[65] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*.
[66] Lynn Darling, "Single White Man, Seeks Clue," *Esquire*, Jun. 1993, 97-104.
[67] John Fiske, *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics, 2nd ed.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 42.

trade press, which frequently characterizes men's magazines such as *King* as targeting African American men but does not describe the male audiences of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* in terms of race, demonstrating the degree to which a supposed universal male experience is premised in part on whiteness.

Further narrowing the aspects of male identity addressed, men's lifestyle magazines are generally read by, and targeted to, an affluent or upwardly mobile audience—in 2010, the average median household income of readers across *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* was $80,175, or almost $31,000 higher than the median U.S. household income that year.[68] Yet class is not simply a matter of economic wealth but also, as Pierre Bourdieu argues, a matter of how social hierarchies are constructed in part through consumption practices and tastes. He theorizes the latter as symbolic associations that create and perpetuate a class structure defined not only by economic capital but also by cultural capital (ideas, knowledge, and experiences of culture) and social capital (personal influence and social connections) which are secured through the deployment of aesthetic preferences and values that "assert one's position in social space, as a rank to be upheld or a distance to be kept."[69] Taste not merely demarcates difference but classifies things and people as either superior or inferior and helps to structure what he calls the "habitus," or the relationship between the body and its material and symbolic surroundings. As Sender, who extends Bourdieu's concept of habitus by arguing it includes not only the dominant variables of education, occupation, and gender but also sexuality, explains:

> Habitus embodies the lived conditions within which social practices, hierarchies, and forms of identification are made manifest through the choices of individuals, but where those choices already are predisposed by an existing social position. […] Habitus is constructed through myriad displays of taste that structure lived

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[68] Sabrina Tavernise, "Soaring Poverty Casts Spotlight on 'Lost Decade,'" *The New York Times*, Sep. 13, 2011, p. A1.

[69] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 57.

> environments, more or less comfortably "reflect" our social and cultural position, and maintain boundaries between those environments one feels "naturally" at home in (that is, those that are class- or gender-appropriate) and those that feel uncomfortable (those that are class- or gender-transgressive).[70]

Bourdieu's theorization of class, consumption, habitus, and taste, then, is useful for thinking about how *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* construct male identity specifically through the styles, modes of consumption, and guidance on self-expression that they present to readers. The messages in editorial content must be understood as constructing a particular class of men who adopt, or aim to adopt, "appropriate" tastes and consumer choices that signify their cultural savvy, social respect, and sexual desirability. As *Details* deputy editor Chris Raymond, who has also edited *Esquire* and *GQ*, explained, all three magazines are "for men that aspire to be smart, to have good things in life, [and] to have an eye for quality." These magazines thus present certain expressions of masculinity as "naturally" preferable to others, constructing dominant notions of masculinity for their readers through taste choices in all aspects of their life. Economic privilege is integral to these notions as the magazines cultivate particularly expensive tastes; designer clothing, styling products, and other lifestyle activities (e.g., travel, restaurant dining) featured throughout the magazines are likely well beyond the financial means of even the majority of their own affluent readers yet are presented as within the reach of everyone.[71] At times they also present class difference as a stylistic choice, such as when *Details*, at the height of the Great Recession in May 2009, wrote about feigning poorness through a carefully

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[70] Katherine Sender, "Gay Readers, Consumers, and a Dominant Gay Habitus: 25 Years of the *Advocate* Magazine," *Journal of Communication, 51*, no. 1 (2001), 73-99, p. 74.

[71] Editors explained that they must include a certain number of fashion and style pages so that fashion and style advertisers—who generate a significant amount of advertising revenue—feel that they are reaching the right type of audience that is interested in, and hopefully willing to buy, the products that they advertise in the magazines. As *GQ* senior articles editor Brendan Vaughn put it, "Readers are the reason this magazine exists, but the fashion industry is what makes this company go financially."

calculated but still expensive "poorgeoisie" style.[72] This intertwining of economic class and taste illustrates the normalization of economic privilege in these magazines, constructing an environment that devalues and ignores working-class masculinities as the magazines seek to appeal to high-end advertisers in order to generate revenue.

Research Questions and Methodology

This dissertation explores the men's lifestyle magazine industry's production of cultural knowledge about masculinity in the 1990s and 2000s. Its specific focus on the relationship between gay and straight masculinities is distinct in the study of men's lifestyle magazines as questions of gayness have gone almost entirely ignored by scholars beyond Tim Edwards' acknowledgement that gay men played a crucial role in the development of the British men's magazine industry in the 1980s. Due to increasing social acceptance of gay men as well as advertisers' perception that they possess much disposable income for identity-based consumption, he argues they "provided the template and take-off point for exploring consumer masculinity in general. As a result, gay sexuality remains a significant, if often unacknowledged, factor in the development of men's style magazines targeting men and masculinity."[73] This provides a useful starting point for understanding how assumptions about gay men, particularly as a demographic often presumed to be disproportionately affluent and style-conscious, have functioned within the industry. However, Edwards refers to marketing in the magazines; neither he nor others have explored how these assumptions influence, or show up in, editorial constructions of men's magazines. To explore such issues this dissertation asks: How do these magazines' editorial content feature gay men and gay-related issues, and what are their

[72] Steve Kandell, "How Looking Poor Became the New Status Symbol," *Details*, May 2009, retrieved from http://www.details.com
[73] Edwards, *Men in the Mirror*, p. 74.

ideological messages about sexual difference?[74] What might the terms of gay inclusion tell us about the anxieties and privileges of the magazines' intended readerships? Such questions are considered in terms of the industrial factors that limit or delimit the magazines' editorial possibilities: What changing institutional dynamics enabled gayness to appear in these magazines? What everyday logics and practices in the editorial departments inform their construction of masculinities?

I explore these questions in relation to the upscale titles of the U.S. men's lifestyle magazine industry, an intentionally narrow focus that aims to expand the literature on contemporary men's lifestyle magazines, which looks exclusively on U.K. lad magazines and, to a lesser extent, the health-driven lifestyle magazines in the U.S. and beyond. Although the following chapters discuss how the lad and health categories emerged alongside and, at times, influenced the editorial direction of the upscale titles, the focus on *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* enables a specificity of claims as the categories are notably different. Unlike scholars such as Benwell who conflate the editorial content of magazines like *GQ* and *Maxim* despite their distinct approaches to audience construction, I acknowledge the meaningful differences between the types of men's lifestyle magazines and do not aim to generalize across them.[75] *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* were selected as they have the longest publication histories in the upscale category and are the titles mentioned most frequently and consistently in the media across the two decades of this study.[76] To answer my research questions, I triangulated textual analysis of these three magazines, examination of the production process via

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[74] This dissertation does not analyze advertising content. Analysis considers how advertising as an economic model informs the men's magazine industry but this dissertation's substantive contribution is in its exploration of editorial content and practices.

[75] Bethan Benwell, "Elusive Masculinities: Locating the Male in the Men's Lifestyle Magazine" (pp. 41-62), in Antonia Sanchez Macarro (Ed.), *Window on the World: Media Discourse in English* (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2002), p. 41.

[76] A fourth title, *Men's Journal* (1992-), is also part of the upscale category. It is more adventure-based than *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details*.

interviews with those involved in the creation of editorial content, and analysis of trade press discourse.

To make sense of the relationship between gayness and straightness in the magazines, I examine the editorial content for particular ideological messages and cultural knowledge about male identity. My approach to analyzing discourse is informed by the work of Michel Foucault, who sees discourse as a system of representation through language and practice that produces meaning and knowledge about an object.[77] As such, gender and sexuality have no authentic essence and can only be "known" through, and exist within, the discourse about them at a particular historical moment. I do not use a formal Foucauldian approach in my analysis, but instead conduct textual analysis in ways similar to media studies scholars such as Becker and D'Acci. I sampled four complete issues of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* per year from January 1990 through December 2010; editors of these magazines insisted that they do not have consistent best-selling issues so the sampled issues were chosen randomly. In addition, I examine the covers of the remaining issues to verify editorial consistency in the magazines beyond the sampled issues. My analysis includes how articles, subject matter, headlines, and tone construct masculinity, and I examined emergent themes by creating a timeline that chronicles the frequency and type of content published (e.g., gay references, discussions of homosocial and heterosexual relations) to determine moments and contexts when particular aspects of male identity became a more prominent topic or reference. Although this dissertation focuses on how ideas about gay men and masculinities circulate within the industry, I also analyzed discourses regarding straight masculinities because, as previously discussed, gay and straight identities are relationally defined and so examination of straight-themed content revealed shifting ideas in the industry about gay identity, and vice versa.

[77] See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972).

I further employed methods within the critical media industry studies paradigm to make sense of editorial content through institutional practices and conditions. Timothy Havens, Amanda D. Lotz, and Serra Tinic characterize this cultural studies approach as entailing mid-level fieldwork analysis that allows for understanding and theorizing "how institutions organize ways of knowing into seemingly irrefutable logics of how systems *should* operate, thereby bringing to the forefront the *material* consequences of industrial 'common-sense.'" They note that understanding institutional practices, knowledge, discourses, organization, and economic factors, as well as accounting for the degree of agency possessed by individual cultural workers in making creative decisions, provides a valuable and important link between political economists' macro-level studies and cultural studies' textual analyses and audience reception research.[78] Rather than lay out specific methods that fall within critical media industry studies, Havens, Lotz, and Tinic urge scholars to pursue theoretically informed empirical research "with an eye towards the *struggle* over ideological hegemony in the production of popular culture, in particular."[79] To that end, this dissertation is grounded in interviews that I conducted with current and former editors and writers as well as examination of trade and news press coverage of the industry to make sense of the institutional logics, practices, and conditions that produce editorial content.

I conducted 23 individual interviews with creative workers at men's lifestyle magazines, all but one of them at *GQ*, *Details*, and *Esquire* (see Appendix 2).[80] Twenty-one of the interviews were conducted with people in the editorial departments at these magazines, from editors-in-chief down to senior staff writers, and who had anywhere from two to more than twenty years of experience in

[78] Timothy Havens, Amanda D. Lotz, and Serra Tinic, "Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach," *Communication, Culture, and Critique, 2*, no. 2 (2009), 234-253, p. 247.
[79] Havens, Lotz, and Tinic, "Critical Media Industry Studies," p. 249.
[80] I also interviewed a former editor-in-chief of *Maxim*.

the industry; two interviews were with publishing executives at *GQ*.[81] Because the editorial staffs are small, the interviews with those in editorial represent the equivalent of approximately one-third of the magazines' entire editorial staffs, although *Esquire* is less represented than the others. Further, as the men's magazine industry is comprised of only a handful of magazines that tend to have high turnover rates, the editors often worked at more than one of the titles and thus were able to speak of similarities and differences in the production processes across the magazines. These interviews allow for an understanding of how and why particular editorial decisions are made and how editors "know" the magazine's reader, a discursive construct that McRobbie characterizes as "a useful fiction" as readerships can never be fully known and, thus, their assumed knowledge about the audience becomes a means to justify decisions they make.[82] Echoing Ben Crewe's findings in the U.K. men's magazine industry, I found this knowledge is not based in market research but rather on editors' own gut instincts and intuition about what the magazine "does."[83] This results in magazines that do not reflect readers' actual interests but rather those of the editor-in-chief as editors ignore reader feedback and conceive of editorial content based on what they think the editor-in-chief will approve for publication.

I characterize this largely unconscious process as "discerning savvy" because editors accrue knowledge about the preferences of their superiors in ways that effectively narrow the range of editorial ideas that they will even propose to the magazine. Through analysis of how editors perform

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[81] I requested interviews via print letters and emails sent to the magazine offices. Most of the interviews were conducted in person during summer 2009 at or near the magazine offices in Manhattan. Some phone interviews took place as late as November 2011. Interviews were each typically 45 minutes in duration. Further, one interview was conducted off the record, on condition of anonymity. This respondent is thus not identified or directly quoted. The account provided by this person was used to verify other accounts.

[82] Angela McRobbie, *British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry?* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 152.

[83] Ben Crewe, *Representing Men: Cultural Production and Producers in the Men's Magazine Market* (New York: Berg, 2003), p. 206.

their duties and the considerations that they make during the production process, I argue that the representational and storytelling possibilities in these magazines are limited by the editorial departments' organizational structures rather than by explicit criteria or policies. While editors insist they are given unlimited creative freedom, they in fact self-impose parameters of appropriate content by observing a number of aspects of the workplace culture in an attempt to come up with editorial ideas that they believe are likeliest for the editor-in-chief to accept for publication. This concept extends work in critical media industry studies, offering scholars further means to theorize how creative workers' agency is informally circumscribed in ways that maintain the hegemony of particular textual forms and ideologies in cultural industries. Indeed, discerning savvy helps to explain why men's lifestyle magazines tend to consistently reproduce, often unintentionally, similar content that reinforces dominant values such as heteronormativity even without policies regarding editorial content.

Discerning savvy is particularly integral to understanding the production processes of men's lifestyle magazines because editors, though tasked with creating magazines that target men with information on how to live their lives, generally expressed little interest in thinking about male identity. Few of the editors with whom I spoke had aspired to work at a men's magazine, only a handful claimed to be devoted readers of the magazines prior to working at them, and none was especially intrigued by the opportunity to write about masculinity or about contemporary issues affecting men. They instead emphasized their appreciation for the opportunities available at these magazines to write long-form journalism and to report at length about a wide range of topics—none necessarily revolving around masculinity. As *GQ* senior editor Mark Kirby explained, "For someone like myself, and I know it's true for many of the other editors, I'm here not because I care about men's fashion or masculinity. It's because we're doing long-form narrative [articles] and there are not a lot of places do it." This sentiment was almost unanimously expressed by the editors of *GQ* and

Esquire, who continually downplayed the fact that their magazines were men's magazines and instead grouped them with publications associated with in-depth reporting and cultural criticism such as *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*. At *Details*, where such style of writing is not a prominent component of the editorial mix, editors emphasized their enthusiasm to investigate aspects of pop culture. Some of the *Details* editors expressed professional—but not personal—interest in thinking about gender and sexuality but only because they felt that their editor-in-chief expected it of them, as Chapter Three elaborates.

As a result, the *GQ* and *Esquire* editors I spoke with often had little, if any, desire to discuss masculinity in our interviews. Time and again they insisted that they simply did not think about it. Moreover, they claimed that men's lives were not specifically discussed on the job unless they were preparing editorial packages specifically about masculinity that the magazines tend to publish every few years, such as *Esquire*'s "The State of the American Man" July 2006 cover story. Some editors expressed discomfort in talking about gender altogether, deflecting questions about men or making fun of the idea that they would have anything to say about "masculinity and its discontents," as *Esquire* features editors Richard Dorment jokingly put it. *Esquire* articles editor Ross McCammon summed up the editors' general thoughts about masculinity by explaining, "We're not carrying a banner, you know what I mean, and *Esquire* is not a cause." Indeed, editors at all three magazines—even *Details*, where some editors spoke openly and with enthusiasm about masculinity—went out of their way to distance their editorial decisions from any politically or personally charged motivation. It is perhaps expected, then, that only one editor, at *Details*, claimed to try and push his magazine to represent men in new or different ways than it already did—in this case, to expand its racial diversity. In general the editors made no connection between their work and the magazines' production of ideas about masculinity. When pushed, only a few conceded that even if they do not consciously think about masculinity, they are nonetheless putting forth particular ideas about it

through the "thousand little decisions" they make (e.g., writing photo captions, choosing one article idea over another), as *GQ* director of editorial projects and former *Details* editor Mark Healy noted. However, I did not take at face value the editors' general insistence that they did not think or care about masculinity because our interviews revealed that they had many ideas and beliefs about masculinity in relation to the magazines' respective brands, and that these were unconsciously taken into consideration in the production process.

To further make sense of the construction of masculinity throughout the production process, I triangulated my interview data with examination of discourses in the trade press. Publications such as *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management*, *Magazine Industry Newsletter,* and *Advertising Age*, as well as creative workers' accounts in news outlets such as *The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times*, and *Time*, provide a forum for understanding how those in the industry relay information to the rest of the industry about their own brand identities, their competitors' brand identities, and shifting institutional and cultural dynamics—what Anna Gough-Yates describes as an industry's discursive attempts to organize understandings of itself and what John Caldwell characterizes as industrial self-theorization.[84] Exploration of the trade press provided valuable insight into how a range of people within the industry made sense of developments such as perceived shifts in cultural values or particular magazines' failures or successes. That these assessments necessarily reflect the interests of those speaking as they discuss their own and others' readerships, roles, and reputations illuminates the stakes involved for different individuals, entities, and sectors of the industry. I thus follow Gough-Yates in analyzing the trade press and newspaper coverage to situate

[84] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). John Caldwell, "Cultural Studies in Media Production: Critical Industry Practices" (pp. 109-153), in Mimi White and James Schwoch (eds.), *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006). Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 24.

men's magazines in their institutional context, to look at how meaning is given to particular titles by those involved in the production of the magazines.[85]

Organization

Kenon Breazeale argues that *Esquire*'s need to manage associations between femininity and fashion in the 1930s and 1940s meant "this 'magazine for men' was to a great extent a magazine about women."[86] Similarly, this dissertation is organized into five chapters that demonstrate how men's lifestyle magazines, though primarily targeted to straight men, have also been to a great extent about gay men. By exploring how gayness has functioned in relation to constructions of straightness from the industry's emergence in 1933 through the 2000s, these chapters extend existing work at the intersections of media studies, masculinities, and critical media industry studies, particularly in terms of theorizing issues of sexual difference in the media as well as cultures of media production more broadly.

Chapters One and Two offer historical and contemporary context for the magazines, providing the first account of the evolution of the U.S. men's lifestyle magazine industry that addresses developments since the 1960s. By tracing the emergence and trajectory of the industry through synthesis of academic literature and a range of other sources regarding the industry's earliest years (1930s-1960s) as well as through original research of trade discourses and interviews in subsequent decades (1970s-2000s), these chapters examine the shifting institutional discourses about male readers and how men have been segmented and appealed to as audiences. Chapter One argues that perceived tensions between straight and gay masculinities have been at the core of the industry since its inception in 1933, with editors and publishers founding and later expanding the industry

[85] Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines*, p. 24.
[86] Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," pp. 1-2.

specifically through the rhetorical disavowal of homosexuality to readers and advertisers into the 1980s. Focusing on the contemporary era of the industry, Chapter Two contends that while new masculine scripts emerged in the magazines as companies and advertisers began to see different segments of the male population as desirable in the 1990s and 2000s, the explicit exclusion of gay men shifted primarily to a limited, largely implied inclusion. Editors no longer actively sought to distance themselves from gay men but, excepting *Details* in the 2000s, did not necessarily work to integrate them—an editorial approach that results neither in wholly gay-inclusive content nor in straight masculinities constructed entirely free of homophobia. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how contemporary editors of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* differentiate their respective brands, revealing connections between their ideas about men and how each magazine fits into the market even as the editors claim they do not think about masculinity when producing the magazines. These differentiating strategies offer context for the subsequent chapters' analyses of the magazines' production practices and editorial content.

Through analysis of editors' contemporary practices, Chapter Three theorizes the aforementioned concept of "discerning savvy" to help explain—particularly given editors' general disinterest in, and lack of critical attention to, issues of masculinity—why particular representations and discourses tend to appear in *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* while others do not. The remaining chapters then explore editorial content to assess the relationship between gay and straight masculinities in the magazines in the 1990s and 2000s. Chapter Four takes as its focus *Esquire* and *GQ*, arguing that these titles negotiate sexual difference through an editorial strategy that encourages readers to embrace social and political equality for gay men but discourages them from accepting personal expressions of gay identity. This differs from the predominant integration of gay men in mainstream media, which have privileged gay men's interpersonal relations with straight people over political matters and have relied on their associations with style and consumption in order to

encourage straight men to consume. This chapter contends that this different strategy allowed *Esquire* and *GQ* to construct liberal straight masculinities that also conveniently demarcated boundaries, and thus created distance, between gay and straight identities. This encouraged straight readers to feel accepting of gay men—and thus feel they are progressive and open-minded regarding issues of sexual difference—without threatening to undermine their (or the magazine's) heterosexual masculinity or challenging homophobia on the personal level. Such a strategy suggests tension still exists between constructions of gay and straight masculinities but that, in an era of increased gay acceptance and visibility, this tension is navigated in a different manner than has been historically on offer in the men's magazine industry. It also demonstrates how the inclusion of progressive gay-rights ideologies in male-targeted media can actually reinforce heteronormativity, homophobia, and straight privilege.

Chapter Five takes *Details* as a case study because it began in the 1980s with a gay-inclusive readership only to be transformed into a successful straight-targeted men's lifestyle magazine in 1990 under the new ownership of Condé Nast. Ten years and two significant editorial makeovers later, it became the only men's lifestyle magazine with an editor-in-chief who publicly acknowledged and embraced the gay segment of his readership. This history provides a useful site to examine shifting discourses of masculinity in the industry specifically in terms of sexual identity. Whereas queer communication scholars have shown gayness is often used to demarcate differences between gay and straight masculinities to make domestic consumption a "masculine" practice for straight men, this chapter argues that *Details* also utilized gayness to construct differences between *straight* masculinities. These differences allowed *Details* to distinguish itself from competitors, using gayness to construct new male audiences around masculinities previously ignored in the men's magazine market and legitimize them as "authentic" straight identities. This case is significant for the study of

consumer masculinities and male-targeted media, asserting that the relationship between gay men and straight consumption must be theorized as a dynamic and discursive pattern of gender relations.

I conclude with a discussion of the magazines' role in this era of convergence. As the preceding chapters argue that these magazines for straight men are very much about gay men—though not necessarily *inclusive* of them—it is crucial to explore how digitization and its wide-ranging technological advances might influence the representations and discourses of masculinities in these magazines. The conclusion thus lays out lines of future inquiry, including efforts to explore how the print magazines might be remediated by the emergence of online magazines for men as well as to examine how the ongoing transition to a print and digital medium may contribute to evolving understandings of, and attitudes about, sexual difference among men. After all, gayness may not be perceived as the threat it once was by the industry, but the negotiations with gay men and masculinities in the 1990s and 2000s suggest that concerns about the "lavender whiff" have not disappeared but rather evolved—and are likely to keep evolving as both technological possibilities expand and social and cultural ideas about sexual identity continue to shift.

Chapter One

"It's Not Aimed at a Gay Audience": Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Disavowal of Homosexuality, 1930s-1980s

"Ever on the lookout for what is truly hot, the magazine industry has come up with a sizzler. It has discovered men," declared *The New York Times* in the spring of 1990.[1] Explaining that many publishers, editors, and advertisers believed straight men had grown to embrace their feelings and domestic responsibilities, the newspaper described the magazine industry's pursuit of these supposedly liberated men with an onslaught of new titles that went beyond the special-interest topics traditionally used to appeal to these readers. Rather than focus exclusively on sports, sex, cars, or the outdoors, as many magazines had previously done, these publications touched on those topics but as part of an entire lifestyle that also included fashion, grooming, relationships, politics, careers, cooking, entertainment, and health. *The New York Times* was not alone in noting this industry trend as a series of similar stories appeared in trade and news publications throughout the year boasting headlines such as "Looking for Mr. Right" and "It's Raining Men."[2] These articles insisted that a growing number of people in the industry were convinced the time was right to embrace the male audience even if few seemed to agree on what was causing more men to expand their interests or even the extent to which men had actually changed. *Esquire* publisher Randy Jones described the interest in men at the time as a "pendulum effect" where, following the industry's previous focus on

[1] Deirdre Carmody, "In Magazines, It's a Man's World Once Again," *The New York Times*, Mar. 26, 1990, p. D12.

[2] See Bob Sipchen, "Looking for Mr. Right," *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 28, 1990, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com. Cary Peyton Rich, "It's Raining Men," *Folio*, Jun. 1990, pp. 45(2).

women, a lot of marketers suddenly felt there were "120 million male bodies out there that perhaps have not been given the time and attention they so richly deserve."[3]

The industry certainly turned its attention their way in 1990. That year, Murdoch Magazines launched *Men's Life* and Condé Nast reformatted the hip downtown Manhattan publication *Details* into a men's lifestyle title. New American Magazine Company and Norris Publishing joined forces with their respective publications, *Smart* and the still-in-development *Men*, to launch *Smart: For Men*. Capital Cities/ABC started *M Inc.* by merging the business-oriented *Manhattan Inc.* with the men's magazine *M*. Meanwhile, Playboy Enterprises, Lear Publishing, and Straight Arrow Publishers planned their own lifestyle titles for men, while Weider Publications reportedly aimed to reposition its health- and physique-oriented *Men's Fitness* and *Muscle & Fitness* to compete among the lifestyle publications. Those already in the category looked to expand their reach: *GQ* and *Details* publisher Condé Nast worked on a prototype for a sports-inflected lifestyle magazine for men while the Hearst Corporation, publisher of *Esquire*, planned *The Gentleman*. Competition for many of the same readers as well as for a limited number of advertising dollars during an economic recession guaranteed that at least a few, and probably more, of these magazines would quickly fold or fail to even hit newsstands. So many new titles nonetheless indicated the industry had confidence that an audience existed for men's lifestyle magazines—publishers simply needed to reach the right segment of the male population. Yet the declarations of *The New York Times* and other media outlets were misleading: that so many new male-targeted lifestyle titles were launched or in the works at the same time was unprecedented, but the magazine industry had long before "discovered" men.

This chapter outlines the first six decades of men's lifestyle magazines, which emerged with the launch of *Esquire* in 1933 as the magazine industry's first attempt to organize an audience around men specifically as a gendered demographic. This account describes the institutional histories of the

[3] Cary Peyton Rich, "It's Raining Men," *Folio*, Jun. 1990, pp. 45(2).

publications that were most consequential to the evolution of the lifestyle category through the 1980s—*Esquire*, *Playboy*, and *GQ*—and examines the logics that editors and publishers used to justify the existence of these magazines to readers, advertisers, and the industry at large. The central argument is that the disavowal of homosexuality has been the most integral rhetorical strategy in the development of the industry as editors and publishers needed to gain support from advertisers, who were wary of having their products associated with potentially gay audiences, and to convince heterosexual male audiences that their masculinity would not undermined if they read magazines targeting them through fashion and other lifestyle-based consumption. This history puts subsequent industrial developments in context, demonstrating the significance of the shifts that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s regarding the number and type of masculinities on offer.

The Industry's Early Years: 1930s—1970s

Esquire's 1933 arrival marked the emergence of men's lifestyle magazines but it is not the first magazine intended for a male readership. Titles have targeted men as an audience since the 1700s, either because periodicals were once largely available only to the economic elite, which was comprised primarily of men, or because they were focused on professions or interests perceived to be the domains of men. But as magazines emerged as a mass medium around the turn of the twentieth century, they started appealing to men in gendered terms—constructing audiences *through* masculinity rather than conceptualizing them as male by default.[4] Pendergast argues publications

[4] Although the 1831 invention of the steam-driven rotary press provided the technological capability for magazines to become a mass medium, Theodore P. Greene notes that a series of obstacles—dispersed populations, poor road systems, limited transportation facilities, and the Post Office's right to refuse to deliver periodicals to subscribers—prevented the magazine industry from reaching beyond small, elite, and regionally defined readerships. Benjamin M. Compaine and Douglas Gomery argue this began to change with Congress's decision to allow periodicals to be mailed at a special low cost in 1879. Subsequent developments also extended magazines' reach and influence: Charles P. Daly, Patrick Henry, and Ellen Ryder note the creation of a rural free-

such as *Munsey's* (1889) and *McClure's* (1893) began to subtly albeit inconsistently construct masculine ideals through editorial content while *The Saturday Evening Post*, following an editorial overhaul in 1899, attained the largest magazine readership in the U.S. by purposefully emphasizing Victorian ideals of masculinity and appealing "to an audience that was expected to consist of white, middle-class, male readers who anticipated further success" in the business world—an approach soon echoed by other popular titles such as *The American Magazine* (1911).[5] However, these magazines' production-based models of masculinity and emphasis on nineteenth-century values such as hard work, integrity, and character quickly became outdated as publications such as *Vanity Fair* (revived in 1913) and *The New Success* (1918) began to promote consumption-based models of masculinity in both editorial and advertising content. Yet not until the arrival of *Esquire*, subtitled "A Magazine For Men Only," had a periodical focused entirely on the construction of a modern masculine lifestyle. *Esquire*'s immediate popularity inspired competition for the male demographic from other publishers and paved the way for *Playboy*, but the first five decades of the industry featured only a handful of

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delivery system in the 1880s as well as advances in printing technology resulted in the publication of thousands of new titles, leading magazines to attain "an important place in shaping public opinion and providing a forum for new ideas." Greene points to an increase in literacy rates that led to growing demand for magazines, and skyrocketing circulations following a reduction in cover prices that began in 1893, when publishers decided to sell magazines below the cost of production to reach more people. As a result, magazines heavily relied on advertising to make a profit, which Greene argues resulted in "new patterns in editors, audience, and contents for the magazine world" as publishers chased large audiences in order to generate the most advertising revenue. See Theodore P. Greene, *America's Heroes: The Changing Models of Success in American Magazines.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 65. Benjamin M. Compaine and Douglas Gomery, *Who Owns the Media?: Competition and Concentration in the Mass Media Industry*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000). Charles P. Daly, Patrick Henry, and Ellen Ryder, *The Magazine Publishing Industry* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), p. 14.

[5] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, pp. 53, 111. He explains that the *Post* championed this Victorian model of masculinity into the 1930s, although in 1908 it broadened its readership to include women once manufacturers expressed interest in reaching a general audience (p. 57). Meanwhile, small-scale African American magazines such as *Colored American* (1900) and *The Voice of the Negro* (1904) emerged wherein editors staked out claims of black masculinity, although that effort was not their central concern (p. 69).

titles (see Appendix 7), and the era is almost singularly marked by the success of *Esquire* in founding the men's lifestyle category specifically through the exclusion of homosexuality.

Esquire's Modern Man, 1930s-1940s

Despite its focus on providing guidance in a range of aspects of men's lives, *Esquire* was originally intended as a fashion magazine. In 1926, publisher David Smart and sales executive William Weintraub started Men's Wear Service Corporation and issued a series of men's clothing catalogs, the most prominent of which, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, was sold nationwide to stores that agreed to stock the merchandise advertised in its pages or at least recommend its merchandise to customers; in turn, store clerks used the catalog as a sales aid and freely provided copies to affluent customers.[6] According to Arnold Gingrich, whom Smart and Weintraub hired to edit the catalogs, *Gentlemen's Quarterly* revolutionized the sales of clothing by "forcing men's stores into the unaccustomed role of actively stimulating their customers' hitherto unsuspected wants, as opposed to catering passively to their routine needs."[7] In 1931, the three men supplanted *Gentlemen's Quarterly* with the trade publication *Apparel Arts*, reported to have become so popular with customers that they were stealing copies intended for in-store use.[8] When a men's retailer in New York expressed interest in selling a publication like *Apparel Arts*, Smart, Weintraub, and Gingrich considered launching a men's fashion magazine that targeted customers rather than retailers. However, they doubted an exclusively fashion-focused magazine for heterosexual men would succeed as fashion was primarily seen as the domain of women and homosexual men—Weintraub deemed a dummied up early version of the

[6] Hugh Merrill, *Esky: The Early Years at Esquire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 26.
[7] Arnold Gingrich, *Nothing But People: The Early Days at Esquire—A Personal History, 1928-1958* (New York: Crown, 1971), p. 28.
[8] Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-style in Modern America* (New York: Berg, 2001), p. 42.

magazine, eventually named *Esquire*, as too fashion-focused for "even a pansy."[9] Gingrich, who became *Esquire*'s editor, agreed, explaining they "didn't dare put out a magazine that was just, frankly, a male *Vogue*. We thought that would be hooted at. No red-blooded guy would be caught dead with a copy of it."[10]

The men's response was to construct a magazine around other aspects of men's lives as a way, according to Gingrich, "to camouflage, sugarcoat the castor oil pill of male fashion by self-consciously cultivating the hair on our chest with features of a manly, he-mannish nature, you know, hunting and fishing and all that."[11] In turn, *Esquire*'s very reason for being—to sell clothing merchandise, which Gingrich said remained the men's business despite the magazine's expanded editorial focus—was downplayed due to its perceived associations with homosexuality. The broader focus, Gingrich assured contributors, would keep the magazine from being "a sissy journal" as he would make it "substantial enough to deodorize the lavender whiff coming from the mere presence of fashion pages."[12] The attempt to manage the potentially feminizing threat of fashion-based consumption extended to promotional materials like a 1933 advertisement that emphasized the utility of its clothing instead of style and aesthetics, boasting that the magazine features "men's clothes that are *men's clothes*—not 'fashions.' (We mean, you can wear them.)"[13] This strategy also appeared in the editorial content as Gingrich promised, in the first issue, that *Esquire* was not "a

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[9] Merrill, *Esky*, p. 31. Gingrich, *Nothing but People*, p. 81.
[10] *Arnold Gingrich* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Media Resources Center [producer and distributor], 1974).
[11] *Arnold Gingrich*.
[12] Quotes from Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), p. 304; Gingrich, *Nothing but People*, p. 81. While Gingrich openly discussed the tension between heterosexual masculinity and fashion behind the scenes, the magazine's editorial content acted as if no such tension existed. For instance, in the first issue he wrote, "we feel that men have long since ceased to believe that there is anything effeminate or essentially unbusinesslike about devoting a little care and thought and study to the selection of clothes." See "75 Years of Esquire Style," Esquire.com, n.d., http://www.esquire.com/style/style-archives-0908#ixzz1tTR6R9Ib
[13] Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, p. 45. "Display Ad — no title," *The New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1933, p. 32.

primer for fops"—or, effeminate men overly concerned with fashion—and subtle and blatant homophobia also appeared to demarcate the audience as straight.[14] Consider the 1938 article "Fashion Is a Fairy," which lamented that those with a "homosexual bent" are ruining the fashion industry for heterosexuals.[15] "The world of fashion is riddled with fairies," the anonymous author complains. "The very phrases in the fashion magazines are themselves a dead give-away as to the perverse [sexual] origin of the styles. What normal man would ever describe his cuff links as witty?" Moreover, the article continued, "the influence of the lily lads" is also seen in interior design, theatre, photography, and painting, so straight readers must learn to "combat and subdue" any "taint of swish" they encounter.

This is the very strategy that Gingrich, Smart, and Weintraub used in conceiving *Esquire* and that led them, through the perceived necessity of expanding the scope of the editorial content beyond clothing, to found the men's *lifestyle* magazine industry rather than contribute to the men's *fashion* magazine industry. Indeed, Gingrich constructed style-oriented consumption as a "masculine" practice by including not only fashion content but also pin-up girls, lewd cartoons, literary stories by the likes of Ernest Hemingway that excluded or sexualized women, articles and imagery that emphasized rugged activities such as sports and hunting, and an editorial tone that Pendergast characterizes as imitating "barroom banter between tough guys."[16] Misogyny was also central as

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[14] Quoted in Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, p. 45. Just because *Esquire* attempted to exclude gay men from its readership does not mean they were not readers. It also does not mean that some advertisers did not recognize them as part of the audience and potentially attempt to target them. For instance, Katherine Sender points to a 1958 Smirnoff advertisement featuring two men in close proximity with the tagline "mixed or straight, it leaves you breathless." However, she notes the inability to know if this was intended to be read, or was read, as gay. The significance here is that distancing from homosexuality had rhetorical value in selling the brand, not in necessarily keeping non-straight people from engaging with it. See *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 28.

[15] Anonymous, "Fashion Is a Fairy," *Esquire*, Apr. 1938, 35(3).

[16] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, p. 211. See also Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*. Bill Osgerby, "A Pedigree of the Consuming Male: Masculinity, Consumption and the American 'Leisure Class'"

Breazeale argues the magazine's depiction of women as lacking taste and skills in home décor, drink-mixing, and cooking enabled men to claim for themselves these aspects of the domestic sphere that "were by definition fatally associated with housewifery."[17] This editorial strategy established *Esquire* as a space of "appropriate" heterosexual masculinity rooted in misogyny as well as homophobia, giving permission to straight readers to freely conceive of themselves as tasteful consumers—a rhetorical strategy that demonstrates how, Michael S. Kimmel argues, "fear of being perceived as gay, as not a real man, keeps men exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity […] Homophobia and sexism go hand in hand."[18] So while Gingrich wrote in his opening editorial that he intended *Esquire* as "the common denominator of masculine interests—to be all things to all men," the rhetorical and editorial strategies used to sell the magazine in fact excluded gay men, straight men deemed too effeminate (e.g., no "fops"), and men of color and of the working class.[19]

Pendergast argues that the magazine appealed to straight, upwardly mobile, middle-class readers with the message that they needed to move beyond the Victorian idea of the self-made man who found worth in hard work and sacrifice. He sums up the magazine's approach to masculinity by citing a 1939 *Esquire* article that insisted women do not want a man "slaving ceaselessly at an office, ruining his health and personal appearance" but rather one who is conscious of "the way he wears his dinner suit, the manner in which he orders supper in a fashionable café, his generosity with unexpected gifts, the tilt at which he sets his hat, his adeptness with the latest dance steps." He argues that *Esquire* was thus able to "merge its version of masculinity and consumerism into a seamless whole" by teaching men that possessing the proper masculine tastes will help them succeed

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(pp. 57-86), in Bethan Benwell (ed.), *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). Merrill, *Esky*. Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," *Signs 20*, no. 1 (1994), 1-22.

[17] Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," p. 6.

[18] Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," p. 105.

[19] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, p. 211.

both with women and in life.[20] The strategy worked: in catering to men of the new leisure class it became one of the biggest successes of the magazine industry during the Great Depression, jumping from an initial circulation of 100,000 to more than 700,000 in just over four years. It also inspired a series of imitators, including *For Men* (1937) and *Bachelor* (1937) as well as revamped versions of *Argosy* and *True* that tweaked the lifestyle formula for working-class men in the 1940s. *Esquire* figured prominently in the emergence of modern masculinity in the 1930s by launching the men's magazine industry, demonstrating that a personality- and consumption-driven masculinity could prove an ideal vehicle through which a publication could deliver to advertisers a more specific, desirably affluent reader than those of more broad-based titles such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Look* (1937). As a result, Pendergast contends *Esquire* enabled marketers to complete "the project of casting men as consumers that advertisers had been perfecting for years."[21]

The significance of *Esquire* during this era is perhaps why it is the U.S. men's lifestyle magazine most studied by scholars, and why those scholars have overwhelmingly focused on the magazine's developments in the 1930s and 1940s.[22] The almost entire lack of attention to subsequent years is undoubtedly due in part to *Esquire*'s diminished influence in the coming decades; following a sales slump at the end of the 1930s, readership spiked again in the early 1940s thanks to the U.S. government's endorsement of *Esquire* to boost morale among the troops in World War II with its pin-up content. The emphasis on sexual titillation during this era ultimately led to a fight with the Post Office over obscenity and mailing privileges that went to the Supreme Court in 1945, ending

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[20] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, pp. 219-220.
[21] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, pp. 217-218.
[22] *Esquire* in the 1930s and 1940s is examined in Pendergast's *Creating the Modern Man,* Breazeale's "In Spite of Women," and Osgerby's *Playboys in Paradise*. For examination of *Esquire* in the 1950s and early 1960s, see Stefan K. Cieply, "The Uncommon Man: *Esquire* and the Problem of the North American Male Consumer, 1957-63," *Gender and History 22*, no. 1 (2010), 151-168. Eras after 1963 have gone unexamined.

with a decision in favor of *Esquire*.[23] Despite the court victory, circulation declined after the war. Hugh Merrill argues *Esquire*'s readership dwindled for a number of reasons, including an exodus of readers who had only turned to *Esquire* because their favorite magazines were on hiatus due to wartime paper shortages, competition both from the increasingly popular *True* magazine and the rise in pin-up titles that flooded the market once the Supreme Court's *Esquire* ruling eliminated the threat of future litigation for new magazines that featured images of women in states of undress.[24] *Esquire*'s wartime success was thus largely due to its ability to corner the men's market during the war with the government's assistance and a pending court case that scared off the competition. Even still, no men's magazine emerged in the 1940s that came close to matching *Esquire*'s success and cultural influence.

The Playboy Effect, 1950s-1970s

That changed in the 1950s with the arrival of *Playboy*. Founded in 1953, *Playboy* is categorized in the industry as a pornographic magazine rather than a lifestyle magazine, due to the inclusion of photographs of nude women, but founder and former *Esquire* copywriter Hugh Hefner constructed his magazine's model of consumer-based masculinity, the playboy, through many of *Esquire*'s editorial strategies. *Playboy*, for instance, claimed the domestic sphere for straight men and used sexualized images of the female form and other heterosexual signifiers to protect its readers against accusations of homosexuality.[25] More importantly, Breazeale argues *Esquire* enabled *Playboy* to "present as unspoken givens certain assumptions about the legitimacy of catering to male desire" in

[23] Merrill's *Esky* provides an account of the Supreme Court trial. See pp. 103-123.
[24] Merrill, *Esky*, p. 128.
[25] See Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1983).

the first place.[26] Despite their similarities, *Playboy* promoted a more hedonistic model of masculinity than *Esquire*, offering men a break from the breadwinning ethos that found new footing in the postwar emergence of a new middle class, which encouraged mass consumption and "masculine domesticity" within the context of the nuclear family.[27] Hefner characterized such a life as one of "conformity, togetherness, anonymity and slow death," presenting the playboy as an embodiment of masculinity marked by individualism, youthful consumption, and the appreciation of women (but, importantly, a hatred of wives) that Barbara Ehrenreich describes as a "literal escape, from the bondage of breadwinning."[28] However, she argues that men who avoided this bondage risked having their heterosexuality called into question as "the image of the irresponsible male blurred into the shadowy figure of the homosexual."[29] Similar to the concerns editors had with *Esquire*, then, Ehrenreich argues *Playboy* had to construct this escape as a virulently "masculine" endeavor, the pursuit of a man who "didn't avoid marriage because he was a little bit 'queer,' but, on the contrary, because he was ebulliently, even compulsively heterosexual."[30]

Esquire responded to the arrival of *Playboy*, which quickly became one of the biggest magazines in the country and inspired other magazines such as *True* to closely follow its misogynistic and hedonistic editorial mix, with a series of editorial transformations throughout the 1950s and 1960s that downplayed the sexual content that had previously marked the magazine. One of its editors later explained that those at the magazine made this decision because they believed, following the war, men no longer wanted images of pin-ups on their coffee table.[31] Yet this reasoning conveniently ignored that, while some men perhaps did not feel pin-ups belonged in plain

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[26] Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," p. 19.
[27] Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise*, pp. 62-68.
[28] Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, pp. 44, 51.
[29] Ehrenreich, p. 24.
[30] Ehrenreich, p. 50.
[31] Jerry Knight, "Esquire's Editor Discusses New Format," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 11, 1978, p. D9.

view as the postwar years pushed men back into the breadwinning role as father and husband, the immense popularity of skin magazines following the Supreme Court's *Esquire* ruling, in particular *Playboy*, certainly indicated many men still *wanted* pin-ups. This popularity was in fact a significant factor in the decision by Gingrich, who returned to the magazine in 1952 after leaving in 1945, to rethink his target audience as the new competition for male readers meant that it "was neither enough nor even very helpful" simply to call *Esquire* a men's magazine.[32] Stefan K. Cieply notes that Gingrich, with the help of editors Harold T. P. Hayes and Clay Felker, turned his attention in the late 1950s to a more refined category of reader, the "Uncommon Man," that could distinguish *Esquire*.[33] Cieply explains that Gingrich believed the prosperous postwar economy made sophistication available to everyone, resulting in people distinguishing themselves from their peers through their individuality, knowledge, attire, and cultural refinement (e.g., frequenting museums rather than fishing).[34] The pin-ups, sensational articles, and detective stories were thus replaced by fine art photography, cultural criticism, political reportage, and serious fiction—an editorial mix that blended consumption and cultural sophistication. Then, following Felker's departure in the early 1960s, Hayes and Gingrich shifted *Esquire*'s focus from the Uncommon Man to New Journalism, an emergent form of journalism associated with unconventional literary techniques.[35]

Esquire's editorial transformations were a success as the magazine's circulation peaked in the early 1970s around 1.2 million—compared to the late 1930s, when circulation stalled just below 750,000. Yet this was a minor uptick compared to *Playboy*, which surpassed seven million monthly readers during this period and spawned the enormously successful rival *Penthouse* (1969) as well as inspired other magazines to imitate its formula. *Esquire* then stumbled in the mid 1970s: largely

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[32] Gingrich, *Nothing but People*, p. 198.
[33] Cieply, "The Uncommon Man," p. 161.
[34] Cieply, "The Uncommon Man," p. 161.
[35] Cieply, "The Uncommon Man," p. 165.

faulted by industry watchers for failing to find a voice for itself after the appeal of the irreverent tone associated with New Journalism faded, *Esquire* lost a significant portion of its readers and advertisers.[36] This set off a series of ownership changes as different publishing teams experimented with new formulas to woo readers. In 1975, Esquire Inc. dropped its publication's "The Magazine for Men" tag and tried, without success, to integrate women into the readership. Two years later the Associated News Group and some investors, including former *Esquire* editor Clay Felker who took over duties as editor-in-chief, chief executive, and publisher, purchased the title and made it a more news-oriented biweekly publication, refocusing on men and promising to make their lives better at a time when Felker argued society was preoccupied with women's difficulties and overlooked how hard men had it. Under Felker, *Esquire* utilized the slogan "It's all right to be a man again," a backlash against perceptions that feminism had forced men to change in ways that compromised their masculinity.[37] When that approach failed to improve circulation beyond 650,000, less than half its peak just four years earlier, and with no other new lifestyle magazine emerging as serious competition, the market for men's lifestyle magazines appeared stagnant. In 1979, Phillip Moffitt of Tennessee-based publisher 13-30 Corporation, which became *Esquire*'s third owner in almost as many years, lamented, "the upscale male audience does not have any choice for a men's magazine."[38]

The Industry Expands: 1980s

Esquire's downward spiral in the 1970s seemed to signal the end of the men's lifestyle magazine industry, but changing industrial logics regarding the male audience led to an expansion of the

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[36] See Deirdre Carmody, "Esquire Magazine Aiming to Cut Losses," *The New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1976, p. 26.

[37] Jerry Knight, "Esquire's Editor Discusses New Format," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 11, 1978, p. D9. James L. Rowe Jr., "'Esquire' Sold Again," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 1979, p. B1.

[38] "Gunners From the South: Saving Esquire and the Male Ego," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1979, p. 145.

category throughout the 1980s. Whereas male readers had largely been written off by the magazine industry as an unviable demographic for lifestyle titles, editors and publishers used the trade press (and business pages of news media such as *The New York Times*) to convince advertisers and others in the industry that the category was viable by arguing that societal changes at the time created a pressing need for these magazines. The decade did not mark a complete break from the assumptions that had circulated within the industry about male readers of lifestyle magazines, particularly about their sexual identity but also about men's interest in reading more broadly. Moreover, discourses were at times contradictory as men's lifestyle magazines became a more prominent and recurring topic of conversation in the trade and news press than ever before. But the 1980s nonetheless marked a turning point for the industry as it was the first time men were targeted through a large number of lifestyle titles (see Appendix 7), led by the successful transformation of *GQ*, rather than through one or two magazines at any given point as in the first fifty years of the industry.

Shifting Industrial Logics

In the early 1980s, trade and news discussion emerged that illuminated why those in the industry believed men's lifestyle magazines had not thrived. Creative workers and executives frequently attributed this to the idea that men were a "hard to reach" demographic, insisting they have short attention spans ill-suited to magazine consumption, do not read as much as women and, when they do read, rarely venture beyond their favorite special-interest publications. They further argued straight men were resistant to magazines offering guidance on matters of relationships, style, grooming, and masculinity because they tend to refuse to admit their insecurities, lack introspection, and feel fashion is the interest of women and gay men. As a result, many argued that an audience for men's general-interest magazines could not be sustained, as apparently evidenced by the lack of successful male-targeted lifestyle titles in the late 1970s. This was particularly the thinking among

advertisers of non-fashion brands (e.g., automobiles, tobacco) that often argued such magazines were trying to create a market for straight men that did not exist. It was not simply that these advertisers believed the male audience for lifestyle magazines was too small or nonexistent but also that it was undesirable due to the assumption that gay men largely comprised it. Former Condé Nast editorial director James Truman explained, for instance, that this presumption in the early 1980s about *GQ*—revamped as a men's lifestyle publication in 1979—resulted in reluctance among "non-fashion advertisers […] to be identified as part of a gay man's world and [so] the magazine struggled on the business side."[39]

Despite these obstacles, many in the magazine industry started to assert that men's lifestyle publications could succeed even if no one argued they could reach the popularity of women's magazines or that the industry could exhaustively segment men as an audience in the same way that they had done with women. Some of this change in thinking was driven by the idea that men were growing more comfortable with style-based consumption and introspective. For instance, publisher and editor-in-chief Gerald Rothberg of the new *Men's Guide To Fashion (MGF)* said the decision to start his magazine was based on "recognition" that a "change in attitude of young guys about looking good, feeling good."[40] *Esquire*'s Moffitt argued, men were growing "dramatically more internally oriented," "committed to learning about himself," and developing "sensitivity to emotions."[41] These perceived changes in men led to industry thinking that, as John Fairchild of Fairchild Publications told advertisers in 1983, "we know that *this* is the right time" for men's

[39] The distinction between fashion and non-fashion advertisers is important. Editors explained that fashion brands are unconcerned about lifestyle magazines because their readerships are assumed to have an interest in fashion. Further, in contrast with non-fashion brands, many of which are more politically and socially conservative, fashion advertisers are not worried about gay associations due to the overall gay-friendliness of the fashion industry as a whole.
[40] Stuart J. Elliott, "Men's Magazines Addressing Segments," *Advertising Age*, Apr. 4, 1985, p. 30.
[41] Curt Suplee, "Esquire: Steinbeck to Steinem," *The Washington Post*, May 19, 1983, p. C1.

lifestyle magazines.[42] This rationale dovetailed with the more widespread discussion at the time of the New Man, a gendered media script in the U.K. and U.S. that argued men were changing in the face of advances in feminism and the growing influence of the consumer sphere, becoming more attentive to women, fatherly, narcissistic, stylish, and consumption-driven.[43] Frank Mort describes

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[42] Bernice Kanner, "Peacock Alley," *New York Magazine*, Sep. 26, 1983, 24(2).

[43] The New Man script was integral to the reemergence of the British men's magazine industry in the 1980s. The U.K. industry launched with *Men Only* in 1935 and was briefly reinvigorated in the 1950s with the publication of *Man About Town* (1952-1963) and a short-lived British version of *Esquire* (1953-1959). However, it was not until the 1980s that the industry became a significant cultural force with the arrival of *Arena* (1986-) and the U.K. incarnation of *GQ* (1989-), which were key sites around which the New Man discourse centered. Sean Nixon argues the New Man was a discursive formation in the Foucauldian sense in that it circulated across many cultural and institutional sites. It was constructed as a particular type of straight-male gendered script that had multiple incarnations that were differentiated by subtle stylistic techniques, according to Frank Mort and Nixon. Nixon and others have theorized these incarnations as making the act of paying attention to one's appearance a "safe" endeavor (i.e., distanced from homosexual perceptions) while also allowing advertisers to target affluent male audiences. Much of this work focuses on the visual deployment of the male body in these magazines' marketing to men. Nixon argues the New Man resignified gay and straight difference by pushing women to the margins and inviting men to consume images of sensualized men. Mark Simpson and Mort agree, with the latter arguing men's invitation to participate in new forms of gendered consumption encouraged them to rethink assumptions about their masculinity through the adoption of a homosocial gaze. Tim Edwards and Bill Osgerby disagree, asserting the New Man did not loosen the binary between notions of straight and gay, did not change men's material conditions, and related to only a very select group of men. Edwards further argues the magazines affirm men's "sense of masculinity without necessarily recognizing or confronting it" (2003, p. 133) while Rowena Chapman insists the new imagery simply reflected new ways of expressing the same male social and cultural power. See Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Sean Nixon, "Resignifying Masculinity: From 'New Man' To 'New Lad'" (pp. 373-385), in David Morley and Kevin Robins (eds.), *British Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Frank Mort, "Boys Own? Masculinity, Style and Popular Culture" (pp. 193-224), in Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (Eds.), *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988). Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996). Mark Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Bill Osgerby, "A Pedigree of the Consuming Male: Masculinity, Consumption and the American 'Leisure Class'" (pp. 57-86), in Bethan Benwell (Ed.), *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). Edwards, *Men in the Mirror*. Tim Edwards, "Sex, Booze and Fags: Masculinity, Style and Men's Magazines" (pp. 132-146), in Bethan Benwell (Ed.), *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). Rowena Chapman, "The Great Pretender: Variations on the New Man Theme" (pp. 225-248), in Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (Eds.), *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988).

the New Man as a particular coding of masculinity that drew men into consumer culture by speaking to them specifically "through their gender—as a community of men" via retail, marketing, advertising, and magazines.[44] However, it is notable that trade and news press discourse did not specifically invoke the supposed New Man as the rationale for men's lifestyle magazines' sudden viability although pundits frequently described developments in masculinity associated with the New Man script.

Rather, the overwhelming majority of the discussion stemmed less from the idea that men themselves had changed and more from the idea that their professional and personal lives had dramatically shifted in response to repercussions from the second-wave feminist movement. This rationale allowed publishers and editors to characterize their lifestyle magazines as necessary to help men navigate these changes. Felker had tried to revive *Esquire* in 1978 in part by insisting society needed to focus on the so-called plight of men given recent advances of women, but this argument did not become pervasive in the industry until the turn of the 1980s. As a media director told *Advertising Age* in 1981, "There has been a proliferation of women's magazines as a result of the changes that have occurred in women's roles and attitudes, and, if changes are happening to American women, they must be happening to American men as well."[45] Editors and publishers thus revived the industry by convincing advertisers that these changes in the lives of American straight men were the direct result of social upheaval wreaked by feminism. By arguing that these men needed these publications for guidance through these significant changes, those at the magazines assured advertisers not only that a large market of men existed for the magazines but also, conveniently, that this market was comprised of *straight* men caught in the crosshairs of their wives and girlfriends' new demands and expectations.

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[44] Mort, "Boys Own?" p. 122.

[45] B. G. Yovovich, "Pinning Down the Elusive Man of Men's Magazines," *Advertising Age*, Oct. 19, 1981, p. S-26.

They particularly argued that women's arrival in the workplace forced men to care about fashion as a means to gain success in their professional lives. Editors and publishers at *GQ* began to warn of this female threat in 1980, when publisher Steven T. Florio noted, "Now with women in the work force, men have to look good, too, to compete." As a result, he continued, "a whole generation of men [has emerged] who are not intimidated when they are told how to look good."[46] *GQ*'s director of marketing similarly stated, "Suddenly the woman next door is wearing a Calvin Klein suit and has her hair done at Henri Bendel. To have your hair cut at a plain old barber shop and to wear an ordinary blue suit puts a man at a disadvantage now."[47] Such logic constructed women as threats because they were joining the workforce but also because they were using to their advantage a practice long deemed superficial and feminine—an emphasis on one's appearance—and that, as a result, men would have to utilize that tactic to remain competitive. As *GQ* editor-in-chief Art Cooper argued, style provided an "edge" on the job market.[48] Through this trade and news discourse, editors and publishers thus argued to the magazine industry and, in particular, to non-fashion advertisers that a man's interest in fashion was no longer an indication that he was gay but that it had become a necessity for him in order to remain competitive in the corporate world. The magazines could thus deliver to advertisers a particularly desirable audience, professional and upwardly mobile men. In addition, they argued, men were buying more than just clothing: as women's entrance into the workforce meant that more men were married to employed women, were divorced, or were single fathers, men were taking over more purchasing decisions in the home and sharing household responsibilities.

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[46] Nancy Yoshihara, "Men's Magazine Gets a Facelift," *The Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 23, 1980, p. E5.
[47] William McGowan, "Who Says You Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks?," *Madison Avenue*, Oct. 26, 1984, 68(9), 76.
[48] Pat Guy, "Magazines Looking for a Few Good Men," *USA Today*, Aug. 21, 1989, p. 6B.

Further, according to editors and publishers, women's new roles also supposedly prompted new expectations of men in relationships that further signaled a need for these magazines. "Today's man is a person without a context," *Esquire*'s Moffitt said, explaining changes in male identity. "I think this is a natural sequel to the women's movement. […] The man has been left hanging in the air in terms of how he's supposed to relate, what games he's supposed to play."[49] *GQ*'s Cooper likewise insisted "there has [never] been as much confusion between the sexes" as in the 1980s.[50] He claimed, for instance, that women were "angry and hostile" because men had changed little after feminism while their own lives were significantly disrupted by trying to get on "the super-woman treadmill." He believed men were bewildered by contradictory messages from women who expected them to become more sensitive yet were "bashed" when they did.[51] By characterizing women as angry, irrational, manipulative, demanding, and the source of sexual confusion in heterosexual relationships, these editors offered up their magazines as a guide for men to deal with their suddenly confusing heterosexual relations. Editors and publishers thus revived the industry by convincing non-fashion advertisers that straight men needed these publications to navigate a changing society, specifically in the workplace and in relationships. This countered these advertisers' belief that, as one ad executive put it, such magazines were "more of a business matter than a sociological phenomenon."[52] It also spoke directly to advertisers' demands that the industry needed to "prove

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[49] "Gunners From the South: Saving Esquire and the Male Ego," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1979, p. 145.

[50] Christy Marshall, "GQ Breaks Ad Records as It Breaks the Mold," *Adweek*, Aug. 27, 1984, retrieved through Academic OneFile database.

[51] Bob Sipchen, "Looking for Mr. Right," *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 28, 1990, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

[52] Hilary DeVries, "Fairchild Courts the 'Civilized Man,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 17, 1983, p. 43. Fairchild Publications' John Fairchild, for instance, pointed to such resistance from these advertisers as the reason he had to shutter a male-targeted consumer magazine that he attempted to launch in 1973. See Kanner, "Peacock Alley."

[…] that readers come to the magazine for more than just fashion."[53] In short, they convinced non-fashion advertisers, who were crucial to the magazines' financial success, that a market for straight-targeted lifestyle magazines existed. Many advertisers subsequently grew less resistant to the category as they changed their thinking that fashion-oriented magazines were only for gay men only and saw a wider market for their products as the magazines were not strictly fashion-driven. As a result, one advertising executive noted in 1985 that the "stereotypes are breaking down" about men's lifestyle magazine readers.[54]

GQ Reinvigorates the Industry

The first industry success in the 1980s, thanks to the changing industry logics about male-targeted lifestyle magazines, was the revival of *Esquire*. The 13-30 Corporation purchased the title in 1979 and steadily turned it around by targeting a younger, less aggressively macho reader with a heavier fashion emphasis. *Media Industry Newsletter* named *Esquire* the fastest-growing magazine of 1982 and, two years later, the magazine posted its first profits in 15 years.[55] A series of competitors emerged in the wake of *Esquire*'s comeback, including *New Man* (1981), *M* (1983), *Modern Black Man* (1984), *MGF* (1985), *Ebony Man* (1985), *Men's Look* (1987), *Fast Lane* (1987), while others such as *Men's Bazaar* and *Men's Vogue* were planned but never hit newsstands. Other male-targeted categories emerged in the mid to late '80s as well, including those with a health and physique bent (e.g., *Men's Fitness*, *Men's Health*), those aimed at fathers (*Fathers*, *Single Dad's Magazine*), and college titles (*University Man*). Yet the decade's biggest story—and the magazine that truly renewed industry interest in men's lifestyle magazines—was the reformatted *GQ* under publishing conglomerate

[53] Richard W. Stevenson, "Fashion Publications for Men," *The New York Times*, Apr. 8, 1985, p. D1.
[54] Richard W. Stevenson, "Fashion Publications for Men," *The New York Times*, Apr. 8, 1985, p. D1.
[55] Barbara Love and Ira Ellenthal, "Philip W. Moffit: 'No Magic Moments, No Single Factor Turned Esquire Around,'" *Folio*, Jan. 1984, retrieved through General OneFile database.

Condé Nast. While *Esquire* helped prompt the shifts in industry thinking about the men's market that decade, *GQ* is predominantly credited with making male-targeted lifestyle magazines a viable commodity for a mainstream audience. As one advertising executive put it in 1983, "If a venture capitalist had assessed this market five years ago, he'd probably have decided there wasn't enough to grow on. But after Condé Nast bought *GQ* and began investing, the magazine had wild receptivity. That same analyst would consider the market pretty hot now."[56]

Evolving out of the trade publication *Apparel Arts*, which launched in 1931 as a replacement for the *Gentlemen's Quarterly* menswear catalog and had inspired the creation of *Esquire*, *GQ* reemerged in 1957 as a trade publication until owner Esquire Inc. transitioned it into a consumer-targeted fashion title in 1972.[57] By then, *GQ* had an industry reputation as a magazine for the gay market that seemed to stem from its exclusive focus on fashion and use of male models on the cover and in editorial—a reputation that resulted in the sales office facing "a war" when trying to pitch the magazine to advertisers.[58] Despite this reputation diminishing somewhat throughout the 1970s as the readership grew as a consumer publication, both doubling its circulation to 400,000 and

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[56] Kanner, "Peacock Alley."

[57] *GQ* reemerged in 1957 as *GQ/Apparel Arts*, then dropped *Apparel Arts* from the title the with the Sep. 1958 issue.

[58] Christy Marshall, "GQ Breaks Ad Records as It Breaks the Mold," *Adweek*, Aug. 27. 1984, n.p. Doug Johnston, who worked in the *GQ* sales office in the 1970s, is quoted in Carol Felsenthal, *Citizen Newhouse: Portrait of a Media Merchant* (New York: Seven Stories, 1998), p. 243. The reputation extended beyond the magazine industry. When the March 1962 issue featured John F. Kennedy on its cover, the President reportedly grew irate that a media outlet stated he had specifically posed for the magazine. (The image was taken from another photo shoot.) Upset that people would think he posed for a magazine widely assumed to target homosexual men, and that his brother Robert described as a "fag rag," Kennedy is quoted in *Time* complaining, "I'll be remembered now as the man who posed for *Gentlemen's Quarterly*." See Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), pp. 287-288. Hugh Sidey, "The Presidency by Hugh Sidey: Memories of John F. Kennedy," *Time*, Nov. 26, 1973, retrieved from http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,908157,00.html

tripling its ad pages throughout the decade, the association with gay men remained.[59] However, the "specter" of homosexuality did not deter Condé Nast from acquiring *GQ* in 1979 and transitioning the fashion publication into a men's general-interest magazine that, while still style-heavy, targeted a specifically straight male readership through a range of other lifestyle content as well. Publisher Steven T. Florio worked with longtime editor-in-chief Jack Haber to immediately begin transforming the magazine into one with an upscale, straight-targeted readership, adding non-fashion editorial columns, integrating travel and automobile editorial, using higher-grade paper, raising the cover price to indicate a quality reading experience and, as he described, changing the look of the magazine by utilizing photo shoots that paired "real men with attractive women in attractive surroundings" so that readers "did not feel uncomfortable."[60] These strategies, especially the latter, aimed to help the magazine overcome the gay reputation that Florio said resulted in "a lot of smirks" when people spoke with him about the magazine.[61]

The heterosexual makeover sped up in 1983 when Florio enlisted former *Penthouse* editor-in-chief Art Cooper to replace the openly gay Haber.[62] Indeed, Cooper claimed the biggest obstacle in making over the magazine "was that it was perceived to be a gay fashion magazine."[63] He later recalled of his immediate efforts upon taking over:

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[59] B. G. Yovovich, "Pinning Down the Elusive Man of Men's Magazines," *Advertising Age*, Oct. 19, 1981, p. S-26. Of note is that actual statistics regarding *GQ*'s gay readership are unknown—and likely not reported or collected at the time. Throughout trade discourse it seems that this reputation is taken for granted. *Adweek* argued in 1998 that *GQ* had, as a fashion magazine, "pioneered the 'feminization' of men's magazines, as evidenced by a heavily gay readership in the '70s." See Debra Goldman, "Walk Like a Womag," *Adweek*, Jun. 8, 1998, p. 62.

[60] "*GQ* Fashions a Style of Life," *Madison Avenue*, Jan. 1983, 132(7), 134.

[61] Nancy Yoshihara, "Men's Magazine Gets a Facelift," *The Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 23, 1980, p. E5.

[62] Prior to Cooper's arrival, *GQ* was edited by Everett Mattlin (1958-1969) and Jack Haber (1969-1983).

[63] Mary Alice Kellogg, "Battle for the Young Urban Professionals," *Adweek*, Mar. 1984, retrieved through the Academic OneFile database. Charlene Canape, "Refashioning the Male Marketplace," *Marketing and Media Decisions*, Mar. 1985, 84(5).

> When I first started editing *GQ*, it gave the impression of being, and in fact was, a gay magazine. There were female models in it and there were women on the cover, but the boys were always much, much more beautiful than the girls. There was never any eye contact between men and women, and never any tension on the page. What I wanted to do in repositioning the magazine was make it very clear very quickly that this was a heterosexual magazine. I'm sure we have a large gay readership, and I want anyone who enjoys the magazine to read it. But the message I wanted to send was that it's not aimed at a gay audience.[64]

He responded by building on the initial efforts of Florio and Haber, including more sexualized photographs of women and by broadening the content to include sports, fitness, and a columns and other content written by women in order to give men insight into the female mind. The magazine also strengthened the journalism content and began to feature male athletes and celebrities, instead of male models, as cover subjects—Cooper's first cover, for instance, featured Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann. Of that cover, then-managing editor Eliot Kaplan recalled, "we were so happy to get a straight man on the cover."[65] These strategies, dubbed "determinedly virile" and "more masculine" by *The New York Times*, helped *GQ* appeal to a wider audience by allowing the magazine to sidestep the potential issue of the homoerotic gaze, effectively assuring readers that they were not reading a gay magazine as well as assuring advertisers, as previously noted by Condé Nast editorial director James Truman, that the readership was straight. All of which added up, according to Truman, to a "definite effort to make the magazine less gay" in the 1980s.[66]

Despite the great lengths to protect the magazine against the perception of being a publication for gay men, *GQ* publisher Steven T. Florio publicly explained that the magazine was

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[64] Nicole Beland, "So What Do You Do Art Cooper?" *Media Bistro*, Nov. 19, 2002, retrieved from http://www.mediabistro.com/content/archives/02/11/19

[65] "For Its 40th Anniversary, *Gentlemen's Quarterly* Salutes "Stylish Icons," *Media Industry Newsletter*, Sep. 17, 2007, retrieved from http://www.minonline.com

[66] John Duka, "Notes on Fashion," *The New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1983, p. C10. John Duka, "Notes on Fashion," *The New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1984, p. C12. James Truman, personal communication, Apr. 26, 2010.

not excluding anyone but rather that it wanted to "broaden" the audience.[67] However, his statements suggested gay men were not integral to the audience. In 1983, he said the magazine's new target reader was "the young dentist in Cleveland, the first one in his family to graduate college, who wants to drive a BMW and dress well. It's new-money. It's ethnic. It's young black men, young ballplayers, young Hispanics, young Italians, all of whom have come into a new life-style and need some direction."[68] Gay men were conspicuously absent from his description. But even if all signs may have indicated otherwise, publisher Jack Kliger insisted five years later that gay men were "still considered very important readers."[69] Former *GQ* editor Chris Raymond's understanding of the transition to a more heterocentric magazine under Cooper was that:

> It's not like anybody came straight out and said this or it was written down anywhere, but the thinking was just that the [gay] audience is there. It's always going to be there by the nature of the fact that we are a men's magazine with fashion, so we don't need to cater to it. There was discussion back and forth of "Is this going to alienate the straight readership?" when you have a sort young, really attractive [male] model and the sort of way they would pose. So it was that sort of thing.

The belief among *GQ* editors that gay men would respond positively to a fashion publication regardless of the magazine's tone and editorial content certainly made it easier to justify such a drastic transformation. After all, if editors believed they would not risk losing their 400,000 circulation—many of which were presumed to be gay—no matter what they did, then they could broaden their appeal with only straight men in mind. *GQ* thus implicitly used their gay readers to bolster readership numbers while emphasizing that its audience was primarily straight and, thus, more desirable to advertisers.

This makeover proved successful, increasing the circulation to more than 700,000 by the middle of the decade, doubling the ad pages, and bringing in new readers as well as new categories

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[67] Richard W. Stevenson, "Fashion Publications for Men," *The New York Times*, Apr. 8, 1985, p. D1.
[68] Kanner, "Peacock Alley."
[69] Gary Belsky, "'Esquire,' "GQ' Fashionably Ahead," *Advertising Age*, Apr. 18, 1988, S-2.

of advertisers such as tobacco and automobile companies.[70] The general consensus among the trade and news press was that *GQ*'s success hinged on to its ability to successfully "deal with a perception that their primary readership was fashion-conscious homosexual men," as *The New York Times* put it.[71] As previously described, that was the main obstacle for all men's lifestyle magazines in the 1980s as the publications sought new readers and advertisers—the underlying subtext of *GQ*'s makeover and the arrival of new title *M* "was that existing men's fashion magazines [previously] seemed to be aimed at men who like to look at page after page of 18-year-old male models and the time had come for a change," *The New York Times* noted elsewhere.[72] Under Cooper, *GQ* ushered in that change: more than any other men's lifestyle magazine at the time, *GQ* proved to advertisers that a sizable straight audience existed for fashion-centric lifestyle magazines and, as a result, the whole category benefited. Decades later, Cooper is still mentioned in the news and trade press for his efforts to transform the industry from one associated with gay men to one associated with, as one fashion industry pundit put it, "the average guy."[73] In 2003, for instance, *The Los Angeles Times* quoted a consulting firm director who credited him with changing the perception that "the only men who read magazines about fashion were gay men. Before he came along, *GQ* was kind of a sissy magazine. He butched it up," while others in the industry argued he showed men "how to be elegant and masculine at the same time."[74]

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[70] Christy Marshall, "GQ Breaks Ad Records as It Breaks the Mold," *Adweek*, Aug. 27, 1984, retrieved through Academic OneFile database. Clay Felker, ""The New Yorker's New Man," *Adweek*, May 13, 1985, retrieved through Academic OneFile database.

[71] Stevenson, "Fashion Publications for Men."

[72] John Duka, "Notes on Fashion," *The New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1984, p. C12. In 1983, Fairchild senior VP Michael Coady drew on this reputation to differentiate the readership of his new magazine *M* as heterosexual, arguing that *GQ*, unlike *M*, was "for little boys and those who like them." See Lynn Langway and Tenley-Ann Jackson, "Courting the Clothes Hound," *Newsweek*, Oct. 3, 1983, 92.

[73] Michael Quintanilla, "Fashion as One Piece of the Puzzle," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 11, 2003, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

[74] Quintanilla, "Fashion as One Piece of the Puzzle."

Conclusion

This so-called normalization (i.e., heterosexualization) of men's fashion and the increasing allure of these magazines for advertisers resulted in a surge in male-targeted lifestyle publications throughout the 1980s. While *Esquire* could initially call itself "A Magazine For Men Only" and immediately find a large readership because it was the only title to explicitly construct a modern masculine lifestyle, the male audience subsequently had to be segmented as new magazines arrived and needed to distinguish themselves in the increasingly crowded market. But as advertisers wanted a "quality" audience, this segmentation was limited: the market was segmented primarily by age—for instance, *GQ*, *MGF*, and *Men's Look* pursued twenty- and thirtysomethings while *Esquire* and *M* targeted an older generation—and *Modern Black Man* and *Ebony Man* further carved their niches by targeting African American men, but the category generally targeted the same straight and affluent or upwardly mobile readerships. They thus attempted to cultivate unique brand identities by differentiating themselves through psychographics to entice advertisers that increasingly wanted to reach distinct subsections of the male audience. For instance, the magazines pointed to their respective readers' intelligence, worldliness, trendiness or lack thereof, athleticism, and interest in health in order to stand out from the competition. However, these distinctions were often minor, leading industry observers to argue that too many similar titles were competing for the same advertising dollars. This would turn out to be a true assessment. *GQ* and *Esquire*, the proven brands with the most corporate backing, received the bulk of the ad revenue while the others, when they survived, settled into small-circulation publications as the next wave of titles emerged in the early 1990s—a wave that marked an end to the overt disavowal of homosexuality that had thus far defined the industry.

Chapter Two

"We *Don't* Have to Think About Sexual Identity": From Explicit Exclusion to Implied Inclusion of Gay Men, 1990s-2000s

GQ, *Esquire*, and the titles that emerged in the wake of their success in the 1980s laid the groundwork for the significant expansion that occurred in the contemporary era of men's lifestyle magazines. Following the debates about the viability of the industry in the prior decade, the flurry of new magazines at the turn of the 1990s suggested that a vast number of editors, publishers, and advertisers were finally convinced that a market had been established for lifestyle magazines targeted to men. A few doubts lingered in the trade press at points throughout the 1990s and 2000s about the strength of the category and its potential for growth, yet such skepticism was significantly subdued in comparison to the previous widespread concerns and seemed increasingly out of touch given the large number of new magazines that continued to emerge (see Appendix 7). This confidence in the market was demonstrated in less contentious and less frequent debates about the existence of an audience as more magazines launched and in the fact that trade discussion of readers' sexual identity largely faded and that it became taken for granted the readerships were primarily comprised of straight men. Questions regarding gay readers reappeared intermittently in discussions surrounding *Details* throughout the next two decades but the overt tensions surrounding readers' sexual identity had turned a corner in the 1990s given that the concern no longer surrounded the men's category as a whole.

Instead of worrying whether straight men were reading the magazines, editors, publishers, marketers, and others contributing to the trade and news discourse around the turn of the twenty-first century aimed to assess trends in straight masculinity based on developments in the industry.

This proved futile as the increasing number of titles, many touting different gendered scripts and reflecting psychographic if not demographic diversity, crowded the market and challenged monolithic claims about men's aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, and style preferences. Indeed, the market segmentation that began in the 1980s had amplified by the early 1990s: alongside established upscale, fashion-oriented publications such as *GQ*, *Esquire*, *MGF*, and *M*, as well as the health-oriented titles, the category expanded to include the edgier, gay-friendly Generation X readership of *Details* (1990), the new-age-inflected sensibilities of *Matter for Men* (1995) and *Men's Perspective* (1995), lower middle-class men (*Heartland USA*, 1991), and those with more traditional codes of masculinity such as *Men's Life* (1990) and *Men's Journal* (1992). These scripts further expanded throughout the latter half of the 1990s and the 2000s as the industry also targeted men through lad-style sensibilities and through metrosexual styles and outlooks, the latter of which created the space for the first men's lifestyle magazine—a revamped *Details* in the 2000s—that openly integrated gay-targeted editorial content.

The lack of a coherent trend toward a singular "'90s man" or "millennium man" resulted in confusion about, as *The New York Times* wondered, which magazine had the authority to speak about trends in masculinity given the proliferation of titles with diverse ideas about men.[1] In 1992 *Adweek* similarly noted, "The reality seems to be that while men are changing, no one has been able to yet explain exactly what they are changing into […] Is today's man sensitive or tough? Provider or nurturer? Cowboy or wimp?"[2] Attempts to answer such reductive, either/or questions throughout the contemporary era were inevitably contradictory. For every opinion echoing earlier arguments that men were growing more feminist-informed and feminine in their habits, others contended men

[1] Robin Pogrebin, "Has Esquire Gone Out of Style?" *The New York Times*, Jul. 1, 1996, p. D1.
[2] Diana Minardi, "The '90s Man: Cowboy or Wimp," *Adweek*, Jun. 29, 1992, p. 34(2).

were retrenching into more traditional codes of self-expression.[3] For instance, many editors characterized the so-called New Man—the domestic and emotional straight man often discussed by media pundits in the 1980s—as counter to how men actually behaved and simply pressured them to change. *Esquire* editor-in-chief Edward Kosner took a common stance, sniping, "The fact is that Sensitive New Man was something of a wishful thought. It's not terrible to be a man. […] So I am not sympathetic to that wimpy view."[4] Others argued that men were growing sexist while debates also surrounded whether men were more narcissistic. These assessments were generally based on nothing except gut feelings about what someone felt a particular magazine's circulation suggested about men broadly, and generally disregarded other factors that often explained failures or successes such as issues of ownership and economics. Given the wide-ranging assessments about men that resulted from the volatility of the category, the most accurate take seemed to be *Mediaweek*'s conclusion, in 2006, that men are simply "a hard editorial nut to crack."[5]

This chapter examines the shifting industry dynamics of the contemporary era of men's lifestyle magazines that influenced the editorial directions of *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details*. This primarily includes the emergence of the wildly popular lad magazines, which pushed the upscale titles to temporarily take on a more emphatically heterosexual tone in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Yet this was not due to fear of being perceived as gay, as in the past, but out of the need to compete for a newly desirable audience of male readers. The tracing of wider industry trends such as the lad

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[3] Claims that men are growing more feminine in their style frequently appear in the trade press. In two of many instances, *Esquire*'s publisher told *Adweek* in the late 1980s that suddenly "men are involved in products traditionally deemed to be female." Then, more than a decade later, *Advertising Age* noted men's attention to things that are "decidedly unmasculine, from clothing to grooming products—even hair color." See Iris Cohen Selinger, "For Women, What's the Allure of Magazines Edited for Men?," *Adweek*, Dec. 5, 1988, accessed through Academic OneFile database. Mercedes M. Cardona, "Vanity, They Name Is… Man?" *Advertising Age*, Apr. 17, 2000, p. 24.

[4] Deirdre Carmody, "Esquire Seeks Rebound as Writer's Magazine," *The New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1994, p. D6.

[5] Stephanie D. Smith, "Condé Nast Packs in Men's Shopping Magazine *Cargo*," *Mediaweek*, Apr. 3, 2006, p. 8.

phenomenon is intended to contextualize the contemporary editors' considerations of sexual identity in the production process as well as how they connect to the identities of the three magazines at the center of this dissertation, an analysis of which comprises the latter half of the chapter. Aside from the brief lad-influenced turn, magazines in this era shifted from an explicit exclusion of gay men to an implied inclusion. Editors no longer actively distanced their magazines from gay men but, excepting *Details* in the 2000s, also did not specifically work to appeal to them through gay-themed content in the magazines as they claimed sexual identity is simply not a consideration. However, editors' thoughts about the different identities of these magazines indicate that sexual identity remains a key negotiation in the industry, albeit one that is subtler and more unconscious than in the past. Subsequent chapters explore how the editors' simple insistence on their magazines' gay inclusiveness without efforts to actualize that inclusiveness results in the reproduction of heteronormative and homophobic ideologies in editorial content.

Diversifying Gender Scripts in the Contemporary Era

The increased competition in the early 1990s coupled with an economic recession that resulted in financing issues and limited advertising dollars led to a large number of failures, including the high-profile *Men's Life*, which folded after a single issue, and established titles (*M*, *MGF*) as well as upstart magazines that did not even hit newsstands such as *Men* (1990), *Smart: For Men* (1991), *Max* (1992), and *Matter for Men* (1995). Moreover, only two magazines went on to significant success from the crop of titles that emerged early in the decade, Wenner Media's outdoors-driven *Men's Journal* and Condé Nast's revamped *Details*, with only the latter considered a true breakout success at the time as it became one of the fastest growing magazines of the early 1990s. This pattern marked every phase of the industry in the contemporary era: a new group of magazines would emerge with a different script of masculinity—or several scripts among them—but only a few titles in the group could

sustain themselves in the long term. As a result, shifts in the type of men suddenly targeted did not replace or render obsolete the existing magazines but added to them, ultimately expanding the psychographic range of masculinities that the category presented to readers by the end of the 2000s.

Details Breaks Out, 1990-1996

Details' history marked the magazine as particularly unlikely to become the industry's big story of the early 1990s. Founded in 1982, it began as a black-and-white newsprint magazine that took an irreverent approach to New York nightlife, art, and fashion that editor, publisher, and owner Annie Flanders envisioned as a publication for artistically inclined "people who didn't fit in."[6] In particular, she intended *Details* to embrace gay readers: Flanders enlisted gay writers to pen columns in the personal voice, utilized fashion spreads that embraced sexual fluidity, and seamlessly incorporated various elements of gay cultures into editorial content. Gay contributor Stephen Saban, whose club column and articles were some of *Details*' defining features, even described the magazine as promoting "the idea … that it was possible to be gay and happy," which had not frequently circulated in media.[7] The magazine's inclusiveness and hip reputation helped the magazine's readership of mainly women and gay men grow slowly but steadily across the country; its original circulation of 10,000 reached 100,000 by 1988, when Advance Publications purchased *Details* and hoped to use its resources as a conglomerate to raise the magazine's profile in the marketplace

[6] Michael Gross, "The Downtown Press: 4 Irreverent Journals," *The New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1986, p. A20. Judy Klemesrud, "Ann Flanders: New Fashion Voice," *The New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1985, p. 65.

[7] Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1999), p. 510. Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

through subsidiary Condé Nast, publisher of high-end titles such as *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*.[8] Although *Details* looked glossier and grew more celebrity-focused under its new ownership, the magazine otherwise initially changed little as the Condé Nast imprint attracted the attention of mass marketers such as Revlon and Estée Lauder and, in 1988 alone, advertising pages rose 39%.[9] Indeed, the magazine's desirable readership to advertisers—approximately 65% of the magazine's audience included women with a median reader age of 29 and possessing a single-person household income of $56,000—inspired Advance chairman S.I. Newhouse, Jr. to insist he did not plan editorial changes for *Details*. Publisher Jonathan Newhouse agreed, claiming it would be a "folly" to make the magazine more mainstream.[10]

However, Advance soon believed that it could make the magazine even more successful if they capitalized on the growing industry belief that men were new hot commodities. Newhouse thus recast *Details* as a men's lifestyle magazine specifically aimed at the straight male market, opting to fire Flanders and most of her staff early in 1990 and hire *Vogue* features editor James Truman as editor-in-chief. That spring Condé Nast announced the magazine would change its format with the September issue, informing media buyers and advertisers that the new *Details* would target men ages 18 to 34 and that the magazine would differentiate itself from the glut of new male-targeted magazines by appealing to "the media-tized generation" with edgy visuals, "approachable" fashion

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[8] *Details* changed owners several times in the 1980s. In 1987, Gary Bogard, who had purchased the magazine from Flanders earlier in the decade, sold his controlling stake in the magazine to Alan Patricof Associates, who then sold it to Advance Publications.

[9] Noreen O'Leary, "Jonathan Newhouse: Attention to 'Details,'" *Adweek*, Nov. 14, 1988, accessed through Academic OneFile database.

[10] Deirdre Carmody, "Details' Editor Is Dismissed By Newhouse," *The New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1990, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com. "Details Magazine Seeks a Market Outside of Downtown," *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1991, p. D6. John Gabree, "Details a Trendy Comers Among Fashion-Conscious Periodicals," *The Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 24, 1988, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com. Cynthia Crossen, "Annie Flanders of Details Magazine Finds Newhouse 'Family' Fashionable," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 23, 1988, p. 1.

coverage, and personalized insider perspectives into the entertainment industries.[11] Publisher Mitchell Fox anticipated building a readership comprised of men who were not yet committed to other men's magazines, and Truman likened the magazine to a "younger, hipper brother" of *GQ* aimed at men who preferred music and the creative fields over sports and business.[12] Yet according to media buyers and advertisers, the most distinguishing feature of *Details* in the flooded market was neither its editorial vision nor its atypical targeted reader but rather that its financial backing came from Condé Nast, which instilled confidence that *Details*, unlike so many of its competitors, would have quality and longevity.[13]

The transition into a lifestyle title was not seamless, however. Several companies pulled their ads after seeing the early issues' abrasive imagery, particularly a controversial photograph of an electric chair victim's burnt scalp that accompanied a capital punishment article and loud, tabloid-style layout that utilized unconventionally bright primary colors and covers comprised of multiple pictures rather than one image.[14] The editors immediately toned down the visuals and streamlined elements of the layout so *Details* would fit alongside Condé Nast's polished titles, bringing in more advertising revenue and helping the magazine find great success under Truman's editorship. By summer 1991 *Details* shifted from a 65% female to 70% male readership and, three years later, increased circulation to 465,000 to become one of the fastest growing titles in the magazine

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[11] Scott Donaton, "Relaunch Aims at Broader 'Details': Men's Book Not Just for Fashion Anymore," *Advertising Age*, May 14, 1990, p. 22.

[12] Jane Weaver, "'Details' Gets a New Focus," *Adweek*, June 4, 1990, retrieved through Academic OneFile database. Donaton, "Relaunch Aims at Broader 'Details.'"

[13] The company invested an estimated $10 million in *Details*' relaunch, between two and ten times more than the amounts reportedly invested in the launches of other men's magazines in 1990. See Iris Cohen Selinger, "New Magazines Reassure Media Buyers," *Adweek*, Jul. 2, 1990, retrieved through Academic OneFile database. Bruce Horovitz, "Publishers Target the American Male, Today's Big Spender," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 4, 1990, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

[14] This image accompanied Ellen McGarrahan's article "Capital Offense," *Details*, Sep. 1990, pp. 24(2).

industry.[15] Trade publication *Advertising Age* named *Details* its 1992 Magazine of the Year, while *The New York Times* lauded it for successfully appealing to "young men in their 20's, a group with no previous history of reading magazines."[16] Joe Dolce, who edited the magazine under Truman before becoming editor-in-chief in 1995, recalled of the media attention: "Everybody watched *Details* because it was an anomaly. Like, 'How did this little magazine make it?' So many men's magazines just didn't make it. [But] *Details* made it and it didn't fit the 'guy' model."

Just as it had done with *GQ* in the 1980s, then, Condé Nast successfully transitioned *Details* from a gay-associated style publication into one targeting straight men. But whereas *GQ* initially expunged any associations with gay men, the new *Details* specifically constructed a gay-friendly straight masculinity for readers. It also differed significantly from other men's magazine by targeting a younger, edgier man into alternative rock music and with an anti-establishment sensibility. *Details*' success inspired imitators, including *Inside Edge for Men* (1993) and *Bikini* (1993), and opened the door to others taking slightly more inclusive approaches to gayness. For instance, *Esquire*'s fashion spinoff *Esquire Gentleman* (1993) claimed it would embrace gay men and, in 1995, *Matter for Men* aimed for inclusivity because that "will only make the magazine cooler."[17] (Both magazines failed, with the former lasting two years and the latter not even hitting newsstands due to financing issues.) Moreover, *Details* pushed the category leaders to further distinguish themselves: while *Esquire* chose to pursue an even older reader and returned to its more writerly roots, the situation was trickier for *GQ* as both it and *Details* were owned by the same company and their target readerships were fairly

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[15] "Details Magazine Seeks a Market Outside of Downtown," *The New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1991, p. D6. Erika Isler, "A Career on the Cutting Edge," *Folio*, Apr. 1, 1994, p. 58.

[16] Scott Donaton, "Magazine of the Year," *Advertising Age*, Mar. 1, 1993, retrieved from LexisNexis database. Deirdre Carmody, "Details Magazine Defies Fickle Ads and Fashions," *The New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1992, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[17] Deirdre Carmody, "If Clothes Make a Man, *Esquire* May Make a Hit," *The New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1993, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com. Paul D. Colford, "A Crowded Field to Get More So," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1995, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

similar in age. *GQ* editor-in-chief Art Cooper thus described the difference between the magazines as one of attitude and approach, explaining, "*GQ* is for a guy who intends to succeed within the establishment. They have great confidence in themselves and in their futures. *Details* is for the anti-establishment [and] more downtown and trendy."[18] However, the need to distinguish themselves from *Details* grew less urgent by 1997 as they had to navigate the arrival of lad magazines, which *Folio* quickly noted "shook up the men's magazine category as much as any event" since the 1980s.[19]

Maxim-ization of the Industry, 1997-2003

The most influential development of the contemporary era of the U.S. men's category was the arrival of lad magazines in the late 1990s. First emerging in the U.K., the "New Lad" phenomenon was a gendered script for men that developed across consumer culture in ads, retail, and especially magazines such as *Loaded* (1994-), *FHM* (1995-), *Maxim* (1995-2009), and *Stuff* (1996-) in response to the so-called "New Man" of the 1980s. Whereas the New Man was supposedly fashionable, vain, and sensitive to women, the New Lad represented a more boorish, misogynistic man less invested in attending to his appearance than in "authentically" male interests such as cars, sports, beer, and electronic gadgets. Lad magazines were a huge success and, seeing a gap in the U.S. market for such titles, Dennis Publishing launched *Maxim* in the states in the spring of 1997. The U.S. format surpassed even the success of the U.K. version and, just two years after its arrival, saw its circulation skyrocket from an initial 200,000 to 2.2 million, prompting an explosion of similar titles: in 1998 Dennis Publishing launched the *Maxim* spinoff *Stuff* and Bob Guccione, Jr., founded *Gear*, followed

[18] Art Cooper, "The Art of Being a Gentleman," *Mediaweek*, Apr. 24, 1995, pp. 20(3).
[19] Tony Silber, "Felix Dennis," *Folio*, Apr. 15, 1999, p. 52(1).

by Larry Flynt's *Code* (1999) and the EMAP export *FHM* (2000).[20] A second wave of largely third-tier lad-inspired titles followed in 2001 and 2002, mostly by small companies and first-time publishers, including *Razor, Stun!*, *Controversy*, *Ramp*, *Tongue*, *Swung*, *King*, and *Smooth*, although the large number of similar titles did not challenge leaders *Maxim*, *FHM*, and *Stuff*. By 2002, the former had a circulation of approximately 2.5 million—more than *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details* combined—and the latter two each had circulations topping one million.

No one in the industry seemed to believe that lad magazines siphoned readers from the upscale titles' audiences. Editors and publishers rather asserted that *Maxim* had created a new readership of men who were previously uninterested in lifestyle magazines. According to those at *Maxim*, the appeal for men came through a shift from text to visuals—mostly of scantily clad women but also in chart-like articles ("charticles"), graphs, and simplistic service features instead of multi-page features. According to editor-in-chief Keith Blanchard, the magazine notably let go of the upscale editors' need to "see themselves as keepers of the flame of culture. As a class, they believe it's their right, nay, their sacred duty as the informed elite to use their pages to educate and uplift a nation of irrelevant drones."[21] Editors of *Maxim*, like those of other lad magazines, often framed the upscale magazines as elitist, egotistical, out-of-touch with everyday men, advertiser-friendly rather than reader-friendly, and "contemptuous of their readers" because they wanted to make them "feel guilty because you don't spend two-and-a-half thousand dollars on a suit," as Dennis put it. By cultivating an un-condescending buddy tone and using heterosexual sex to draw in men, Dennis continued, he "produced *Cosmo* for men."[22] Blanchard says *Maxim*'s editors conceived of the

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[20] Keith J. Kelly, "Maxim Editor Moves On," *Daily News*, Nov. 21, 1997, retrieved from http://www.nydailynews.com. Verne Gray, "Fall Magazine Report: Strategies—Newsstand Seductress," *Mediaweek*, Oct. 23, 2000, retrieved through Academic OneFile database.

[21] David Carr, "British Publishers Attack U.S. and Take Young Male Readers," *The New York Times*, Jul. 29, 2002, p. C1.

[22] Scott Donaton, "Right Place, Right Time and Loving It," *Advertising Age*, Mar. 13, 2000, p. S2.

magazine as "a bit of a political movement when it started," rejecting politically correct notions of straight masculinity in order to present what they described as the so-called authentic tastes and interests of "regular guys."[23] Here everyday men were emphatically heterosexual, related to each other through homophobia, and expressed their sexual desire through shameless misogyny. While the magazine originally hired a woman as editor-in-chief—a strategy the editor-in-chief claimed offered the magazine protection against accusations of sexism—half a year later the publishing company apparently no longer concerned itself with such accusations and replaced her with the first of a series of male editors-in-chief.[24]

Accusations of sexism were common in the clash that emerged between upscale and lad editors and publishers, although they were usually part of the former's broader attack on *Maxim* and its ilk for being immature and lacking class. While *Maxim*'s editors bragged that their magazine was so popular because it presented an unpretentious approach to being a man—implying that lad culture is what men were *really* like—upscale editors cast their lad peers as unrefined in their message of what it meant to be a man. Most of this criticism centered around lad editors and readers as lacking taste, with *GQ* publisher Tom Florio arguing, "*GQ* is the Mercedes-Benz of the men's business, [*Maxim* is] the Ford Taurus. They are a mass-market magazine by their nature. We are not."[25] *GQ* editor-in-chief Art Cooper put it more succinctly, noting, "If *Maxim* were a movie, it would be *Dumb and Dumber*."[26] They also presented their own readers as more intellectual,

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[23] Ginia Bellafante, "Sorry, Lads, Now Men Are from Venus," *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 2000, p. S1-9. Robin Pogrebin, "Magazines Reassess What It Is Men Really Want," *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1996, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[24] *Maxim* arrived in the U.S. with a female editor-in-chief, Clare McHugh, who claimed that the sexist humor seemed more acceptable because she is a woman. She explained, "I think having a woman editor is an advantage [because] you can get away with a lot more. If a guy edited that piece, people would say, 'What a chauvinist pig.'" See Keith J. Kelly, "Attitude to the *Maxim*," *Daily News*, Apr. 1, 1997, p. 46.

[25] Lisa Granatstein, "60 Seconds with… Tom Florio," *Mediaweek*, Oct. 16, 2000, p. 46.

[26] Lisa Granatstein, "*GQ*: A True Work of Art," *Mediaweek*, Nov. 16, 1998, pp. 38(2).

sophisticated, and emotionally confident.[27] Despite these attacks, editors of *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details*—who were "knocked off [their] game" by the lad magazines' success, as *GQ* editor Michael Hainey put it—soon adopted lad-style approaches in order to compete, including putting nearly naked women on the cover and integrating crass humor and a more juvenile tone. *Details* became the first to emulate *Maxim*, transforming in 1997 and even hiring *Maxim* editor-in-chief Mark Golin in 1999. *Esquire* and *GQ* followed suit editorially, with the former's David Granger defensively proclaiming his magazine to be "the original racy magazine" and both magazines' covers suddenly featuring stars like actress Heather Graham in a towel and model Tyra Banks topless with her hair covering her breasts alongside the headline "Tyra, Please Pull Your Hair Back!"[28] As *Time* noted of the transformation of the men's lifestyle category, "now all the fellows are slapping cleavage on their covers—in homage, it would appear, to *Maxim*."[29]

Mark Healy, who worked at *Details* as it began to head in the lad direction, recalled:

> The lad magazines came and caught everybody really flat-footed. They made anybody in men's magazines in the U.S. look really stupid and kind of pompous. Because here our idea of what a men's magazine was, like, embracing and espousing fashion and smart service and a sophisticated lifestyle. What no one in America realized was, like, men—*some* men—just want tits and jokes and a dumb magazine with maybe a narrative about some crime or some high seas adventure, which is fun and it's important—those are always great reads. But we overestimated and stuck by [our] idea that a men's magazine had to be kind of smart or that it was about reporting or narrative writing and a level of sophistication. And commercially at least we were dead wrong. We got our lunch stolen.

Moreover, trying to compete did not work for the upscale magazines and they quickly distanced themselves from the lad titles. As lad-style titles, *Details* barely increased its circulation, and *GQ* and *Esquire* did not break the million-circulation mark. In fact, Granger said the Heather

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[27] "60 Seconds with… Tom Florio," *Mediaweek*, Apr. 19, 1999, retrieved through Academic OneFile database.

[28] David Carr, "British Publishers Attack U.S. and Take Young Male Readers," *The New York Times*, Jul. 29, 2002, p. C1. The mentioned covers were from the April 2000 *Esquire* and January 2000 *GQ* issues.

[29] Bruce Handy, "Bosom Buddies," *Time*, Feb. 15, 1999, retrieved from http://www.time.com

Graham issue was the worst seller of 2000 and *GQ* editors claimed that high-end advertisers expressed confusion and disappointment by their editorial changes.[30] Indeed, one of the main reasons editors cited for eventually breaking from the laddish tone was because it did not garner support from advertisers who saw the upscale titles' readerships as psychographically preferable to lad readers. For instance, *Maxim* did not attract the same type of fashion advertisers that supported the upscale titles; by 1999, only 10% of its advertising came from apparel.[31] Moreover, it was not commanding the same ad rates: the first two months of 1999, *Maxim* generated $2.4 million in advertising revenue while *GQ* generated $7.7 million.[32] So while the upscale titles at first chased the lad magazines in hopes of gaining significantly larger readerships, it soon became clear that luxury advertisers considered the lad readerships to be lowbrow—or "nobrow," as *Advertising Age* mocked—and thus undesirable.[33] As one corporate media director of an upscale fashion brand put it, "We're looking for a psychographic, and don't just look at the numbers. […] I would be cautious of the effect on our brand of being in *Maxim*."[34] This would eventually be widely cited as the reason for the slowdown of the lad subcategory, which saw its hype in the industry quickly fade after 2003.

That year Wal-Mart banned sales of *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM*, acquiescing to demands from Christian groups and some customers to stop carrying the magazines. However, the effect was more symbolic of the slowing enthusiasm for lad magazines than an economic breaking point given that Wal-mart accounted for less than 3% of newsstand sales of *Maxim* and *Stuff*, and less than 1% of *FHM* newsstand sales.[35] A year later, *Gear* and *Maxim Fashion* were put on hiatus and *Razor* opted to

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[30] Ginia Bellafante, "Sorry, Lads, Now Men Are from Venus," *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 2000, p. S1-9.
[31] Nelson Mui, "Mega Changes at Young Men's Mags," *Daily News Record*, Feb. 5, 1999, p. 6.
[32] Tony Silber, "Felix Dennis," *Folio*, Apr. 15, 1999, p. 52(1).
[33] Scott Donaton, "Right Place, Right Time and Loving It," *Advertising Age*, Mar. 13, 2000, p. S2.
[34] Nelson Mui, "Mega Changes at Young Men's Mags," *Daily News Record*, Feb. 5, 1999, p. 6.
[35] David Carr and Constance L. Hays, "3 Racy Men's Magazines Are Banned by Wal-Mart," *The New York Times*, May 6, 2003, p. C1. David Lipke, "Men's Magazines in State of Flux," *Daily News*

pursue a more upscale audience. In summer 2004, trade and news press discussion of the magazines was predominantly marked by commentary about their decreasing cultural influence and slowing circulation as, *Women's Wear Daily* noted, they settled "into a somewhat saggy middle age."[36] Media commentators began doubting the longevity of magazines perpetually targeting men in stunted adolescence, particularly as no new lad titles had achieved mass success. In 2004, *Maxim* tried one final effort to reinvigorate the lad phenomenon with a PR campaign that characterized itself as a safe haven from metrosexuality, from "an effeminate, feng shui world gone mad."[37] When that failed, editors of the magazine—which maintained a circulation over two million—tried to improve its standing by distancing itself from the *lad* tag to bring in more luxury-brand advertisers and touting a newly sophisticated but still macho audience.[38] This attempt was clearly a response to developments in a year that seemed to mark the end of lad magazines as *FHM* and *Stuff* ceased publication and left *Maxim* the last sizable lad title standing.

"Metrosexual" Magazines and Beyond, 2004-

Maxim's attempt to court a more sophisticated audience in the wake of the lad cool down reflected a larger trend in the 2000s as the industry refocused its attention on upscale magazines—and prompted *Maxim* to pursue the magazines that had once pursued it. This shift began in 2000 with *Details*, yet again revamped from a lad-inspired title to a magazine that would soon be associated with metrosexuality and also gay inclusivity—a shift that prompted *Advertising Age* to declare, "going

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Record, May 12, 2003, p. 5. It should be noted that Wal-mart had previously halted distribution of the magazines at some of its stores in the past, but the magazines had not been outright banned.

[36] Jeff Bercovici, "Leaner Times for Mad Mags," *Women's Wear Daily*, Jul. 30, 2004, p. 11.

[37] Nat Ives, "A Men's Magazine Seeks to Swap a 'Laddie' Sensibility for a Prosperous Macho Sophistication," *The New York Times*, Nov. 9, 2004, p. 10.

[38] "Maxim Beta," *Mediaweek*, Nov. 12, 2007, retrieved through Academic OneFile database. Lauren Bell, "December Maxim Debuts New 'Sophisticated' Look," *Direct Marketing News*, Nov. 13, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.dmnews.com

pink has put it in the black" with a slightly smaller but high-quality readership.[39] A series of new, more consumption-driven titles emerged alongside the new *Details*: amidst the burgeoning metrosexual phenomenon, Visionaire Publishing issued *VMan* (2003) and Condé Nast launched *Cargo* (2004), a shopping-oriented catalog that blended product information with celebrity articles, relationship content, and interior design tips from one of the *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* men. Condé Nast sister company Fairchild Publications launched an even more high-end version of *Cargo* called *Vitals* (2004) as *Best Life* (2004), *Men's Vogue* (2005), and *V-Style* (2006) also entered the fray in pursuit of sophisticated audiences. Still other magazines, such as *Sync* (2004) and *Everything for Men* (2006), pushed the consumption angle in other directions and focused on the role of technology and other products in men's lives. The downmarket reputation of lad magazines, which had failed to impress advertisers in the long term and subsequently failed in large numbers, had pushed the industry in the opposite direction with upscale, product-oriented titles. However, none of these titles achieved the same industry status and success as *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details*, which dominated the upscale, fashion-focused subcategory that became most associated with men's lifestyle magazines.

Sexual Identity in the Contemporary Upscale Category

This chapter has thus far argued that the longtime efforts to distance men's lifestyle magazines from associations with gay men subsided throughout the 1990s. The shift away from gay exclusion is not entirely surprising on the publishing side: the increase in social acceptance and cultural visibility of gay men in the 1990s and 2000s made it less risky for businesses to serve and target gay-inclusive audiences. Further, many corporations now see gay people as an affluent consumer group, which

[39] Nat Ives, "Yes, We Are Gay. And Now We're Profitable, Too," *Advertising Age*, Aug. 22, 2005, p. 4.

has changed many advertisers' perceptions about them as an undesirable demographic.[40] *GQ* marketing director Edwin Bragg, for instance, said advertisers do not see his magazine's gay readership as the "stigma" they once did. Moreover, *GQ* director of advertising Mike Coffas stated that the marketers he deals with believe there are "a lot more common interests across straight and gay men" than in the past, and so he has not encountered any of them concerned about gay readers. This does not mean that all advertisers are comfortable with gay or potentially gay audiences, or that this is the case across all the lifestyle magazines. Rather, these accounts and the fact that the discussion surrounding sexuality faded in the trade press in the contemporary era suggests that there has been a general shift away from overt homophobia particularly since the middle of the 1990s, when former *Details* editor-in-chief Joe Dolce says he still had to be careful not to risk alienating non-fashion advertisers, who were often still wary of gay-oriented content.

That Dolce, who is gay, even held the position of editor-in-chief is further sign of a shift toward greater gay acceptance in the industry. While gay men have long held varying levels of editorial positions at these publications, Chris Raymond says that when he entered the industry in the late 1980s editors widely believed that a gay man could never hold the position of editor-in-chief of a lifestyle magazine that sought a primarily straight male audience. He says the consensus was that "there was no way you could send a gay man out to talk to advertisers and the people you need to invest in the magazine to make it work."[41] However, in 1995 Dolce was promoted to the role of editor-in-chief at *Details* and, in 2003, Jim Nelson—also gay—took the position at *GQ*. Raymond specifically pointed to the latter's appointment as evidence of the "remarkable shift" that has occurred regarding attitudes about homosexuality since the 1990s. When Nelson was chosen,

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[40] See, for instance, Sender, *Business, Not Politics*.

[41] Jack Haber, who was gay, was editor-in-chief of *GQ* from 1969-1983, but during this era *GQ* was a male-targeted fashion magazine instead of a men's lifestyle magazine so the context was different than the one discussed by Raymond.

Raymond explained, "His sexuality was not even an issue in the industry. It wasn't even a concern, like, 'How will you respond? Will there still be pin-up babes in the magazine?' It was not discussed in any way. It was just, 'Jim is the most qualified for this job and so he's the guy that will get the job.'" The shift is not complete or entirely consistent—Chapter Five discusses how Dolce's homosexuality reportedly became an issue and was assumed by many in the industry to have, in part, led to him being replaced at a time when exaggerated macho codes of lad magazines began to dominate. Yet these developments nonetheless point to a decreased general resistance to gayness in the industry.

Editors explained that, along with the belief that straight men are likelier to have gay friends now than in the past, one of the main reasons for this decreased resistance is that fashion has become more socially accepted as the domain of straight men in recent years. Whereas editors in the past felt that they needed to convince straight men, as both readers and advertisers, that fashion was important and that an interest in style did not mean they were feminine or gay, contemporary editors at all three magazines claimed that they do not use such strategies because there is no longer the widespread fear in society that caring about one's appearance implies homosexuality. As *GQ*'s Mark Healy succinctly put it, "The assumptions that only gay men are interested in fashion is hopelessly outdated and short-sighted." *Esquire*'s McCammon agreed, stating, "The idea that fashion is not masculine is just nonsense. I mean, everybody wears clothes and most men care very much about what they look like. That's just obvious." However, such comments do not necessarily indicate significant shifts in editorial strategies. In fact, they echo Arnold Gingrich's thoughts in *Esquire*'s first issue that "men have long since ceased to believe that there is anything effeminate or essentially unbusinesslike about devoting a little care and thought and study to the selection of clothes," and editorial content throughout the contemporary era suggests the magazines continue to utilize many

of Gingrich's rhetorical strategies intentionally or not.[42] Consider the pervasive use of words such as *masculine* and *manly* to describe style products and the gendered framing of fashion spreads with descriptions like "Men are acting like men again. In attitude, and in apparel," as *GQ* noted in its July 1994 issue. Style and fashion have undoubtedly become more socially accepted interests for straight men since the 1930s, but editorial techniques such as these—which function to assure that these interests are appropriate for straight men—indicate that tension still exists between fashion and dominant notions of straight masculinity.

Editors nonetheless insisted that fashion is now such an integral part of *all* men's lives—or at least the urban, upwardly mobile men envisioned as the magazines' readers—that there is no need to convince them to take interest in it. Many editors, particularly at *Esquire* and *GQ*, went out of their way to insist they truly believe straight men are interested in fashion and that fashion is not in the magazine simply because it is important to appease advertisers. *Esquire* and *GQ* editors even pointed to their "*Esquire* Style" section and "Style Guide" columns, respectively, as among their magazines' most popular content and as proof that, as *GQ* senior articles editor Brendan Vaughan put it, "men absolutely want information about how to dress." He continued:

> Obviously we've got to have [fashion] edit [because] if there were no fashion edit, the advertisers would be, 'What's up?' But that doesn't mean there's not interest. There *is* interest in the readers, especially in the more advice-driven stuff. Men will always need to know this stuff because they don't know it. Sometimes you're just busy with your life, your family, your job [and] you don't maybe have a lot of time to spend thinking about this stuff. But you do want to look good. Everybody wants to look good. And if you pay just a little bit more attention to the fashion and style advice in a men's magazine then your going to look better than the guy who just goes into J. Crew and throws on the first thing that is in front of his face, which is still the overwhelming majority of American men. […] And it's perfectly OK and it doesn't compromise your masculinity to care and to admit that you care about fashion. You can go too far, like, "Dude, you're trying way too hard," but there's a huge middle ground that's pretty new in our culture.

[42] See "75 Years of Esquire Style," Esquire.com, n.d., http://www.esquire.com/style/style-archives-0908#ixzz1tTR6R9Ib

Editors unanimously agreed that fashion is no longer in tension with heterosexual masculinity due, it would seem, to the emergence of this "huge middle ground" in how straightness can be expressed through style. Yet as this chapter later examines, feminine associations with fashion still play into how editors differentiate their brands—as more masculine or sophisticated than their competitors, for instance—due specifically to the varying levels of fashion coverage. Although editors explained that the increased social acceptance of fashion in straight men's lives has led to less resistance of homosexuality in the industry, the next section argues that magazines have not necessarily opted to align their brands with gay men, court gay readers, or even acknowledge them in the trade and news press in the 1990s and 2000s.

Two Editorial Approaches to Gay Identity

Just as the business side of the industry has grown less overtly resistant to potential associations between men's lifestyle magazines and gayness, editors in the upscale category are not concerned with actively distancing their content from gay readers and cultures. As suggested in the trade press during this era, little if any overt anxiety exists among editors about potential associations with gay men and those at all three magazines emphatically denied that any effort goes into limiting or containing their audience to straight readers. Yet this shift has not produced widespread editorial practices intended to broaden the sexual diversity or the range of sexual discourses in editorial content across the upscale category. Rather, two divergent approaches have emerged in the contemporary era: Editors at *Esquire* and *GQ* insist gay men are included but do not make a specific effort to court them with content, while editors at *Details* also insist gay men are included and *do* intentionally publish content to appeal to them. As discussed below and more fully elaborated throughout the following chapters, these two approaches have significantly different effects on the magazines' editorial content.

In contrast with *Esquire* founder Arnold Gingrich and former *GQ* editor-in-chief Art Cooper, both of whom attempted to purge or deemphasize their gay readers to avoid potentially deterring straight readers, editors at these two magazines are no longer consciously concerned with distancing their magazines from gay men. In fact, those I spoke with openly acknowledged that they have gay readers and expressed hope that these men feel included in the readerships. They further insisted that no attempts are made to downplay or exclude certain types of gay-themed editorial content in order to make straight men more comfortable or to maintain a predominantly straight readership—a notable transition from editorial strategies that were common in the industry into the 1990s, as editors noted. Further, editors at both magazines said they envision their straight readers as comfortable with and friendly toward gay men. At the same time, they stated there are no efforts to *include* content that might specifically appeal to gay men; they do not have a quota of gay-themed articles per issue or per year and they do not try to balance straight- with gay-themed content with the stories that they edit, write, or pitch to the editor-in-chief. As *GQ*'s Mark Healy put it, echoing how editors at both magazines talked about how editorial mixes come together, "It's not conscious, like, 'Oh, this issue's too straight' [or] 'This issue's too gay' [or] 'This one has too many of these themes.' It's nothing that anyone plans out." Editors simply insisted that readers' sexuality is not a consideration throughout the editorial process, from brainstorming story ideas to the perspective from, and voice with, which they write the content.

In fact, editors at *Esquire* and *GQ* insisted that they rarely think about the readers and, if they do, never in terms of specific demographic information such as sexuality. Just as editors insisted that they do not think about or have interest in issues masculinity, *Esquire*'s Richard Dorment explained, "Whether it's race, ethnicity, [or] sexual orientation, that does not enter the conversation in terms of doing sort of macro-editing in terms of what's of interest to our readers. I think most of our readers are, I don't want to use the words 'evolved enough' because I think that's patronizing, but they have

a sensibility that's somewhat progressive which doesn't necessarily feel the need to deal with those sorts of trappings." Similarly, deputy editor Michael Hainey explained that sexual identity is not an important consideration for *GQ* editors during the production process because, if they were to list what they believe is important to the readers, they do not feel that sexuality is central to how they see themselves in the world. He elaborated:

> Fortunately we're in a time where we *don't* have to think about sexual identity. I think maybe we're insulated being in New York and being in publishing, but you don't have to think too hard about the gay reader or the straight reader. It's just, 'Let's make a magazine that draws in people who care, who don't identify themselves sexually first, but identify themselves as culturally engaged, intelligent, and all the things that *GQ* values are primary. Almost way down there would be sexual identity or orientation. I think it's a real testament to where we are culturally that all these people can come to the magazine and find what they want in it. I mean, I look at the fashion and I see fantastic style. At the same time, I'm aware that it's shot on really attractive male models. That doesn't appeal to me but I know a lot of gay guys are, like, 'These guys are so handsome.' [*GQ*] is a great environment and I'm sure gay guys come [to read it].

These comments by Dorment and Hainey, which were echoed by other editors, are illustrative of the nature of the shift in editorial practices regarding sexual identity since the 1990s at these magazines. Rather than explicitly exclude gay men, these editors now describe an approach that claims inclusivity but only by default. While editors may find it ideal to insist that everyone can "find what they want in" the magazines because they believe particular aspects of one's identity such as sexuality and race are "trappings," the following chapters argue that a lack of attention to these aspects in fact leads to narrow depictions and discourses of masculinity that reinforce the privileges of some men over others. These chapters insist that aspects of readers' identities such as sexuality are not truly removed, nor can they be, from the production process. Indeed, editors' decisions to ignore them have significant, if unintended, consequences on content: to dismiss specific aspects of one's identity as "trappings," and to insist that they "*don't* have to think about sexual identity," is to presume the existence of a universal or generalizable male experience. This results in the construction of masculine ideals that ultimately reinforce the privileges of white, middle- to upper-

class, and—as Chapters Four and Five specifically examine—heterosexual readers. Despite editors' refusal to intentionally exclude gay men from the magazines, then, this dissertation argues that some discourses remain more readily available in content while others, such as those of same-sex desire, are dismissed or absent.

Whereas editors at *Esquire* and *GQ* assume gay men read their magazines even though they do not make efforts to appeal to them through content, those at *Details* make conscious efforts to reflect sexual diversity in their editorial content in order to target gay readers. This is a direct result of the fact that *Details* has an editor-in-chief, Dan Peres, who publicly acknowledges and embraces the gay segment of his audience. Chris Raymond pointed to Peres as the first editor-in-chief that he has worked with among *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* "who not only nods to [the gay readership] but embraces it," consciously gearing "a significant portion" of the content toward gay men and insisting that this embrace will not alienate the straight readers. Associate entertainment editor David Walters agreed, stating, "We definitely court that readership to a degree because that's a huge segment of the men's magazine reading population." Indeed, the editors at *Details* see this intentional inclusion of gay-themed content as a means to differentiate their magazine. Unlike Healy's claim that no one at *GQ* says an issue is "too straight" or "too gay," such assessments are in fact made at *Details* as they attempt to create balanced editorial mixes that will appeal to a range of men. In fact, the gay-oriented content often needs to be scaled back because editors say that, since they know Peres likes this content, they tend to pitch too many articles of these nature since they feel it will increase their chances of getting articles into the magazine.

These magazines' two approaches to sexual identity throughout the production process resulted in significantly different consequences on editorial content. As Chapters Four and Five argue, the lack of attention to issues of sexual difference in *Esquire* and *GQ* led to a default heteronormative address that ultimately reinforces interpersonal homophobia while *Details*, at least

in its post-2000 incarnation, at times disrupted that norm through the conscious integration of gay-themed content. As described below, these approaches to sexuality also inform the magazines' respective brands and positions in the marketplace. As the present and subsequent chapters make clear, a lack of conscious consideration of sexual identity does not negate the fact that *Esquire* and *GQ* editors nonetheless base editorial decisions on their assumptions about how sexuality fits into the magazines' respective identities. Their decision-making criteria are simply based on unconscious ideas about male identity as well as their magazine and their competitors' brands and, as Chapter Three explicates, how the production process works.

Differentiating the Magazines

To an observer outside of the men's magazine industry, the three magazines at the center of this dissertation may appear remarkably similar. As previously discussed, *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* utilize the same format conventions and editors even acknowledge that at times they might be difficult to distinguish given the frequent overlaps in feature topics and editorial packages—for instance, in March 2009 *GQ* and *Esquire* both did stories on the best breakfasts in America, while they often cover similar trends in pop culture and fashion. In terms of audience demographics, they also target similarly professional, middle-class men in their thirties and forties (see Appendix 3) who presumably share the goal of upward mobility. The distinctions get even fuzzier when editors describe their own readership: no matter which magazine they work for, editors invariably use words such as *sophisticated*, *professional*, *educated*, *cosmopolitan*, and *liberal* to characterize their imagined audience, which essentially paints the picture of a monolithic category of men's lifestyle magazine readers. Yet editors draw marked distinctions between the magazines' readerships, with some even insisting that their respective audiences are so distinct that they do not even overlap. These brand distinctions emerge only when editors discuss their own readerships *in terms of* the other magazines'

readerships. As editors claim not to think about their actual readers, they primarily make sense of the magazines' identities in terms of how they fit in the marketplace and exist in relation to the competition—editors reported time and again that, as *GQ*'s Mark Healy put it, "We hone our sensibilities to the point where it's like, 'That's a *Men's Journal* piece' or 'That too *Esquire*.' It just feels right or it doesn't." *Details*' Ian Daly explained, "We have to know how our personality fits in the marketplace and the particular niche that we fill"—a process that, by nature, requires figuring out how the competition fits into the marketplace as well.

This discursive positioning, which is not necessarily based in demographic reality, happens not only within the upscale category but also between other categories of men's lifestyle magazines. As demonstrated above with debates in the trade press in the 1990s, editors at *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* insisted that their readers are significantly more affluent, older, and educated than readers of the lad magazines. Yet this is not necessarily the case: the median household income of *Maxim* readers is only $5,000 less than that of *Esquire* readers and the average reader is only three to five years younger than those of *GQ* and *Esquire*. Education levels are reported differently across the magazines but it appears only a slightly smaller percentage of the *Maxim* readership did not attend college than the other magazines' readers. But even if the differences between *Maxim* and the upscale magazines are not necessarily as pronounced as the upscale editors believe, editors' discussions of their magazines in opposition to a magazine that they deem low-class and for men with poor taste is one way in which the editors imbue their magazines with particularly desirable meanings for readers and advertisers alike. As *Details* associate editor Erica Cerulo put it, "As much as we don't feel like we're really competing with *Esquire* that much for readers, we'd certainly much rather be associated with *Esquire* than with *Maxim* or, when they were around, with *Stuff* and *FHM*." These logics and signifying practices are thus important to understanding how editors construct brand identities, which in turn affect decisions they make about editorial content.

This section examines the differences between the contemporary identities of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, both in terms of how the companies present their magazines to advertisers as well as how editors and publishers talk about their magazines. These profiles draw on information provided by the companies, including their websites and, when available, materials given to advertisers, as well as data gathered through interviews and through the news and trade press. This information is analyzed specifically as self-representation, or how those at the companies attempt to appeal to advertisers and readers as well as how they think about, and would like others in the industries to think about, their own magazines and their competitors. This is important because the magazines, which generally target the same demographic readership, must divide up the market psychographically in order to cultivate unique, desirable readerships for advertisers. Yet as Chapter Three elaborates, editors state that they think very little about their actual readerships when creating editorial content. So just as Angela McRobbie argues that notions of readerships are "a useful fiction" that enable editors to justify their decisions, I contend that editors and publishers' references to readerships in these profiles are little more than branding strategies that seek to distinguish their respective magazines in the marketplace—and that sexual identity is an important way that the magazines are differentiated even if editors claim not to consider it during the editorial process.

Esquire: "Man at His Best"

> *As the only general-interest lifestyle magazine for sophisticated men,* Esquire *defines, reflects and celebrates what it means to be a man in contemporary American culture. Required reading for the man who is intellectually curious and socially aware,* Esquire *speaks to the scope and diversity of his passions with spirited storytelling, superb style and a tonic splash of irreverent humor.*
>
> —Hearst Corporation's *Esquire* profile[43]

[43] "Hearst Corporation," Hearst.com, retrieved January 2, 2012, from http://www.hearst.com/magazines/esquire.php

The Hearst Corporation's *Esquire* led the men's lifestyle magazine industry into the early 1990s but has since been surpassed in circulation within the upscale category by *GQ* and in other categories by *Maxim*, *Men's Health*, and *Men's Journal*. It nonetheless remains one of the most widely known men's lifestyle magazines: boasting a 700,000 circulation that reaches over three million readers, *Esquire* frequently finds its stories, particularly its political commentary, discussed in the entertainment media and has a strong journalistic reputation.[44] Demographically, its readership is older (median age of 43.9 years), slightly less affluent ($72,891 median household income), and comprised of more women (34.1%) than the other upscale titles. Taking "Man at His Best" for a tagline, it touts to advertisers that its readers are opinion-leader "influentials," or the ten percent of the population that influences what the other ninety percent does, and who are "well educated, urbane, and affluent—class, not mass." It further distinguishes its reader from those of its competition by insisting the *Esquire* man does not need to learn how to be successful because he has already "arrived," and he looks to the magazine because he wants "a primer on how to lead a richer, better, fuller, and more meaningful life."[45] Along with the original U.S. edition, *Esquire* has 22 international magazines and Hearst has extended the brand through a line of watches, a home collection that includes furniture, lighting, and accessories at a variety of home interior and furnishing chains and boutiques, books such as *Esquire: The Handbook of Style—A Man's Guide to Looking Good*, and the retail website cladmen.com.

Editors characterize their readers as professional, educated men who possess a curiosity for new experiences, want to be entertained and challenged, and have a clever or arch sensibility—according to editor-in-chief David Granger, they are the "successful, sophisticated regular guys"

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[44] For instance, it has 60 National Magazine Awards nominations and 15 wins since 1998. "National Magazine Awards – Esquire Media Kit 2012," Esquire.com, retrieved July 20, 2012, from http://www.esquiremediakit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=1135498&category_id=19105

[45] "Esquire Media Kit," Esquire.com, retrieved January 2, 2012, from http://www.esquiremediakit.com

who occupy the middle ground between "the more adolescent idea of a man that the lad books went after" and the "more effete idea of a man" that he believes *GQ* and *Details* target.[46] Indeed, editors emphasize that they appeal to, as Tyler Cabot put it, "the general men in America," which he characterized as "a big swath of land to hit so if you're outside of that swath, well, it's not like we're excluding that much. I've just learned that the more [away from that] you get, you're getting off into fringe audiences." Editors seemed particularly proud of their appeal to what they deem a general man—so much so that Richard Dorment insisted, "With some magazines you get a sense that they're only talking to a very specific *kind* of man. That's not what we try to do. We're not exclusionary." Yet as Chapter Four discusses, the notion of "general," as opposed to "fringe," constructs normative ideas of masculinity that privilege the experiences of white, middle- to upper-class, straight men—in this case, as most obviously embodied by George Clooney, whose image features prominently in *Esquire*'s media kit for advertisers and who, along with Bill Clinton, has most frequently appeared on the magazine's cover since Granger started as editor-in-chief in 1997. In turn, masculinities that do not align with this normative notion are either excluded from the magazine altogether or included in especially constrained ways.

Editors establish this normative masculinity, and thus distinguish *Esquire* from its competition, most self-consciously through their discussion of fashion. Although they insisted fashion is important to men's lives just as editors at the other magazines believe, *Esquire* editors, in contrast, emphasized that their heritage is journalism and continually distanced their magazine from fashion's perceived associations with frivolity, characterizing *GQ* and *Details* as primarily fashion-based publications and, thus, less serious. Granger has taken this tactic as well, accusing *GQ* and *Details* publisher Condé Nast of promoting a "'men as shoppers' philosophy" that emphasizes

[46] David Carr, "*GQ*, under a New Editor, is Not Quite So Coiffed," *The New York Times*, Sep. 1, 2003, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

"selling clothes [and] cosmetics" and so targets "superficial readers."[47] Editors repeatedly pointed out that fashion is only a minor component of *Esquire*, which they feel has grander, even literary ambitions and so is more closely aligned with *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic* than other men's magazines. Dorment explained:

> *Esquire* is not a fashion magazine. The magazines that are grouped into our competitive class, although we don't necessarily consider them competitors, are *GQ* and *Details*, which are very much fashion magazines. They are governed by a fashion ethos. We are not. Fashion is just *one* of the things that we do. We are a *men's* magazine—a men's *general-interest* magazine.

This use of *general-interest* serves a specific rhetorical purpose: it differentiates *Esquire* from its competitors by categorizing them as specifically *fashion* magazines in contrast, which echoes Hearst's claim above that *Esquire* is "the only general-interest lifestyle magazine for sophisticated men." As *GQ* and *Details* are also general-interest magazines, the categorization of them as *fashion* is an attempt to elevate the significance of *Esquire*'s editorial work and, given the editors' other comments, associate it with a more "appropriate" masculinity than that of its competitors. Indeed, another *Esquire* editor contrasted his magazine's supposedly minor and, therefore, more masculine fashion coverage with *Details*' coverage, which he characterized as a "feminized service" due to its excessiveness.

This disavowal of fashion by editors, in interviews if not in editorial content, reveals lingering tension between straight masculinity and fashion despite their previous claims that such tension was a historical phenomenon. These statements suggest fashion is an acceptable interest so long as one is not *too* interested, which would threaten to undermine straight masculinity and render one superficial—a message that fits within a broader approach to masculinity that *GQ* and *Details* editors, several of whom had previously worked at *Esquire*, characterized as for culturally reserved,

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[47] Dong Wang, *Editorial Practices of Top Editors of Ten Magazines: An Exploratory Study on Magazine Editing* (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Missouri), 2005, p. 131.

middle-aged men overly invested in their straightness. One editor, now at *Details*, captured this sentiment by describing his former place of employment's content as "really hyper heterosexual—and I say this with all affection for everyone who works there. [It's] like, 'Don't confuse us!' and 'We're going to eat a sausage and drink a beer and we're 50 years old!'" Although such a characterization by a competitor is an effort to fix the meaning and marketplace position not only of *Esquire* but also of the *other* magazines, Chapter Four elaborates how *Esquire* editors' notion of a "general" audience result in editorial content that reinforces its industry reputation.

GQ: "Look Sharp, Live Smart"

> GQ *is the authority on men. For over 50 years* GQ *has been the premier men's magazine, providing definitive coverage of men's style and culture. With its unique and powerful design, the best photographers, and a well of award-winning writers,* GQ *reaches millions of leading men each month.* GQ *is the only publication that speaks to all sides of the male equation.* GQ *is simply sharper and smarter.*
>
> —Condé Nast's *GQ* mission statement[48]

With a circulation nearing 950,000 and reaching more than seven million readers, Condé Nast Publications' *GQ* has been the upscale category leader for most of the contemporary era. Since many in the magazine and advertising industries credited it for bringing fashion to mainstream American men in the 1980s, *GQ* has been described by one of Condé Nast's presidents as the strongest brand at a company that also owns well-known and highly regarded publications such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*.[49] Indeed, the phrases "*GQ* guy" and "Mr. *GQ*" circulate in films, television, and culture broadly to signify well-dressed men who are successful in the professional realm—a reflection of the magazine's "Look Sharp, Live Smart" tagline—and globally the brand is attached to watches, cars, bars, and beyond, and has 18 international formats. In terms of demographics, *GQ*'s readership has

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[48] "Mediakit," CondeNast.com, retrieved Dec. 29, 2011, from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/gq/

[49] Michael Learmonth, "Condé Nast Says Goodbye to Men.Style.com, Hello to GQ.com, Details.com," *Advertising Age*, Jul. 20, 2009, retrieved from http://adage.com

a median age of 33.4 years and an $81,214 median household income, giving it the youngest upscale audience and placing its readership's median income above that of *Esquire* but below that of *Details*. Fashion director of advertising Mike Coffas adds that the *GQ* audience is statistically the most "multicultural" male-targeted lifestyle magazine, and editors emphasize the diversity of their readership. In the U.S., the magazine has gained respect in the industry as evidenced by its 53 National Media Awards nominations and 6 wins, including for the highest honor of general excellence.[50]

Editors described their reader as primarily urban but not simply coastal, sophisticated, fashion-conscious, in his early thirties, somewhat snarky, and extremely interested in popular culture—a man publisher Tom Florio has characterized as having "a fairly high intellectual sensibility" but also "emotional and inner confidence."[51] Whereas *Esquire* has an older, more established reader, Mark Kirby described the *GQ* reader as younger and "becoming part of the professional world and growing up but still has some of the same tastes they did in college in terms of music and movies—but who's looking to be more grown up, to get a nice suit or acquire some of these tastes that you wouldn't have had in your college years." Moreover, in contrast with *Details*, which pursues an extremely niche audience of so-called metrosexuals who live on the coasts, *GQ* presents itself as having broader geographical appeal that marketing director Edwin Bragg explains extends across the country, "not just in New York and Los Angeles." Deputy editor Michael Hainey described the magazine as "a great club or a great dinner party" where "you can check out the hot gay guy over there who's the DJ making great music and then here's a beautiful woman at the club and there are the guys you want to be. All the elements come together." This youthful, stylish, and

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[50] "National Magazine Awards – Esquire Media Kit 2012," Esquire.com, retrieved July 20, 2012, from http://www.esquiremediakit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=1135498&category_id=19105

[51] "60 seconds with… Tom Florio," *Mediaweek*, Apr. 19, 1999, retrieved through Academic OneFile database.

polished appeal is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Justin Timberlake, who played a *GQ* editor in the 2011 movie *Friends with Benefits*, and Ben Affleck, both of whom are among the most frequent cover subjects.

If *Esquire* is the "older, stodgier, more middle American" men's magazine, as one *Esquire* editor self-deprecatingly characterized his magazine's reputation, *GQ* is widely known as a mainstream, fashion-focused magazine that tonally, topically, and culturally occupies the middle ground between *Esquire* and *Details*. It has a cool factor that the former lacks and appeals to "schlubby Westchester dads" in a way that the latter does not, as one *Details* editor mockingly put it. Indeed, editors at both *Esquire* and *Details* claimed that their own titles are far more closely related to *GQ* than to the other despite substantial efforts to differentiate their brands from *GQ*. Although not explicitly articulated as such, their comments suggest this is because, for *Esquire*, *GQ* more closely embodies the same type of masculinity and, for *Details*, because *GQ* is younger and more urban in sensibility. Whereas *Esquire* has a very specific reputation that often earns it mockery from editors at *GQ* and *Details* as being out-of-touch, *GQ* does not inspire the same sort of derision. Neither did *GQ* editors seem as insistent, or go out of their way, to distinguish their reader from the competition as the competition did.

Details: "The Modern Man's Guide to Culture, Style, Entertainment, and Fitness"

> Details *continues to revolutionize the men's market by providing the blueprint to a new era of masculinity for affluent, educated, metropolitan men. These cultural leaders care about more than just their appearances, with interests ranging from design and art/culture to fashion, grooming and fitness.* Details*' smart journalism, unparalleled design aesthetic and actionable service provide everything our reader needs to accessorize his lifestyle and embody the new masculine ideal.*
>
> —Condé Nast's *Details* mission statement[52]

[52] "Mediakit," CondeNastMediaKit.com, retrieved December 29, 2011, from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/det/

Touted by Condé Nast as "the blueprint for a new era of affluent, educated, metropolitan masculinity," *Details* targets "a new generation of young, intelligent, confident men" through content that is "provocative, fresh, contrarian and unprecedented."[53] Boasting a readership with a median age of 35, *Details* has a smaller audience than average in the category—its circulation is under 500,000 and reaches only 1.12 million total readers—but that audience is particularly desirable to advertisers as it is the most affluent of all men's lifestyle magazine audiences with a median household income of $86,419. Through materials distributed by its advertising partner, the MediaMax Network, Condé Nast claimed in 2007 that *Details* readers are 71% likelier to be president of their company and 161% likelier to spend more than $5,000 annually on fine jewelry than non-readers. Moreover, they spend more than $1 billion each year on clothing and apparel, and nearly $2 billion each year on domestic and foreign vacations. While each men's lifestyle magazine touts its audience's consumerism and spending power to advertisers, *Details* distinguishes itself by cultivating a sensibility that aligns most closely with the metrosexual phenomenon that emerged in the 2000s—so much so that in 2003 *The New York Times* dubbed it a "a kind of metrosexual bible" under the tenure of editor-in-chief Dan Peres, who took the position in 2000.[54]

Though editors at *Details* rejected the term *metrosexual*, their characterization of the magazine and imagined reader is not unlike the popular conception of the term. They described the magazine as primarily appealing to metropolitan men who live on the coasts, particularly straight men who are secure enough in their sexuality to have gay friends because "they grew up thinking, 'Hey, this is really not that big of a deal,'" as Chris Raymond explained. Moreover, editors described their straight readers as men who in the past may have been perceived as gay themselves for their attention to

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[53] "Mediakit," CondeNastMediaKit.com, retrieved December 29, 2011, from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/det/

[54] Warren St. John, "Metrosexuals Come Out," *The New York Times*, Jun. 22, 2003, Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

clothing and grooming. Former executive editor Bill Van Parys said that *Details* targets a "new masculinity" for "professional people, primarily single neo-yuppies with kind of cool sensibilities and fashion style." Editors generally characterized their reader as the youngest of the upscale titles—an assessment that is not supported by demographic data, as *GQ* has a slightly younger reader—as well as something of a skeptic in life. According to associate editor Erica Cerulo, the *Details* reader does not blindly follow orders or go along with something simply because it is trendy. "In general we think of our guy as a cynic, as someone who doesn't believe everything he reads," she said. "He wants advice but […] there's a little bit of contrarianism in him." As a result, editors claimed they like to publish stories that mock trends and celebrities that people love (e.g., Jon Stewart), and embrace those that people hate or consider guilty pleasures (e.g., Bravo's *Real Housewives* franchise). Within the upscale category, they differentiated their readers as younger and more fashion-interested than that of *Esquire*, and edgier and more metropolitan than the *GQ* reader.

Most of all, though, editors pointed to the magazine's gay inclusivity as a primary distinguishing feature of *Details*. As noted above, Peres is the only editor-in-chief who acknowledges in the press the non-straight segment of his audience, and only *Details*' editors seek to appeal to gay men through editorial content. Likewise, in contrast with *GQ* and *Esquire* editors, *Details*' editors expressed interest in thinking about cultural developments of male identity, such as straight men wearing engagement rings, the evolving line between gay and straight identities, and cultural ideas about gay men. However, this is not necessarily due to personal curiosity but rather an attempt to select topics that the editor-in-chief wants in the magazine and, as further discussed in Chapter Three, editors have learned that Peres finds those stories particularly compelling and important to the magazine's brand. As associate entertainment editor David Walters put it, "*Details* is considered more of a gay men's magazine. I don't think we'd be like, 'It is' or 'It isn't' but we have to sort of play up to that. It's the perception that people have of it, and you have to sort of play up to that and

speak to your readership." Indeed, several of its editors believed that, in contrast, *GQ* and *Esquire* simply avoid gay-themed stories. In 2005, *Details*' VP and publisher Chris Mitchell even pointed out in *Advertising Age* the problematic exclusion of gay-themed editorial in those magazines, arguing, "conventional wisdom would suggest" that the other men's magazines also "have plenty of gay and straight readers alike. When does that rub off on their editorial? When does this [lack of gay-themed content in those magazines] become a glaring oversight?"[55] Such comments by Mitchell and the others help to position *Details* as the gay-inclusive magazine and distinguish it from the competition—a positioning that is supported by editorial content, although Chapter Five argues that the conditions of gay inclusion are limited.

Despite this reputation, editors at *Details* have no idea what percentage of their readership is gay—nor, significantly, did anyone at *GQ* or *Esquire* about their own readers or *Details*' readers. The assumption among them is simply that *Details* has the most and *Esquire* has the fewest. Katherine Wheelock, who has worked at both *Details* and *GQ*, noted it is possible that *GQ* does not have a significantly smaller percentage of gay readers but rather that "it just became *Details*' thing" to be known for its gay readership. This reputation carries over into the trade press as well. In 2009, for instance, *Adweek* characterized the difference between *GQ* and *Details* as the former taking a "more mainstream" approach that "resonates more with men in Ohio" while the latter has a "very gay, very urban" sensibility.[56] Although data about the sexuality of readers is reportedly not measured or available from the magazines, in 2006 a Simmons Market Bureau consumer study found that 10.39% of *GQ*'s readership (or 219,000 readers) identifies as gay or bisexual—the largest percentage of any non-gay-oriented magazine with a circulation of at least 500,000 (which excluded *Details* from the

[55] Nat Ives, "Yes, We Are Gay. And Now We're Profitable, Too."
[56] Lucia Moses, "For Condé Nast, Is Devil in the 'Details'?" *Ad Week*, Oct. 7, 2009, retrieved through Academic OneFile Database.

study) and not specifically targeting a gay audience.[57] Nonetheless, the fact that *Details* has the "gay" reputation shows just how rare it is for men's lifestyle magazines to consistently devote editorial space to issues related to gay identity—even in an era when editors insist that they are not actively distancing their magazines from gay men yet, it turns out, are still negotiating matters of sexual identity in less conscious ways.

[57] "Page Boys," *Daily News Record*, Feb. 20, 2006, p. 145. The only other men's magazine on the list, *Men's Health*, at number seven, with 4.68%. Of the magazines *least* likely to have gay readers, lad title *Stuff*—the only men's lifestyle magazine on that list—had a 99.23% straight readership.

Chapter Three

"I Know Which Stories Get Accepted and Which Stories Don't": Editorial Agency, Organizational Structure, and the Production of Masculinities

This chapter builds on the previous examination of the differentiating strategies among men's lifestyle magazines by analyzing the practices, logics, and routines involved in the production of editorial content. Just as Chapter Two demonstrated that *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* target different types of men, the specific editorial strategies used to appeal to these men are the products of a number of operational routines, departmental norms, and individual efforts of those at the magazines. This chapter argues that the magazines' textual possibilities, and thus their ideological messages about masculinity that are analyzed in Chapters Four and Five, are limited by the editorial departments' organizational structures and cultures rather than by explicit criteria or policies set by the editors-in-chief or publishing companies. Although editors insist they are given unlimited creative freedom, they self-impose parameters of appropriate content by observing aspects of the workplace culture in an attempt to come up with ideas that they believe are the likeliest for the editor-in-chief to accept for publication. I characterize this often unconscious process as "discerning savvy" as these workers accrue knowledge about the preferences of their superiors that effectively narrows the range of editorial ideas that they will propose as their professional reputations depend on their ability to successfully pitch stories. This concept offers critical media industry scholars a means to further theorize how creative workers' agency is circumscribed in ways that maintain the hegemony of particular textual forms and ideologies in cultural industries. Indeed, particularly given the previous discussion of the editors' stated disinterest in, and lack of critical attention to, issues of

masculinity, discerning savvy helps to explain why men's lifestyle magazines tend to reproduce, often unwittingly, similar discourses and modes of address that reinforce values such as heteronormativity even without editorial policies to guide editors.

Editorial Power and Organizational Structure

As with any magazine, wide-ranging negotiations result from the organizational structure of the editorial departments of men's lifestyle magazines (see Appendix 5). Editors not only coordinate with workers in related creative divisions, such as the art, fashion, photography, and digital departments to make sure visual representations, layouts, and online components are consonant with the rest of the magazine's tone, but must also navigate their own editorial hierarchy to produce each issue.[1] At *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, the editor-in-chief dictates the editorial vision of the magazine and a range of editors and writers conceive and write articles in an attempt to actualize that vision. This section discusses the operation of power at the magazines and argues that the decentralized structure of this editorial hierarchy, which hides aspects of the decision-making processes from many editors, demands that editors constantly observe developments in the department in order to gain a sense of what is happening editorially and tonally at the magazine.

The Role of the Editor-in-Chief

The editorial hierarchy must foremost be understood in terms of the editor-in-chief as he (as they are all men) holds as much power over content as any individual can possess at a magazine.[2] Along with acting as "the face" of the magazine in the media, the editor-in-chief dictates the publication's

[1] Advertising is not one of these concerns. Aside from the editor-in-chief, those in the editorial department claim they do not work with or take into account the publishing side of the magazine.
[2] Every editor-in-chief of *Details*, *Esquire*, and *GQ* has been a man although Barbara O'Dair was *Details*' acting editor-in-chief for the May and June 1999 issues following an editorial shakeup.

guiding editorial vision, oversees the entire staff, accepts or rejects every idea, signs off on the content of every page, hires and fires editors, and cultivates relationships with advertisers. Moreover, he negotiates a variety of forces beyond the editorial department—readers, advertisers, publishing company executives, and broader cultural shifts—to produce a magazine that is relevant and appealing to a distinct segment of the market that, in turn, attracts the attention of high-end brands that buy advertising space and generate revenue for the publishing company. Although men's lifestyle magazines occasionally go through eras of relatively quick turnover of editors-in-chief, as with *Esquire* and *Details* in the 1990s, generally an editor-in-chief holds his position for an extended period, resulting in fairly consistent editorial visions for the magazines over time. For instance, the current editors-in-chief of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* have thus far held their positions since 1997, 2003, and 2000, respectively (see Appendix 6).[3] While the editor-in-chief is responsible for conceiving of a magazine's editorial vision, he works with a publisher who deals with the magazine's business-related matters, gathering and interpreting readership data in order to sell the magazine to advertisers and to promote the brand.[4] Because the publisher has a close relationship with the advertising community, he or she relays information to the editor-in-chief about tensions and trends in the market for him to consider when making editorial decisions.

These myriad duties make the editor-in-chief a crucial figure in the men's magazine industry as, according to Ben Crewe, it is ultimately through his "cultural representations, knowledges and resources that economic conditions [are] operationalized and commercial enterprises materialized."

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[3] A striking exception is *Maxim* (U.S.), which had nine editors-in-chief between 1996 and 2011.

[4] Magazines' publishing departments occasionally conduct studies or propose monthly questions to a small segment of their readerships in order to collect their own information. However, they mostly rely on audience research purchased from Mediamark Research and Intelligence (MRI). The MRI survey samples the U.S. population, allowing publishing executives to see the percentage of their readership that is, for instance, aged 25 to 34 or college graduates. Publishers often utilize the Mendelsohn Affluent Survey for information on the lifestyles, behaviors, and media habits of the most affluent portion of their audiences (i.e., readers who make over $100,000 annually).

As a result, publishing executives acknowledge that the editors-in-chief are "their most valuable asset and, within certain boundaries, upheld [their] editorial autonomy."[5] In this way editors-in-chief perform creative-commercial hybrid duties as they make decisions about the final editorial product but must always keep the business in mind. For instance, Joe Dolce, *Details* editor-in-chief from 1995 to 1997, said that executives at publishing company Condé Nast gave suggestions but allowed him to create the magazine as he saw fit. He explained of his experiences at the time:

> Condé Nast was a company that pretty much let its editors do what they want to. But if they didn't like it, you got fired. They gave subtle pointers and nudges but never took a hammer and said, "Don't do this." Never. I don't think the people who ran Condé Nast ever had the arrogance to say, "We understand what makes *Details* work." They're much more business-like: if it's working, great; if it's not working, let's fix it. It wasn't about a dialogue there—that was just the corporate culture. I don't know what was expressed when I left the room or what was expressed behind closed doors, but to me it was like, "You are the captain and will navigate this ship through the rocky seas. Good luck to you. We're going to give you as much money as we possibly can to make this work but you're on your own."

Though Dolce had to justify the contents of every page to company executives in monthly meetings, he said their feedback primarily came in the form of questions rather than approvals or disapprovals (e.g., "Who was the photographer of that shoot?"). For more concrete feedback he said he discussed the direction of the magazine with *Details* publisher Gina Sanders (1994-1997) and Condé Nast's editorial director James Truman (1994-2005), who oversaw the editorial direction of each of the company's magazines. Though, again, he made the final editorial decisions.

Dolce's tenure at *Details* illustrates the possibilities and limitations of the power of the editor-in-chief. On one hand, Dolce had complete control over the magazine's direction and targeted readership: he says no one at the publishing company stopped him from "pushing the boundaries of

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[5] Crewe, *Representing Men*, p. 113. Due to differences in language in the U.K. and U.S. magazine industries, Crewe and I use slightly different terminology although we refer to the same figure. For instance, his "editor" is my "editor-in-chief" and his "editor-in-chief" is my "editorial director," who oversees all the titles owned by the publishing company. He writes, "The editor was the title figurehead, working alongside a publisher and underneath an 'editor-in-chief'" (p. 90).

what a men's magazine was" by appealing to edgier young straight men while also nodding in the editorial content to the gay men that he knew were also readers. Similarly, Truman explained that when he was *Details*' editor-in-chief before his promotion to Condé Nast's editorial director, he never sought the company executives' approval of his target readership. Dolce nonetheless worked carefully within the limitations subtly dictated by the aforementioned forces. For instance, he said he toned down *Details*' emphasis on grunge fashion, which had long helped the magazine appeal to a distinct men's lifestyle magazine audience. This was because he saw grunge's popularity waning but also because he felt that company executives believed such fashion was "too radical" and did not reflect the upscale clothing sold in the magazine's advertisements. Despite the creative freedom afforded the editors-in-chief, Condé Nast executives could pull the plug on their visions at any point. Indeed, in spite of *Details*' success, the company opted to chase a potentially larger audience by replacing Dolce, in 1997, with someone who editorially repositioned the magazine closer to lad title *Maxim*. "I just didn't really see *Details* going in that lad-magazine way, and that was probably one of the reasons I got axed," conceded Dolce, echoing media speculation that the magazine's gay inclusiveness and Dolce's own gay identity resulted in his termination given the prevailing trend in the market toward the excessive heterosexuality popularized by *Maxim*.

As evidenced by Dolce's experience at *Details*, the editor-in-chief possesses unparalleled power in dictating the editorial vision and direction of a men's lifestyle magazine. That power is not unfettered, as demonstrated by Dolce's dismissal in the face of larger cultural trends influencing the company, but is significant enough that a magazine may look different depending on how a particular editor-in-chief envisions his publication's sensibility and readership. In other words, an editor-in-chief must maintain—or in rare certain cases, reestablish—a magazine's brand, but this does not mean a magazine remains constant in tone and content across the tenures of various editors-in-chief as space exists to interpret that brand. For instance, Dolce made *Details* more

celebrity-driven and Jim Nelson, upon taking over as *GQ* editor-in-chief, gave his magazine a younger, pop-culture bent. Crewe argues that while editors-in-chief are "pre-selected not to produce the sorts of editorial that would breach the terms laid down by the publishers," the terms are somewhat negotiable so long as advertisers and readers are happy with any adjustments in editorial approach.[6] Because of the influential role that the editor-in-chief plays in a magazine's editorial direction, his decisions must necessarily be taken into account in analysis of men's lifestyle magazines. As discussed below, however, his reliance on his editorial staff to actualize that vision means that attention must also be paid to how editors and writers do this.

The Responsibilities of the Editorial Staff

The hierarchies of editorial power below the editor-in-chief vary among men's lifestyle magazines and are loosely structured with, typically, fewer than twenty individuals on staff. A small group generally works directly beneath him to help with day-to-day operations, oversee different aspects of the magazine, and translate his vision to others on staff—typically including the managing and deputy editors, and creative, design, and editorial projects directors. Below these editors and directors are various senior, features, and articles editors who work with associate and assistant editors as well as staff, contract, and freelance writers. While these editors are often responsible for specific sections of the magazine, both assigning and writing content that comprises these sections, they characterize the whole magazine as somewhat available for input from the entire editorial staff and describe their responsibilities as multifaceted and changing as both the magazine's staff and their own abilities evolve. Mark Healy, *GQ* director of editorial projects and a former *Details* editor, explained:

[6] Crewe, *Representing Men*, p. 114.

> In a lot of ways we as editors are coming up with ideas and shaping the magazine in ways that cross boundaries. Things aren't divided necessarily, like, "You do Hollywood. You do sports. You do politics." We come up with ideas, work with and cultivate writers, get the stories in the magazine, contribute to [editorial] packages and things that we do here at the magazine—basically shaping ideas and bringing in and assigning stories. Also it changes over time. I used to write some car and music stuff, but as I got older, those things got picked up and done well by others. But everybody has a few things that they do really well—or things that they just bother to do. So basically the most honest answer about what we do is probably the simplest and least satisfying: it depends.

The relatively contingent nature of the editorial jobs prompted several editors to refer to their position titles as somewhat unhelpful or even misleading—or, as *Details* associate editor Erica Cerulo described them, "almost entirely random" as the titles fail to signify a linear hierarchy (e.g., *Details* has an Associate Entertainment Editor but not an Entertainment Editor) and could never capture the wide-ranging responsibilities of each editor.

Despite their varying duties, editors stated that the ability to generate editorial ideas is most integral to their jobs. While the editor-in-chief might occasionally provide general ideas or topics for them to translate into specific story ideas, editors insisted that it is far more common for them to come up with ideas entirely on their own—which they then write or assign to their writers to execute. These writers also pitch their own ideas to the editors, who then present the best ones to the editor-in-chief, but editors stated that they infrequently accept those story pitches as outside writers are less familiar with what types of ideas that the editor-in-chief believes are best for the magazine. *Esquire* features editor Tyler Cabot explained, "Getting ideas is hard and my writers haven't been here for six years like me. They're great writers but it's easier for me on this side to know what our magazine is, what's going to get past [editor-in-chief David] Granger." As a result, editors across all three magazines said that the vast majority of content originates from those on staff rather than from contracted and freelance writers, and that it is up to the editors to pitch only the ideas—from all of the possibilities that they think up and field from writers—that they believe have the best chance at being accepted by the editor-in-chief. Because of this structure, ideas

perceived to be inconsistent with the editors' understandings of the preferences of the editor-in-chief are unlikely to even get proposed and so have no chance of appearing in the magazine.

Yet editors described aspects of the decentralized department structure that pose obstacles to assessing the preferences of the editor-in-chief. They explained while the editor-in-chief has final approval, the hierarchy within the department does not necessarily function top-down in the sense that an assistant editor only reports to a more senior editor, and so forth. Editors rather work with different people across varying editorial levels depending on the particular project—an assistant editor might primarily work with a particular editor who is more senior in status, for instance, but on certain tasks might work directly with the editor-in-chief or with another senior editor. Because of such variability, editors claimed to rarely know who is working with whom, and on what, for any given issue of the magazine—and that they often find themselves unexpectedly working on new and different projects or stories from issue to issue. Each magazine regularly holds production meetings, generally on a weekly or biweekly basis, but editors said that many decisions about editorial content happen one-on-one, meaning that the only people who know about a project are often those directly involved with it. *Esquire* articles editor Ross McCammon explained, "When the line-up comes around each month [for what is in the issue], it's mostly a surprise. I won't know where *that* came from. But obviously there have been tons of discussions about it in the department, just like there have been tons of discussions about the stuff I'm working on." As a result, editors frequently said they felt "in the dark" about aspects of the editorial process and made disclaimers that they are not privy to the range of editorial decisions made across the department and so things might not, in fact, always work as they believe them to work. They explained that they simply had to do their jobs given the information, however limited, that they had about the production process. Indeed, editors appeared to have varying knowledge about practices at a magazine. For instance, some *Details*

editors claimed to have no knowledge that focus group research with readers was ever conducted, while others knew that such research occurred and knew the results of the research.

This decentralized editorial structure informs how editors and other creative workers perform their duties. Given that much of the decision-making is hidden from view and that their duties and day-to-day working relations are not constant, editors reported that they need to watch what goes on around the office to get a sense of what is happening tonally and editorially at the magazine—a necessary component of their jobs given that they share the goal of creating a magazine that aligns with the vision of the editor-in-chief and so must make themselves aware of the types of projects and stories he deems relevant. *Details* senior writer Ian Daly explained, "Everything we do is really a greater reflection of the editor-in-chief—more than I ever expected—because he's the one who says yes or no everything." As the next section elaborates, this process of trying to determine which ideas the editor-in-chief will approve is an informal one as he does not offer explicit editorial guidelines. I argue that the process by which they figure this out significantly limits the type of content ideas that they pitch to the editor-in-chief for publication. While editors insist they have unlimited creative freedom, they unconsciously set their own limits on the possibilities of content by only considering ideas that they feel will specifically appeal to the perceived preferences of the editor-in-chief.

Negotiating Editorial Agency

A curious tension emerges when editors describe their own creative agency. On one hand, they insist that they are given carte blanche to conceive and executive editorial content, proud that they can write about aspects of life that interest them rather than forced to follow departmental policy or reader demands. On the other, they repeatedly note that content must adhere to the preferences of the editor-in-chief, whom they say trusts them to know the sensibility of the magazine and to pitch

content that fits within that sensibility. This section discusses the negotiations that take place, often unconsciously, as a result of these contradictory accounts. In doing so, it highlights that analysis of the editorial content in men's lifestyle magazines requires attention to both the vision of the editor-in-chief and to the departmental cultures and practices that inform how editors actualize that vision since that vision is not explicitly articulated but rather informally expressed.

Creative Freedom/Creative Constraints

The editors' perceptions of unconstrained creative freedom stems primarily from the fact that just as the editor-in-chief rarely gives them article ideas, he does not present them with formal guidelines about what he expects in terms of content. Editors across all three magazines insisted that explicitly articulated criteria do not exist that dictate what the magazine can or cannot "do." Moreover, there are no quotas for required story topics in each issue that might guide the editors beyond thinking about how to fill the recurring, thematically defined sections such as *GQ*'s style-driven "Manual" and *Details*' gadget- and information-oriented "Know & Tell." As *GQ*'s Healy explained, "At *Men's Fitness* and *Men's Health*, for example, basically if [content] doesn't somehow improve your life, they don't do it. There *has* to be a service element to it there. There's a mandate on that. We don't really have that. We're sort of free of those various house rules, like, 'No this' and 'No that.'" Editors often emphasized how much they appreciated that this lack of rules enabled them to pursue their interests and to have the opportunity "to look out on the world and try to interpret it as authentically as I can," as *Esquire* features editor Richard Dorment put it. Comments such as Dorment's, which were made frequently, demonstrate the degree to which editors feel free to decide what topics are important or significant for the magazine, and be able to make sense of them without any imposed frame of interpretation from the editor-in-chief or company.

Editors further said that that their editor-in-chief wants them to be creative and to surprise him in their pitches. For instance, *Esquire*'s Cabot explained, "The note I get back most from [Granger] is 'This seems conventional.' He *wants* you to say, 'No, why don't we try *this*.'" Often they even pointed to examples of atypical content to argue that there is no single formula for a successful story pitch—such as *Esquire*'s February 2008 memoir of Nick Flynn that was presented as a series of vignettes, which Cabot believed would not even be an acceptable story form at *The New Yorker* or *Vanity Fair* yet was enthusiastically embraced by Granger. Similarly, Daly pointed to a story that he successfully pitched to *Details* editor-in-chief Dan Peres about scientists in the North Pole preparing for a mission to Mars: "That's something that ostensibly has nothing to do with our magazine but Dan was like, to me, 'Just go.' It's a good illustration of how, no matter what a magazine's about, if the editor-in-chief just happens to be fascinated by your idea, even if it's not totally in line with what we do, it'll happen." They also frequently insisted that the editor-in-chief urges them to have strong opinions and to defend their ideas if they feel strongly about rejected pitches. According to *Details* deputy editor Chris Raymond, "Dan openly says, 'If you feel really strongly about something that I say no to, I want you to tell me that I'm wrong and why you think I'm wrong.' Because he wants it to be a fresh magazine and he knows that's how it gets fresh." As with Dorment's notion of authenticity, the idea that editors-in-chief keep things "fresh" by encouraging editors to fight for their ideas maintains the notion of unlimited creativity.

Finally, editors at the magazines feel that they can execute the articles as they see fit because editors-in-chief do not give extensive, micro-level notes throughout the development of their articles. They rather described feedback from the editor-in-chief as provided in "broad strokes" with questions like "Is this part working?" and "Is this essential?" They also said that neither the editor-in-chief nor editors who work immediately beneath his command significantly rewrite the final article submissions. Editors thus reported that they work amongst themselves and with their writers

to develop the articles in ways that feel free of rules or compromises. This led editors across the magazines to characterize their jobs as "*all* instinct," in the words of *Details* executive editor Bill Van Parys, as they do not make decisions based on guidelines, rules, demands, or pressures but rather based on their personal hunches and beliefs. However, while editors repeatedly pointed to these rationales—a lack of editorial policies, encouragement from the editor-in-chief to surprise him, the ability to be "authentic," and no micromanagement—as evidence of their unconstrained agency, other accounts from them pointed to the ways in which constraints do, in fact, exist but in more subtle, often unconscious forms throughout the production process.

Although editors offered examples of articles that prove there is no rulebook for pitching successful articles, they frequently described how they tailor their pitches based on "an awareness of what the editor-in-chief says is going to work in the magazine," according to *Details*' Daly. This is a result of the competitive structure of the editorial departments as well as the editors' notions of professionalism: because editorial space is limited and editors are not guaranteed space in each issue, they must strategize how to get their own pitches into the magazine before their colleagues fill the allotted number of editorial pages with their own pitches. As *Esquire*'s Dorment put it, "You have to work hard to elbow your way into the magazine, so to speak." The ability to do this is central to the editors' job security and professional reputation; they stated that they were hired because the editor-in-chief believes they understand their magazine's sensibilities (e.g., cultural touchstones, attitudes, interests, tastes) and can successfully pitch, write, and edit articles that capture this sensibility without much guidance and direction from above. *Esquire*'s McCammon explained, "We're hired because we have the right sensibility and we're still here because we have the right sensibility. I mean, my boss judges if I have the right sensibility." *Details*' David Walters said that it is essential they demonstrate that editors "know what we do [as a magazine], a lot of which is unspoken," and the common way to do this is to pitch story ideas that align with the interests and preferences of the

editor-in-chief since those are the likeliest to get accepted. Walters' colleague Chris Raymond explained, "We are always trying to get stories in there to make sure that you're not the guy who has *no* stories in the magazine. We kind of know where the stories are that are going to appeal to Dan [Peres, editor-in-chief] so we know right off the bat that we should be trying to find those stories."

However, as editors-in-chief do not explicitly articulate expectations or preferences for content, *GQ* senior articles editor Brendan Vaughan explained that editors "have to pick [them] up on their own." They reported various methods of informally gathering this information: they study previous months' issues to get a sense of the ideas that have recently been approved; listen to what the editor-in-chief talks about around the office or in staff meetings; read what he tells the trade and news press; and follow the feedback he gives them on their pitches, although they said his comments are rarely given as flat-out-directives. *GQ*'s Healy even said that the "hiring and a firing that goes on also gives you a good indication of where the magazine is going tonally and otherwise." Such discreet observations help to explain why editors generally do not pitch ideas that veer far from the content that already appears in the magazines even though they could propose wide-ranging ideas for each issue. It is not because they have been told that they need to stick to certain topics or only depict masculinity in particular ways—on the contrary, as previously discussed, editors feel they have a significant amount of agency and even insist that editors-in-chief encourage them to push boundaries. It is rather because they have developed notions about the types of stories that the editor-in-chief is likely to approve, and so they pitch stories that align with those perceived preferences so that they can get articles in the magazine and prove their understanding of the magazine's editorial vision. Thus, the informal knowledge that circulates among editors about the tastes and distastes of the editor-in-chief, regardless of the accuracy of that knowledge, puts parameters on the boundaries of creativity.

No one characterized this process of tailoring pitches to the editor-in-chief as onerous, constraining, or bothersome. In fact, given that they discussed this process even as they talked about their sense of creative agency, they seemed to see it as an organic and natural aspect of the job. *Esquire*'s Cabot, for instance, described it as "a real relationship with the editor-in-chief in the sense that you get to know someone and who you watch at meetings. You just kind of attune to him." This statement echoes a sentiment that almost everyone expressed across the three magazines, particularly those who have edited at more than one men's lifestyle magazine and described the necessity of quickly adapting to the nuances and particularities in office norms and creative output while relying on the basic knowledge they have about how men's lifestyle magazines generally operate. This need to observe developments and interactions around the office in order to appeal to the editor-in-chief is an ongoing process not only for new editors, which frequently occupy editorial staffs given the high turnover of editors in these magazines, but also for seasoned editors as they claim that they never fully have a sense of what the editor will like and that his interests often change over time. As a result, editors expressed that it is essential for them to constantly stay attuned to the preferences of the editor-in-chief in order to perform their job effectively—so much so that they joked the editor-in-chief is actually the magazine's imagined reader, that he is the only person they have in mind when conceptualizing and executing editorial content.

Indeed, editors explained that it is not enough for them to find an idea engaging but rather that it must also fit within their understanding of how the editor-in-chief sees the magazine's sensibility. For instance, *GQ* senior editor Mark Kirby said that he often likes certain editorial ideas but still does not see them as appropriate for the magazine because his editor-in-chief would not approve them. He elaborates:

> Sometimes I see something pitched from one of my writers and think it looks like a good story but I just think, "That's not *our* guy." Though I actually don't think that's a matter of us thinking or imagining an idealized type of guy out there [that is the *GQ* reader]. There's no real tendency to think of an archetypal reader that we're

> trying to fit. It's less thinking about what our guy wants to read and more about it being something we just wouldn't do. I know which stories get accepted and which stories don't, and I only pitch things to Jim [Nelson, editor-in-chief] that are realistic for him to approve.

Editors characterized this consideration of the editor-in-chief as so central to their job that several said it is even possible to trace changes in the magazine's content specifically to the personal interests of the editor-in-chief and his ideas about what is compelling about culture. *GQ* articles editors Kathleen Wheelock, who previously edited at *Details*, explained, "At the best magazines, that wouldn't be palpable to the reader, but it would if you worked there because you know what ideas are being pitched to them and what they're going for and what they're suddenly interested in." She pointed, for instance, to *Details*' increase in stories about fatherhood in the 2000s as due to the birth of editor-in-chief Dan Peres' son. Yet, again, these editorial reflections of the editor-in-chief are not directly relayed or demanded of editors but rather picked up by editors in their own in an attempt to get stories into the magazines.

As noted above, editors do not see this attention to the editor-in-chief as a constraint on their creative freedom. This is because the editors' perceived interests of the editor-in-chief become so ingrained in the production process that they in effect cultivate instincts even as they believe instincts to be unencumbered by outside forces (e.g., reader demographic considerations, editorial policies) and thus "authentic." As a result, the "commonsense" ideas about what the magazine does or does not "do" are dictated by how editors determine what the editor-in-chief likes. So while editors do not think about their story ideas or their approach to writing and editing in terms of the readers' interests or even explicitly outlined editorial policies, this does not mean that they are free to follow their instincts without any imposed parameters. Rather their instincts—and thus the ideas that they bring to the magazine—are often unconsciously narrowed by what they believe the editor-in-chief will approve. This demonstrates that "authentic" instincts are in fact constructed by the

knowledge that editors accrue about the production process and, as a result, is an important consideration in theorizing how editorial agency is negotiated.

Reader Considerations

Attention to the interests and expectations of the editor-in-chief comes at the expense of the interests, whether real or perceived, of the reader. In fact, editors insisted that considerations of the reader factor extremely little into the production process—*GQ*'s Healy called it a "misconception" that they think much about the readers since they "are not consciously discussing who these people are" while conceiving and executing editorial content.[7] *Esquire* assistant editor Tim Heffernan even explained, "We don't sit here and go, 'What's the reader we're aiming for?' A lot of magazines do, but we're aiming to make *Esquire* be *Esquire*, to be really, really good." That Heffernan claimed not taking the reader into consideration is a necessary aspect to making the best magazine, a point echoed by editors across all three magazines, speaks to the degree with which reader considerations are almost completely removed from the production process. Just as the editor-in-chief does not formalize policies or expectations about content, he also does not articulate specific data about the readership to editors in order to help them more effectively appeal to a specific audience. While editors said they have a sense of the most basic information about the readership, such as average reader age and the breakdown between male and female readers, they insisted they do not use, need, or even want to know this information. They contended that this information is too broad of a metric to use when conceiving of stories and so they ignore it altogether. Such data, they said, are

[7] This echoes Herbert J. Gans' claim that journalists "serve their audience without paying much attention to it" (p. xiv). Given that readers are key to a magazine's success as they ultimately make magazines desirable to advertisers, in turn generating the bulk of magazines' revenue, several editors felt it was curious and even funny—but ultimately necessary—that editors paid little attention to readers. See *Deciding What's News: A Study of* CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, *and* Time (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

useful only to those working on the publishing side of the magazine because those people need it to sell the magazine to advertisers that want to reach very particular segments of the population.

Along with refusing demographic information, editors resisted any attempt to measure audience interests. They often expressed skepticism about the merits of audience research, whether gathered through focus groups, interviews, or surveys, arguing that research companies employ unreliable research methods and simply tell you what you would expect or what they think you want to hear. Primarily, however, editors characterized such quantifiable information as antithetical to their instinctual approach to making the magazines. The editors' logic was that, if the magazines' executives and publishers provide them with specific audience information, then they would be expected to take it into consideration when making decisions about the magazine—and the creative process would then become more "mechanical" and "stifling" as they would be expected to cater to readers along demographic lines. Not one editor stated that he or she believed such data might *help* the editorial staff appeal to readers more effectively or make it easier to come up with editorial ideas. Instead, they saw it as a potential hindrance to their creativity and so they claimed to disregard the little reader data that they know when making decisions about the magazine. It in fact became a point of pride that they do not consider the reader as this refusal enabled the idea that their content was, as Dorment previously noted, authentic and an interpretation born out of their hunches rather than a story based on what readers might like. As *GQ* senior articles editor Brendan Vaughan, who also edited at *Esquire*, explained, "At the end of the day it really is about what *feels* like a *GQ* story, or what *feels* like an *Esquire* story as opposed to 'We ran this through the numbers and this appears to be an *Esquire* story.' It doesn't work that way at all."

Editors explained that the most productive approach to making a magazine is simply to not think about the reader and instead have confidence that they know what is best for the magazine

since they were hired because they have what the editor-in-chief sees as the right sensibility. As *Esquire*'s McCammon explained:

> I don't think about, "Will the reader like this?" I just mean, "Do *I*?" because that's the first thing. You have to be confident in that. That's the best quality—that you're confident in your ideas and in what you think is interesting. I try not to think about other magazines' readers and I try not to be obsessed with *my* magazine's readers. This magazine isn't focus grouped. We know who we are and who we want to be.

Editors at all three magazines invariably echoed McCammon's sentiment, stressing that editors rarely discuss the reader—and never their demographics, as discussed in Chapter Two—during the production process.

They further claimed not to pay attention to the hundreds of reader emails and letters typically sent to the magazine each month. Such feedback does not make them reconsider what the magazine should or should not do because, as *Details* senior editor Tyler Graham explained, "Readers don't know what they want. They *shouldn't* know what they want. We should be *showing them* what they want." As a result, they stated that the test of a good idea was whether those on the editorial staff like it rather than whether the reader might. As *GQ* deputy editor Michael Hainey explained, "Really, our reader is—well, we start with the idea 'Is this a good story? Is this something *we* want to read? Is this something *we're* engaged in?' I think that's what the reader will respond to." This conflation of the reader's interests with the those of the editorial staff conveniently allows editors to point to their instincts as the best way to conceptualize content and allows them to repeatedly insist that, as *Esquire*'s Heffernan put it, "We *know* that the readers like what we're doing so we do what we do." This disregard for the actual reader, as with the lack of formal guidelines, feeds editors' perception that they are granted unlimited creative freedom. Resistance both to thinking too much about the audience and to holding audience research in high regard is integral to the editors' insistence on trusting their instincts (i.e., their own tastes and interests) about what their

respective magazines "do" and "are." Yet this perceived freedom is nonetheless mitigated, as previously noted, by their need to appease the editor-in-chief.

Theorizing "Discerning Savvy"

To make sense of the gap between how editors perceive their agency (as unbounded) and how it in fact exists (as bounded), I introduce the concept "discerning savvy." I use this term to characterize the process by which media industry workers informally and often unconsciously gauge the limits of acceptable creativity by coming to understand and adopt the perceived expectations of their superiors. The understandings these workers gain about the types of creativity that get rewarded are not informed by policies or explicitly articulated guidelines; rather they result from a familiarity with the established norms of a workplace culture that suggest a certain set of expectations and behaviors regarding job performance. This knowledge is ascertained through a number of means involving constant attention to the production process including but not limited to casual conversations, interactions between colleagues and superiors, and superiors' decisions made about one's own and others' pitches. This knowledge puts parameters on the textual possibilities of particular media products: by prompting workers to consider, often unconsciously, the potential consequences of their creative decisions on their professional reputation and job security, it narrows the ideas that they even consider throughout the production process as workers must prove to their superior that they understand the nature of their media product in order to gain his or her approval. Given the crucial role this process plays in constructing "commonsense" ideas about what a media outlet "does" and in how creative workers orient themselves to notions of professionalism in their work environment, discerning savvy must be theorized for its role in maintaining the hegemony of particular textual forms by circumscribing the agency of media workers.

Indeed, the identification and theorization of discerning savvy is situated within a wider

attempt in critical media industry studies to understand how creative workers' ability to make their own decisions, characterized as circumscribed agency by Timothy Havens and Amanda D. Lotz, is constrained in ways that lead to particular textual outcomes.[8] Havens and Lotz argue that industry workers make decisions that have meaningful consequences for media texts but that the decisions they may make are not limitless as those involved in production and distribution take into account a range of structured industrial norms and conventions such as television schedules, film lengths, and profit motives. For instance, John Thornton Caldwell argues that an industry's trade stories reify established patterns of doing things while Havens has examined how the taken-for-granted wisdom, or "industry lore," of television executives about audience tastes affects the global flow of series with casts of color.[9] Similarly, in the 1970s, Lee Sigelman observed that rookie news reporters sometimes emulated the practices of veteran reporters in order to learn, and thus replicate, established routines of reporting the news.[10] The present examination of the practices of men's lifestyle magazine editors suggests that industry workers' awareness, or at least the perception, of the preferences of their superiors also circumscribes how workers create media texts. This process of ascertaining knowledge about the expectations of one's job responsibilities and creative output is thus an important site of theorizing the operation of media industries.

The conceptualization of discerning savvy moves beyond scholars' previous findings, based on studies of news production in the 1960s and 1970s, that *direct* feedback from above affects the decision-making of media workers and can involve them in the unconscious reproduction of

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[8] Timothy Havens and Amanda D. Lotz, *Understanding Media Industries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 136-137.

[9] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). Timothy Havens, "'It's Still a White World Out There': The Interplay of Culture and Economics in International Television Trade," *Critical Studies in Media Communication 19*, no. 4 (2002), 377-397.

[10] Lee Sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology, 27*, no. 1 (1973), 132-151, p. 138.

ideologies and industry norms.[11] Herbert J. Gans, for example, found that the suggestions of superiors were an overriding consideration that journalists used during story selection because these comments could be intended to set precedents.[12] Similarly, Philip Schlesinger argues that the routine guidance provided by editors-in-chief became "part of the taken for granted assumptions of those working in the newsrooms," while Sigelman emphasizes the importance of editorial conferences in making explicit the precise nature of policy.[13] Although Caldwell recently studied the process of corporate executives "giving notes" to creative teams in film and television, discerning savvy offers a means to theorize how media workers come to perceive the priorities and expectations of their superiors through other indirect and informal aspects of the workplace culture and the production process.[14] Indeed, it offers language to explore the constructed nature of unspoken norms as well as the means by which they are transmitted to workers in a media industry. That these expectations, priorities, and norms are typically not outlined in policy or directly articulated to workers enables them to exert a particularly powerful force on textual output as, I have shown, workers often do not realize that they are reproducing them. The concept thus provides a means to help understand how and why particular textual forms and ideologies might maintain their dominance in certain cultural industries.

I further propose this term as different and more specific than terminology used in the fields of organizational studies and organizational communication, which do not focus on media industries, to discuss how people learn to perform their duties.[15] In a classic study on organizational

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[11] See Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978). Gans, *Deciding What's News*. Philip Schlesinger, *Putting "Reality" Together: BBC News* (London: Constable, 1978).
[12] Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 100.
[13] Schlesinger, *Putting "Reality" Together*, p. 162. Sigelman, "Reporting the News," p. 138.
[14] Caldwell, *Production Culture*.
[15] An exception is Paul M. Hirsch's "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems," a classic study of the book publishing, music, and film industries. He

behavior, Herbert A. Simon argues that a number of means exist by which an organization's values are instilled in workers. He argues the organizational influence on workers happens by "(1) establishing in the operative employee *himself* [sic] attitudes, habits, and a state of mind which lead him to reach that decision which is advantageous to the organization, and (2) imposing on the operative employee decisions reached elsewhere in the organization."[16] Yet, again, the methods associated with these modes focus on direct communication, such as training, mentorship, advice, and other information, rather than the indirect methods involved in discerning savvy. Many scholars in these fields have further drawn on Robert Merton's broad concept of anticipatory socialization to describe how employees, prior to starting a new position, voluntarily rehearse behaviors that they anticipate will be demanded of them in their new role in hopes that doing so will help them fit into the organization.[17] While media workers certainly come to their jobs with preconceived notions of what will be expected of them, and perhaps which have even been specifically articulated throughout the interview process, these notions and articulations may not be accurate. As the process of discerning savvy occurs on the job, it provides a means for workers to accrue knowledge about what is actually expected of them and in ways that are often unconscious, rather than conscious as in anticipatory socialization.

In this way discerning savvy is closer to the general term "information-seeking strategies" involved in organizational assimilation, which Fredric M. Jablin defines as the process by which individuals become integrated into a new organizational culture and its values, behaviors, and

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looks at "coping" strategies used in production, including the use of "contact" men [sic], overproduction and differential promotion, and the role of gatekeepers—none of which is at the center of the creative practices discussed in this chapter but could potentially be explored in relation to discerned savvy. See *The American Journal of Sociology, 77*, no. 4 (1972), 639-659.

[16] Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1945), p. 11.

[17] See Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

beliefs.[18] Similar to Simon's previously noted work, organizational assimilation involves many means by which newcomers acculturate to a specific organization, including attention to orientation materials, participation in training as well as in formal and informal mentorships, and attempts to gain information about the nature of the organization. Vernon D. Miller and Jablin argue that newcomers to an organization are active agents in their assimilation and therefore deliberately and consciously utilize information-seeking strategies that are both formal/direct (e.g., queries about technical and logistical issues) as well as informal/indirect (e.g., joking in order to gauge coworkers' reactions to questions or ideas) to gain information about expected behavior and job performance.[19] The specific information-seeking strategies most closely aligned with discerning savvy are Miller and Jablin's theorization of how surveillance (indiscriminately watching office proceedings) and observation (watching co-workers perform specific tasks) helps new workers overcome uncertainty about their roles. Yet discerning savvy more precisely captures the means by which media workers identify and align themselves with a company or department's unspoken norms and priorities: it identifies specific (not indiscriminate) sites that workers monitor, which revolve specifically around the actions and expectations of supervisors (not co-workers of similar status as Miller and Jablin contend), and does not simply apply to newcomers. Unlike their conceptualization of information-seeking strategies, discerning savvy is an ongoing process as editors who had worked for nearly a decade at a magazine engaged in the process of discerning savvy because they said the magazines constantly evolve, not only as new editors-in-chief join a magazine but also as the interests and preferences of long-term editors-in-chief evolve.

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[18] Fredric M. Jablin, "Organizational Communication: An Assimilation Approach" (pp. 255-286), in Michael E. Roloff and Charles R. Berger (eds.), *Social Cognition and Communication* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982).

[19] Vernon D. Miller and Fredric M. Jablin, "Information Seeking During Organizational Entry: Influences, Tactics, and a Model of the Process," *Academy of Management Review, 16* (1991), 92-120.

The concept of discerning savvy does not seek to dismiss the work in organizational studies and organizational communication but rather intends to offer a means to more precisely capture the nature of practices in media industries, and to specifically connect those practices to textual outcomes. Miller and Jablin's work does not discuss or even nod to how adaptive strategies and practices lead to specific types of ideological patterns in the actual work that newcomers perform; they simply focus on the fact that these information-seeking strategies are utilized. I argue the practice of discerning savvy plays a specific role in the operation of hegemony and can help to explain how certain forms and ideologies remain dominant. Indeed, the knowledge editors gain about the types of content that get rewarded (i.e., accepted for publication) constructs their very "instincts" about what the magazines "do." In this way we see how the practice of discerning savvy upholds the status quo, cultivating "commonsense" notions that in fact circumscribe the agency of editors as well as constrain textual possibilities. The rest of this chapter emphasizes some of the textual implications of discerning savvy in men's lifestyle magazines, demonstrating why media texts may remain ideologically consistent even in the absence of policies regarding content as well as illustrating why certain representations, such as those of gay men, may appear at particular moments.

Textual Implications of Discerning Savvy

At men's lifestyle magazines, discerning savvy has implications for the discourses of masculinity and the modes of address in editorial content. The practice creates taken-for-granted ideas about what is acceptable for the respective magazines, constructing "instincts" about what the magazines "do" and thus limiting the types of ideas that editors even consider pitching to the editor-in-chief and in how they write stories. Indeed, as Crewe and Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks found in their studies of U.K. men's magazines, editors of *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* ignore audience or market research and

instead trust their instincts.[20] But analysis of discerning savvy allows for an understanding of *how* those instincts are cultivated: while an invisible process, the transmission of priorities and expectations imposes limitations on content that become imbricated within notions of professionalism (i.e., only pitching content that demonstrates one knows what a magazine "does" to demonstrate one's knowledge of the magazine and industry). Thus discerning savvy can be used to understand why men's magazines, often unintentionally, tend to look certain ways and tend to promote particular ideologies even in the absence of editorial policy or explicitly articulated standards. This section looks at two significant consequences of discerning savvy on editorial content in men's lifestyle magazines, namely a heteronormative mode of address, particularly at *Esquire* and *GQ*, and the emergence of gay-themed content in *Details* in the 2000s.

Mode of Address

As noted earlier and elaborated in subsequent chapters, heteronormativity pervades the discourses and modes of address in men's lifestyle magazines. Despite all the ways with which the magazines position their readers as heterosexual and produce content that upholds heteronormative views of the world, editors insisted that this is not an intentional act and is not supposed to be exclusionary. *GQ*'s Healy explained of the magazine's mode of address to readers:

> There is always that kind of assumption [by editors], particularly when you're writing about women—like, a lot of times the straight tone ends up winning in the end. I've always found that kind of curious, but it's also probably necessary because it just seems to be a convention that works. It's not homophobic. It's just like a fallback assumption that you, dear reader, are interested in this woman as an object of desire. It's always been kind of a funny thing that men's magazines have done. I don't think it's conscious. […] But the thing that's interesting is that in that default mode it's always, like, the kind of assumption that the readers, even the gay readers, are kind of straight.

[20] Crewe, *Representing Men*. Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*.

Certainly editors know their magazines primarily target straight men and so a heterosexual mode of address is integral—Granger has in fact claimed in *Esquire* that his magazine's "durability has had precisely as much to do with its love of women as it has had to do with the other elements *Esquire* is known for" such as fiction and advice.[21] Still, it is important to identify the reproduction of heteronormativity in the magazines as a largely unconscious process that is explained by editors' attempt to come up with ideas that appeal to the interests of the editor-in-chief. As a result, they pitch ideas that are similar to what he has already approved—a strategy, I have argued, that produces commonsense notions about appropriateness regarding content. Healy simply points out above that one such notion, or "convention that works," is the assumption of readers' heterosexuality, resulting in such a rigid form of address that even gay men must be "kind of straight.'"

Yet the magazines also utilize particular gender expressions associated with heterosexuality. For instance, *GQ* senior editor Mark Kirby explained that he would never present editor-in-chief Jim Nelson with a story that has a female narrator or that utilizes a male voice that might not be particularly "butch" because he believes that Nelson would not positively receive them even though Nelson has not said he would reject them. Whether or not this is in fact the case, Kirby's *belief* in it functions to limit the types of approaches that he and other editors take in preparing content for the magazine. When asked if Nelson had ever given him notes that instructed him to adjust anything related to the presentation of gender in an article, such as making the protagonist's voice more traditionally masculine in tone, Kirby elaborated:

> The feedback is not highly gendered like that. It's my job to make sure that I don't get that feedback because that would mean I picked the wrong writers and wrong subject. I know we don't do certain things, like, have a female protagonist to a story. Stylistically, there's a house voice here and it varies but I think the most engaging stories we have are written very colloquially. They sound like a thirty-something guy would sound like talking. So the selection process for the articles and for the tone happens prior to the actual edits [from Nelson], prior to the actual manuscript even

[21] David Granger, "Alan Greenspan's Favorite Issue," *Esquire*, Oct. 2002, 26.

> being written. I wouldn't be doing my job if I handed a story to Jim that sounded too much like [it belonged in] a women's magazine.

However, editors invariably insisted that these decisions are made without thinking about masculinity or trying to actively promote any personal ideas they have about gender politics or about men—they are simply adhering to, again, a "convention that works." Indeed, the editors are trying to construct a coherent set of ideas in subject matter and tone that aligns with what they feel that their editor-in-chief wants for the magazine. As *Esquire*'s McCammon put it, "I don't think about masculinity but when we're doing our work I think there's a certain attempt to define, I guess, what it is or what being a good or better man is. But I don't think it's a conscious effort." Of that attempt, he added, "It's more or less defined by our boss, frankly. It needs to agree with his idea."

Kirby and McCammon's quotes, as examples of how all the editors described how they do their jobs, illustrates how notions of professionalism directly influence the types of gendered discourses and modes of address that appear in the magazines. Indeed, editors must assess what the editors-in-chief want so they can then pitch articles that align with those expectations—a process that discourages the proposal of ideas that may fall outside typical depictions and discourses of masculinity in the magazines as these may suggest that the editor does not understand the magazine's sensibility and is doing his or her job poorly. This is similar to Gaye Tuchman's finding in her study of news production in the 1960s and 1970s that the lack of specific criteria defining newsworthiness did not result in wildly varying ideas, or particularly heated debates, among editors about what they should include in the news. She explains this is because "implicit understandings" about ideas of newsworthiness emerged and that "the possibility of being mocked for poor news judgment (a negative assessment of professional skill from peers)" constrained the type of ideas that certain editors propose for the front page of the paper.[22] Likewise, at men's lifestyle magazines,

[22] Tuchman, *Making News*, pp. 34-35.

discerning savvy produces "commonsense" ideas about what the magazines "do" that, by informing editors' notions of appropriate work, function to police creativity even without policies to guide editors. Further, these ideas become so taken for granted that, as Kirby did, editors insist that they do not consider gender and sexuality even as they explain that they pitch according to the preferences of the editor-in-chief which they perceive to be very much informed by gender and sexuality. In this way it becomes clear how ideological patterns such as heteronormativity can unintentionally emerge as they are built into established routines and practices in the production process.

It is not simply the case that editors-in-chief alter or censor their editors' stories to more appropriately fit the magazine but rather that discerning savvy discourages editors from even considering or proposing stories to editors-in-chief that would demand such editing. The know-how cultivated by discerning savvy so effectively creates taken-for-granted ideas about what generally constitutes a *GQ*, *Details*, or *Esquire* story that it constrains even pitches intended to push those boundaries. When prodded for examples of pitches that they intended to break new ground at the magazine but were ultimately rejected, editors either claimed that they could not recall such instances or simply noted ideas for stories about celebrities or musicians that they felt the editors-in-chief might find unexpected—in other words, minor ideas that would not have significantly altered the magazines' discussions of male identity.[23] That editors tend not to push boundaries in terms of

[23] It is possible that editors do not push ideological boundaries because their ideas about masculinity simply align with those of their magazine, which may be a large reason that they were hired in the first place (i.e., management selectively recruits those whose attitudes are already favorable to the magazine). However, several editors were largely unfamiliar with their magazine's editorial tone or vision before applying for their positions, and many others had only minimal knowledge, suggesting that any on-the-job alignment between the applicant and the magazine's views of masculinity may be unconsciously learned. It may also be the case that editors whose ideas about male identity align with those of the magazine are likelier to apply in the first place, thus limiting the number of potential boundary-pushers who could work at the magazine. Only one editor I spoke with, at *Details*, stated he tried to effect changes regarding male representations, specifically

masculinity reflects not only their stated disinterest in, and lack of critical attention to, issues of masculinity but also reflects how the process of discerning savvy sets informal limits on even the most boundary-pushing ideas they might imagine for the magazine—and, notably, enables them to feel unconstrained in their creativity. The understandings about job performance gained through these efforts thus ultimately function to maintain the hegemony of particular ideas and creative forms in work environments as media workers seek to understand their superiors' expectations about creativity, to which they then often unconsciously consent.

The Case of Gay-Themed Content in Details

Discerning savvy also can help explain why certain representations or discourses suddenly emerge at particular moments. For instance, consider the gay-themed storylines in *Details* under the tenure of editor-in-chief Dan Peres in the 2000s, as will be discussed in Chapter Five but is important to mention here. According to editors, *Details*' focus on shifting, and potentially narrowing, boundaries between cultural definitions of sexual identity during this period was a direct reflection of Peres' ideas about the state of masculinity. While editors insist Peres never stated that this would be an emphasis in the magazine, they learned that he was particularly receptive to these sorts of story ideas and was likelier to approve them for publication. Pitching articles along these lines, then, increased their chances of getting articles in the magazine. Deputy editor Chris Raymond explained that the editors began to look for those stories because they are in competition with their peers to get stories in the magazine. He said, "We know he's just really intrigued by that [gay- and straight anxiety-themed] stuff and thinks those stories are compelling and create a lot of buzz. It's set up by the

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regarding race, but quickly learned the limits to his efforts. He explained, "You could get a story through [into the magazine] about, say, a black lobbyist but you couldn't get that many black models in the fashion or on the cover—the most prevalent [spaces in the magazine]. I just always encountered a weird resistance to it."

competitive nature of the magazine that we're all sort of looking for them." As a result, he says there were often *too many* ideas for gay stories, which then get pared down so as to not cross the unstated line of becoming too gay-focused. As executive editor Bill Van Parys described the significant number of articles about gay/straight anxiety, "The editor thought those types of stories were valid points and so we wrote them if we felt that we could make a statement and it was a *true* reflection of the moment, which is all we try to do in journalism period. It was honestly just trying to come up with something that seems valid and plays to the editor."

While editors learned that gay-oriented story ideas were likely to get in the magazine, they also insisted there were limits to the amount of gay coverage that was considered acceptable for publication. As discussed above, limits were not imposed by Condé Nast executives or even the editor-in-chief but rather were unstated, and thus informally gauged, among the editors and established on their own. Said Van Parys:

> We [at the magazine] knew people would expect some sort of gay comment or gay theme or something from *Details*. Dan knew how to play that. But the thing about *Details* with gay men is it's kind of a love/hate thing. It can't be *too* gay. You don't want to be polarizing. That was the unspoken mandate to me and that I factored into stories that I approved. It's not like there were nasty motives for one way or the other [for exclusion or inclusion]. It's just a bit of a high-wire act.

As in previous eras of the magazine, the editors had to be careful not to turn off advertisers and straight readers. While *Details* had many advertisers who clearly like the magazine's sensibility and saw it as a match for their products, several editors believed that many non-fashion advertisers, primarily the automotive industry, were not entirely comfortable with gay content and so they kept that in mind. Similarly, too much gay content might have signaled to straight readers that the magazine was aimed primarily, or even exclusively, at gay men. Editors of all three magazines, not just *Details*, said the key to not deterring their straight readers is to find the type of gay stories that simultaneously speak to both gay and straight readers. For *Details* this meant stories that focused on potential surprises in the cultural line between gay and straight men, such as stories as about straight

men who perform in gay pornography, while Chapter Four discusses that in *GQ* this meant topics related to the political realm. Yet when asked for examples of how they learned these were the instances of appropriate gay-themed content, editors simply said it is what usually ends up in the magazine and so they try to find those stories.

An earlier era of *Details* further demonstrates how discerning savvy does not simply happen between editors and the editor-in-chief, but also between editors-in-chief and the publishing company's board of director. Chapter Five argues that *Details* integrated gay men into editorial content more than other men's magazines in the early to mid 1990s. Two editors-in-chief from that era, James Truman and Joe Dolce, believed that the use of gay-themed editorial content at the time was not a big deal for Condé Nast executives, with the former characterizing the company as "very open-minded […] in regards to sexuality—largely because it is so allied with the fashion world." He said that he never encountered resistance to his integration of gay themes and even explained that Leo Lerman, an openly gay executive at the company, congratulated him on a 1992 fashion spread featuring a gay man. Dolce characterized the executives' thinking on the topic at the time as thus: "As long as the magazine keeps it within the unstated limit of moderate, it will all be fine." However, he explained that Condé Nast executives never told him that he could not do something with regards to editorial content. So despite having free reign to address gay people and issues as he pleased, he said he was cautious not to include too many gay men as it might make people think the magazine was a gay magazine, which could alienate readers, advertisers, and company executives. "Just the numbers alone dictate that the majority of your readers are going to be heterosexual, so you had to tread carefully," he said, explaining that advertisers often did not want to be associated with gay people into the mid 1990s. "You had to be mindful about it. You could do the gay stories, but you had to modulate them—modulate the frequency with which you did them and the attention that you gave them." Here, again, we see how merely the perception of one's superiors and other

aspects of the industry, such as advertisers, invisibly informs the ways in which editorial content appeared in the magazine even without explicit policy or feedback from above.

These brief discussions of the general mode of address as well as the gay-themed discourses in *Details* are not exhaustive of the ways that discerning savvy can put parameters on textual outcome in men's lifestyle magazines. As discerning savvy is largely an unconscious process and editors often do not realize that their creativity is, in fact, bounded, a more immersive ethnographic research approach could ascertain additional ways—ways that editors are unable to articulate as they do not even notice them—creativity is altered in an effort to meet the perceived expectations of the editor-in-chief. Even these few instances demonstrate how the practice of discerning savvy helps to explain contradictory accounts from editors: that they claim not to exclude gay men or even consider aspects of readers' identities such as sexual identity yet unconsciously consider, and exclude, them by adhering to conventions that work. Biases such as heteronormativity may not be as intentional as they once were in the industry, but the practice of discerning savvy helps explain how they can be built into the production process as conventions that work, thus ensuring that certain discourses, such as same-sex desire, are less readily available in content—if at all—or, in the case of gay-themed content in *Details* in the 2000s, only emerge in certain moments. This counters widely held notions that media content is necessarily a conscious, intentional effort or the result of explicit policies or guidelines, and is instead often the product of organizational structures, workplace cultures, and notions of professionalism that unconsciously circumscribe media workers' decision-making processes in ways that lead to the maintenance of such biases.

Conclusion

As seen at these magazines, discerned savvy illustrates how specific policies are not necessary to police how content is produced. Editors develop perceptions—whether accurate or not—about

editorial preferences and norms through a variety of informal methods. Because editors' job security rests on their ability to get stories into the magazine, these methods ultimately limit the types of stories that editors even proposed because they do not want to risk pushing boundaries by pitching too many stories that could get rejected. As a result, the respective magazines tend to repeat the same type of content and do not venture far off the proven path. It is also a largely unconscious or unwitting reproduction. Without absolving editors of responsibility for the knowledge that they produce about masculinity in the editorial content, this chapter illustrates how patterns in representations and discourses—such as those about male identity that are at the center of this dissertation—can emerge in content not through editors' intention but rather as products of institutional routines, practices, and norms. The identification and theorization of discerning savvy highlights a central argument of this dissertation that one can only fully understand why particular media representations and discourses appear through an exploration of the conditions and practices that create them. This chapter thus contextualizes subsequent chapters by connecting analysis of the magazines' editorial content to the industrial practices that produce it.

Chapter Four

"There's Really No Better Way To Say 'I'm So Gay'": Managing Sexual Difference in *Esquire* and *GQ*

In December 1993, Tom Hanks appeared for the second time on the cover of *Esquire*, flexing his arm to display a temporary tattoo of an AIDS ribbon on his bicep, alongside the headline "Tom Hanks Gets Tough." The reason why the magazine deemed the actor so gallant after it had previously presented him as little more than the guy next door? According to the accompanying article, Hanks' decision to play a gay man with AIDS in the new film *Philadelphia* made him an "all-American hero [who], in the name of progress, touches his lips to those of a fellow man."[1] The ick factor underlying this assertion—that physical intimacy between men is so gross that, even when acting, only the bravest straight men would dare to engage in it—permeates the story through subtle anxiety in Hanks' quotes and, more conspicuously, through how author Jennet Conant frames him in the feature. Conant repeatedly reminds readers that Hanks is simply playing a role, making clear that he has a wife and an ex-wife, that he plainly states he has never had sex with a man, and that he even characterizes his younger self as "probably as much of a closet homophobe as the next guy." Indeed, Conant notes, as if to reassure readers of his heterosexuality, "He knew fag jokes." The article uses this discomfort with homosexuality to bolster Hanks' reputation as a likable everyman, explaining that he did not accept the role because he is "especially enlightened" about homosexuality or a political activist but rather because the script was well-written and "he's a big believer in 'the concept of tolerance in America.'"

[1] Despite this claim, Tom Hanks' character never kisses another man onscreen in *Philadelphia*. Jennet Conant, "Tom Hanks Wipes That Grin Off His Face," *Esquire*, Dec. 1993, pp. 74(9).

While these efforts to distance the actor from associations with gayness may appear to extend the same homophobia that historically characterized men's lifestyle magazines, Hanks' stated belief in tolerance along with *Esquire* applauding him for taking the role to effect social change suggest something more nuanced is on display. Whereas these magazines had long sought to remove potential links with gayness so as to protect their straight readers from accusations of effeminacy, this cover story presented particular types of associations with gay identity as relevant and of interest to them. Conant notably devotes the bulk of the feature to informing readers of various anxieties that keep Hollywood from making more movies like *Philadelphia*, and discusses the contested space that gay media representations and AIDS-themed films occupy in US culture. Hanks even observes that straight people are so fearful and hateful of gay men and lesbians that "the last thing we want to do is pay any attention to them." Instead of a typical profile about a celebrity and his latest media project, then, the article uses Hanks as an entry point to a story with societal, industrial, and political implications regarding gay people. In calling attention to large-scale forms of prejudice and putting forth a message of tolerance of gay people, the story prompted *The Los Angeles Times* to question what it revealed about straight men's changing attitudes about sexuality. The newspaper posited that *Esquire*'s publication of the Hanks article along with an extensive feature on homophobic military violence in the same issue "may make men examine their definition of manhood," and that these two stories' scrutiny of bigotry "may well be a sign that American men—even men's magazine editors—are becoming sexually secure [in their straightness], hence sexually tolerant" of gay people.[2]

These stories appeared as part of a broader increase in gay-oriented stories and references in *Esquire* and *GQ* in the 1990s and 2000s that, on the surface, may have signaled a significant shift in straight-gay relations in men's lifestyle magazines. The rise in this editorial content was not as

[2] Bob Sipchen, "Esquire Asks Readers to Review Definitions of Manhood," *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 1993, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

extensive as in some other media at the time. Ron Becker, for example, notes many primetime television programs in the mid-1990s included gay references in nearly every episode, but such explicit discourse appeared across these magazines in only a handful of issues per year.[3] The type and amount of coverage nonetheless marked in some ways a striking departure from content published in previous decades of the men's magazine industry and was important to these magazines' constructions of straight masculinity around the turn of the twenty-first century. However, the extent to which these magazines encouraged readers to reassess their ideas and expectations of masculinity was far more limited than *The Los Angeles Times* speculated with *Esquire*. They did not monolithically embrace gay men despite growing acceptance of gay men by society as well as in the upscale sector of the magazine industry. Instead, as evidenced by the contradictory messages in Hanks' cover story—wherein expressions of gay male desire are framed as gross, yet gay people are positioned as deserving of respect and equality—the discourses surrounding sexual difference remained contested throughout the contemporary era of these magazines.

Esquire and *GQ* negotiated this difference through an editorial strategy that drew distinct parameters around the ways in which gayness and gay-related issues should feature in straight readers' lives. On one hand, the strategy in fact revealed a significant shift in their construction of masculinity by encouraging straight men to embrace an inclusive perspective with regards to social equality and gay-rights issues. On the other hand, the strategy continued the magazines' previous homophobia by insisting straight readers see personal expressions of gay identity as deviant and to be avoided. This approach allowed the magazines to construct politically liberal straight masculinities that also conveniently demarcated knowable boundaries, and thus created distance, between gay and straight identities. These magazines encouraged straight readers to feel tolerant of gay men, and thus allowed them to feel progressive and open-minded regarding issues of sexual difference, without

[3] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 3.

threatening to undermine their (or the magazine's) heterosexual masculinity, challenging homophobia on the personal level, or disrupting their straight privilege. Such a development in editorial content highlights how the inclusion of progressive gay-rights ideologies in male-targeted media does not necessarily suggest the emergence of straight masculinities undisciplined by homophobia. In fact, such inclusion may function to secure heteronormativity and straight privilege.

Managing Sexual Difference

This editorial approach to managing sexual difference in *Esquire* and *GQ* marks a distinct shift from how mainstream entertainment media have overwhelmingly engaged with gay male identity. Media such as television and film have largely refused presentation and examination of gay people in relation to political and institutional contexts in order to emphasize their contributions to popular culture and personal ties with straight people.[4] Such an approach extends beyond gay representations to other minorities but it is a particularly common trend in depictions of and discourses surrounding non-straight people.[5] For instance, José Esteban Muñoz draws on the work of Lisa Duggan to contend that *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* depicts "depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity" while Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow argue that the focus on interpersonal dynamics in *Will and Grace* rewards viewers for their acceptance of gay people but "prevents a consideration of gay politics and leads to a failure to acknowledge the social consequences of gay and lesbian persons

[4] For instance, see Shugart, "Reinventing Privilege." Dow, "*Ellen*, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility."

[5] For instance, Herman Gray asserts that "the hegemony of the personal and personable" marks media narratives centering on African Americans. See Herman Gray, "Television, Black Americans, and the American Dream," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6,* no. 4 (1989), 376-386, p. 384.

living in our heterosexist culture."[6] Indeed, Becker contends this appeal simply flatters these viewers through their open-mindedness regarding homosexuality, commodifying them as an advertiser-friendly audience and enabling them to feel that their consumption of gay-themed programming provides support for gay rights.[7] This means of managing sexual difference obfuscates the lived experienced of gay men and lesbians and results in a particularly limited way that media audiences are positioned to relate to and engage with them.

Esquire appeared on a similar trajectory in the mid to late 1980s when it published a few articles that took a markedly different approach to sexual difference than what had come before or would soon follow in the magazine. While discussion of gay issues overwhelmingly remained absent in the magazine at the time, two particular articles were nonetheless unexpectedly inclusive for a men's lifestyle magazine. Of particular note is a 1986 issue themed "The American Man: 1946-1986," in which Richard Goldstein wrote the essay "What Burt Told Me" relaying the story of how a childhood friend came out to him as gay in adulthood.[8] Goldstein describes the disclosure with care, explaining how it forced Burt to renegotiate boundaries with his friends and family and how it instantly changed the dynamic of their friendship: "I became invested with the uneasy privilege of a straight white male and he with the heroism of an oppression so covert that it could go unmentioned, so long as Burt kept his closet tidy and locked himself inside." The article concludes with Goldstein explaining that his friend's confession predated his recognition and acceptance of his own gay identity. This story is remarkable in its personal discussion and disclosure of gay identity in light of the magazine's history of homophobia, particularly at a time when rampant homophobia

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[6] José Esteban Muñoz, "Queer Minstrels for the Straight Eye: Race as Surplus in Gay TV," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 11*, no. 2 (2005), 101-102, p. 102. Battles and Hilton-Morrow, "Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces," pp. 102, 99.

[7] Ron Becker, "Prime-Time Television in the Gay Nineties: Network Television, Quality Audiences, and Gay Politics," *The Velvet Light Trap*, *42* (1998), 36-47, p. 44.

[8] Richard Goldstein, "What Burt Told Me," *Esquire*, Jun. 1986, 158(2).

surrounded the AIDS epidemic. Also notably, its publication in an issue devoted to changes in American masculinity over the previous 40 years seemed to break from *Esquire*'s exclusion of gay men. Similarly, in "The Gay Decades" published a year later, Frank Rich compassionately reflected on his interactions with a gay man and the progress that had been, and still needed to be, made in gay-straight relations.[9] These two articles, though certainly exceptions to the general dismissal of gay men and serious consideration of gay issues at the time, suggested a potentially gay-inclusive turning point in editorial content as the magazine approached the 1990s.

However, *Esquire* did not follow this path as it and *GQ* soon began to negotiate issues of homosexuality through both an exclusion of gay men and masculinities and an inclusion in matters of politics and society. Such a shift in editorial strategy illustrates how men's lifestyle magazines highlight the continuous and often contradictory processes involved in the construction of gender norms that do not necessarily follow a linear trajectory toward gay acceptance: through its interrogation of social tensions that exist between straight and gay men, "The Gay Decades" is, in many ways, far more interested in straight men's connection to gay life and cultures than almost any instance of editorial content that appeared in either magazine throughout the next two decades. A few exceptions exist to this dominant strategy, though, as these magazines at times navigate topics in different and even competing ways. For instance, *GQ* published a 1994 article about an HIV-negative man dealing with finding love, sex, and a future in the age of AIDS, a rare personal glimpse into a gay man's world that did not shy away from discussions of sex and emotional intimacy between men.[10] Two years later *Esquire* published an essay by a man discussing his sexual relationships with both women and men.[11] Rare exceptions such as these are reminders that the messages about male identity are not subject to an overarching editorial policy regarding sexual

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[9] Frank Rich, "The Gay Decades," *Esquire*, Nov. 1987, 87-101.
[10] Dudley Clendinen, "When Negative Meets Positive," *GQ*, Oct. 1994, 237(4).
[11] Jonathan Van Meter, "The Post-Gay Man," *Esquire*, Nov. 1996, 88(5).

difference, and that the magazines must be approached as dynamic and sustained negotiations between men that respond to shifting cultural, political, economic, and industrial forces in occasionally ideologically contradictory ways. Yet the overwhelming consistency with which both magazines' editorial content negotiated gayness in ways that differentiated between gay rights and gay masculinities underlines key areas of anxiety regarding sexuality in these magazines throughout the 1990s and 2000s—indeed, this editorial strategy remained remarkably stable across the two decades.

Gay Rights and Politics

"They're Here, They're Queer, They're… Republican?" *GQ* incredulously asked in a 2004 headline for one of two articles that the magazine published about gay republicans during the George W. Bush presidency.[12] Appearing during the campaign for Bush's reelection, which had been using gay marriage as a wedge issue to rally its voting base, the six-page feature focuses on the gay conservative organization the Log Cabin Republicans and its members' motivations as well as the resistance they encounter from both within and outside of their party. It opens with the organization's director of public affairs claiming to be on the cutting edge of the gay civil rights movement, which author David Rakoff mockingly dismisses before expressing considerable bewilderment, pity, and anger at the organization's collaboration with a party that has a long history of homophobic rhetoric and a track record of actively seeking to deny rights to gay people. Rakoff primarily focuses his article on the six months he spent with Log Cabin executive director Patrick Guerriero, laying out Guerriero's beliefs and logics in order to emphasize the group's incompatibility with gay-rights efforts, its refusal to see the connection between inequitable tax policies, racism, and homophobia, and its inability to create change within or beyond the GOP. "So come November,

[12] David Rakoff, "They're Here, They're Queer, They're… Republican?" *GQ*, May 2004, 155(6).

Patrick Guerriero either votes for a party that has no place for him, or he doesn't vote at all. Whichever he chooses, the result will be precisely what his enemies desire of him: silence," Rakoff writes, concluding, "I think: 'What a waste.'" Although one might assume such an article simply blames gay people for their own oppression, instead it is one of several *GQ* articles in the mid 2000s that explored the Republican party's homophobia and collectively called attention to the numerous ways in which the GOP undermines the struggle for gay equality.

Premised on the notion that gay rights and equality should be a given, "They're Here, They're Queer, They're… Republican?" is characteristic of how gay-related issues of politics and societal acceptance almost exclusively appeared in the magazines in the 1990s and 2000s. Such editorial content consistently presented a serious and sympathetic view of gay rights, often mocking or denouncing anyone who is uncomfortable with gay equality or who feels that gay people are not entitled to equal rights. These articles notably did not debate issues such as same-sex marriage and gays in the military or leave it up to readers to decide where to stand on these matters; they simply based their discussions on the liberal notion that these rights should be granted. The first indication that the magazines would take such an approach came in the late 1980s, when Randy Shilts penned a pair of essays in *Esquire* discussing how homophobia led to an inadequate government response to AIDS.[13] By the mid 1990s, both magazines had tackled—with a message in support of political equality and societal acceptance—issues such as gay people serving in the armed services, homophobic violence in the Navy, the practice of outing closeted gay politicians, gay men who identify as politically conservative, and bigotry in the aforementioned cover story on Tom Hanks and *Philadelphia*. In the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s they published articles that tackled many of these same topics for a second or third time as well as articles on gay marriage, homophobic

[13] "Randy Shilts," *Esquire*, Jun. 1988, 142(2). Randy Shilts, "Talking AIDS to Death," *Esquire*, Mar. 1989, 123(8).

politicians and their oppressive policies, and the president's track record with gay rights. Coverage extended beyond matters of the state to include tensions with gay-oriented celebrity gossip, hate groups boycotting gay-friendly companies, a study on the pervasiveness of homophobia in straight men, the hate rhetoric of the Westboro Baptist Church, and a variety of other forms of intolerance and prejudice.[14]

These stories took several forms, including opinion essays, feature-length articles and profiles, and even fiction, such as when *Esquire* published the satirical "Love Thy Enemy" at the height of the controversy surrounding the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy in late 1993, which lampooned people who feared that gay men serving in the military would destroy unit cohesion with their sexual advances.[15] Editors-in-chief also commented on gay rights in their magazines, such as when *GQ*'s Jim Nelson critiqued Bush's proposal for a constitutional amendment to exclude gay men and lesbians from the institution of marriage. In his June 2004 editor's letter, Nelson criticized Washington's anti-marriage equality crusaders, calling them cowardly for insisting that same-sex marriage would undermine American society and accusing them of "defending" marriage while letting people "that actually need defending […] go brutally undefended" such as the unemployed and the elderly.[16] Elsewhere, the magazines endorsed and interviewed gay politician Barney Frank several times and profiled celebrities such as George Clooney and Howard Stern who casually

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[14] A sample of the type of coverage discussed in this paragraph includes Chip Brown, "The Accidental Martyr," *Esquire*, Dec. 1993, 101(16). Jennet Conant, "Tom Hanks Wipes That Grin Off His Face," *Esquire*, Dec. 1993, 74(9). Patrick J. Kiger, "We're Here! We're Queer! We're Republican!" *GQ*, Jan. 1994, 80(7). David France, "Dying to Come Out: The War on Gays in Iraq," *GQ*, Jan. 2007, retrieved from http://www.gq.com. Robert Draper, "Rick Santorum Is Straight," *GQ*, Aug. 2003, retrieved from http://www.gq.com. David Rakoff, "They're Here, They're Queer, They're… Republican?" *GQ*, May 2004, 155(6). Jack Tapper, "Hot for Gay Republicans," *GQ*, Apr. 2005, 130(5). "The Outtake," *Esquire*, Oct. 2005, 58. David Kamp, "You Just Know He's Gay," *GQ*, Mar. 1996, 257(5). Michael Segell, "Homophobia Doesn't Lie," *Esquire*, Feb. 1997, 35. "The Wonderful Underworld of Disney," *Esquire*, Jan. 1998, 52(3).

[15] Paul Rudnick, "Love Thy Enemy," *Esquire*, Oct. 1993, 170(2).

[16] Jim Nelson, "Letter from the Editor," *GQ*, Jun. 2004, 38.

endorsed gay rights.[17] Perhaps the most common editorial convention was discussing such issues through extensive features on a gay man existing within an institution or culture known for its homophobia such as sports, the church, and media industries. For instance, among articles about gay athletes, gay clergymen, and gay pop stars, *GQ* published a 2005 story of a Grammy-nominated gospel artist who, after being blackmailed and subsequently outed for his same-sex attraction, was shunned by the Christian music industry.[18] But rather than simply personalize the story in a way that presented the case as an outlier or in a way that focused on the individual rather than the institutional, such coverage—as in *Esquire*'s Hanks cover story—used an individual to call attention to larger systemic prejudices affecting gay people.

This type of gay-themed content helped *Esquire* and *GQ* construct a politically liberal masculinity for straight readers, enabling them to feel progressive at a time when gay people were making in-roads in media and public visibility. Such content was not overtly political in motivation; it did not directly encourage or call on readers to vote for specific policies or engage in activism. But it nonetheless pointed out, and critiqued, how various institutions promote or maintain homophobia as well as how gay people still endure injustices and social intolerance in spite of significant legal and social advances made at the end of the twenty-first century and beyond. Acceptance of gay rights as well as social tolerance of gay men were thus integral to the well-reasoned and culturally refined masculinity that the magazines attempted to construct in order to allow readers to distinguish themselves from their peers. This is exemplified by the 1990 *Esquire* article "Confessions of a Heterosexual," wherein author Pete Hamill characterizes himself as "deploring homophobia, like any good liberal," and prides himself in having overcome the homophobia of his youth by dabbling in the arts and traveling the world. He also goes out of his way to acknowledge that gay men have

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[17] Cal Fussmen, "What I've Learned: George Clooney," *Esquire*, Jan. 2005, 56(19). Cal Fussman, "What I've Learned: Howard Stern," *Esquire*, Jan. 2006, 77(4).
[18] Allison Glock, "Out of the Lord's Closet," *GQ*, Aug. 2005, 133(6).

long faced injustices such as beatings, blackmail, and even murder because of their sexual identity, and that even today "homosexuals are still seen with a mixture of uneasiness and contempt," as if noting this demonstrates how concerned about and how knowledgeable he is of the plight of gay people.[19]

The content supporting gay rights and equality ultimately earned the magazines attention for such inclusivity. As previously noted, *The Los Angeles Times* argued that *Esquire* was pushing readers to reconsider their ideas about masculinity. Further, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation gave *GQ* a Media Award in 2008 for its article "Dying to Come Out: The War on Gays in Iraq," and a year later nominated the magazine again for an award for "Let God Love Gene Robinson," about the first openly gay Christian bishop. But while it certainly may have appeared that men's lifestyle magazines had grown more tolerant and even inclusive of non-straight men since the 1980s, this gay-themed content did not necessarily suggest a growing comfort among straight men regarding gay men and masculinities. *Esquire* and *GQ* published sympathetic content regarding societal acceptance and gay-rights issues but they did not demand or even urge that readers who may be uncomfortable with gay men reconsider or further interrogate their personal attitudes and beliefs about gay men. As explored in the next section, both magazines presented gay rights as a given but they also distanced straight readers from gay men and masculinities.

Gay Men and Masculinities

One particularly striking instance of the differential treatment between gay rights and gay men appears in *GQ*'s June 2004 issue. Just one month after printing "They're Here, They're Queer, They're… Republican?" and in the same issue that Jim Nelson argues for marriage equality in his editor's letter, the magazine published a humor page entitled "29 Things Overheard at a Gay

[19] Pete Hamill, "Confessions of a Heterosexual," *Esquire*, Aug. 1990, 55(3).

Wedding." The list, which ran beneath a drawing of a man wearing a wedding veil, aims for laughs with a series of comments and questions that largely draw on stereotypical notions about gay men as catty, superficial, and body- and sex-obsessed. Many items on the list are also premised on the idea that when a couple is comprised of two men then at least one of them assumes the role of a woman. The magazine imagines "Can you zip me?" as a question that guests would overhear, for instance, as if one or both grooms would wear a dress to the ceremony like in the image adorning the page. Another imagined comment includes, "You may kiss the bride… I mean groom… I mean bride… oh, just kiss already."[20] Though clearly intended as humorous, such content feminizes and ridicules gay men and offers a stark contrast to the sympathetic approach of the magazine's discourses surrounding gay rights.[21] Though *GQ* presented gay equality as a worthy and righteous cause for straight men to embrace, it also consistently dismissed gay men and stigmatized the expressions of masculinity that it associates with them.

The most basic way that both magazines dismissed gay men is by outright excluding them in lifestyle content. Whereas *Esquire* and *GQ*'s journalistic articles and news-oriented features sympathetically engaged with gay-rights issues such as same-sex marriage and homophobic violence, interpersonal content such as advice columns, style and informational guides, lists, and fashion spreads failed to speak to or from gay experiences—an exclusion that effectively renders gay men's actual lives, in contrast with their rights, irrelevant to straight men. Moreover, perhaps unsurprisingly given the default straight mode of address utilized by both magazines, they refused to feature gay men in their celebrations of masculinity: *GQ*'s annual "Men of the Year" issues only honored straight men and *Esquire*'s "How to Be a Man" issues have not even acknowledged that gay men are, in fact, men too. Non-themed issues also expunged gay lives from content such as *Esquire*'s

[20] "29 Things Overheard at a Gay Wedding," *GQ*, Jun. 2004, 240.
[21] Lists are common in both *GQ* and *Esquire*. See also, for instance, "28 Shows We're Sure to See on the Gay Channel," *GQ*, Apr. 2002, 214.

recurring "What I've Learned" column, wherein men report firsthand life lessons that they want to share, and fashion layouts utilized rhetorical frames directed exclusively at straight men.[22] It thus becomes difficult to imagine that the attempted humor in content such as "29 Things Overheard at a Gay Wedding" comes from a camp or in-group sensibility that would utilize jokes aiming to laugh *with* rather than *at* gay men and gay cultures. This exclusionary editorial strategy regarding gay men is not overtly homophobic but nonetheless enforces heteronormativity and demonstrates how gay identities, experiences, and lives are, through their omission, situated beyond the scope of normative masculinity in the magazines.

As in "29 Things…," references to gay men—if not gay men themselves—nonetheless circulated in ways that linked them to women and hegemonic notions of heterosexual femininity. Sometimes this included explicit mockery of gay men as feminine or in features wherein male profile subjects casually use the word *gay* to describe ostensibly feminine things such as certain alcoholic beverages.[23] In other instances it presented gay men as having special insight into the heterosexual female psyche, such as asking actor Neil Patrick Harris for advice on how straight men might better relate to women.[24] In fact, *Esquire* commonly included references to gay men in its recurring column "10 Things You Don't Know About Women," wherein female celebrities discuss aspects of their lives that they think readers should know about them, with women frequently discussing their intimate bond with gay men.[25] Contrary to the column's title, then, readers *do* know that women have a special relationship with gay men as *Esquire* and *GQ* repeatedly remind them. This is made

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[22] Gore Vidal is a notable exception in "What I've Learned," appearing in the June 2008 column.

[23] See, for instance, Tom Chiarella, "Please Be Seated. Guy Ritchie's Life Will Begin Shortly," *Esquire*, Nov. 2009, 118.

[24] "In Which America's Favorite Lady-Killer, Barney Stinson, Schools Us in the Time-Honored Art of Scoring with Style," *Esquire*, May 2010, 120.

[25] For instance, actress Kathryn Hahn explained, in a fashion typical of the column, "Our relationship with gay men is sacred. We talk dirty to them, we grab their asses, they grab our boobs, we say 'I love you' all the time, and they can wear skinny jeans. Don't try to compete with that." See Kathryn Hahn, "10 Things You Don't Know About Women," *Esquire*, Jan. 2009, 56.

especially clear in the latter's "8 Stories You Might See if *GQ* Were Edited by Women…," which features a mock cover of the magazine that the editors contended would appear if women made the editorial decisions.[26] With faux headlines like "At Last! 10 Suits That Won't Make Your Butt Look Big" intended to characterize women's magazines as superficial and ridiculous and, in contrast, men's magazines as serious, it is notable that gay actor Rupert Everett is chosen for the fake cover story ("Dishing with Rupert Everett"). Given that neither *GQ* nor *Esquire* has featured a gay man on its cover, Everett's inclusion here specifically associates gay men with women—as their companions and confidants—rather than as the friends of straight men.[27] It thus treats as absurd the very notion that a gay man would appear on the cover of *GQ* or feature prominently in either magazine.

This notion is perpetuated through other ways in which gay men and masculinities are consistently stigmatized in the magazines. Occasionally this occurred through explicitly homophobic

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[26] "8 Stories You Might See if *GQ* Were Edited by Women," *GQ*, Nov. 2002, 394. The premise ignores the fact that women do edit *GQ*, although certainly not to the degree that men do.

[27] While neither *GQ* nor *Esquire* has featured an openly gay man on the cover, the latter has referenced gayness on its cover but in a way that titillated readers rather than embraced or included gay men. Indeed, *Esquire* found itself accused of homophobia for a 1997 cover story that seemed intent on coyly outing actor Kevin Spacey. Though it did not actually state Spacey was in fact gay, the story—which featured him on the cover against a pink background and the headline "Kevin Spacey Has a Secret"—was entirely premised on the metaphor of "the closet" as it punned on words like *passing* and facetiously conflated his personal life with that of his gay character in the movie he was shooting. It also opened with author Tom Junod stating, "I mean, my mother knows. Or thinks she knows. Or supposes. Or suspects. I told her I was writing a story on Kevin Spacey, and she said, 'Well, I hear he's gay.'" Several outlets condemned the piece, with *The Advocate* stating it crossed a line of journalistic ethics and Spacey denouncing it as a "mean-spirited, homophobic, offensive article." Editor-in-chief David Granger defended the piece by claiming that *Esquire* was simply stating, not "peddling," the rumor about Spacey's sexuality while Junod insisted that he "did not expect to out Kevin, because [he] thought he was out.'" Such responses appeared disingenuous given that the profile specifically revolved around the gay rumors so if Spacey had already publicly confessed his gay identity, as Junod claimed he believed, the article's entire conceit would be pointless. The article instead seemed, as *Mediaweek* put it, like an attempt to "kick-start the buzz machine" at the flailing magazine. See Tom Junod, "'Kevin Spacey?' My Mom Said. 'I Hear He's…'" *Esquire*, Oct. 1997, p. 66(9). W. Speers, "Spacey Blasts *Esquire* Story Suggesting He's Gay," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sep. 23, 1997, p. D02. Howard Kurtz, "*Esquire*'s Spacey Case," *The Washington Post*, Sep. 22, 1997, p. B01. Anne Stockwell, "Kevin Spacey Confidential," *The Advocate*, Oct. 28, 1997, p. 22. Lisa Granatstein, "Sharper Storytelling + Service = Buzz," *Mediaweek*, Mar. 16, 1998, p. 25.

comments, such as a joke using the phrase "shit-sniffing faggot," the characterization of gay men as sexual predators of teenagers, and the inclusion of stories about gay men raping or molesting straight men.[28] However, these instances are rare and homophobia primarily existed more subtly through the vigorous policing of masculinity that denounced interests, tastes, and other forms of self-expression that might indicate homosexuality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues this is a particularly integral practice in homosocial spheres as men must engage in these male-only spaces to reap the benefits of patriarchal privilege but they must sufficiently distance their same-sex interactions from homosexual men and desire.[29] Indeed, these magazines are rife with rules for men to follow in order to ensure that they do not engage in behaviors that might be mistaken as those associated with homosexuality, from what to wear and where to shave to ordering drinks and how to travel in appropriately masculine ways—never, for instance, ride "on a motorcycle with your arms wrapped around another man's waist."[30] They also warn against liking gay-associated popular culture such as *The Golden Girls*, Barbra Streisand, and Bette Midler, and insist that men always pick *Monday Night Football* over television programs deemed female-centric.[31]

These magazines still stipulated limits for these gendered expressions even as acceptable forms of masculinity evolved in the 1990s and 2000s, such as the metrosexuality phenomenon ushering in new ways for straight men to self-present and discourses like "the bromance" enabling new types of male relationships to flourish publicly. Consider, for instance, *GQ*'s 2010 trend piece "The Man Date Is the Mandate," which tells readers that it is okay for friendships between men to

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[28] "How To Skin a Moose," *Esquire*, May 2009, 96(6). Hamill, "Confessions of a Heterosexual." Anonymous, "My Mentor, My Rapist," *GQ*, Apr. 2000, 207(8). Tom Chiarella, "My Education," *Esquire*, May 2003, 135.
[29] Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*.
[30] Brian Frazer, "Things NOT to Do Before You Die," *Esquire*, Jun./Jul. 2010, 170.
[31] For instance, see Brian Frazer, "Things NOT to Do Before You Die," *Esquire*, Jun./Jul. 2010, 170. "…And a Few Things a Man Should Never Do, No Matter How Long He Lives," *Esquire*, Dec. 1999, 176.

take the form of dates because "sometimes the girls just don't understand" and that it is important for men to discuss thoughts about aging, marriage, career, and finances.[32] Even couched within the terms of heterosexuality, the article contends that these man dates must not push the boundaries of normative masculinity too far by, for instance, ordering non-masculine foods or dining at feminine establishments: "Your masculinity won't be called into question when you have a bourbon and a bacon cheeseburger in front of you. Italian joints are generally perceived as manly," the article states, adding that these dates must also never involve traveling such a distance that two men must share a hotel room. In many ways this article pushes traditional notions of straight masculinity toward somewhat less rigid forms, pointing out that a man date is "still a date" and encouraging men to share their feelings with one another and put time and effort into their friendships. Yet it also highlights how homophobia still informs evolving norms of masculinity. Similarly, this fear of being mistaken as gay also underlies the magazine's fashion and style content, which repeatedly assures that style is more than ever a straight man's interest but that one must attend to it in ways that will not result in "fast-fading masculinity," such as making sure that one's medicine cabinet is not filled with "frilly potions" but with more manly products.[33]

Though editorial content implicitly functioned to cordon off gayness, at times the distancing efforts were more blatant. For instance, in 1999 *GQ* published a photograph of actor Leonardo DiCaprio clowning around with a group of male friends, who were laughing and lifting him off the ground. The photo's caption admonished, "Pussy Posses: There's really no better way to say 'I'm so gay.'"[34] The conflation of this type of male bonding both with the female anatomy and with homosexuality highlights Kimmel's argument that sexism and homophobia go "hand in hand."[35]

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[32] Adam Rapoport, "The Man Date Is the Mandate," *GQ*, May 2010, 60.
[33] David Katz, "The Cure: How Not To Be a Metrosexual," *Esquire*, Dec. 2003, 46.
[34] *Esquire*, Dec. 1999, p. 72.
[35] Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," p. 105.

Here gay men are stigmatized as inadequately masculine through an imposed association with women who are denigrated by virtue of their femininity. By following the rules and messages laid out in *Esquire* and *GQ*, straight readers can work to ensure that they will not be confused as gay or otherwise feminine and, thus, can protect and legitimize the straightness of their masculinity. These magazines thus demonstrate, as Kimmel contends, that homophobia is a central organizing principle of American straight masculinity and that homophobia is not simply the fear of gay men but also "the fear of being perceived as gay" and "that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men." Kimmel adds, "The fear of being a sissy dominates cultural definitions of manhood."[36]

As a result, the exclusion of gay men and the stigmatization of gay masculinities, as well as the vigorous policing of homosocial behavior, in these magazines functioned to construct easily identifiable and knowable boundaries between gay and straight men so that men can avoid this unmasking and emasculation. This was a particularly crucial effort in a time when the increased acceptance of gay men as well of consumption-based straight masculinities sparked confusion and anxiety among straight men about the nature of sexual difference. Advice columns in *Esquire* and *GQ*, for instance, suggested that straight readers wanted to better understand gay men and gay practices as they asked questions such as if a "gay accent" exists, whether gay men are more promiscuous, and why "gays are so much better at staying friends with people they've slept with."[37] The answers asserted that general differences do in fact exist—the columnists answered that, yes, most gay men do speak differently and are more promiscuous, for instance. However, questions about gay men were overwhelmingly dwarfed in number by straight men's queries about how to know what is "gay" and "straight," what is considered "masculine" and "feminine," to help them

[36] Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," p. 103-105.
[37] "Answer Fella," *Esquire*, Oct. 2006, 110. Stacey Grenrock Woods, "Sex," *Esquire*, Mar. 2009, 66. Stacey Grenrock Woods, "Sex," *Esquire*, Jan. 2010, 30.

properly present themselves to, and engage with, the world. These questions ranged from how to know whether a hairdo is "gay" and if shaving below the neck is something only gay men do, to whether straight men carry man bags, get pedicures, enter steam rooms naked, and drink flavored vodka drinks.[38] Such questions suggested that straight readers may have been unclear about how to appropriately behave as straight men, but they certainly knew that it was crucial to monitor their tastes, interests, behaviors, and habits so as to not appear gay or otherwise feminine.[39]

Straight Privilege

Yet *Esquire* and *GQ*'s exclusion and stigmatization of gay men did not simply secure heteronormative notions of masculinity and seek to assuage straight men's personal anxieties when they may have felt confused about expectations of manhood. They also functioned to ensure that straight men remained at the social and cultural center in an era of increased debates about diversity as women and various marginalized groups began to threaten, or at least make visible in previously unseen ways, the position of privilege occupied by straight white men of the upper middle class—the very men to which these magazines catered. Throughout much of the 1990s, both magazines responded to these perceived threats by publishing a series of articles lambasting feminism and lamenting political correctness, affirmative action, and efforts toward multicultural sensitivity.[40]

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[38] Glenn O'Brien, "The Style Guy," *GQ*, Sep. 2000, 198.

[39] Ironically, despite encouraging readers to care about such matters, as demonstrated by headlines like *GQ*'s Apr. 2005 question "Does Your Shirt Look Like a Blouse?", both magazines' advice columnists often told readers not to care what others thinks. They even mocked and said they felt "sorry for the dear readers so worried about making an unmistakably hetero impression," as *GQ*'s Glenn O'Brien put it in "The Style Guy," *GQ*, Nov. 2002, retrieved from http://www.gq.com. *Esquire*'s "Answer Fella" columnist similarly noted he "weeps for a generation of American men shrouded in such self-doubt." See "Answer Fella," *Esquire*, Mar. 2003, 89.

[40] A few of these many articles include David Rieff, "The Case Against Sensitivity," *Esquire*, Nov. 1990, 120(9). Stanley Bing, "Sorry As I Oughta Be," *Esquire*, Nov. 1990, 117(2). Harry Stein, "The Making of an Anti-Feminist," *GQ*, May 1993, 188(4). Lynn Darling, "Single White Man, Seeks Clue," *Esquire*, Jun. 1993, 97(8). Lucy Kaylin, "The Way We Are," *GQ*, Feb. 1994, 118(4).

These stories insisted that straight white men were unfairly criticized and, as *Esquire* put it, have "the bad luck to be at the bottom" of a turn-of-the-century shift in cultural values as feminists, gay men and lesbians, and people of color were criticizing the status and privileges that they as straight white men have earned.[41] *GQ* agreed that these men were simply "being blamed for everything […] as countless mad-as-hell minorities chew up the scenery with their gripes."[42] Authors of these articles rhetorically positioned themselves as rational and logical, acknowledging the validity of the core complaint about political and structural inequity while simultaneously characterizing these minority groups as outlandish and extreme in their demands. So, for instance, the author of "Confessions of a Heterosexual" found himself "deploring homophobia, like any good liberal" even as he demonized queer activists and stereotyped gay men as identifying themselves "exclusively by what they do with their cocks." Similarly, *Esquire* and *GQ* acknowledged that the discrimination women faced was a problem while simultaneously stating that feminists are "a destructive force in American culture" and in men's lives.[43]

Such messages were not exclusive to *Esquire* and *GQ* as other media also commented on what they alleged was a suddenly precarious position for straight white men in U.S. culture. The number-one box office films *Falling Down* (1993) and *Disclosure* (1994) featured middle-class straight white men besieged by advances made by multicultural and feminist movements—the disgruntled protagonist in the former famously asked, "*I'm* the bad guy? How'd that happen?" At the same time a slew of books appeared that insisted men were not as powerful as they are often perceived, and extensive news coverage of issues such as political correctness and affirmative action painted a portrait of the US where straight white men were "required to feel guilty about what they are," as

[41] Lynn Darling, "Single White Man, Seeks Clue," *Esquire*, Jun. 1993, 97(8)
[42] Lucy Kaylin, "The Way We Are," *GQ*, Feb. 1994, 118(4).
[43] Harry Stein, "The Making of an Anti-Feminist," *GQ*, May 1993, 188(4).

Newsweek contended in 1993.[44] Nicola Rehling argues that media coverage of issues and events such as the 1992 Los Angeles uprising and the Clarence Thomas hearings further fueled white male resentment.[45] Such logic was defensive and overblown, premised on the idea that any attempts to call attention to how mainstream culture and politics did not reflect the full diversity of the country were suddenly putting straight white men at a cultural disadvantage. Indeed, as media culture grew more interested in aspects of gay identity, *Esquire* and *GQ* responded with bitterness, complaining that gay men were suddenly more stylish and socially desirable than straight men, ranting that gay men were given carte blanche to speak about sex in public in ways that straight men would never be allowed, and insisting that "no one's interested in your life story. Unless you happen to be a man who sleeps with men."[46] In an attempt to turn the tables, *Esquire* even declared in 1993 that straight people, not gay men, were in fact "*fabulous!*"[47]

As these instances of editorial content suggest, the magazines' exclusion of gay men and experiences occasionally took on a more overt and virulent tone during this era of backlash against women and minorities than it generally did with its policing of masculinity throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Consider the 1996 *Esquire* article "Out Is In, In Is Out," wherein author Doug Marlette describes an emerging acceptance of people speaking up about aspects of their lives that had been long dismissed, ignored, or deemed unacceptable by society at large.[48] Rather than celebrate the potential for a more open and accepting society that acknowledged a wider range of men's experiences, Marlette laments what he calls an era of compulsory oversharing. "A friend came out of the closet recently," he begins. "Naturally, his friends and colleagues were all very supportive, but if

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[44] David Gates, "White Male Paranoia," *Newsweek*, Mar. 28, 1993, 48-53.
[45] Nicola Rehling, *Extra-Ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity in Contemporary Popular Culture* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 26.
[46] David Kamp, "Gay Memoir-O-Matic," *GQ*, Nov. 1997, 482. Lynn Darling, "Single White Man, Seeks Clue," *Esquire*, Jun. 1993, 97-104.
[47] "Viva Straight Camp!" *Esquire*, Jun. 1993, 92(4).
[48] Doug Marlette, "Out Is In, In Is Out," *Esquire*, Dec. 1996, 54.

he'd asked me—and I know this is heresy, blasphemy of the most egregious order—I hope I would've had the guts to say, 'Stay in the closet.' It's a novel concept, I know—discretion: THANK YOU FOR NOT SHARING." This is the first of several anecdotes that Marlette uses in the article to argue men should not make "racy self-revelations," by which he refers not only to sexual orientation but also to other aspects of one's identity. He contends that drawing attention to such things is merely a "manipulation" and a "non-negotiable demand" for approval from others who have a right to not know, care, or like what others tell them. "Insisting that relationships pay homage to one's race, gender, or sexual preference is like basing them on the shape of one's nose. Why define oneself so narrowly?" he asks, echoing the notion that contemporary editors have that such aspects of one's identity are "trappings" as he asserts men should shove their "gotta-be-me-ness back into the closet."

Marlette frames his argument for nondisclosure as one "that goes for everyone," a claim that disregards the existence of social and political power in US culture and thus also ignores the complexities and varying implications of making public certain identities and experiences. For instance, Marlette states that both gay and straight people should not reveal their sexual orientation. Such an assertion fails to account for the fact that coming out as straight and coming out as gay are not the same since heteronormativity produces potentially severe repercussions for the latter and rewards the former, which is already generally assumed and so need not be declared in the first place anyway. Similarly, white people are disproportionately valued over people of color in a society marked by racism and so they need not declare their "gotta-be-me-ness," as Marlette reductively puts it, as their experiences are already those of the dominant representational group. Marlette's call for everyone to keep quiet about their individual experiences and identities thus conveniently maintains straight, white, middle- to upper-class privilege under the guise of impartiality—a privilege from which the men primarily targeted by the magazines benefit. This logic is uncommonly explicit

in "Out Is In, In Is Out" but pervades how male identity is generally addressed in the magazines, making the article useful for understanding how masculinity gets constructed for an intended universal male experience but, in fact, privileges the experiences of a particular population of men.

Gay-Straight Relations

Queer media scholars repeatedly point out that entertainment media primarily present gay people in personalized ways that discourage consideration of systemic issues related to their minority status. Bonnie Dow argues that this representational strategy must be acknowledged as a production of power: by encouraging straight audiences to like characters rather than to engage in or even familiarize themselves with political issues, media texts facilitate "blindness toward the heterosexism and homophobia in which they are complicit and from which they benefit." As a result, "what is at stake here are basic issues of civil rights, freedom of choice, and social justice—issues that shouldn't be dependent on liking [gay people], anyway."[49] *Esquire* and *GQ* would seem to offer a corrective to this representational pattern and its resulting ideological limitations by calling audiences' attention to gay-rights issues in ways that are sympathetic and not contingent on likability. Yet their editorial content suggests that the prioritization of such political discourse does not in and of itself disrupt the hegemony of heterosexism and heteronormativity, particularly when presented at the expense of encouraging straight people to accept gay men and masculinities. Such a strategy enforces heterosexual privilege even as it supports structural equality, leaving straight men's cultural and social power intact through the naturalization of a particular alignment of sexuality and gender expression for men that disciplines people and performances of self that deviate from that norm. Just as Dow argues of the media's emphasis on the personal over the political, then, the reverse

[49] Bonnie Dow, "*Ellen*, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," pp. 135, 137.

emphasis must also be understood as a construction of power with its own regressive implications for relations between men.

The support for gay rights certainly presents progress from the historical exclusion that has been characteristic of men's lifestyle magazines. It is important not to underestimate how such content marks steps toward a relationship between straight and gay men that is less infused with the former's fear and loathing of the latter. For instance, in 1990 *GQ* tackled the outing of public officials and discussed the rampant institutionalized discrimination that prevented many gay men and lesbians from freely acknowledging their sexuality. As a result, author Randy Shilts argued, prejudice fueled a destructive societal belief "that gays truly do not play a major role in American life. That, of course, is not the truth."[50] This is a powerfully inclusive message for a historically homophobic media form—yet is a message tempered by other, more extensive editorial content that kept gay lives largely hidden from view and that presented gay masculinities as inadequate and a cause for straight men's concern. Such content continued the historical efforts of *Esquire* and *GQ* to remove any potential associations with homosexual men in order to construct the magazines' identities in the market as for straight men, allowing them to reassure straight readers that their consumption of fashion, style, and other domestic goods was an appropriately manly pursuit. Yet this strategy of distancing straight men from gay men and gay masculinities had far deeper implications than simply functioning to construct a space for straight men to consume without fear of being seen as gay or otherwise effeminate.

Indeed, the editorial strategy demonstrated how constructed relations among straight men, and between straight and gay men, remained disciplined in many ways by homophobia in the 1990s and 2000s. This took on unique dimensions in this era as gay men grew more socially accepted and straight men were increasingly encouraged to consume as a means to present themselves in ways

[50] Randy Shilts, "Naming Names," *GQ*, Aug. 1990, 160(3), 166.

long associated with women and gay men—in 1997, *Esquire* even noted "that a 'gay' aesthetic actually looks pretty good" on straight men.[51] So as boundaries between some gay- and straight-associated expressions evolved, the magazines' vigorous policing of men's expressions of gender enabled men to figure out where the line between the former and the latter existed. For instance, scholars have argued that the trend of pairing gay men with straight women makes gayness more palatable to mainstream audiences of films and television programs, but in men's lifestyle magazines this representational strategy offered straight men—particularly those uncomfortable with gayness—a means to "know" who is gay based on their platonic friendships.[52] Similarly, telling readers what behaviors are "so gay" makes clear where the line between gay and straight exists even as it gets blurrier. In *Esquire* and *GQ*, then, gayness—through its actual depiction or, more commonly, through its implicit invocation—was utilized to shore up and protect straightness by constructing identifiable and knowable boundaries of sexual difference. This strategy indicates that gayness was still constructed as incompatible with heterosexuality and how it was evoked and featured in the magazines ultimately functioned to uphold heteronormative worldviews and maintained structures of power that oppress homosexuality.

In a perhaps counterintuitive manner, the more progressive gay-rights discourse in the magazines worked to further secure, rather than disrupt, this straight privilege. The political content notably did not build a sense of solidarity between gay and straight people or compel straight men to join the fight against homophobia. Rather it bolstered a sense of well-meaning liberal masculinity for

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[51] Tad Friend, "You Look Great," *Esquire*, Mar. 1997, 71(3).

[52] For instance, Battles and Hilton-Morrow characterize it as the "ultimate twist" on the delayed consummation trope between straight men and women in television narratives while Shugart argues that this "best girlfriends" dynamic invites viewers to see the configuration as heterosexually romantic. See Battles and Hilton-Morrow, "Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces," p. 92. Shugart, "Reinventing Privilege," p. 87. Further, it is unknown if the actual readers were uncomfortable with gay men but a 2003 *Esquire* survey suggested many were, with 49% of reader respondents revealing that they would react negatively if they had a gay child. See Scott Quill, "What We've Learned About You," *Esquire*, Jan. 2003, 60.

straight readers: the matter-of-fact way in which the magazines presented this supportive discourse allowed readers to feel confident that they know prejudice against gay straight people is wrong, unjust, and to be condemned—at least on a societal and political level. It thus enabled those who may be uncomfortable with gayness to feel accepting of gay people and perhaps even involved in a struggle for equality without asking them to reconsider their personal views on gay men, masculinities, and desire. As a result, the gay-rights discourse must be understood as less about gay people and evolving gay-straight relations than about constructing a straight audience through their liberal beliefs, affiliations, and attitudes. The rhetoric was a means of distinguishing oneself as a particular type of straight man, but was not actually about eliminating homophobia on a personal level or about constructing a form of male bonding undisciplined by homophobia.

The previously mentioned "Confessions of a Heterosexual" makes this particularly clear, highlighting the importance of tolerance (the author goes out of his way to discuss how he deplores homophobia) but also underscoring the limits to how gay-rights ideologies featured in *Esquire* and *GQ* throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In the article, Hamill describes his irritation with a New York City march organized in protest of an increase in incidents of antigay violence, taking personal offense to a protester who shouted "You're fuckin' *killing* us!"[53] Despite acknowledging the history of prejudice and violence that gay people have faced, Hamill still describes their political activism as too "militant," "self-pitying," and "paranoid" because it lashes out at straight people like him and refuses to try to understand many straight men's disapproving attitudes about gay people. He insists gay people must start working to forge "a union by cool reason" with straight people instead of confronting them with "the irrational, snarling faces of haters" if progress is to be made in gay-straight relations. Indeed, Hamill rejects the increasingly visible and vocal minority group at a time when organizations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation were bringing public attention to prejudices

[53] Hamill, "Confessions of a Heterosexual."

affecting gay people, reducing the messages of queer activists to "apocalyptic" slogans and proclaiming that he did not feel bad for dismissing "the ranting of those gays who believe that all straights are part of some Monstrous Conspiracy to end homosexual life."

Through this privileging and normalizing of straight men's anger about homophobia at the expense of gay people's anger about their own oppression and actions to stop it, the article suggests that support of gay rights in these magazines was less about fighting injustice than about constructing a liberal straight masculinity for readers. Hamill, in fact, turned the focus from how homophobia affects gay people to how the activists' claims reflected upon him and straight men like him. The article also highlighted that gay-rights rhetoric did not extend to radical queer activism and that such discourse was welcome in the magazine only if it did not implicate readers in their homophobia. It is somewhat ironic, then, that the sympathetic discourse about gay equality provided a cover for some straight men's homophobia as well as for the homophobia that fueled the magazine's vigorous policing of masculinity and resulted in the magazine ridiculing gay men, expressions of gay masculinity, and same-sex desire. Consider, for instance, a 2006 column wherein the author proudly declares, "I support gay rights, even though I'm not gay personally or professionally […] I believe that whatever two guys want to do with each other's parts is fine, as long as I'm not in the room, and two gals as well, even if I am."[54] In this quote, which encapsulates the logic behind the magazines' strategy regarding gay content, the reassertion of one's heterosexuality and the distancing from gay men—premised on a discomfort with what they do together sexually—gets rhetorically distanced from homophobia by the support for political equality. This broad editorial strategy, which supports gay rights but not gay lives or experiences, highlights how the magazines' pro-rights rhetoric does not necessarily intend to, nor does it, upend power relations and heteronormative ideologies. In fact, it may work to reinforce them.

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[54] Larry Doyle, "Things You Need to Know About Me," *Esquire*, Oct. 2006, 234.

In this way the pro-rights discourse of *Esquire* and *GQ* functioned to resolve straight panic, or what Becker theorizes "happens when heterosexual men and women, still insecure about the boundary between gay and straight, confront an increasingly accepted homosexuality."[55] He contends that this panic emerged in the 1990s, when a range of multicultural voices and forces called attention to the problems in assuming the universality of heterosexuality as well as of other dominant identity categories such as whiteness. He argues it was perhaps most powerfully expressed among straight, white men—such as those primarily targeted by men's magazines—as they perceived a loss of their authority at the cultural center, and struggled to acknowledge their privileged position and not be seen as homophobic in a culture that increasingly embraced gay people.[56] He then posits that primetime television's personalized gay-themed narratives allowed socially liberal straight people to negotiate this straight panic by allowing them "to establish a 'hip' identity."[57] *Esquire* and *GQ* did not want to construct hip readers through gay-rights rhetoric but rather allowed readers to appear liberal and rational through their tolerance—"a good liberal," as "Confessions of a Heterosexual" put it. These magazines constructed normative masculinities that did not want to appear homophobic—thus, the sympathetic rhetoric surrounding gay rights—yet did not want to challenge notions of normative masculinity or correct any disgust or discomfort that their readers may have had of non-normative expressions of male gender. In short, the magazines appealed to straight men who did not want to relinquish heterosexual privilege and so the gay-rights editorial content enabled them to feel accepting of gays without upending existing power relations—an illustration of how hegemonic ideologies may remain intact by adapting to social and cultural shifts.

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[55] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 23.
[56] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 24.
[57] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 108.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that editors do not follow editorial policy that dictates they may only include content that includes supportive gay-rights messages but distances the magazine from gay masculinities. This editorial pattern is the result of a largely unconscious process as editors simultaneously stated they are gay-inclusive but that they do not specifically think about gay-themed content for the magazine. Notably, however, in the few instances when editors *did* discuss that they sometimes think about sexuality, they referred to matters of the nation as being contexts in which gay-oriented topics fit into their perception of what the editor-in-chief thinks fits into the magazine's mandate. For instance, *GQ*'s Mark Kirby pointed to a story about the persecution of gay people in Iraq that as an example of the sort of gay-themed story that he felt would be accepted for the magazine. He explained it works because it is "about something of national interest—the Iraq war, the state of affairs in Iraq—and happens to be about gay community there. It's not necessarily incidental to the story but it's not the *only* reason for doing the story." Such logic points to discerning savvy's textual implications of gayness for the magazine as it suggests the editors believe directly gay-related topics are not in and of themselves relevant to the straight readership but may be of interest when they have overt political or societal implications. The logic also points to the limits of implicit inclusion: just because editors claim that their magazines are inclusive, and may genuinely believe that they are, does not mean content is in fact free of homophobia. Editors do not try to exclude gay men or dismiss gay men and gay masculinities, nor do they appear to realize that they are including gay-themed content in such a limited way. Rather these are simply conventions that work, as *GQ*'s Mark Healy noted in Chapter Three, that highlight the unwitting reproduction of heteronormativity throughout both magazines.

Nonetheless there are signs that this editorial strategy regarding gay men may be slowly changing, at least in the content of *GQ*. In the magazine's July 2007 issue, two gay dads featured in

an editorial package on fathers, integrated casually into the editorial mix alongside straight fathers. Then, three years later, the magazine published "Did You Just Call Me a Gaywad?"[58] Dubbed a "handy guide to homophobia," the article tells readers that there is "a mustache-thin line between calling someone queer and *a* queer, and it's probably worth trying to define where that line is." The guide runs through a series of slang words for gay such as *homo*, *queen*, and *fairy*, explaining their origins as well as which ones tend to be used by actual gay people and which are most commonly hurled as insults by straight people. Rather than simply defend their usage, the article stresses context is important with such language. For instance, a gay man explains when he feels words such as *fag* and *queen* should and should not be employed. He writes, implicitly to straight readers, "It comes down to friendship. Intimacy. If it's just you and me talking at that bar and we're a little drunk and have laughed and cried and said, 'I love you,' you can follow it up with 'you butt pirate.' Because that's about bringing us closer and being friends—you know, all that faggy-ass shit." The focus here is on bonds between gay and straight men, encouraging straight readers to think before using language that might be hurtful to gay people while also acknowledging that such language can also be used to strengthen some friendships. The title of the article, then, presents homophobia rather than homosexuality as the problem and, in doing so, points to promising possibilities in the magazine regarding the future management of sexual difference.

[58] "Did You Just Call Me a Gaywad?" *GQ*, Jul. 2010, 92(2).

Chapter Five

"Is *Details* Gay?": Gay Men, Straight Masculinities, and the Construction of the *Details* Audience

"Is *Details* gay?"

So asked Dan Peres in the opening of his editor's letter in the October 2005 issue of *Details*, reiterating the question that he claimed had been most frequently posed to him since he became the magazine's editor-in-chief five years earlier.[1] The question followed *Details* throughout the 2000s seemingly because, unlike other men's lifestyle magazines, it frequently published editorial content about gay-oriented issues, only used male cover figures—most of whom appeared in varying states of undress—and had a chief editor who publicly embraced the gay segment of his readership. Indeed, queries and jokes about the sexual identity of *Details*' readership spread even beyond the magazine industry, showing up in various entertainment media such as lad magazine *Stuff*, pop-culture website Nerve.com, and sitcoms *The Simpsons* (FOX) and *Parks and Recreation* (NBC). A 2005 episode of NBC's *Will and Grace* even joked that *Details* is "the official magazine of guys who haven't come out yet," and the popular media gossip site *Gawker* published a series of articles that attempted to "out" the magazine as gay with headlines such as "Actual Proof That *Details* Is Gay" and "What Do [openly gay singer] Adam Lambert and *Details* Have in Common?"[2] GLAAD's decision in 2007 to honor the magazine for its coverage of LGBT-related issues, as described in the introductory

[1] Dan Peres, "Letter from the Editor," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 50.

[2] See *Will and Grace* episode "Sour Balls," March 17, 2005 original airdate. Hamilton Nolan, "Actual Proof That *Details* Is Gay," *Gawker*, Oct. 8, 2008, retrieved from http://www.gawker.com. Brian Moylan, "What Do Adam Lambert and *Details* Have in Common?" *Gawker*, Oct. 20, 2009, retrieved from http://www.gawker.com

chapter, only further fueled speculation even as many readers argued that the magazine was often homophobic rather than inclusive of gay men.

In his editor's letter, Peres answers the query by emphasizing the heterosexual nature of the heterosexuality while also claiming *Details* embraced all men. After stating that the magazine was "for intelligent, sophisticated men—both gay and straight," he claimed he had long tried to "defend" the magazine to advertisers, publishing executives, and readers by insisting *Details* was "not a gay magazine" and explaining that its seemingly ambiguous sexuality was due to more straight men assuming traits, behaviors, and interests that have been stereotypically associated with gay men. This echoed much of what he told the trade and news press, to which he characterized his readership as a small, fashion-oriented segment of the male population that represented a new type of masculinity emerging in the twenty-first century. But "*Details*… a queer magazine? NEVER," he assured. He nonetheless concluded his letter by insisting that if "reading these pages makes you question the sexuality of this magazine, well, we're probably not for you. And it's probably not *our* sexuality you should be questioning."[3] Though Peres did not acknowledge as much in his letter, questions regarding *Details*' relationship to gay men circulated within and beyond the magazine industry long before he became editor-in-chief. As this chapter investigates, such questions have surrounded *Details* for two decades as various editors-in-chief attempted to secure the magazine's place in the men's lifestyle magazine market by targeting a series of different readerships that have aligned themselves with, or distanced themselves from, gay readers to varying degrees.

Details had a convoluted trajectory throughout the 1990s and 2000s as changes in ownership, a high turnover in editors-in-chief, and the emerging acceptance of different masculinities in the marketplace resulted in significant shifts in the magazine's target readership. This chapter argues that as *Details* pursued different types of straight men throughout these two decades, its relationship to

[3] Dan Peres, "Letter from the Editor," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 50.

gay men also dramatically changed. Moreover, the divergent scripts of straight masculinity constructed by the magazine, and the ways in which corresponding constructions of gayness informed them, cannot be explained without considering whom individual editors believed constituted a desirable audience and how those audiences fit within the category of men's lifestyle magazines. This chapter thus examines *Details* as three distinct eras of editorial control (see Appendix 4) to interrogate the magazine's different straight masculinities and to explain how varying depictions of gayness helped construct them. Whereas scholars have shown media representations of gay men often function to establish differences between straight and gay masculinities as a means to make consumption a "safe" practice for straight men, *Details* also used gayness to establish differences between *straight* masculinities.[4] These differences allowed *Details* to distinguish itself from competitors, using particular depictions of gayness as a strategy to construct new straight male audiences around masculinities previously ignored in the men's magazine industry while also legitimizing them as "authentic" identities. This chapter conceptualizes this process of demarcation and legitimization as dynamic and, as such, must be theorized as a discursive pattern of gender relations wherein gay masculinities are differently constructed so as to mobilize and reinforce the privileges of a range of straight consumer identities.

First Era: "Alternative" Masculinity, 1990-1997

Following the transformation of *Details* from an arts- and nightlife-driven magazine with a large gay readership to a lifestyle magazine targeted to straight men, as described in Chapter Two, the first editorial era under the new ownership of Condé Nast was marked by the hugely successful appeal to the edgier Generation X reader. The editorial vision of this incarnation of the magazine was helmed by James Truman, who took over as editor-in-chief for the magazine's relaunch in September 1990.

[4] See, for instance, Shugart, "Managing Masculinities."

Although Truman left the position of editor-in-chief in 1994 to become editorial director of Condé Nast, his vision for *Details* continued to dominate this initial era as his successors, John Leland (1994-1995) and Dolce (1995-1997), followed his editorial style.[5]

"Rock 'n' roll gender-bending"

Unlike other men's magazines, *Details* combined lifestyle, fashion, and celebrity culture with a particularly heavy emphasis on music in the early to mid 1990s. Working for U.K. style publication *The Face* had previously showed Truman that melding style and music could prove successful, but no U.S. men's publication had tried it. He specifically envisioned a reader who was the product of a "very dandy-ish, somewhat androgynous phase" of music and fashion in the 1980s, as exemplified by acts such as Duran Duran and Depeche Mode—a significantly different approach to constructing straight masculinity than in any competing men's title. He even recalled a sold-out 1988 arena concert by the latter group as the first, and guiding, inspiration he had for the magazine's readership: "Just looking at the audience made me realize that something important had shifted in America. It was this absolutely unselfconscious mix of gay and straight, of white, black, Latino and Asian, and I had never seen such a stylish group of young Americans assembled in one place." Truman also quickly grew to embrace alternative rock and grunge music, both of which became mainstream phenomena in the early 1990s as bands such as R.E.M. and Nirvana released top-selling albums, dominated MTV, and embarked on sold-out tours. Though not "dandy-ish" like '80s new wave and electronic-oriented music, these genres similarly provided a space for expressions of masculinity that had not been common in either mainstream rock culture or men's magazines.

[5] As of 2012, Dolce remains *Details*' only gay editor. The editorial incorporation of gayness was not significantly different under the direction of Dolce than Truman and Leland.

During this era, profiles of alternative-rock and grunge musicians, CD reviews, and fashion spreads utilizing rock imagery and style dominated *Details*—"Rock 'N' Roll Hair" and "Fashion: Rock 'n' Roll Suits" were typical headlines for layouts that used rock musicians as models. Many of the contributors' bylines could also be found in music publications such as *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*, while musicians such as Henry Rollins and Red Hot Chili Peppers singer Anthony Kiedis penned articles. Covers frequently featured musical acts such as Nirvana and Nine Inch Nails, whose members reflected *Details*' heterosexual, yet untraditional, model of masculinity by wearing eyeliner, occasionally cross-dressing, and even making out with other men. The February 1995 cover also featured R.E.M. front man Michael Stipe, who had famously refused to categorize his sexuality. Not all of the musicians embraced this fluidity: some of the magazine's featured acts, such as Henry Rollins, embodied more typical rock masculinities informed by aggression and excessive musculature, while others, like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, did so ambivalently. Yet these expressions of masculinity were so prominent that Leland would later name Truman's most significant editorial contribution to *Details* as the "element of rock 'n' roll gender-bending" he brought to the magazine.[6] Leland continued the tradition by publishing articles like "Frock 'n' Roll," which convened a panel of designers, magazine editors, and drag queens to discuss the style of various cross-dressing rock musicians. Such non-restrictive expressions were not new to *Details*, of course; Flanders had previously allowed space for them prior to the magazine's makeover in the fall of 1990. However, Truman was the first editor to see them not only as relevant to straight readers of a mainstream men's lifestyle magazine, but also as a primary means through which they could conceptualize their masculinity.

The construction of this relatively non-restrictive straight masculinity was truly distinct for a men's lifestyle magazine. As discussed throughout this dissertation, men's lifestyle magazines such as

[6] Sean Elder, "Details Goes Bust," *Salon*, Mar. 20, 2000, retrieved from http://www.salon.com

Esquire and *GQ* historically attempted to exclude all non-heterosexual masculinities as well as heterosexual masculinities that expressed gender too effeminately so as to make fashion and consumption a "manly" pursuit. Yet Truman imagined a masculinity specifically inspired by the fans of Depeche Mode, whose straight singer he described as looking "like a huge queen" and which has another, also straight, member known for wearing make-up and leather skirts.[7] The decision to promote such a masculinity, at precisely the moment when *Details* began to pursue a straight readership, suggests he saw non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality as *useful* means to appeal to straight men. This masculinity, relatively undefined by hegemonic gender norms, enabled readers to reject more traditional masculinities—as championed in other men's magazines—that *Details*' editors saw as undesirable, as increasingly uninhabitable, and as a site of anxiety for its readers. Dolce noted in a 1996 editor's letter that men were "fairly confused about manhood and the variations thereof," which was reflected in numerous articles during this editorial era.[8] For instance, the 1992 article "Are You Man Enough?" made clear that old codes of masculinity were harder to abide by.[9] *Details* responded to these shifts by constructing an "alternative" masculinity that provided escape from the careerism, clean-cut fashion, and old-fashioned gender rules championed in other men's lifestyle magazines.

Nowhere was the magazine's use of alternative music to frame masculinity more apparent than in the November 1992 article "Rock 'n' Roll Samurai: Defining the Man of the '90s," which argued, "[T]he messengers for the new masculinity […] come from rock 'n' roll—a last outpost of unself-conscious sexuality." In that essay, author David Turin contemplates the state of American masculinity, writing that it had become "increasingly problematic to be a man, or at least to find

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[7] Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 513.
[8] Joe Dolce, "Editor's Letter," *Details*, Sep. 1996, 44.
[9] Blake Nelson, "How To Date a Feminist," *Details*, Aug. 1993, 46(2). Denis Leary, "Are You Man Enough?," *Details*, Sep. 1992, 84(3).

appropriate ways to express one's manhood." He asserts that Lollapalooza, the annual alternative-rock tour that featured many of the musicians that *Details* prominently covered, offered men protection from "the worlds of political correctness, of gender rage, of recession-bred hopelessness."[10] He specifically praised rocker and poet Henry Rollins and Red Hot Chili Peppers singer Anthony Kiedis—a heterosexual man with a womanizer reputation and known for performing nude and publicly kissing his male band mates—for embodying this new, sexually uninhibited model of straight masculinity. Of course, *Details* did not see the non-restrictiveness of this masculinity as limitless; the magazine championed the musicians who donned drag but did not actually sell dresses to men, for instance. Further, the fluid expressions of male gender were "protected" by rock conventions that are socially constructed as heterosexually "masculine." Yet *Details* nonetheless offered opportunities for gender expression that were not even imaginable within the pages of its competitors.[11]

"Not uptight" heterosexuality

By predominantly targeting their readers through alternative-rock music, Truman, Leland, and Dolce not only envisioned a straight readership that appreciated a relatively fluid notion of masculinity but one that was also not threatened by associations with gayness to the degree that editors of men's magazines had historically envisioned. In 1992 Truman even stated, "We're a heterosexual magazine

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[10] David Turin, "Rock 'n' Roll Samurai: Defining the Man of the '90s," *Details*, Nov. 1992, 54(3).

[11] The heavy focus on alternative rock music helped *Details* define its unique readership, but was also a strategy of necessity. Editor David Keeps explained that *Details* competed for cover and feature subjects with *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Vanity Fair*. As a result, he says that even if the magazine had wanted to put more conventionally mainstream celebrities on its cover to attract a broader audience, it would have been nearly impossible because *Details* was at the bottom of a "pecking order" where the three aforementioned magazines got first pick as *Details* possessed the smallest circulation and had the least established brand. Keeps says that featuring musical acts provided a means to gain access to cover and feature subjects that its competitors did not necessarily want. This allowed *Details* to target a distinct type of reader and stand out amongst men's magazines.

that is not uptight about homosexual issues," while Michael Hainey, an editor during this era, characterized *Details* as aiming to create a "culturally fringe, sexually indeterminate world where gay and straight men could co-exist."[12] In fact, the editors seemingly saw gayness specifically as a means to appeal to straight men, as integral to the masculinity constructed in the magazine. Advance seemed to reinforce this idea with the initial decision to transform a magazine with gay associations into a magazine targeting straight men, rather than create an entirely new title—a decision that suggests the company did not believe *Details*' previous associations with gayness would deter it from acquiring the new straight readers they imagined. As editor, Truman specifically sought contributions from gay writers and hired David Keeps and Dolce, both gay, as some of his first editors.[13] Later, in 1995, as Condé Nast's editorial director, he gave Dolce the editor-in-chief position. However, *Details*' transformation into a straight-targeted lifestyle magazine did not entirely lack problematic repercussions for the incorporation of gayness: it featured less prominently as a sensibility than in Flanders' *Details* and contributor Stephen Saban, who was not fired with the rest of Flanders' staff in 1990, claimed that under Truman he "wasn't allowed to be who [he] had been."[14]

Details' gay-inclusiveness throughout this era was nonetheless unprecedented for a men's lifestyle magazine. The editors frequently incorporated gayness into the entertainment content, including gay-oriented events in the magazine's club listings and the frequent coverage of gay-identified musical acts such as Erasure, Pet Shop Boys, and Boy George—acts not at their commercial peaks and so did not need to be covered at all. Images of same-sex couples and drag

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[12] Truman quoted in Garry Abrams, "Who's Wooing Whom in Details?," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 27, 1992, retrieved from http://www.latimes.com

[13] Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1999), p. 523.

[14] Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 524. Saban's coverage post-Flanders was in fact significantly different: whereas he often wrote about club culture, in the first issue as a men's lifestyle magazine in Sept. 1990, for instance, he covered logging in the Northwest.

queens appeared, as did thoughtful coverage of a wide range of gay-oriented social and political topics such as gays in the military, the Christian Right's war on queer people, outing, gay men living with HIV, gay marriage, and the mainstreaming of gay communities. *Details* also presented personal glimpses into gay lives by letting men pen essays about their experiences coming out and as gay men. In the 1992 essay "Friends Indeed," a straight man even recounted how a gay friend taught him "about the meaning and importance of honesty and respect."[15] The magazine further included gay men's responses in sex surveys, occasionally answered their relationship questions, and even tried to assuage some straight men's anxieties about homosexuality. For instance, when a reader asked about proper etiquette when offered a drink by a gay man, the advice columnist told him to, simply, "Accept it. It's only a drink, Mary."[16] This use of "Mary," a term of endearment or mockery used between some gay men, gently poked fun at the reader's fear of being perceived as gay simply for accepting the drink.[17] The integration of such content marked a break from the media's tendency to present gay men as both depoliticized and desexualized, ultimately encouraging readers to accept gay men both personally and politically—a stark contrast with the content in *Esquire* and *GQ* at the time. Indeed, according to David Keeps, an editor at *Details* from 1990 to 2000, "The heart [of the magazine] was about trying to make the gay stuff not a big deal, trying to make it all part of the conversation."

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[15] Jeremy Mindich, "Friends Indeed," *Details*, Oct. 1992, 93.
[16] Glenn O'Brien, "The Style Guy," *Details*, Mar. 1997, 90.
[17] As further evidence of *Details*' "alternative," or "not uptight," approach to constructing straightness, David Keeps says the editors did not make a big effort to include "a whole lot of bearding" in the fashion layouts. He refers to the common practice in men's magazines of including women alongside the male models in pictures to assure audiences that the men in the photograph are heterosexual. Refusal to do this indicates, as with the "It's only a drink, Mary" comment, a "not uptight" and non-defensive approach to construction masculinity. It is also in direct contrast with the approach Art Cooper said he took when he assumed the editor-in-chief position of *GQ* in 1983, as discussed in Chapter One.

Despite trying to defuse any threats straight men may have felt about gay men and even nodding to gay men at times, *Details* editors were not seeking a gay audience. In fact, Dolce outright argues that the gay content was used to appeal to a specifically *straight* audience:

> What we were trying to say is these are modern men, younger men. There's a generational difference here and in this generational difference, sexuality is more integrated. These men had straight *and* gay friends. They fucked women. They liked to talk about sex. The whole thing added up to what we thought was a new generation. But we *weren't* ever targeting a gay readership.

In this way, *Details*' strategy is similar to the one that Becker argues emerged in television a few years later, when network executives used gay-themed programming to target a straight audience that they envisioned as "'hip,' 'sophisticated,' urban-minded, white, and college-educated 18-to-49 year olds (perhaps even 18-to-34) with liberal attitudes, disposable income, and a distinctively edgy and ironic sensibility."[18] In the early to mid 1990s, then, gay material became a narrowcasting tool to reach a specifically straight viewing audience that was large as well as demographically desirable to advertisers—a strategy that basic and premium cable networks such as Bravo, HBO, and Showtime further capitalized on in the late 1990s and 2000s. Similarly, *Details* targeted an edgy straight reader—though a more narrowly edgy reader than audiences associated with network television—through gay-inclusive and -themed editorial content. While this strategy was new for a men's lifestyle magazine, it is not entirely surprising that *Details*' associations with gayness proved a successful appeal to certain straight men during this editorial era. As Becker argues, gay people were gaining social acceptance and a particular cultural allure in the 1990s among the twentysomething-aged individuals of Generation X, which was the audience that comprised much of *Details*' target audience.

However, the *type* of gayness that Truman and his immediate successors utilized made their construction of masculinity unlikely. Becker argues that network television tended to use

[18] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, p. 95.

representations of gay people as upscale, professional, and urban to reach their demographically desirable straight readers.[19] Meanwhile, Tim Edwards argues assumptions about gay men's consumption practices allowed British marketers in and beyond the magazine industry to make "inroads into mainstream heterosexual masculinity" in the 1980s, a trend that scholars in subsequent decades have argued occurred in the U.S. with *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and the metrosexual phenomenon.[20] But during this era, *Details* did not capitalize on the assumptions about gay men as affluent consumers who could normalize the practice of consumption for men broadly. They instead drew on an entirely different set of assumptions—particularly regarding gay men's subcultural status, political and social oppressions, and contributions to popular culture—and made inroads to straight men via the belief that these particular associations would contribute to the magazine's hip cultural edge.

The integration of this gay-themed content raised questions in the media about the magazine's target audience. For instance, a 1992 fashion spread, which included a photograph of a man getting ready to go on a date with another man, prompted *New York Magazine* to note that *Details* "appears to be wooing a gay readership," which Truman denied.[21] Even still, the magazine found a large gay readership as Dolce said more reader mail came from gay men than straight men and that the gay percentage of the readership was "larger than typical" for a men's lifestyle magazine.[22] The magazine also increased its straight readership significantly as *Details*' hip, gay-friendly model of straight masculinity helped the magazine quintuple its readership by the end of

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[19] Becker, "Prime-Time Television in the Gay Nineties," p. 43.
[20] Tim Edwards, *Men in the Mirror*, p. 74.
[21] Jeannette Walls, "Intelligencer," *New York Magazine,* Jan. 20, 1992, 10.
[22] Similarly, in 2010, editor David Keeps said he still heard from gay men who felt they had at least a partial voice in the magazine during that era. It should be noted that not everyone felt the new *Details* was gay-inclusive. In 1991, for instance, Don Tuthil said he started his gay-targeted men's magazine *Genre* in part because the demise of the original *Details* left a lot of gay men feeling that they did not have a magazine with which they could identify. See Joanne McAllister, "A Magazine for a Man's Man," *Inside Media*, Apr. 3, 1991, p. 52.

Dolce's tenure as editor in 1997. However, it was not a particularly affluent readership for a men's lifestyle magazine. With a median reader income of $27,000 in 1996 and a circulation that stalled around 516,000 in 1997, *Details* had a readership that lagged behind those of *Esquire* and *GQ* in both affluence and size.[23] The strategy nonetheless allowed *Details* to distinguish itself in the men's market, which was flooded with titles that eliminated gayness altogether or included them in limited ways, helping it succeed while the vast majority of new male-targeted titles failed. By insisting the magazine was for straight men yet utilizing gayness as an asset rather than a threat, Truman, Leland, and Dolce capitalized on gay men's perceived cultural cachet while reaffirming their readers' heterosexuality through the insistence that they were simply "not uptight." Moreover, the success of *Details* in this era significantly complicates the scholarly literature that argues men's lifestyle magazines need to distance themselves from gayness in order to appeal to straight men.

Second Era: Lad Masculinity, 1997-2000

Details' second era of editorial control as a men's lifestyle magazine offered a striking departure from that of Truman, Leland, and Dolce. In 1997, shifts within the men's magazine industry allegedly led Condé Nast to believe gayness, though previously integral to *Details*' editorial content, was holding the magazine back from reaching a larger audience. Media reports noted that Dolce's homosexuality allegedly "rubbed some [Condé Nast] corporate types the wrong way," prompting the company to insist that *Details* become "more hetero."[24] As Chapter Three's analysis of the magazine's operation of power further discusses, Dolce states that Condé Nast executives did not rule with an iron fist and that no one at the company directly told him to downplay any gay-themed content: "They

[23] Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 517. Constance L. Hays, "Condé Nast Makes High-Level Changes at Two Magazines," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1997, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[24] Cynthia Cotts, "The Devil Is in the Details," Salon.com, May 15, 1997, retrieved from http://www.salon.com

would never had been that crass to say, 'Make it straighter.' I think at the end of my reign there, they were saying to me, 'Focus on the majority of your audience.'" Though *Details* was an enormous success in the early to mid 1990s, Condé Nast expected the magazine to grow as big as *GQ* and reach a circulation of at least 700,000—a figure *Details* failed to reach. Based on whom the executives chose to succeed Dolce, former sports journalist and *Vanity Fair* senior editor Michael Caruso (1997-1999) and *Maxim* editor-in-chief Mark Golin (1999-2000), the company appeared to see a more traditionally masculine approach as a way to broaden the magazine's readership. Both editors-in-chief expunged every trace of editorial content even remotely considered gay-inclusive and replaced the magazine's music focus with sports coverage, images of scantily clad women, and sexually explicit articles like "Fondle with Care: A User's Guide To Breasts" and "How To Make Her Beg For More."[25] In short, *Details* assumed the "locker-room, sexual tone" that Truman specifically claimed he did not want for the magazine when he was editor.[26]

It is highly unlikely that the decision to give *Details* a new direction was solely attributable to Dolce's gay identity—after all, Condé Nast allowed him to edit the magazine for more than two years. However, the company certainly seemed to perceive that a gay-inclusive men's magazine would flounder as the launch of *Maxim*, an aggressively heterosexual publication with a frat boy ethos, changed many industry people's thinking about how a men's lifestyle magazine should look. Within months of *Maxim*'s arrival, Dolce was fired and, under Caruso, *Details* immediately bore a striking resemblance to the new competition—the March 1998 cover is a typical example, featuring actor Heather Graham topless and covered in gold paint. Even when the magazine featured people who would have fit the sensibility of the previous era of *Details*, such as actor Ewan McGregor, their features were surrounded by articles focusing on women's sex secrets and fitness tips from athletes.

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[25] For these headlines, see the covers of the Oct. 1997 and Jan. 1999 issues.

[26] Deirdre Carmody, "Details Magazine Defies Fickle Ads and Fashions," *The New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1992, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

However, just as Dolce said no one told him to make *Details* more laddish, David Keeps says there "wasn't any sort of explicit, like, 'Well, we're going to be a he-man magazine now'" when Caruso took over. Instead, he described a three-month period that involved editors and writers being hired, fired, or quitting as it became increasingly clear, though never explicitly articulated, that the magazine's tone shifted—a process explained by Chapter Three's theorization of discerning savvy. *Details*' resemblance to *Maxim* became even more pronounced when Condé Nast replaced Caruso with former *Maxim* editor Golin, who put nearly naked women on the cover of every issue because, he explained, "if you are going to have a general-interest magazine for men, well—surprise, surprise—one of men's general interests is women."[27] Both Caruso and Golin characterized their readers as exclusively straight and primarily published sports content, money-related articles, and instructions on how to interact with women—the content Condé Nast CEO Steve Florio presumably had in mind when he told *Folio* that the new *Details* would be "much more of a reflection of what young men *really* want."[28]

Florio's statement discursively positioned the magazine's previous gay-inclusive content against Caruso and Golin's exclusively straight content in order to construct normative ideas of masculinity. By characterizing the exclusively straight content as encompassing men's supposed authentic interests, Florio suggested that Truman, Leland, and Dolce artificially imposed gay-inclusivity and a countercultural sensibility on readers and that it did not reflect what men truly desire in a men's magazine. But as Ben Crewe argues readerships are "always an imagined, discursive form, never entirely knowable or fully definable," editorial content does not necessarily represent men's actual desires.[29] Both the gay-inclusive (1990-1997) and exclusively straight (1997-2000)

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[27] Alex Kuczynski, "Seeking More Sizzle, Details Magazine Hires Maxim's Editor," *The New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1999, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com
[28] Jeff Garigliano, "The New House That Florio Built," *Folio*, Jul. 1, 1997, p. 78; emphasis added.
[29] Crewe, *Representing Men*, p. 114.

content were simply different means through which the editors discursively constructed the magazine's audience. Like the three editors that immediately preceded them, Caruso and Golin envisioned a heterosexual readership; they were simply the first editors-in-chief of *Details* to see heterosexuality as incompatible with gayness and non-normative expressions of masculinity. Indeed, Caruso observed of his attempts to heterosexualize *Details*, "If you have *any* gay content, you're perceived as a gay magazine."[30] Caruso and Golin responded by entirely eliminating gayness from the magazine and replacing their predecessors' model of non-rigid heterosexual masculinity with one that strictly adhered to traditional notions of heterosexuality. This editorial strategy attempted to stabilize straight masculinity; after all, as Judith Butler argues, the mere presence of gayness threatens "to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization."[31] However, it did not help *Details* achieve the same surge in circulation as it did for *Maxim*.

By the end of Golin's editorship, in spring 2000, *Details*' circulation hovered around 541,000—an overall increase of only 25,000 since Dolce's departure in 1997.[32] This suggested the magazine failed to make a new name for itself among the new lad titles (e.g., *Maxim, Stuff*) and had not differentiated itself enough from *Esquire* and *GQ*, which had begun to undergo their own relative *Maxim*-ized makeovers. Advance Publications responded by temporarily shutting down *Details* with the May 2000 issue in an attempt to rebrand *Details* from a lad-style title to a fashion-oriented lifestyle publication for men. This involved not only overhauling the editorial content but also shifting the magazine from Condé Nast to another Advance subsidiary, Fairchild Publications, which had a lower cost structure than Condé Nast and thus did not require *Details* to have such large

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[30] Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 508.
[31] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (pp. 13-31), in Diana Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 314.
[32] Sean Elder, "Details Goes Bust," Salon.com, Mar. 20, 2000, retrieved from http://www.salon.com

circulation in order to remain profitable. A smaller and more focused circulation would also appeal to high-end apparel advertisers as the audience would have a higher average income and be more psychographically desirable, thus making it a better fit for their brands than a more mass-appeal title.[33] When *Details* relaunched in October 2000, it looked nothing like the previous incarnations of the magazine as its next editor-in-chief and, according to those who worked there at the time, editors made no effort to retain any of the previous readers, instead heralding a new type of consumer-driven masculinity.

Third Era: Metrosexuality, 2000-

Following the previous gay-inclusive and exclusively straight masculinities in the magazine, new editor-in-chief Dan Peres claimed *Details* now championed a "new form of masculinity" for fashion-conscious men. He described this masculinity as "more of an urban thing and a niche market. It certainly hasn't swept the nation, or else we would have the circulation of *Maxim*. But it's focused enough for us to know our reader and what will make him comfortable."[34] Although he did not use the word, Peres promoted metrosexual masculinity nearly three years before metrosexuality became a cultural phenomenon in the U.S. Originally used in print by British journalist Mark Simpson in 1994, *metrosexual* refers to a straight man who embraces a type of style that has been stereotypically associated with gay men and whom he claims "pioneered the business of accessorizing masculinity."[35] In 2002, Simpson predicted a forthcoming metrosexuality phenomenon in the U.S. and characterized the metrosexual as a narcissist who possesses plenty of disposable income, resides

[33] Typically, as a readership increases in size, its median household income decreases as more affluent readers tend to defect and the typical level of income drags down the median. This shift is generally believed to attract advertisers who want to reach quantity rather than quality.
[34] Rachel Lehmann-Haupt, "Dan Peres Edits Both Ways," *Folio*, May 1, 2004, p. 16.
[35] Mark Simpson, "Meet the Metrosexual: He's Well Dressed, Narcissistic and Obsessed with Butts. But Don't Call Him Gay," *Salon*, Jul. 22, 2002. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com

in a metropolitan area, and likes to consume clothing and domestic products.[36] The term gained cultural traction in the U.S. the following summer, when *The New York Times* ran the trend piece "Metrosexuals Come Out" and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, a Bravo network reality-television show that featured gay men giving straight men metrosexual makeovers, debuted to strong cable ratings and substantial media attention. According to Helene Shugart, the figure of the metrosexual pervaded the public consciousness for the next two years.[37]

Though not as widely known as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Details* became highly associated with metrosexuality as *The New York Times* deemed it "a kind of metrosexual bible" in summer 2003, a description that circulated widely through the media and brought the magazine much attention.[38] Newhouse reportedly liked the media attention but Peres quickly attempted to distance *Details* from the term *metrosexuality* as he believed the media considered it a fad, going so far as to declare a moratorium on the word within the magazine's pages. *Details* nonetheless promoted a model of masculinity that embraced the characteristics of metrosexuality, with Peres stating that it was "a wonderful thing" for men to keep people guessing about their sexuality because it "gives you an air of mystery: could he be [gay]? It makes you stand out."[39] He appealed to this metrosexual reader by bulking up the magazine's fashion coverage, focusing on high-end style, and putting male celebrities rather than nearly naked women on the cover of each issue. He claimed from the outset of the relaunch that the magazine pursued a man who is "upwardly mobile, who is status-conscious, who is

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[36] Mark Simpson, "Meet the Metrosexual." Although the term *metrosexual* was popularized in the 2000s, it is not the first term to reference the figure of a supposedly gay-acting straight man. Terms such as *retrosexual*, *pomosexual*, and even *strays*—a term *Details* defined in 1993—have also been used. See "The *Details* Dictionary," *Details*, Dec. 1993, 55.

[37] Shugart, "Managing Masculinities," p. 284.

[38] Warren St. John, "Metrosexuals Come Out," *The New York Times*, Jun. 22, 2003, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

[39] St. John, "Metrosexuals Come Out."

smart, and can handle stimulation beyond a woman in lingerie."[40] Despite that description's implied heterosexuality, as well as that of his quote to *The New York Times*, Peres did not exclude gay men from his readership. In 2000 he said, "yes, they are our readers also."[41] He later stated outright that the magazine embraced and targeted, not just acknowledged, the magazine's gay readers alongside its straight readers—a claim reiterated by editors who said the magazine intentionally sought to appeal more to gay readers than other men's lifestyle magazines.[42]

This intent is evident in a number of articles that embraced gay men and aspects of gay culture during this era. Though *Details* included little gay-themed content throughout the first few years under Peres' editorship, the magazine began to feature nearly monthly content that discussed topics related specifically to gay men including gays in the military, gay marriage, media stereotypes of gay men, gay parenting, army soldiers who make gay porn, the influence of gay men in Hollywood, the Catholic church's war on gay priests, some Christians' belief that exorcisms can cure homosexuality, online cruising culture, and friendships between gay and straight men, among others. The magazine even published articles about America's treatment of gay people as "second-class citizens," and how words such as *metrosexual*, *man date*, and *gay vague* function to reinforce homophobia by creating "language to clarify gender and behavioral boundaries [and] to pointedly redefine what's acceptable for straight dudes while simultaneously keeping homos safely on the other side of the divide"—content that undoubtedly helped it win a 2007 GLAAD Media Award.[43] Two years later, *Details* became the first men's lifestyle magazine to feature an openly gay man on its cover when singer Adam Lambert appeared on the November 2009 issue.

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[40] Jon Fine, "'Details' Pumps Up Style for New Incarnation," *Advertising Age*, Jun. 19, 2000, retrieved through the LexixNexis database.
[41] Alex Kuczynski, "Brash Newcomer Rolls Out Latest Incarnation of Details," *The New York Times*, Sep. 18, 2000, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com
[42] Dan Peres, "Letter from the Editor," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 50.
[43] See Augusten Burroughs, "All Men Are Created (Not So) Equal," *Details*, Oct. 2006, 204. Simon Dumenco, "The New Homophobia," *Details*, Sep. 2005, 136(2).

The magazine also constructed its audience through an assumed knowledge of aspects of gay culture. The mode of address in many articles, for instance, implied that a significant portion of its readership is gay: occasional use of the words *fag* and *faggot* suggests that the editors see their readership as either gay and comfortable with non-pejorative uses of the word—or, if not gay, at least knowledgeable enough about gay culture to know that those words can be used to build community within certain contexts.[44] Such appeals extended beyond simple editorial content: editors noted *Details* also pushed the envelope in terms of sexuality with its art direction and photography, bringing edginess through blatant homoeroticism and appeals typically associated with gay-targeted publications such as bare-chest men and double entendre headlines. One of the most discussed cover subjects was Daniel Radcliffe, the *Harry Potter* actor who donned leather gear in a quasi-bondage-themed photo spread that ended up being widely covered by the media and became the magazine's biggest selling issue of the year. That sort of buzz, said executive editor Bill Van Parys, is crucial for the magazine as it drives up interest in the magazine. As a result, he said, *Details* makes a point to "push it" with such gay-themed and sexually risqué content because creating that sort of interest is "the whole key to the business."

"Does Everyone Think You're Gay?"

Although Peres was the first editor since 1990 to state that *Details* targeted straight and gay readers, editorial content under his editorship did not always indicate comfort with gayness. In fact, much of what Peres said *about* the magazine's inclusivity was often not reflected *in* the magazine. Contrary to boasting that sexual ambiguity allows a man to create interest and distinguish himself, Peres cultivated a culture of anxiety about masculinity. This included articles that addressed concerns such

[44] See Simon Dumenco, "The Media's Fag Factor," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 188(2). Augusten Burroughs, "Are Metrosexuals Fake Fags?" *Details*, Oct. 2003, 104. Tom Samiljan, "Fag-Stags," *Details*, Dec. 2002, 44(2).

as desirability to women, the male physique, sexual performance, income level, and career status, but most prominently revolved around the fear of being perceived as gay—headlines such as "Does Everyone Think You're Gay?" and "My TiVo Thinks I'm Gay" were common.[45] Fears surrounding the perceived instability between gay and straight identity and unfixed nature of sexuality were further underscored by articles asking, "Is Your New Baby Making You Gay?" and "Can Gays Turn Straights?"[46] At times the editorial content highlighted the absurdity of some straight men's fear of being perceived as gay, as in the article "Dissecting the Straight Man's Hug," but more often the attention on the issue did not assuage the anxiety but reinforced it as a valid concern.[47] Peres expressed this concern himself, writing in an editor's letter, "There's nothing butch about me … I felt particularly limp in the weeks immediately following 9-11. Firemen, cops, and steelworkers were king. Did that make me a queen?"[48] This proved a marked contrast to the gay-inclusive content published in the early 1990s, when Truman considered looking "like a huge queen" to be a desirable embodiment of masculinity rather than something to fear. It also echoed Joshua Gamson's assertion there was an emerging cultural anxiety at the time that one could no longer "tell the difference between a gay man and a straight one."[49]

In May 2006 *Details* went so far as to publish the article "It's Okay To Ask 'Are You Gay?'" which espoused the belief that if a man wonders about someone's sexuality, he should ask directly rather than make assumptions.[50] In the essay, author Simon Dumenco argues that this approach, at least in contexts where a person's public declaration of homosexuality will not get them fired or

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[45] See Mike Albo, "Does Everyone Think You're Gay," *Details*, Jun./Jul. 2008, 160(6). Carl Swanson, "My TiVo Thinks I'm Gay," *Details*, Sep. 2002, 80.
[46] See the cover of the Aug. 2005 issue. Augusten Burroughs, "Can Gays Turn Straights?" *Details*, Mar. 2004, 125(2).
[47] See Augusten Burroughs, "Dissecting the Straight Man's Hug," *Details*, Jun./Jul. 2003, 78.
[48] Dan Peres, "Letter from the Editor," *Details*, Sep. 2002, 58.
[49] Joshua Gamson, "The Intersection of Gay Street and Straight Street: Shopping, Social Class, and the New Gay Visibility," *Social Thought and Research, 26* (2005), 3-18, p. 7.
[50] Simon Dumenco, "It's Okay To Ask, 'Are You Gay?'" *Details*, May, 2006, 90(2).

worse, is more "polite" as it does not condescend to the person in question. Yet in the context of a magazine publishing numerous articles about discomfort and concern surrounding ambiguity of sexual identity, the permission given by the magazine to ask someone outright about his sexuality also functioned to resolve the anxiety and confusion about shifting boundaries—it allowed readers to not feel guilty about needing to identify who is gay. However, the article's argument about using a direct question is undermined by the accompanying etiquette guide that offers suggestions about "How To Pop the Question." Rather than simply suggest, as the article's title does, that one should ask "Are You Gay?" it only offers indirect approaches, such as asking about *Project Runway* and the Logo network. Knowledge of these subjects, the article contends, is a positive indication of gayness. Of course, because *Details* operates in a space where straight men are allegedly behaving more like gay men (e.g., watching Bravo's fashion competition *Project Runway*), these indirect questions reveal nothing as they rely on outdated, pre-metrosexual stereotypes and gay/straight cultural boundaries.

Panic over shifting cultural boundaries between gay and straight masculinities, and the ability to identify who is gay and who is straight, in *Details* manifested most infamously in the "Gay or…?" column described in the introductory chapter. A monthly feature that queried whether an individual was gay or simply appeared gay due to other aspects of his identity such as his nationality or profession, the column began in August 2003 and ran until December 2006. For instance, the "Gay or Guido?" column pointed to supposedly similar preferences of gay men and "guidos" for spray-on tans, large pecs, and European clothing labels as proof that "the Italian stallion and the Chelsea boy are indistinguishable."[51] Elsewhere, "the British fop and the American queen are cut from the same cloth," rappers and rock stars alike were adopting gay aesthetics, best friends could actually be lovers, preppiness could be seen as gayness, Los Angeles hipsters resembled gay men, and—the

[51] Whitney McNally, "Gay or Guido?" *Details*, Aug. 2003, 32.

installment that prompted a protest of the magazine—gay men and Asians were easily confused.[52] Despite the more blatantly absurd and jokey installments (e.g., "Gay or Ellen?" "Gay or Magician?"), the column collectively insisted that anyone could be gay and so boundaries must be constantly scrutinized and policed.[53] In 2010, more than three years after the column's discontinuation, the magazine published a brief retrospective on the column that dismissed the "Gay or…?" question as "moot" since it is "clearer than ever that telling gay from straight stereotypes is impossible."[54] That conclusion, however, dismissed the fact that for years *Details* relied on and reaffirmed certain stereotypes not only about gay men but also about certain racial groups, ethnicities, nationalities, and professions, among other categories.

By insisting men's sexuality needed to be constantly monitored and identified, the monthly "Gay or…?" column and much of the other editorial content in *Details* suggested Peres saw sexuality as a central concern of his readership. Whereas fear of these blurred boundaries, particularly with regards to consumption habits, has prompted many men's magazine editors to entirely eliminate gayness from their magazines—as in Caruso and Golin's second era of *Details*—Peres specifically constructed his audience around this very anxiety. He claimed his readership was "of the mind-set that gay and straight men are *alarmingly* similar," a drastic shift from Truman's previous description of his readers as "not uptight about homosexual issues."[55] However, Peres seemed to think only the

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[52] Whitney McNally, "Gay or British?" *Details*, Oct. 2003, 58. "Gay or Rapper?" *Details*, Sep. 2005, 322; Whitney McNally, "Anthropology," *Details*, Apr. 2004, 52.

[53] According to Cerulo, the column did not end because of reader outcry about the "Gay or Asian?" column but rather because the puns and one-liners grew tired. She explained, "We kept it around as long as we did because it was iconic. Whether you loved it or hated it, you knew it existed. But it didn't disappear after the 'Gay or Asian?' controversy because Dan didn't want to cave. And that's sort of, I think, in tune with the magazine: 'We're not going to not do something just because you don't want us to.'"

[54] "Gay or…?" *Details*, Mar. 2010, 150(2).

[55] Lehmann-Haupt, "Dan Peres Edits Both Ways." Emphasis added.

straight segment of his readership was concerned about this similarity, as the editorial content never indicated anxiety that a gay man would be mistaken for straight.

The emphasis on this tension resulted in content that reinforced the notion of gayness as a threat, including articles such as "Heterophobia: Has the Straight Man Become the Victim?", and as something about which one is right to be concerned.[56] So while Jay Clarkson argues of metrosexuality in *Queer Eye*, "heterosexuality […] is changed in one highly significant way: it cannot be homophobic," Peres' model of metrosexuality allowed space for homophobia to remain intact.[57] Images that accompanied many of these articles, such as photographic depiction of a band of violent gay men ("Heterophobia") and a gay man dressed as a fairy ("It's Okay To Ask 'Are You Gay?'") only reinforced this homophobia, as did articles arguing for the right for people to use the word *gay* as a slang term, insisting gay men have power over straight men in culture and the workplace, pejoratively decrying the rise of the "douchefag," and arguing that there is such a thing as being "too gay."[58] As a result, many in the media wondered if *Details* was a gay magazine while many others, as evidenced by the outcry surrounding the "Gay or…?" column, saw this anxiety as indication that *Details* was not friendly towards gay people but rather homophobic.

Notably, these articles were not written cynically or intended to be read ironically or to mock of the reader. Editors said that they rather saw them as authentic reflections of Peres' target reader, whom editors often described as neurotic and contemplative. Said Van Parys, "*Details* certainly preyed on men's issues about that masculinity stuff. It even did articles on, like, 'Do you have paycheck envy?' Whether it's money or sex or the gay/straight stuff—it was all about getting at

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[56] Dumenco, "Heterophobia."
[57] Clarkson, "Contesting Masculinity's Makeover," 241.
[58] See Dumenco, "Heterophobia." Dumenco, "It's Okay To Ask, 'Are You Gay?'" Wimple, "It's Okay To Say… Gay." Whitney McNally, "Faking Gay," *Details*, Mar. 2004, 126(2). "The Rise of the Douchefag," *Details*, Dec. 2009, 78(2). Tony Hendra, "Is There Such a Thing As Too Gay?" *Details*, Sep. 2003, 115.

men's neuroses and inner thoughts." Senior writer Ian Daly agreed, adding this attention to men's anxieties separates *Details* from other men's magazines: "If you're hyper-masculating like at *FHM*, it's like this bullshit faux confidence thing. We take the opposite approach, like, 'Let's be real about this.' We love stories that call into question, like, 'What does it mean to be a man these days?' 'What are the parameters of masculinity?' We want to discuss the anxieties our reader has." Indeed, associate editor Erica Cerulo said the line between gay and straight is of concern to many of the magazine's straight readers. She pointed to feedback from 2008 focus groups that *Details* conducted with readers in Los Angeles and New York, explaining, "Many of these guys, since they're stylish and well-informed, intelligent guys, get mistaken for gay reasonably regularly. In the particular issue that we were talking to them about [June/July 2008], there was a story called 'Does Everyone Think You're Gay?' and all of these men were like, 'Yes. Yes! This is me. Yes.'"

"Is There Such a Thing As Too Gay?"

The type of gay man targeted by, and depicted in, *Details* also helps to mitigate potential concerns by straight readers and advertisers. The gay man envisioned by *Details* is clearly happy to consume products as a means to remain stylish but is not flamboyant. He is not, in other words, television personality Steven Cojocaru—a figure *Details* deemed "too gay" for his interest in women's clothing and for being "a freak who plays slap-bang into the stereotype of 'pansy,' 'fairy,' 'sissy,' and all those other hilarious epithets we throw around in private"—in a word, "*abnormal*."[59] Elsewhere, the article "Is There Such a Thing As Too Gay?" dubs Cojocaru "a bitchy slap in the face to the dogged, courageous men and women who've fought 30-plus years to be accepted as normal, law-abiding citizens." By linking particular gay-associated behaviors with deviancy, *Details* puts boundaries on acceptable notions of what it means to be acceptably gay. Unlike the *Details* under Truman, Leland,

[59] Hendra, "Is There Such a Thing As Too Gay?"

and Dolce, Peres' *Details* does not rely on their subcultural status or oppressions to bring the magazine an edge. It rather relies on perceptions of their knowledge of a particular type of fashion, urban sensibility, and connections with upscale living.

Lynne Joyrich has described this approach to gay inclusion on television as depicting a gay man as a "knowing character," who has "privileged access to information or wisdom that other figures lack." The result, she argues, is that gay people have power *within* narrative worlds, but not over them.[60] Gay men function similarly in the editorial content of *Details* in this editorial era: while *Details*' idealized gay man does not act with the flamboyance of Cojocaru, the magazine banks on the fact that he nonetheless possesses the same sort of knowledge about style as Cojocaru. In 2009 and early 2010, for instance, the magazine's website published a recurring feature entitled "Ask a Gay," which posited that when a straight man has "evolved" straight buddies and a girlfriend who is "plenty chic," "even in this day and age, there are some questions that only a stylish gay man can answer."[61] The sort of questions that gay men are particularly able to answer, it turns out, have to do with women's handbags, chest-waxing, wedding attire, and selecting sheets, sofas, and underwear. In other words, like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Details* often uses gay men for their supposed knowledge of style and fashion so that they can help straight men become better consumers and more desirable to women. Further, even when gay men are not explicitly utilized as repositories of this type of specialized knowledge, their presence in the magazine still has the effect of emanating that sense of style onto straight readers.

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[60] Lynne Joyrich, "Epistemology of the Console," *Critical Inquiry, 27*, no. 3 (2001), 439-469, pp. 454, 456.

[61] See "Ask a Gay: Details," Details.com, retrieved from http://www.details.com/about/ask-a-gay. This column is premised on the same ideas about gay men as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. It is also a common popular culture theme (e.g., the 2003 "Ask a Gay Dude" skit on the Comedy Network's *Chappelle's Show* and the fashion-oriented "Ask a Gay Man" YouTube.com series, which was eventually shown on the Bravo network's online division, OutZoneTV.com).

Given metrosexuality's fashion emphasis, it follows that Peres—unlike Truman, Leland, and Dolce—drew on the same associations between gay men and high-end consumerism that Tim Edwards notes were used to help marketers appeal to all men in the 1980s.[62] It also follows that gay men were finally acknowledged and embraced, however problematically, as part of *Details*' readership at the moment the magazine transformed into a more upscale fashion title. This is particularly notable given the rise of the gay market throughout the 1990s and, according to Katherine Sender, its frequent perpetuation of "the myth of the ideal gay consumer as affluent, educated, apolitical, and tasteful."[63] Peres' construction of metrosexual masculinity capitalized on this myth and embraced gayness as a means to normalize consumption for men broadly. While he occasionally featured politically and socially relevant articles about, for instance, gays in the military, the vast majority of content constructed gay men as sophisticated, professionally successful, and fashion-forward. By utilizing gay men for their alleged associations with fashion, affluence, aesthetic expertise, and cosmopolitan existence, *Details* enabled straight men, as Shugart notes of *Queer Eye*, to "collude with and capitalize on gay men's abberant status in order to increase their cultural capital, both with women and in terms of economic and professional success, to which gay men essentially functioned as the link."[64]

Such collusion required careful management so as to not cast doubt on the inherently heterosexual nature of metrosexuality. Indeed, as previously mentioned, Peres insisted that *Details* was "NEVER" a "queer magazine."[65] This was further emphasized in content that—through the safe demarcation of boundaries between gay and straight masculinities in articles such as "Does Everyone Think You're Gay?" and the "Gay or…?" column—consistently marked the magazine as

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[62] Edwards, *Men in the Mirror*.
[63] Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics*, p. 238.
[64] Shugart, "Managing Masculinities," p. 294.
[65] Dan Peres, "Letter from the Editor," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 50.

straight even as Peres argued that the magazine also targeted gay men. Because *Details* embraced gay male readers, albeit marginally, drew on their feminized associations with fashion and sophisticated taste, and championed a so-called effeminate model of straight masculinity, *Details* needed to directly acknowledge the non-normativity of metrosexuality so that it could effectively establish that it is, in fact, not a form of homosexuality. Nowhere is this strategy more obvious than in *Details*' fifth anniversary issue, which included the article "The Pussification of the American Man." In that article, author Jeff Grodinier asserts that more straight men may be getting pedicures, waxing their chests, and caring about how their rear ends look, but that does not make them weak, gay, or inferior to those—such as, he says, the Bush Administration—who champion "the brawny he-mannishness of the ancient regime." He likens the adoption of these allegedly feminine behaviors as a strategy similar to that utilized by the non-alpha male animals in a group, who surreptitiously develop different behaviors so that they can still impregnate females despite not being the males that actually dominate the tribe—"a scheme that is going to sound eerily familiar to those of us living in an age of plucked eyebrows and tingly bath salts." He thus suggests, "The next time your dad starts wondering why you've gotten all swishy lately, just explain to him that you're acting gay because you're … straight. That's right. It's a cloaking mechanism. It's *the evolution of the species!*"[66] In short, *Details* argued that the adoption of these so-called "gay" attributes actually functioned to validate the heterosexuality of metrosexuals.

This notion of gay men as embodying a more "evolved" model of masculinity than straight masculinity, yet still representing something that should be kept at a distance, is key to the discursive construction of metrosexuality. Gay men are welcome in as much as they function to, as Shugart argues, promote straight consumption and conveniently absorb "all of the tensions related to sexual

[66] Jeff Gordinier, "The Pussification of the American Man," *Details*, Oct. 2005, 97(4). Emphasis in original.

ambiguity inherent in commercial masculinity."[67] But gayness must ultimately be disavowed and gay men must never exist at the center of the metrosexual project lest they taint it as gay. *Details* constructed its readership along these same lines: the anxiety-themed content with its innate homophobia and the gay-inclusive content worked together to construct a metrosexual reader that was straight but able to benefit from the presence of gayness in the magazine, reaffirming straight men's heterosexuality while flattering them by inviting them into a gay-integrated world where *fag* can be bandied about and knowledge of taste is guaranteed. Indeed, Cerulo pointed again to the *Details* focus groups, where straight subscribers claimed they appreciated the gay content because it "made them feel sophisticated and modern." Perhaps most of all, as the article "The Pussification of the American Man" made particularly apparent, *Details* convinced its readers that their interest and existence in this so-called feminized metrosexual world was a means to sustain their heterosexuality. This approach simultaneously confronted and defused the anxiety about metrosexual men potentially being seen as gay.

By defusing gay men's perceived threat while simultaneously using gay men to inform *Details*' model of straight metrosexual masculinity, Peres was able to make his magazine—as he once boasted of sexually ambiguous men—"stand out" from competitors such as *Esquire* and *GQ,* which did not feature nearly as much gay-themed content and promoted more traditionally straight models of masculinity than metrosexuality. According to associate entertainment editor David Walters, by including gay men in its audience and incorporating gay-themed content, *Details* was "filling a niche, addressing a readership that might feel neglected by men's magazines" while at the same time differentiating itself from *GQ*, which is also under the corporate umbrella of Condé Nast. Specifically of the gay-themed content, he added, "Any way that we can vary our content to differentiate ourselves—that's good." Indeed, the inclusion of gay-themed editorial content has

[67] Shugart, "Managing Masculinities," p. 294.

helped *Details* create a brand for itself. For example, Cerulo pointed out that while straight subscribers liked the gay-themed content, the straight *non*-subscribers—whom editors consider to be less invested in, and knowledgeable of, the magazine—were confused by it and uncomfortable with the presence of naked or near-naked male bodies in the magazine. Cerulo cited the magazine's concern with gay/straight boundaries—and the intrigue, controversy, and buzz that is has inspired—as an intentional means of creating a unique sensibility for the magazine as "there's a certain allure that comes with" walking the line between gay and straight.

That ambiguity, which has prompted many to ask "Is *Details* gay?" of its editor-in-chief, has proved a viable business strategy. Although the title's average paid circulation decreased during this era to 465,000, or approximately half that of *GQ* and 235,000 less than *Esquire*'s readership, Peres' readership was more affluent—and, thus, desirable—than ever: *Details*' readers possessed a median household income of approximately $86,419, with 40% of its readers earning over $100,000, in 2010.[68] This not only indicated a remarkable increase over the average $27,000 reader income in the early to mid 1990s, but it also bested the average income of *GQ* ($81,214) and *Esquire* ($72,891) readers. So while Peres may have chastised that if "reading these pages makes you question the sexuality of this magazine, well, we're probably not for you," in the marketplace at least, it is, in fact, okay to ask, "Are you gay?" Indeed, Peres actually counted on that very question to build interest in his magazine.

Constructing Straight Difference

Queer media inquiries of the relationship between gay representations and straight male consumption, as noted in this dissertation's introductory chapter, have focused on how

[68] "Mediakit," 2008, retrieved from http://www.condenastmediakit.com. "Esquire Media Kit," 2008, retrieved from http://www.esquiremediakit.com. "Mediakit," 2010, retrieved from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/det/circulation.cfm

metrosexuality mobilized straight consumption by assigning "gay men and effeminacy … clearly defined roles, as drawn sharply against 'authentic'—heterosexual—masculinity."[69] This chapter's analysis of *Details*' trajectory after 1990 moves beyond the literature's emphasis on metrosexuality, examining various incarnations of consumer masculinity to more fully account for the circulation of gay representations in media and how they relate to the promotion of consumption-driven straight male identities. Although *Details* used and excluded gay men as means to distinguish between gay and straight masculinities, this chapter has shown its editors also used gayness specifically to construct distinctions between *straight* masculinities in the men's lifestyle magazine industry, such as Truman, Leland, and Dolce's "alternative" heterosexuality versus Peres' metrosexuality. *Details*' editors thus did more than distinguish between gay and straight masculinities to construct their respective readerships; they also used gayness to distinguish their straight masculinities from those promoted in other men's titles at the time. *Details*' constructions of masculinity served two important purposes: they first created new male audiences within the men's lifestyle magazine market, using gayness to help promote types of straightness previously ignored in the industry; second, because these new audiences were at risk of emasculation due to their associations with gayness, the constructions also legitimized these audiences' heterosexual identities as "authentic." This case thus emphasizes the necessity of theorizing gayness as a key site for the demarcation of boundaries between, as well as the legitimization of, a range of *straight* consumer masculinities not only in men's magazines but also other men-targeted media.

Details' distinctions between straight masculinities, this chapter argues, are commercial strategies used to secure particular readerships. After all, men's lifestyle magazines sell what Pendergast characterizes as "a coherent representation of a modern masculine ideal," which the previous chapter argued have touted relatively limited notions of acceptable heterosexual gender

[69] Shugart, "Managing Masculinities," p. 292.

expression.[70] From 1990 to 1997 and again from 2000 to 2010, *Details* was thus able to uniquely position itself among competitors by promoting gay-informed (on an interpersonal level) constructions of straight masculinity that were not, and had not previously been, promoted in the men's magazine market. This is important because, as Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks put it, men's magazine editors are particularly concerned with being able to "differentiate themselves from their competitors, to establish an independent identity for their magazine."[71] Constructing new straight readerships largely through gayness proved a savvy strategy: while Caruso and Golin found little commercial success in following industry trends and excluding gayness from their model of *Maxim*-ized masculinity, Truman, Leland, Dolce, and later Peres found considerable commercial success by constructing new, gay-informed masculinities that allowed the magazine to stand out from other men's titles.

Tim Edwards would argue, and this chapter does not disagree, that *Details*' different masculinities throughout the 1990s and 2000s were primarily about the men's magazine industry's need to develop "new markets for the constant reconstruction of masculinity through consumption."[72] But their reconstruction *through gayness* is a significant disruption to how magazines have traditionally constructed a modern masculine ideal via the editorial reinforcement of the gender hierarchy among men. As explained in the introductory chapter, Connell describes this hierarchy as a dynamic set of relations and struggles between men wherein various masculinities are subordinated to hegemonic masculinity.[73] The masculine ideals in men's lifestyle magazines do not always attempt to embody the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity, but they nonetheless function hegemonically in relation to other masculinities in ways that often uphold notions of masculinity

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[70] Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, p. 28.
[71] Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*, p. 48.
[72] Edwards, *Men in the Mirror*, p. 82.
[73] Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 77, 79.

determined by hegemonic masculinity. As a result, the ideals promoted by the upscale magazines are intended to be read as more desirable than other types of masculinities such as gay masculinities, lad masculinities, or working-class masculinities. *Details*' prominent use of gayness, a masculinity that Connell argues is "expelled from the circle of legitimacy" in the gender hierarchy, thus indicates a quite different route to these publications' construction of straight masculinity.[74] Indeed, whereas editors have historically reinforced the hierarchy in a simple, straightforward manner by eliminating gayness—as the presence of gayness would cast doubt on the authenticity of readers' heterosexuality, its elimination helped ensure or gave the illusion of ensuring that their readers would maintain a privileged position in the hierarchy—Truman, Leland, Dolce, and Peres *included* gayness for the very same purpose.

How, then, did gayness work to help ensure these editors' constructions of straight masculinity would remain in the circle of legitimacy rather than, due to its own subordinated status, cast these masculinities completely out of the circle? While *Details* has, since its relaunch as a men's lifestyle magazine in 1990, constructed a readership that is privileged within Connell's conception of the gender hierarchy, I argue Truman, Leland, Dolce, and Peres constructed readerships around masculinities that were nonetheless suspect with regards to their heterosexuality due to their non-normative expressions of gender (e.g., "rock 'n' roll gender-bending," metrosexuality's so-called effeminate fashion aesthetic) and associations with gayness. By carefully transforming the potential threats of these expressions and associations into a means to reinforce readers' heterosexuality, these editors effectively promoted their magazine's masculinities as viable ways to embody "authentic" straightness. The very presence of gayness was necessary to this legitimization, then, as its lower position in the hierarchy provided a contrast that made "alternative" heterosexuality and metrosexuality appear more credibly heterosexual in contrast. By incorporating gayness, these

[74] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 79.

editors were thus able to simultaneously secure their readers' heterosexual privilege as well as *Details*' own position in the men's magazine industry.

It is unsurprising that *Details*' representations of gayness, even when they broke from traditionally stereotypical depictions and encouraged the acceptance of gay men, ultimately reinforced straight men's privileged status in the gender hierarchy—after all, as Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix note, scholars continue to find that media "often simultaneously challenge and reaffirm the heterosexist sociosexual order."[75] This case argues that these challenges can, in fact, *be the very means by which* heterosexist values are reaffirmed. Indeed, it was precisely through the unlikely editorial inclusion of gayness and embrace of gay readers that some of *Details*' editors were able to ensure (or give the appearance of ensuring) that their straight readers would remain inside the gender hierarchy's circle of legitimacy despite not fully meeting the normative standards set by hegemonic masculinity. I argue the inclusion of gay masculinities in male-targeted media—sometimes especially the instances that seem to challenge heteronormative values—can thus be usefully understood as an attempt to modernize hegemonic masculinity. Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee describe such a strategy as "concerned with finding ways in which the dominant group—the White, educated, heterosexual, affluent males we know and love so well—can adapt to new circumstances without breaking down the social-structural arrangements that actually give them their power."[76] Yet I demonstrate how this process of modernization need not be confined between hegemonic masculinity and non-hegemonic masculinities, but also to ways in which non-hegemonic masculinities function in relation to one another. Indeed, in *Details*' first and third eras editors incorporated gayness in a more accepting manner than in much media at the time

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[75] Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, "Seeing 'Straight' Through *Queer Eye*," p. 440.
[76] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Hard and Heavy: Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change* (pp. 139-192), Ed. Michael Kaufman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 164.

and even integrated gayness into the magazine's "complete package" of masculinity. However, they ultimately incorporated gayness only to the extent that it allowed their straight readers to have the appearance of more fully embodying the normative standards set by hegemonic masculinity.

This case emphasizes the dynamic nature of this process of modernization. Just as Connell argues hegemonic masculinity "is not a fixed character type" but rather a configuration "of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships," this chapter argues the representations of gayness used to sell *Details*' respective ideals of straight masculinity were also unfixed.[77] Because literature on the relationship between gay men and straight consumption almost exclusively focuses on metrosexuality, it suggests the sole construction of gayness in this relationship has been the affluent, consumer-oriented model utilized in *Queer Eye*. The present analysis illustrates this is not the case, however: by emphasizing that gayness is constructed differently according to the type of straight masculinity that editors imagine for their readership, this case extends existing literature by theorizing the relationship between gay men and straight consumption as a discursive pattern of gender relations wherein various gay masculinities are constructed to mobilize and reinforce the privileges of various straight consumer identities. By moving beyond the literature's emphasis on metrosexuality and examining how the shifting nature of gay constructions allows for various straight masculinities to remain privileged, I show that constructions of gender in men's magazines are relations among men that negotiate positions of power and prestige rather than merely "lifestyles, a matter of consumer choice," as Connell warns scholars often conceive of multiple masculinities.[78] As media grow increasingly niche-oriented, this raises important concerns about how various media may depict or otherwise draw on gayness—just as *Details* did—as they

[77] Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 76, 81.
[78] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 76.

continue to devise new ways to construct, target, and inevitably need to legitimize the "authenticity" of different segments of the straight male population.

Conclusion

Men's Magazines and New (Media) Possibilities for Masculinities?

Around the turn of the 2010s, seemingly omnipresent headlines such as "Out of Print," "The Print Media Are Doomed," and "How To Survive the Death of Print Media" pronounced newspapers, magazines, and books on the verge of extinction due to the wide-ranging consequences of digitization.[1] Men's lifestyle magazines were certainly no exception. In 2012, for instance, *The New York Times* media journalist David Carr contended that in recent years, "guys like me who have a general interest in the general interest—politics, music, sports, and yes, good-looking women—were looking elsewhere for guidance on how to be a modern man." He explained that he had begun to assemble his lifestyle content from a series of destinations on the web such as political sites and entertainment forums, insinuating lifestyle magazines no longer served a useful purpose for men now that they can freely pick and choose what they want to read about from any number of niche sites. Such an array of new options, Carr stated, left men's lifestyle magazines like *Esquire* looking "like your father's Oldsmobile. And we all know what happened to that brand."[2] The situation has indeed looked dire for men's lifestyle magazines—as with countless other magazines—as fallout

[1] Eric Alterman, "Out of Print," *The New Yorker*, Mar. 31, 2008, retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com. "The Print Media Are Doomed," *Business Week*, Dec. 31, 2008, retrieved from http://www.businessweek.com. Kenneth Rapoza, "How To Survive the Death of Print Media," *Forbes*, Jul. 15, 2011, from http://www.forbes.com

[2] David Carr, "How Esquire Survived Publishing's Dark Days," *The New York Times*, Jan. 22, 2012, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

from the economic recession led to steep, double-digit drops in ad pages.[3] But despite undeniably significant, industry-changing developments resulting from recent economic trends and the rise of competition on the internet, readers have not fled men's upscale magazines in droves as Carr implies. In 2011, *GQ* boasted 980,000 readers—or 260,000 more than in 2000 and 30,000 more than in 2010—while *Esquire* and *Details* remained essentially the same at around 700,000 and 450,000, respectively.[4]

Moreover, the publishing companies are starting to utilize other platforms to adapt to this era of convergence so that they are not rendered obsolete. Whereas in 2009 editors explained that the publishing companies saw websites as simply functioning to drive potential readers to print subscriptions, they have since begun to embrace new technological possibilities with the use of social media, in moves toward e-commerce ventures, via the introduction of web-only content, and through efforts to offer digital subscriptions and interactive versions for tablets and mobile devices that are not simply duplicates of the print versions. Consider that *GQ* and *Details* did not even have their own websites until the fall of 2009, at which point Condé Nast finally dismantled their shared Men.Style.com in order to leverage the magazines' distinct brands through GQ.com and Details.com. Today, on average, the former gets nearly 2.9 million unique visitors and almost 71 million monthly page views while the latter gets nearly 458,000 unique visitors and 3.2 million page views monthly.[5] Esquire.com jumped from 300,000 unique monthly visits in September 2009 to

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[3] *Advertising Age* reports that this affected the entire magazine industry, with many magazines, from *Ebony* and *Wire* to *Men's Journal* and *Teen Vogue*, seeing upwards of 40% drops in advertising pages. *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details* showed 24, 33, and 34% drops from 2008 to 2009. See Nat Ives, "Why Ad Pages Won't Ever Fully Return to Mags," *Advertising Age*, Jul. 27, 2009, retrieved from http://adage.com

[4] Joe Pompeo, "In Latest Report, Circulation Is Up for 'New York,' 'New Yorker,'" *Capital New York*, Feb. 7, 2012, retrieved from http://www.capitalnewyork.com

[5] It is important to note that the economic model for magazines in this digital age is uncertain. Even though the magazines get significant number of page views, these are rewarded with only a fraction of the advertising dollars paid for print. Statistics taken from "GQ – Media Kit Web,"

over two million in December 2011.[6] Although *GQ* was one of the first magazines to appear on the iPad, sales of its digital versions on tablets and mobile devices have been sluggish although have improved: its first issue, in December 2009, sold only 6,614 copies through iTunes but by May 2010 had become the best selling magazine in the App Store and Condé Nast announced that it had sold 57,000 individual issues.[7] The late 2000s and early 2010s have certainly marked a transitional period for men's lifestyle magazines, as well as for the magazine industry broadly, but the death knell has not yet sounded for them—they are simply adapting, largely through hit and miss efforts, to a new digital era.

The question moving forward, then, is how this transition to a print and digital medium will influence discourses and representations of masculinities. Might *Esquire*'s shift to a single-sponsorship advertising model for its iPad version have editorial consequences in how the magazine's digital version attends to male identity?[8] How could the use of social media expand the conversation? Will the move to a multiplatform format in this era of convergence open up new opportunities for creating communities of men and for challenging existing relations between straight, gay, and all men? Unfortunately, at least so far, there is little indication that new media technologies are prompting new constructions of masculinity in the magazines. Given the need to leverage these established brands for more advertising revenue, as well as given editors' ongoing

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CondeNast.com, n.d., retrieved from http://www.condenast.com/brands/gq/media-kit/web/metrics. "Details – Media Kit Web," CondeNast.com, n.d., retrieved from http://www.condenast.com/brands/details/media-kit/web

[6] Carr, "How Esquire Survived Publishing's Dark Days."

[7] Peter Kafka, "With an Eye on the iPad, Condé Nast Declares Its $39,000 in iPhone Magazine a 'Success,'" *All Things D*, Jan. 21, 2010, retrieved from http://allthingsd.com. Lauren Indvik, "GQ's Men of the Year Issue on iPad: 365 Copies Sold," *Mashable*, May 17, 2010, retrieved from http://www.mashable.com

[8] Peter Kafka, "Hearst Makes Its iPad Debut with Esquire: Full Price, No Subscriptions," *All Things D*, Oct. 8, 2010, retrieved from http://allthingsd.com. The car brand Lexus is a noted sponsor of the iPad version. This could have regressive implications for editorial content given that editors noted automobile companies are the most conservative advertisers—as when Chrysler's influence led to the editor-in-chief pulling a gay-themed 1997 fiction piece.

attempts to make sense of what is appropriate for these brands in ways that tend to maintain the status quo, it is perhaps unsurprising that digital content and online strategies have thus far replicated the print magazines' editorial patterns of the contemporary era. For instance, in 2011 *GQ* reaffirmed its exclusion of gay men and masculinities by using its Twitter account to mock gay pop star Adam Lambert, tweeting a link to a photograph of him with facial hair alongside the message, "Rules of Street Style: If you have testosterone problems, a mustache doesn't always help."[9] The tweet received backlash from LGBT-targeted media pundits and critics, including GLAAD, which responded "that being #gay is not a 'testosterone problem,'" and a retort from the blog Queerty noting, "Lambert looks *ridiculous* but it's not because of a hormone imbalance."[10] Anyone who found this tweet "a surprising lapse of gay friendliness," as *Instinct* magazine called it, had not been paying close attention to the magazine.[11]

Given this dissertation's emphasis on the print version of the magazines, future research could offer insight into the implications of shifting industry dynamics and technological developments regarding ideological messages about men. One line of inquiry is to determine whether their place is being contested by the emergence of male-targeted magazines made for the internet. Consider *Grantland* (2011-), an ESPN-affiliated sports and popular culture site that gets 3.5 million unique views per month—more than *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Details*—and was conceived as a space to exercise editorial freedom not allowed on ESPN.com.[12] Although it largely ignores gay issues and does not actively embrace gay men, which enables the dominance of heteronormativity, it also does

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[9] The tweet was quickly deleted as controversy ensued. See "Adam Lambert's Mustache Slammed by *GQ* Magazine," *Huffington Post*, Dec. 13, 2011, retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com

[10] Dan Avery, "*GQ* Apologizes for Suggesting Adam Lambert Has 'Testosterone Problem,'" *Queerty*, Dec. 13, 2011, retrieved from http://www.queerty.com

[11] "*GQ* Apologizes for Suggesting Gay Men Have 'Testosterone Problems,'" *Instinct*, Dec. 14, 2011, retrieved from http://www.instinctmagazine.com

[12] Bill Simmons, "Welcome to Grantland," *Grantland*, Jun. 8, 2011, retrieved from http://www.grantland.com. Josh Sternberg, "Under ESPN's Tutelage, Grantland Plows Ahead," *Digiday*, Apr. 16, 2012, retrieved from http://www.digiday.com

not actively distance itself from personal or political associations with homosexuality. In fact, it has published a thoughtful, personally written examination of homophobia in sports and praised Madonna's performance at the 2012 Super Bowl for queering the annual game and offering a "break from the culture of 'no homo.'"[13] It further condemned film director Brett Ratner for his use of the word *fags* and his subsequent non-apology, arguing, "You don't get a mulligan on homophobia. Not in 2011," and then humorously and good-naturedly answered *Entertainment Weekly*'s headline "James Franco's 'The Broken Tower': Will You Only Watch for His Gay Love Scenes?" with a simple "Yes!"[14] Clearly, *Grantland* is not as disciplined by homophobia on the personal level as, for instance, *Esquire* and *GQ*, and competition from such websites might prompt remediation of the print versions of men's lifestyle magazines, pushing them to rethink how they present information to readers as well as what they cover. This also raises questions about whether online spaces, due to their different economic models, might be able to construct masculinities more broadly and thus avoid some of the gay-related issues in the print magazines analyzed here.

Moreover, the multiple ways in which readers can now engage with men's lifestyle magazines suggest a need to also conduct reception studies. The meaning-making practices of readers is a site in the circuit of media study to which this dissertation has not specifically attended, and research on this may provide insight into some of the ideological work that these magazines do for readers. Research on reception of men's magazines has thus far focused on lad and health-oriented titles, and has investigated the role of these magazines in terms of men's relationship to their bodies, women,

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[13] Dan Klores, "Mind Over Media: Homophobia in Sports," *Grantland*, Aug. 1, 2011, retrieved from http://www.grantland.com. Wesley Morris, "Gay Coding and Madonna's (Brilliant) Halftime Show," *Grantland*, Feb. 6, 2012, retrieved from http://www.grantland.com

[14] Mark Harris, "Why the Academy Should Fire Brett Ratner," *Grantland*, Nov. 7, 2011, retrieved from http://www.grantland.com. Mark Lisanti, "James Franco's 'The Broken Tower': Will You Only Watch for His Gay Love Scenes?" *Grantland*, Jan. 12, 2012, retrieved from http://www.grantland.com

grooming products, and irony.[15] However, sexual identity has not been a subject of inquiry and, given the particularly contested nature of sexuality in these magazines, it is important to know how people use these magazines to make sense of issues of sexual difference in an era when gay men are growing more visible and socially accepted. As Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks point out in their study of focus groups regarding U.K. lad magazines, "different individuals and groups of men negotiate these ambivalent spaces in contradictory fashion."[16] This is undoubtedly true but it remains important to assess how the different ways in which these magazines fit into readers' larger media consumption practices allow them to navigate discourses of masculinity in everyday life, particularly during a time when expectations of straight masculinity are changing and the range of normative gender scripts for men is expanding. Further, how does the nature of their reading experiences—print versus online, ongoing versus casual, and so forth—inform their relationship to the magazines? Finally, race, class, and nationality have not been given in-depth examination in studies of men's magazines, including in this dissertation, and future research could shed light on the ways in which those categories as well as sexual identity and gender are imagined together in these magazines, in often unnoticed ways, to maintain power for certain populations of men, and how readers respond to these imaginings. The proliferation of format sales of these magazines globally further calls for exploration of how international audiences make sense of these texts in different national and cultural contexts as well as how creative workers at these magazines negotiate brand identities in terms of local cultural norms and gender scripts.

These approaches to studying men's lifestyle magazines could provide a more nuanced analysis of how these media continue contributing to evolving relations between men and men's understandings of sexual difference in this culture of increasing convergence. After all, this

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[15] See, for instance, Benwell, "'Lucky this is anonymous.'" Benwell, "New Sexism?" Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*.
[16] Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks, *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*, p. 145.

dissertation has argued that these magazines, while primarily targeting and depicting straight men, are very much about gay men—though not necessarily *inclusive* of them. They have rather been included in ways that have helped to construct particular categories of straight male audiences as well as promoted consumption by straight men, with gayness used to operationalize straightness and to secure its position of power. As a result, gayness has functioned to uphold heteronormativity, heterosexism, and even homophobia rather than undermining them, as might be assumed by its increased visibility in editorial content. This dissertation thus reinforces many queer communication scholars' concern regarding the presence of gayness in the media in recent decades. But as these magazines are not static, and their ideological messages may evolve and change in response to any number of cultural, technological, social, political, and institutional factors, ongoing examination is needed to assess what role they may further play in structuring relations between men in ways that expand and limit possibilities for masculinities.

It is important to remember that both regressive and progressive editorial strategies are on display in the magazines. Despite finding the reinforcement of ideologies that maintain heterosexual power and privilege in *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, this dissertation argues that progress has nonetheless been made in the men's lifestyle magazine industry regarding gay/straight relations. The contemporary era's tentative steps toward gay acceptance in the realm of politics and civil rights, if not interpersonally, are a marked contrast to previous eras of the magazine. They also point to the importance of considering conditions of gay inclusion and exclusion in a range of media, assessing different aspects of their histories, economic models, and audience imaginings that open up or constrain patterns of representation and discourse at various sociocultural moments across media forms. Indeed, the inclusion of gay rights but exclusion of gay masculinities in men's lifestyle magazines is markedly different than in entertainment television, complicating monolithic thinking about gay media visibility that can obfuscate minor but meaningful steps toward a more equitable

relationship between straight and gay men. Heteronormativity and its related ideologies of straight dominance may never be fully disrupted or dismantled in U.S. culture but this dissertation has demonstrated that *how* this power is structured is evolving, demanding ongoing analysis of negotiations with the "lavender whiff"—in men's lifestyle magazines, other male-targeted media, and in media culture more broadly.

Appendix 1: Men's Lifestyle Magazine Cover Statistics, 1990-2010[1]

	GQ	*Esquire*	*Details*
Number of covers	252	251	222
Sex of cover subject			
Male	78%	54.5%	77%
Female	20%	36%	18%[2]
Both male and female	2%	6%	5%
Neither	0%	3.5%	0%
Cover subject by race			
White person(s)	74.5%	81.5%	91%
Person(s) of color	20%	9.5%	9%
A mix of races is present	5.5%	5.5%	0%

[1] Chart data for *Esquire* and *GQ* covers Jan. 1990-Dec. 2010. For *Details*, chart covers Sep. 1990-Dec. 2010 as it launched as a male-targeted magazine with the Sep. 1990 issue. In addition, fewer covers were examined as fewer issues were published due to a brief hiatus in 2000, after which it returned with ten annual issues instead of twelve.

[2] *Details* has not had a woman on its cover since prior to the relaunch in 2000.

Appendix 2: Research Participants

Jesse Ashlock	2011	*Details*	Articles editor
Keith Blanchard	2010	*Maxim*	Editor-in-chief
Edwin Bragg	2011	*GQ*	Marketing director
Tyler Cabot	2009	*Esquire*	Features editor
Erica Cerulo	2009	*Details*	Associate editor
Mike Coffas	2010	*GQ*	Fashion director—advertising
Ian Daly	2009	*Details*	Senior writer
Joe Dolce	2009	*Details*	Editor-in-chief
Richard Dorment	2009	*Esquire*	Features editor
Tyler Graham	2011	*Details*	Senior editor
Michael Hainey	2009	*GQ*	Deputy editor
Mark Healy	2009	*GQ*	Director of editorial projects
Tim Heffernan	2009	*Esquire*	Assistant editor
David Keeps	2010	*Details*	Executive, West Coast editors
Mark Kirby	2009	*GQ*	Senior editor
Ross McCammon	2009	*Esquire*	Articles editor
Chris Raymond	2009	*Details*	Deputy editor
James Truman	2010	*Details*	Editor-in-chief
Bill Van Parys	2010	*Details*	Executive editor
Brendan Vaughan	2009	*GQ*	Senior articles editor
David Walters	2009	*Details*	Associate entertainment editor
Katherine Wheelock	2009	*GQ*	Articles editor
Anonymous	2009	—	—

Appendix 3: Men's Magazine and Reader Statistics, 2010[1]

	GQ	*Esquire*	*Details*	*Maxim*
Scope				
Circulation	947,519	700,000	465,519	2,549,893
Total audience[2]	7.03 m	3.27 m	1.12 m	11.95 m
Household Income				
Median	$81,214	$72,891	$86,419	$67,903
Age				
Median	33.4	43.9	35	30.2
% 18-34	54%	32.9%	51%	65.3%
% 25-49	58%	50.5%	73.3%	64.6%
Sex				
% Male	72%	65.9%	76%	75.8%
Sales				
% newsstand	19.8%	14.3%	10.8%	11.5%
% subscription	79%	85.2%	89.2%	88.1%
% digital	1.2%	0.5%	N/A	0.4%

[1] The information in this chart reflects MRI data contained in the magazines' official media kits. For *GQ*: "Mediakit," retrieved from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/gq/index.cfm on Dec. 21, 2010. For *Esquire*: "Esquire Media Kit," retrieved from http://www.esquiremediakit.com/r5/cob_page.asp?category_id=19103 on Dec. 21, 2010. For *Details*: "Mediakit," retrieved from http://www.condenastmediakit.com/det/index.cfm on Dec. 21, 2010. For *Maxim*: "Maxim Media Kit," retrieved from http://www.maximmediakit.com/print/readership on Dec. 21, 2010.

[2] Circulation refers to the number of copies that circulate through sales, both on the newsstand and through subscriptions. Total audience, or total readership, refers to the number of people who read the magazine each month. The latter is almost always larger than the former because more than one people generally read each magazine (i.e., someone buys an issue then shares it with others).

Appendix 4: *Details*' Editorial Eras, 1990-2010

First era: "Alternative" Masculinity, Sep. 1990 - Jun. 1997

James Truman	Sep. 1990 - May 1994
John Leland	Jun. 1994 - Jan. 1995
Joe Dolce	Feb. 1995 - Jun. 1997

Second era: Lad Masculinity, Jul. 1997 - May 2000

* *None Listed*	Jul. 1997 - Aug. 1997
Michael Caruso	Sep. 1997 - Mar. 1999
* *None Listed*	Apr. 1999
* Barbara O'Dair	May 1999 - Jun. 1999 (Acting Editor-in-Chief)
Mark Golin	Jul. 1999 - May 2000

Magazine On Hiatus, Jun. 2000 - Sep. 2000

Era 3: Metrosexuality, Oct. 2000-

Dan Peres	Oct. 2000 -

* During these five issues, the editor-in-chief left before a new editor-in-chief was able to begin. As a result, others filled in to put the magazine together but these issues maintained *Details*' overall editorial vision of the era.

Appendix 5: General Editorial Hierarchy

This chart is intended to loosely illustrate the editorial structure as responsibilities of particular titles change and differ among magazines. Different magazines use different titles for similar roles, use qualifiers such as *Associate* and *Contributing* (not listed here but generally a person who is not on staff although often contributes to editorial content) in differing ways, and confer different levels of status to titles.

[1] The editor-in-chief works with the publisher, who deals with the business side of the magazine and relays information from the advertising community.

Appendix 6: Editors-in-Chief, 1990-2010

Esquire	Lee Eisenberg	1987-1990
	Terry McDonell	1990-1993
	Ed Kosner	1993-1997
	David Granger	1997-
GQ	Art Cooper	1983-2003
	Jim Nelson	2003-
Details	James Truman	1990-1994
	John Leland	1994-1995
	Joe Dolce	1995-1997
	Michael Caruso	1997-1999
	Mark Golin	1999-2000
	Dan Peres	2000-

Appendix 7: List of Men's Lifestyle Magazines

The following list is not exhaustive, and dates are incomplete at points, as information on many magazines and their publication histories is often not archived. However, these magazines represent titles discussed in the trade and news press as male-targeted lifestyle magazines. Only titles intended as lifestyle titles were included. So, for instance, father-oriented titles were excluded as were the titles including pornographic content, such as *Playboy* (1953-active), as these are categorized differently in the industry. Dates in parentheses indicate magazines that were planned but never launched.

The Industry's Early Years, 1930s-1970s

Esquire	1933-active
Bachelor	1937-1938
For Men	1937-unknown
Argosy *	1940s
True *	1948-1968
Cavalier	1952-1992

The Industry Expands, 1980s

Gentlemen's Quarterly (*GQ*) *	1979-active
New Man	1981-unknown
Playboy's Fashion for Men	1981-unknown
Esquire Fashion Guide	Unknown
M **	1983-1990, 1991-1992, 2012-
Modern Black Man	1984-unknown
Ebony Man	1985-1998
Men's Guide To Fashion (*MGF*)	1985-1991
Men's Fitness	1985-active
Men's Health	1986-active
Men's Look	1987-1988
Fast Lane	1987-unknown

The Industry's Contemporary Era, 1990s-2000s

Men's Life	1990-1990
*Details**	1990-active
M Inc.	1990-1991
Heartland USA	1991-unknown
Men	(1990)
Smart: For Men	(1991)
Journeymen	1991-unknown
Dirt	1991-unknown
Max	1992-unknown
Men's Journal	1992-active

Esquire Sportsman	1992-1993
Esquire Gentleman	1993-1995
Bikini	1993-2000
Inside Edge for Men	1993-unknown
Muscle & Health	1993-unknown
Matter for Men	(1995)
Men's Perspective	1995-unknown
P.O.V.	1995-2000
Just for Black Men	1996-unknown
GQ Active	1996-unknown
Icon	1997-2000
Verge	1997-1998
Maxim	1997-active
Max	(1997)
Detour	(1998)
Personal Best	(1998)
Gear	1998-2003
Stuff	1998-2007
Code	1999-2001
FHM	2000-2007
Razor	2000-2005
Stun!	2001-unknown
King	2001-2009
Smooth	2001-unknown
Maxim Fashion	2001-2004
Adam	2002-2002
Controversy	2002-unknown
Swung	2002-unknown
Ramp	2002-unknown
Tongue	2002-unknown
V Man	2003-unknown
Cargo	2004-2006
Vitals	2004-2005
Best Life	2004-2009, 2012-
Sync	2004-unknown
Giant	2004-unknown
Men's Vogue	2005-2008
Everything for Men	2006-unknown
V-Style	2006-unknown
MadePossible	2010-unknown
MensWear	2010-unknown

* *Argosy*, *True*, *GQ*, and *Details* were not initially launched as men's lifestyle magazines but the dates listed here indicate the years when they were editorially transformed into men's lifestyle category.

** From 1990-1991, *M* merged with *Manhattan, Inc.* to become *M Inc.* When that resulting magazine failed, the publication reverted to the title *M*.

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