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Portrayals of successful women: a comparison of traditional and new women's magazines from 1980 to 1989

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Portrayals of successful women:
A comparison of traditional and new women's magazines
from 1980 to 1989

by

Hsiao-Ching Liu

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1993

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Traditional Women's Magazines: Past Studies	6
New Women's Magazines: Past Studies	8
Socialization Theory	11
Fear of Success and Barrier to Success	13
METHODOLOGY	19
Units of Analysis and Variables	19
Subject Selection	23
Sampling Procedure	24
Research Questions	25
Statistical Methods	26
Reliability Test	28
FINDINGS	31
Key Findings	31
Summary of Key Findings	53
CONCLUSION	57
Discussion	57
Future Research	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY	69
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	72

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Coefficient of inter-coder reliability	30
Table 2. The distribution of occupation (N = 415)	31
Table 3. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazines on the distribution of occupation (N = 412)	32
Table 4. The distribution of lifestyle (N = 415)	33
Table 5. Comparison of two types of magazines on whether there was any information about lifestyle (N = 415)	34
Table 6. Comparison of two types of magazines on the distribution of different lifestyles (N = 213)	35
Table 7. Frequency of appearance for each of the six Barrier to Success themes (N = 217, the total number of stories from the six magazines that contained at least one of the six themes)	36
Table 8. Frequency of appearance for each of the six Barrier to Success themes for new and traditional magazines respectively (N-new = 141; N-traditional = 76)	37
Table 9. The number of stories that contained the Barrier to Success theme	38
Table 10. T-tests of the difference between traditional and new magazine articles on the amount of Barrier to Success themes contained (266 new magazines stories; 149 traditional magazine stories)	39
Table 11. Comparison of traditional and new magazine articles on whether there was any facing the Barrier to Success theme present	41
Table 12. Comparison of traditional and new magazine articles on whether there was any opposite to the Barrier to Success theme present	41

Table 13.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 was present (N = 415)	42
Table 14.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 2 was present (N = 415)	42
Table 15.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 3 was present (N = 415)	43
Table 16.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 was present (N = 415)	43
Table 17.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 2 was present (N = 415)	44
Table 18.	Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3 was present (N = 415)	44
Table 19.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male occupations and those that portrayed women in female occupations on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme(s)	45
Table 20.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 was present (N = 412)	46
Table 21.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 2 was present (N = 412)	47
Table 22.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 3 was present (N = 412)	47

Table 23.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 was present (N = 412)	48
Table 24.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 2 was present (N = 412)	48
Table 25.	Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3 was present (N = 412)	49
Table 26.	The number of words and the proportion of space used to describe the Barrier to Success theme(s) for articles that fell into different lifestyle categories	50
Table 27.	The effect of interaction between source and lifestyle on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme	51
Table 28.	The effect of interaction between source and occupation on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme(s)	52
Table 29.	The difference between articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations in terms of the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes for traditional and new magazines respectively	53

INTRODUCTION

The stereotypical depiction of women in the mass media, particularly women's magazines, was one of the earliest focal points of criticism for the new women's movement which surged during the 1960s. Thirty years ago, Betty Friedan charged in her now classic The Feminine Mystique that the image of women emerging from McCall's, the fastest growing of the women's magazines in the early 1960s, was:

...young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home...In the magazine, women do not work except housework and work to keep their bodies beautiful and to get and keep a man. (p. 36)

Several studies of women's magazines have reported findings consistent with Friedan's claim. Flora (1971) compared the images of women in women's magazine fiction in the United States to that in Latin America and found that the passivity of women was reinforced across cultural boundaries. Franzwa (1974) analyzed 155 female characters in women's magazine fiction and noted that these women were portrayed as creatures defined mainly by the presence or absence of a man. In their lives, work played a secondary part. In a more recent study, Loughlin (1983) analyzed the short stories in three major women's magazines between November, 1979, and April, 1981. Although more than half the heroines of the fiction were employed, Loughlin found that the magazines continued to

portray women in a fairly conservative way; that is, the main responsibilities of women were still confined within a happy home.

The stereotypical portrayals of women in women's magazines caused feminists' dissatisfaction. A famous event that characterized their rage was the Ladies' Home Journal sit in. On March 18, 1970, approximately 100 women occupied the office of Ladies' Home Journal, announcing that the Journal:

...creates frustrations which lead to depression and anger because women can not live up to what the magazine tells them they should. The attitudes of the Journal are abhorrent and degrading to women. (Woman Power, 1970, p. 61)

Since the established women's media were filled with sex-role stereotypes, the feminists felt a need to build up their own communications network in which to discuss women's issues. A number of feminist media thus emerged. The first feminist publication, Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement, was started in March, 1968. By the beginning of 1971, more than one hundred women's liberation periodicals were being published (Hole & Levine, 1971).

In addition to the feminist media, many of which were amateur or underground journals and newspapers, the new women's movement has also left its mark on the world of mass-circulated women's magazines. Companies that were responsible for the established women's magazines began publishing new

periodicals geared to women in specific roles other than mothers and wives, for example, Working Woman and Savvy, the magazine for female executives (Ruggiero & Weston, 1985). In 1972, another new women's magazine, Ms., was born. Ms. focused on women's life options and self-growth. By 1975, Ms. already claimed a circulation of 380,000 and has since been considered one of the industry's real success stories (Hole & Levine, 1971). One might expect that these new women's magazines would present women in ways that were different from the traditional women's magazines and that they would provide more positive role models for women. But did they?

The purpose of this study was to compare the portrayals of women in traditional women's magazines with those in new women's magazines to see if they were really different. Specifically, it was focused on profiles or features on outstanding, noteworthy, or interesting women because, according to Ruggiero and Weston (1985), these success stories were an important part of what sold the magazines to its readers, and they revealed much about "the overall perspective or value orientation that a magazine offered its readers" (p. 537).

The success stories in the sample were classified in four ways: in terms of their source, in terms of the occupation of the central figure, in terms of the lifestyle of the central figure, and in terms of the number of Barrier to Success

theme(s) articles contained. The first variable, "source", referred to the magazine which a story was from and whether it was a traditional women's magazines or a new one. The second variable, "occupation", was about the kind of job that a woman was shown doing, either traditional women's jobs like nurse, teacher, or typically male-dominated jobs such as politician and sports figure. The last two variables "lifestyle" and "the Barrier to Success theme" were drawn from a study of Australia print media profiles of successful women done by Leder (1986). Lifestyle was defined as the way the articles discussed how a successful woman balanced career and family life. The Barrier to Success theme was employed to investigate whether the articles portrayed women as having to struggle to overcome prejudice in order to succeed, or whether in some cases being a woman helped them succeed. The operationalization of these variables is explained in more detail in the methodology chapter.

In addition to comparing the portrayals of successful women in two different kinds of women's magazines on occupation, lifestyle, and the Barrier to Success themes, this study also explored the following relationships between different variables: (1) the relationship between the occupation of a woman and the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained in the article in which she was portrayed, (2) the relationship between the lifestyle of a woman and the Barrier

to Success theme(s) contained in the article in which she was portrayed, (3) the effect of interaction between occupation and type of magazine on use of Barrier to Success themes, and (4) the effect of interaction between lifestyle and type of magazine on use of Barrier to Success themes.

The magazines analyzed in this study included three traditional women's magazines (Good Housekeeping, McCall's, and Ladies' Home Journal) and three new women's magazines (Savvy, Working Woman, and Ms.). The time period chosen in this study ran from January, 1980 through December, 1989. The 1980s were chosen for study because they were considered by some feminists as a decade in which the backlash against feminism was prevalent everywhere, including the mass media (Faludi, 1992). The researcher hopes this study can make a small contribution to the testing of such a claim.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Women's Magazine: Past Studies

It is easier to make generalizations about traditional women's magazines than to generalize about all women. Women vary and so do their interests and concerns; but traditional women's magazines tend to define them as a homogeneous group. (In this study, traditional women's magazines were defined as monthly magazines aimed at middle-class homemakers.)

According to Ruggiero and Weston (1985), in these magazines, "...women were generally shown in stereotypical roles--passive and dependent, especially on men, and their sphere of activity was mainly the home" (p. 537). A glance at the relevant research seems to support Ruggiero and Weston's claim, though one might argue that such a claim is not as valid today as it was thirty years ago.

Bailey (1969) studied 161 short stories in three traditional women's magazines to analyze the heroines. She found that the typical heroine was an attractive, college-educated married woman in the middle economic level with one or two children. Her main occupation was housekeeping, and her goals were love-oriented.

Loughlin (1983) replicated Bailey's study, analyzing the same magazines from November, 1979 to April, 1981 to see if the rising levels of American women's education and employment were reflected in the short stories. After analyzing 36

female characters, Loughlin noted that while her typical heroine was still an attractive, college-educated married woman in the middle economic level, she was more likely to be employed than the heroine of Bailey's study. However, Loughlin also pointed out that the stories tended to portray these women's jobs as insignificant compared with families. She concluded that the fiction portrayals of women in the traditional women's magazines were still conservative, maintaining the status quo.

Corsiglia (1971) in her study of the values presented in traditional women's magazines found that the majority of the content of these magazines dealt with issues about home and family, such as food, beauty aid and childcare. National and international subjects were rarely mentioned. The role of the woman portrayed was primarily of a wife and mother.

In a more recent study, Demarest and Garner (1992) content-analyzed the articles in traditional women's magazines published between 1954 and 1982. The main research question raised was whether these articles reflected the changing roles of women over the past 30 years. In general, Demarest and Garner found that traditional women's magazines had been responsive to societal change. There was a slow but steady increase in stories with feminist themes and a gradual decline in the number of stories that portrayed women as homemakers. However, the increase of coverage about feminist issues lagged

behind changes in the real world, and the central focus of the articles sampled continued to be centered around stereotypical female roles.

New Women's Magazine: Past Studies

Compared with traditional women's magazines, there has been less research done on "new" or "liberated" women's magazines, and the findings are less consistent.

Many studies done on new women's magazines have been comparative in nature, in which new women's magazines were examined to see how they differed from their traditional or established counterparts. Phillips (1978) compared the kinds of women portrayed in two women's magazines, one of which was homemaker-oriented (Family Circle) and the other was feminist-oriented (Ms.), as subjects of feature stories, analyzing their occupation, social backgrounds and the attitudes toward them as conveyed by the writer's word choices. It was found that in the feminist magazine, the largest percentage of heroines (48%) were from political life and public service. The other 52% of the sampled women comprised businesswomen, professionals, entertainers, and so on. In stark contrast, the homemaker-oriented magazine portrayed 61% of its heroines as wife or mother. Phillips pointed out that the two types of magazines provided quite different role models. In the feminist-oriented magazine, women were clearly more independent, serious and productive. They were also more

"culturally important, politically engaged, economically productive, and socially active" (p.124).

Another study of new women's magazines was a content analysis by Ruggiero and Weston (1985) which focused on the socialization messages about work options in two types of women's magazines: established and new. After examining 172 profiles of outstanding women, Ruggiero and Weston found that the new magazines (Ms., Working Woman, New Woman, and Savvy) were more likely to feature women being employed full-time than the established magazines (Ladies' Home Journal, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Bazaar, and Woman's Day). In addition, the profiled women in the new magazines who worked for pay were more likely to be engaged in non-traditional, male-dominated jobs. Regarding the attitude towards work, it was found that women profiled in the new magazines were more likely to perceive themselves as having responsibility and/or power than those in the established magazines.

Although feminist-cause magazines claim that they provide more positive role models for women than traditional women's magazines, Clark (1981) failed to find any significant difference between the two. In a content analysis, Clark compared feminist magazines, fashion periodicals and homemaker type magazines to investigate how much emphasis each one of them place on living alone, a lifestyle that a significant number of contemporary women have adopted. Contrary to her

hypothesis, the findings revealed that the feminist-cause magazine did not devote more content to living alone than fashion or homemaker type magazines.

Another analysis of new women's magazines and their not-so-liberal attitudes toward women's issues was done by Susan Faludi (1992). In the national best seller "Backlash: the Undeclared War Against American Woman", Faludi mentioned the backlash against feminism promoted by mass media during the '80s. According to Faludi, feminist publications during the '80s either folded or retreated to become "backlash collaborators." She singled out Ms. magazine as an example of the latter. As a magazine which had been considered by so many as the main medium of modern feminism, Ms. still covered many feminist issues such as domestic abuse and the status of women in third-world countries during the '80s. However, after Ms. jettisoned its non-profit status to become a for-profit venture owned by an Australian firm, some curious changes occurred. The magazine began to have more celebrity reporting, launched a regular fashion column, and even avoided the word "feminist". These changes certainly reflected the magazine's need to be more closely centered in the mainstream and to attract more advertisers. Nevertheless, the advertisers still considered Ms. too political. In October 1989, male publisher Dale Long took control of the magazine and then shut it down. When Ms. was reissued after eight

months, it became a bimonthly with no ads. With a very limited financial backing from subscription and newsstand sales only, Ms. magazine finally left the world of the (semi-) mass-circulated magazines and became a marginal publication.

Socialization Theory

An appropriate theoretical approach to the study of the women's magazines is that provided by socialization theory, in which the mass media teach people how to behave in certain situations as well as what the society expects of a certain role or status (McQuail, 1987). According to the theory, a female college student who has spent much time reading women's magazines that stress the obstacles a career woman has to overcome to succeed is very likely to believe that such obstacles do exist for her to struggle with if she wants to have her own career, even though she may not have any actual working experience.

To prove that mass media worked as a sex-role socialization agent is difficult because gender-learning is a long-term process. Moreover, it is almost impossible to assess media effects when so many other sources of socialization are also involved: parental attitudes, schooling, peer influence, and so on. Nevertheless, several empirical studies of children's use of media do confirm that children are aware of the different ways that men and women are portrayed by the media. Frueh and Mcghee (1980)

investigated the relationship between the amount of time children spent watching television and their knowledge of adult sex-role stereotypes. It was found that heavy television viewers were more likely to have stereotyped perceptions of both masculinity and femininity. In addition, light viewers' sex-role stereotype scores were reported to decrease with age while heavy viewers' stereotyped perceptions became increasingly pronounced. A tentative explanation offered by Frueh & Mcghee was that children who watched less television might spend more time gaining experience with a broader range of people who did not exhibit sex-role stereotypes depicted on television. In a study of the influence of televised models on toy preference in children (Cobb et al., 1982), only five minutes of exposure to a videotape which showed two Muppets discussing the sex appropriateness of a set of toys was found to be enough to make children aged 4-6 years refuse to play with toys identified as inappropriate for their sex. Like television, print media could socialize children to take gender stereotypes, too. For example, preschool children were more likely to choose a sex-appropriate toy after exposure to a sex-stereotypic book. Conversely, a non-stereotypic toy was more likely to be chosen following the children's exposure to a nonstereotypic book (Ashton, 1983). Another study of children's sex-role attitudes reported a finding that

stereotypic sex-role perceptions were prevalent even in children's own writing (Trepanier and Romatowski, 1985). In the study, the creative writing of elementary school children from grades 1 to 6 was examined for evidence of sex difference and gender-role perceptions. It was found that in the stories written by both boys and girls, there was a predominance of male characters. Moreover, fewer personality attributes, both positive and negative, were assigned to female characters than to male characters. Regarding the assignment of occupational roles, a stark contrast was found between male and female characters in that 87% (111) of the 127 roles were assigned to male characters compared with 13% (16) to female characters. As a content analysis rather than an effect study, the research did not prove that the sex-role stereotypes in children's writing were a direct result of their exposure to stereotypic print media. Nevertheless, Trepanier and Romatowski noted that such disturbing findings were not surprising given the large number of sexist models in children's literature and school curricula that previous studies had already found.

Fear of Success and Barrier to Success

The thesis that female underachievement results from an internal motive to avoid success has been around since the late '60s. According to Horner's theorizing (1972), women have a motive to avoid success because they consider qualities

such as independence, competence, competition, and intellectual achievement to be incompatible with femininity. Such a motive can be understood as an internalized dominant societal stereotype where women expect negative rather than positive consequences as a result of professional achievement. Horner used the expectancy-value theory of motivation as a framework within which the motive to avoid success was conceptualized. According to the theory, the direction of an individual's behavior is determined by two important factors: (1) what consequences the individual expects that his/her actions would cause and (2) what the value of these consequences is to the individual. If a person expects that an action would bring negative consequences, the action would be inhibited by aroused anxiety. With this theory in mind, Horner hypothesized that, since most women expected negative consequences as a result of success, they would have a tendency to feel anxious about achieving success. Moreover, such disposition would be significantly less characteristic of men than of women. To test the hypothesis, Horner conducted a study in which 88 men and 90 women were asked to respond to a thematic lead about a successful figure of the subjects' own sex. It was found that, in accordance with her hypothesis, more than 90% of the men showed strong positive feelings toward the successful male figure while 65% of the women responded negatively to the successful female cue. The

concomitant of success for the able women included personal destruction, social rejection, or the loss of femininity. It was found that in the female subjects' responses, there was significantly more evidence of the motive to avoid success than in the male subject's responses.

Horner's theorizing and findings generated many research activities. Illfelder (1980) explored, for 99 female undergraduate students, the relationship between career salience, fear of success, and sex-role attitudes. Through a multiple regression analysis, it was found that the combination of fear of success and sex-role attitudes could significantly predict the level of career salience. Those who were more traditional and higher in fear of success were reported to be lower in career salience. However, fear of success alone could not significantly predict career salience. Topol and Reznikoff (1979) compared two groups of 16 high school senior girls on fear of success, career and educational goals, and conception of women's roles. It was found that achievers had a more liberal view of women's roles in society and, on the other hand, showed more fear of success in fantasies about outstanding women. Anderson (1978) conducted a series of studies to compare the self-descriptions of college women whose stories contained motive-to-avoid-success (MOS) imagery with those whose stories did not contain such imagery. The subjects were first asked to respond to verbal

cues which depicted women who succeeded in non-traditional spheres. Then, a large number of questions about the subjects' attitudes and goals were asked. It was found that women who had the motive to avoid success were more likely to be career-oriented and, on the other hand, to choose occupations deemed appropriate for their sex. These women also tended to lack career dedication. Anderson noted that the combination of career orientation and lack of career ambition supported Horner's other claim (1972) that women who valued achievement and were capable of it were more likely to have the motive to avoid success since the expectancy-value theory would mean nothing if a woman neither desired success nor had the ability to achieve it. In a study of the Australia print media profiles of successful females, Leder (1986) examined the range of achievements and the manner in which successful women were portrayed. The findings indicated that Horner's fear of success construct prevailed in the articles surveyed. A total of 55% of the articles collected in 1982, and 39% of those collected in 1984 contained fear of success imagery. Leder pointed out that these articles tended to deal with the conflicts faced by or attributed to outstanding women rather than the positive consequences of success.

Horner's theorizing drew some critiques, too. Lips (1993) argued that the fear of success stories of Horner's

study should be viewed as evidence of women's sensitivity to the negative results of success rather than as evidence of an internal motivation to avoid success. She also noted that perceived societal barriers to success rather than internal motivations were the real cause for different achievement behaviors of men and women. Several empirical studies also reported findings that challenged Horner's theorizing. For example, Monahan et al. (1974) found that when female and male subjects were both asked to respond to the male and the female leads, both sexes included more negative consequences in the story with a female character than in the one with a male character, supporting the belief that negative responses were related to sex of the actor in the lead rather than sex of subject. Another study found that when success was achieved in a gender-inappropriate field, both male and female subjects tended to include negative consequences in their stories. For example, male subjects tended to show more fear of success when responding to the lead with a male character in nursing school than in medical school, suggesting that fear of success was not just a feminine concern (Cherry and Deaux, 1978).

Given the controversies that revolve around the term "fear of success", the ambivalent attitude toward success contained in women's magazine articles was named "barrier to success" in this study. The purpose of the study would be to investigate whether the perceived negative social consequences

of success are reflected in the articles rather than to test if the successful women featured in the articles have any internal motivation to avoid success.

METHODOLOGY

Units of Analysis and Variables

The research method used in this study was content analysis. The basic unit of analysis of this study was the individual story which focused on the outstanding achievement, or a special, noteworthy accomplishment, of an individual woman. If an article was composed of several such stories, each of them would be treated as an independent unit of analysis.

The following variables were analyzed in this study: (1) source, (2) lifestyle, (3) occupation, and (4) the Barrier to Success theme.

"Source" was defined as the magazine where a story was from. The six magazines were labeled as either "traditional" (McCall's, Ladies' Home Journal, and Good Housekeeping) or "new" (Savvy, Working Woman, and Ms.) women's magazines.

"Lifestyle" referred to the way a successful woman dealt with her dual responsibilities as a career woman and as a homemaker. Did most successful women integrate these two roles or focus on just one of them? To answer these questions, the Leder (1986) categories were employed. The lifestyle of the central figure of each story was categorized into one of the following: (1) career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children), (2) homemaker (full-time home duties, with children), (3) integrator 1 (in the

workforce, with children), (4) integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children), and (5) insufficient information. The measurement of lifestyle was at the nominal level.

For each story, the occupation of the protagonist was recorded and categorized. The measurement of occupation was at the nominal level. The occupational categories developed by Miller (1975) were revised and used in this study, which included:

1. Politician or Public Official: Portrayed in an official capacity as the holder of any elective, appointive or salaried administrative position in federal, state or local government, or as a candidate for any such elective or appointive office.

2. Professional: Portrayed in some professional or vocational role.

3. Sports Figure: Portrayed in a professional or non-professional sports activity.

4. Entertainer: Portrayed as engaged in professional or non-professional entertainment.

5. Socialite or Celebrity: Portrayed as engaged in personal recreation, leisure, or socializing.

6. Activist or Advocate: Portrayed as a spokesperson, representative or volunteer for some special interest cause, and/or as having deliberately thrust oneself into the public

eye or sought publicity for oneself or a cause via a staged event, speech, or other activity.

7. Human Interest: Portrayed as falling into none of the above categories, and as having been discovered by the media without deliberate intention and as having become newsworthy for one's own activities.

8. Spouse: Portrayed as a newsmaker's spouse, or as making news by getting engaged, married or divorced.

9. Other: Portrayed in a role other than those described above.

According to past studies (Christ and Johnson, 1988; Jolliffe, 1989; Miller, 1975), print media tended to underrepresent women newsmakers in certain roles (politician, professional, activist, and sports figure). When a woman newsmaker was covered, she was most likely to be portrayed as an artist/entertainer, spouse, or celebrity. Such treatments reflected the sex-role stereotypes pervasive in society, in which certain occupational roles were considered "male" and others "female". Therefore, it is of interest to compare the traditional women's magazines with the new ones and see whether the two are different in their coverage of women in traditionally male/female occupational roles. To do so, the nine occupational categories were collapsed to the following three: (1) male occupation (politician or public official, professional, sports figure, and activist or advocate), (2)

female occupation (entertainer, socialite or celebrity, and spouse), and (3) neutral occupation (human interest and other).

Each story selected was examined to see whether it contained any one(s) of the following "Barrier to Success" themes (Leder, 1986):

Theme +1: Women have to overcome prejudice and additional obstacles and therefore need to work harder than men to have their achievements recognized.

Theme -1: There is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed. Compared with men, they even have some advantages. They do not have to work as hard as men to have their achievements recognized.

Theme +2: Successful women face unpopularity and/or a perceived loss of femininity unless they are able to achieve a delicate balance between success and interpersonal relations. When career and interpersonal relations are in conflict, they usually choose the latter and give up the former.

Theme -2: Successful women are not obliged to achieve a balance between success and interpersonal relations. They can choose career and give up interpersonal relations when the two are in conflict if they are willing to.

Theme +3: Success somehow happened; it was not expected or sought after, and personal responsibility for having become

a career woman could thus be avoided.

Theme -3: Success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it. It was consciously expected and sought after. The successful woman herself is the one who takes credit for it.

In this thesis, Theme +1, +2, and +3 were referred to as "facing the Barrier to Success themes", whereas Theme -1, -2, and -3 were called "opposite to the Barrier to Success themes" for the convenience of discussion.

There were several steps in measuring the Barrier to Success theme. First, a story was examined to see whether a particular theme existed. At this stage, the measurement of the Barrier to Success theme was at the nominal level. A story would be coded as either "yes" or "no" in terms whether or not a particular theme was present. Then, the number of words used to describe facing and (or) opposite to the Barrier to Success themes would be counted. Finally, the proportion of space allotted to facing and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s) in a story would be computed by dividing the total space of a story with the space allotted to facing and (or) opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s).

Subject Selection

Six women's magazines were selected for study: Savvy, Working Woman, Ms., Ladies' Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, and McCall's. The second three magazines were chosen because

they represented the traditional homemaker type women's magazines which often dealt with issues about home life and portrayed women primarily as wife and mother (Corsiglia, 1971; Franzwa, 1974; Leftkowitz, 1972). Besides, the large readership that these magazines reached by virtue of their mass circulation made it worthwhile to examine their contents carefully. According to statistics, each of these three magazines claimed a monthly circulation of more than five million during an average year of the 1980s (Information Please Almanac, 1980-1989). For the "new" women's magazines, Ms., Savvy, and Working Woman were chosen as the representatives. Ms. was selected because it had been widely known as a liberal, feminist-cause magazine and as a main medium of modern feminism (Janus, 1977). Savvy and Working Woman were selected because a previous study (Ruggiero & Weston, 1985) had used them as representatives of the new women's magazines in contrast with the older, established ones such as Ladies' Home Journal and Woman's Day.

Sampling Procedure

The analysis of the success stories covered the ten years between January, 1980, and December, 1989. The study was focused on the 1980s because it was a decade where antifeminism became socially acceptable (Gibbs, 1992). In contrast with the 1970s--the decade of women, according to Ms.--where feminism was hip and fashionable, the 1980s was

considered by some feminists as a decade in which a backlash against feminism was prevalent in the mass media (Faludi, 1992). To examine the media content of the 1980s systematically helped clarifying whether such a claim was true.

The issues included in the sample were selected using a stratified interval method with a random start. Three issues of each of the six magazines were randomly selected from each interval (two years). Thus, a total of 90 issues were analyzed in this study, which represented roughly 12.5% of the total output of the six magazines over the time frame of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were subjected to empirical study:

- (1) How were the occupations of the successful women distributed among different categories?
- (2) How were the lifestyles of the successful women distributed among different categories?
- (3) What percentage of the stories contained the Barrier to Success theme(s)? What was the frequency of appearance for each of the six themes?
- (4) What was the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained in a story and the occupation of the successful woman portrayed in that story? Would this

relationship change if the source of the story was controlled?

(5) What was the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained in a story and the lifestyle of the successful woman portrayed in that story? Would this relationship change if the source of the story was controlled?

(6) What was the relationship between the source of a story and the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained in that story?

(7) What was the relationship between the source of a story and the occupation of the successful woman portrayed in that story?

(8) What was the relationship between the source of a story and the lifestyle of the successful woman portrayed in that story?

Statistical Methods

Several different statistical methods were used in this study.

Frequency runs were conducted to describe the distribution of occupation, lifestyle, and the Barrier to Success theme (in terms of whether a theme existed or not).

To investigate the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme in a story (in terms of the number of words used and the proportion of space allotted) and the occupation of the successful woman portrayed in that story, ANOVA was used. The same method was also used to investigate the relationship

between the Barrier to Success theme in a story (in terms of the number of words used and the proportion of space allotted) and the lifestyle of the successful woman portrayed in that story. If the results of these ANOVAs showed that the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme and occupation (or lifestyle) was significant, a two-way ANOVA would then be conducted to test whether such relationship would change after one more independent variable--source--was added. In all of these ANOVA tests, the Barrier to Success themes was always the dependent variable, whereas source, occupation, and lifestyle were the independent variables.

Crosstabulation with a Chi-square test was employed to test if there was any significant relationship between the source of a story and the occupation of the successful woman portrayed in that story. The same test also was used to investigate the relationship between the source of a story and the lifestyle of the successful woman. Other research questions that were answered through Crosstabulation and Chi-square were about the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme (in terms of whether a theme existed or not) and the occupation of the woman portrayed in that story, and about the relationship between the Barrier to Success theme (in terms of whether a theme existed or not) and the source of a story.

T-Tests were used to compare the mean words and

proportion of space devoted to the Barrier to Success theme between two groups of stories: stories from traditional women's magazines and stories from new women's magazines. Here, the source of the story was the independent variable while the Barrier to Success theme was the dependent variable.

Reliability Test

To test the reliability of the study and the intercoder agreement, 5% of the original sample was independently coded by three coders. Three variables that required coders' judgement were occupation, lifestyle, and the Barrier to Success theme (measured by whether or not a certain theme was present and the number of words devoted to that theme). The intercoder reliability coefficients were calculated using Holsti's (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983) formulas, which were:

$$\text{Reliability of A\&B} = 2M / (N+N)$$

$$\text{Reliability of B\&C} = 2M / (N+N)$$

$$\text{Reliability of C\&A} = 2M / (N+N)$$

A,B,C: Coders.

M: Total agreement amount of coding decisions.

N: Total amount of coding decisions made.

The result of the test is summarized in Table 1, which shows both the overall percentage of agreement and the percentage of agreement for each variable. In an article which dealt with data reliability and standards, Krippendorff (1980) mentioned a policy which he and three other researchers

adopted in a study of television violence in that only variables with reliability above .80 were reported whereas those between .67 and .80 were admitted only for drawing tentative conclusions. According to Krippendorff, these standards might serve as a guideline for future researchers. A glance at Table 1 reveals that the overall percentage of agreement for the current study was 90.08%, higher than the reliability standard raised by Krippendorff. Among the 14 individual variables tested for their reliability, the only one under .80 was the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3. Thus, any research results related to the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3 should be interpreted with additional caution.

Table 1. Coefficient of inter-coder reliability

Variable	Coefficient (%)
Occupation	$(95.83+95.83+91.67)/3=94.44$
Lifestyle	$(83.33+95.83+79.17)/3=86.11$
Theme +1 (existing or not)	$(87.50+91.67+95.83)/3=91.67$
Theme +2 (existing or not)	$(95.83+91.67+87.50)/3=91.67$
Theme +3 (existing or not)	$(95.83+95.83+100.0)/3=97.22$
Theme -1 (existing or not)	$(91.67+100.0+91.67)/3=94.45$
Theme -2 (existing or not)	$(83.33+95.83+83.33)/3=87.50$
Theme -3 (existing or not)	$(87.50+90.48+91.67)/3=89.88$
Theme +1 (number of words)	$(83.33+91.67+91.67)/3=88.89$
Theme +2 (number of words)	$(91.67+83.33+79.17)/3=84.72$
Theme +3 (number of words)	$(95.83+95.83+100.0)/3=97.22$
Theme -1 (number of words)	$(91.67+100.0+91.67)/3=94.45$
Theme -2 (number of words)	$(75.00+91.67+83.33)/3=83.33$
Theme -3 (number of words)	$(79.17+76.39+83.33)/3=79.63$
General	$(88.39+92.57+89.29)/3=90.08$

FINDINGS

Key Findings

Key finding 1: The distribution of occupation

The majority of the success stories sampled dealt with women whose occupations were traditionally male-oriented. Out of a total of 415 stories, 262 (63.1%) portrayed women who held traditionally men's occupations, whereas 150 (36.1%) had central figures employed in traditionally women's jobs. The distribution of occupations is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of occupation (N = 415)

		Traditional mg.	New mg.	Total (%)
Male	Politician	1	18	19 (4.6)
	Professional	21	199	220 (53.0)
	Sports Figure	2	1	3 (0.7)
	Activist	0	20	20 (4.8)
Female	Entertainer	79	26	105 (25.3)
	Celebrity	15	0	15 (3.6)
	Spouse	28	2	30 (7.2)
Neutral	Human Interest	0	0	0 (0.0)
	Other	3	0	3 (0.7)
Total		149	266	415 (100.0)

Whereas 89.5% of the 266 stories from new women's magazines portrayed women who held male-oriented occupations, the traditional magazine sample had only 24 such cases, which accounted for 16.4% of its total 146 stories (Table 3). The data in Table 3 reveal that new magazines were significantly more likely to portray women who held male-oriented jobs than traditional magazines ($p = 0.00000$).

Key finding 2: The distribution of lifestyle

Table 4 shows the distribution of lifestyle for both traditional and new women's magazines. The data in Table 4 reveal that the distribution of lifestyle for the two types of magazines was quite different. The new women's magazines had a much higher percentage of articles that fell into the

Table 3. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazines on the distribution of occupation (N = 412)^a

count row %	Male	Female	Row total
Traditional mg.	24 16.40	122 83.60	146 35.40
New mg.	238 89.50	28 10.50	266 64.60
Column total	262	150	412

Chi-square: 217.17267.
Significance: 0.00000.

^a: The category "neutral occupation" was not included since its expectancy value was smaller than 5.

Table 4. The distribution of lifestyle (N = 415)

		I1	I2	C	H	X	Total
Tradi- tional mg.	count	76	3	16	8	46	149
	%	51.0	2.0	10.7	5.4	30.9	100.0
	valid %	73.8	2.9	15.5	7.8	----	100.0
New mg.	count	75	32	11	0	148	266
	%	28.2	12.0	4.1	0.0	55.6	100.0
	valid %	63.6	27.1	9.3	0.0	----	100.0
Total	count	151	35	27	8	194	415
	%	36.4	8.4	6.5	1.9	46.7	100.0
	valid %	68.3	15.8	12.2	3.6	----	100.0

I1: Integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children).

I2: Integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children).

C: Career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children).

H: Homemaker (full-time home duties, with children).

X: Insufficient information.

categories "integrator 2" (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children) and "insufficient information" (12.0% and 55.6% respectively) than the traditional ones (2.0% and 30.9% respectively). On the other hand, the percentages of articles that fell into the categories "homemaker" (full-time home duties, with children), "integrator 1" (in the workforce, with children), and "career-focused" (in the workforce, not married, no children) for the new women's magazines (0.0%, 28.2%, and 4.1% respectively) were clearly lower than those for the traditional women's magazines (5.4%, 51.0%, and 10.7% respectively).

The results of two crosstabulations show that traditional and new magazines were significantly different in terms of whether or not they provided any information to judge lifestyle. The data in Table 5 reveal that articles coming

Table 5. Comparison of two types of magazines on whether there was any information about lifestyle (N = 415)

count row%	No, these was not	Yes, there was	Row total
New mg.	148 55.6	118 44.4	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	46 30.9	103 69.1	149 35.9
Column total	194	221	415

Chi-square: 23.53181.
Significance: 0.00000.

from new magazines were significantly less likely to contain any information about a woman's lifestyle to make a judgement ($p = 0.00000$). After dropping those articles that did not provide any information about lifestyle and those that portrayed women as homemakers, it was found that the two types of magazines were significantly different on the distribution of three different lifestyles (Table 6, $p = 0.00001$): integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children), integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children), and career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children).

Table 6. Comparison of two types of magazines on the distribution of different lifestyles (N = 213)^a

count row%	I1	I2	C	Row total
New mg.	75 63.6	32 27.1	11 9.3	118 55.4
Traditional mg.	76 80.0	3 3.2	16 16.8	95 44.6
Column total	151	35	27	213

I1: Integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children).
 I2: Integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children).
 C: Career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children).

Chi-square: 22.74273.
 Significance: 0.00001.

^aThe category "homemaker" was not included in this table since its expectancy value was smaller than 5.

Key finding 3: The distribution of Barrier to Success theme

Out of a total of 415 stories, 217 (52.3%) contained at least one (facing or opposite to) Barrier to Success theme. A total of 76 of these 217 cases (35.02%) came from traditional women's magazines compared with 141 (64.98%) from new women's magazines. The percentages of articles that contained at least one Barrier to Success theme for new and traditional women's magazines were 53% and 51% respectively. Table 7 presents the number of stories that contained each of the six Barrier to Success themes respectively and the percentages of

Table 7. Frequency of appearance for each of the six Barrier to Success themes (N = 217, the total number of stories from the six magazines that contained at least one of the six themes)

	Facing the barrier			Opposite to the barrier		
Theme	+1	+2	+3	-1	-2	-3
Fr.	82	76	32	35	38	99
%	37.79	35.02	14.75	16.13	17.51	45.62

Theme +1: Women have to overcome prejudice to succeed.

Theme +2: Women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Theme +3: Success somehow happened; it was not expected or sought after.

Theme -1: There is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed.

Theme -2: Successful women are not obliged to achieve a balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Theme -3: Success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it.

% = Frequency / 217.

the total 217 stories that contained the particular Barrier to Success theme. Table 8 shows separate results for new and traditional women's magazines respectively.

Looking at facing and opposite to the Barrier to Success themes separately, it was found that, out of a total of 217 stories that contained at least one of the six themes, 68.7% (149) contained at least one facing the Barrier to Success

Table 8. Frequency of appearance for each of the six Barrier to Success themes for new and traditional magazines respectively (N-new = 141; N-traditional = 76)

Theme	Facing			Overcoming		
	+1	+2	+3	-1	-2	-3
New	(fre.) 70	48	19	31	20	58
	(%) 49.6	34.0	13.5	22.0	14.2	41.1
Traditional	(fre.) 12	28	13	4	18	41
	(%) 15.8	36.8	17.1	5.3	23.7	53.9

Theme +1: Women have to overcome prejudice to succeed.

Theme +2: Women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Theme +3: Success somehow happened; it was not expected or sought after.

Theme -1: There is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed.

Theme -2: Successful women are not obliged to achieve a balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Theme -3: Success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it.

% = Frequency / N (N-new = 141 , the total number of stories from new magazines that contained at least one theme; N-traditional = 76, the total number of stories from traditional magazines that contained at least one theme).

theme whereas 67.3% (146) contained at least one opposite to the Barrier to Success theme. The two percentages were almost the same. However, when stories from traditional magazines and those from new magazines were examined separately, some differences emerged (Table 9). The relationship between the source of an article and the Barrier to Success theme is discussed in more detail in Key finding 4.

Key finding 4: The relationship between the source of an article and the Barrier to Success theme

The results of four t-tests show that articles from new women's magazines allotted a significantly higher proportion of space to facing the Barrier to Success themes than the ones from traditional women's magazines ($p = 0.000$, Table 10). In terms of the proportion of space allotted to opposite to the Barrier to Success themes, the mean for traditional magazines was not significantly different from that for new magazines at 0.05 level ($p = 0.053$), but it approached significance.

Table 9. The number of stories that contained the Barrier to Success theme

	New	Traditional
General	141	76
Facing the Barrier	107 (75.89%)	42 (55.3%)
Opposite to the Barrier	89 (63.12%)	57 (75.0%)

Table 10. T-tests of the difference between traditional and new magazine articles on the amount of Barrier to Success themes contained (266 new magazine stories; 149 traditional magazine stories)

	Mean for new mg.	Mean for traditional mg.	DF	2-tailed t probability
No. of words (facing)	82.9436	63.3691	413	1.21 0.228
No. of words (opposite to)	53.6805	78.1275	211.67	-1.33 0.184
% of space (facing)	9.3805	3.5872	412.91	3.97 0.000**
% of space (opposite to)	5.5224	9.4285	200.22	-1.95 0.053

** Significant difference at 0.01 level.

There was no significant difference found between the two types of magazines in terms of the number of words that they used to describe facing the Barrier to Success themes. It is noteworthy that on the average a traditional magazine article with facing the Barrier to Success themes present used 63.3691 words to describe these themes, compared with new magazine articles' 82.9436 words. The difference was not significant. However, the contrast between traditional and new magazines in terms of the mean proportion of space allotted to facing the Barrier to Success themes was much sharper (3.6% and 9.4% respectively). Through computation, it was found that the

mean length of traditional magazine articles with facing the Barrier to Success themes present was 1766.53 ($63.3691 / 3.5872 * 100$) words , longer than their counterparts from new magazines (mean length = $82.9436 / 9.3805 * 100 = 884.213$ words).

Comparing traditional and new women's magazines through crosstabulation, it was found that articles from new women's magazines were significantly more likely to contain facing the Barrier to Success themes than those from traditional magazines at 0.05 level (Table 11, $p = 0.01420$). However, there was no significant difference between the two types of magazines in terms of whether there was any opposite to the Success themes present (Table 12).

In addition to the above comparisons, six more crosstabulations were conducted to see if the two types of magazines were different in terms of whether a particular Barrier to Success theme was present. (Tables 13 to 18). It was found that articles from new magazines were significantly more likely to cover both facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed) and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 (there is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed) than those from traditional magazines ($p = 0.00001$ and 0.00161 respectively). No significant difference was found between the two types of magazines in terms of whether the other four Barrier to Success themes was present.

Table 11. Comparison of traditional and new magazine articles on whether there was any facing the Barrier to Success theme present

count row%	No, there was not	Yes, there was	Row total
New mg.	159 59.8	107 40.2	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	107 71.8	42 28.2	149 35.9
Column total	266	149	415

Chi-square: 6.01355.
Significance: 0.01420.

Table 12. Comparison of traditional and new magazine articles on whether there was any opposite to the Barrier to Success theme present

count row %	No, there was not	Yes, there was	Row total
New mg.	177 66.5	89 33.5	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	92 61.7	57 38.3	149 35.9
Column total	269	146	415

Chi-square: 0.96347.
Significance: 0.32631.

Table 13. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 1^a was present (N = 415)

count row%	NO	Yes	Row total
New mg.	196 73.7	70 26.3	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	137 91.9	12 8.1	149 35.9
Column total	333	82	415

Chi-square: 20.08904.
Significance: 0.00001.

^a: Women have to overcome prejudice to succeed.

Table 14. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 2^a was present (N = 415)

count row%	No	Yes	Row total
New mg.	218 82.0	48 18.0	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	121 81.2	28 18.8	149 35.9
Column total	339	76	415

Chi-square: 0.03561.
Significance: 0.85033.

^a: Women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Table 15. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 3^a was present (N =415)

count row%	No	Yes	Row total
New mg.	247 92.9	19 7.1	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	136 91.3	13 8.7	149 35.9
Column total	383	32	415

Chi-square: 0.33587.
Significance: 0.56222.

^a: Success somehow happened; it was not expected or sought after.

Table 16. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1^a was present (N = 415)

count row%	No	Yes	Row total
New mg.	235 88.3	31 11.7	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	145 97.3	4 2.7	149 35.9
Column total	380	35	415

Chi-square: 9.94965.
Significance: 0.00161.

^a: There is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed.

Table 17. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 2^a was present (N = 415)

count row%	No	Yes	Row total
New mg.	246 92.5	20 7.5	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	131 87.9	18 12.1	149 35.9
Column total	377	38	415

Chi-square: 2.38920.
Significance: 0.12218.

^a: Successful women are not obliged to achieve a balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Table 18. Comparison of traditional and new women's magazine articles on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3^a was present (N = 415)

count row%	No	Yes	Row total
New mg.	208 78.2	58 21.8	266 64.1
Traditional mg.	108 72.5	41 27.5	149 35.9
Column total	316	99	415

Chi-square: 1.71558.
Significance: 0.19026.

^a: Success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it.

Key finding 5: The relationship between the occupation of a woman and the Barrier to Success theme

The results of four ANOVAs reveal that articles that portrayed women in male occupations allotted a significantly higher percentage of space to facing the Barrier to Success themes than those that portrayed women in female occupations (Table 19). In terms of the percentage of space allotted to opposite to the Barrier to Success themes and the number of words used to describe either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success themes, articles that portrayed women in male occupations did not differ significantly from those with central figures in female occupations.

In order to see if the occupation of the central figure

Table 19. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male occupations and those that portrayed women in female occupations on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme(s)

	Mean for male	Mean for female	Degree of Freedom	F value Probability
No. of words (facing)	81.46	67.63	1	0.720 0.397
No. of words (opposite to)	66.87	51.67	1	0.892 0.346
% of space (facing)	9.69	3.27	1	14.253 0.000**
% of space (opposite to)	6.38	7.78	1	0.654 0.419

** Significant difference at 0.01 level.

had any effect on whether a particular Barrier to Success theme was present, six more crosstabulations were run. The results indicate that articles that portrayed women in male occupations were significantly more likely to contain facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed) than those with central figures in traditional female-occupations ($p = 0.00014$, Table 20). In terms of the other five Barrier to Success themes, no significant difference was found between these two types of articles (Tables 21 to 25).

Key Finding 6: The relationship between the lifestyle of a woman and the Barrier to Success theme

To investigate the relationship between the lifestyle of the central figure of an article and the Barrier to Success

Table 20. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 1^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	195 74.4	67 25.6	262 63.6
Female occupation	135 90.0	15 10.0	150 36.4
Column total	330	82	412

Chi-square: 14.51041.
Significance: 0.00014.

^a: Women have to overcome prejudice to succeed.

Table 21. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 2^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	216 82.4	46 17.6	262 63.6
Female occupation	120 80.0	30 20.0	150 36.4
Column total	336	76	412

Chi-square: 0.37835.
Significance: 0.53849.

^a: Women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Table 22. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether facing the Barrier to Success theme 3^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	245 93.5	17 6.5	262 63.6
Female occupation	136 90.7	14 9.3	150 36.4
Column total	381	31	412

Chi-square: 1.10943.
Significance: 0.29220.

^a: Success somehow happened; it was not expected or sought after.

Table 23. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	236 90.1	26 9.9	262 63.6
Female occupation	141 94.0	9 6.0	150 36.4
Column total	381	31	412

Chi-square: 1.88914.
Significance: 0.16930.

^a: There is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed.

Table 24. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 2^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	243 92.7	19 7.3	262 63.6
Female occupation	131 87.3	19 12.7	150 36.4
Column total	374	38	412

Chi-square: 3.34036.
Significance: 0.06760.

^a: Successful women are not obliged to achieve a balance between success and interpersonal relations.

Table 25. Comparison of articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations on whether opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3^a was present (N = 412)

count row%	No, it was not	Yes, it was	Row total
Male occupation	203 77.5	59 22.5	262 63.6
Female occupation	112 74.7	38 25.3	150 36.4
Column total	315	97	412

Chi-square: 0.41969.
Significance: 0.51709.

^a: Success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it.

theme contained, four ANOVAs were run. It was found that the number of words allotted to opposite to the Barrier to Success themes was significantly different for articles that fell into different lifestyle categories at 0.05 level ($p = 0.048$, Table 26). In terms of the percentage of space allotted to either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success themes and the number of words used to describe facing the Barrier to Success themes, no significant difference was found.

Key finding 7: The effect of interaction between lifestyle and source on the Barrier to Success themes

Table 27 summarizes the results of four two-way ANOVAs. It was found that the interaction between source and lifestyle had no effect on either the number of words or the proportion

Table 26. The number of words and the proportion of space used to describe the Barrier to Success theme(s) for articles that fell into different lifestyle categories

	No. of words (facing)	No. of words (opposite to)	% of space (facing)	% of space (opposite to)
Mean for I1	111.08	75.21	8.37	7.38
Mean for I2	88.31	41.31	7.56	6.28
Mean for C	67.52	146.07	4.53	8.67
Mean for H	21.50	204.75	2.64	17.14
F-value	1.135	2.685	0.829	0.891
DF	3	3	3	3
P-value	0.336	0.048*	0.479	0.447

* Significant difference at 0.05 level.

I1: Integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children).

I2: Integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children).

C: Career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children).

H: Homemaker (full-time home duties, with children).

Table 27. The effect of interaction between source and lifestyle on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme^a

	Degree of freedom	F-value	P-value
No. of words (facing)	2	0.375	0.688
% of space (facing)	2	0.002	0.998
No. of words (opposite to)	2	2.863	0.059
% of space (opposite to)	2	0.662	0.517

^a: Since the relationship between source and the Barrier to success theme and that between lifestyle and the Barrier to success theme have both been discussed earlier, they were not included in this table. The effect of "interaction" between source and lifestyle was the major concern here.

of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme. In other words, the effect of lifestyle on the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained was the same whether a story was from a traditional magazine or from a new one.

Key finding 8: The effect of interaction between occupation and source on the Barrier to Success themes

To explore the effect of interaction between source and occupation on the Barrier to Success theme, four ANOVAs were run. The data in Table 28 indicate that the interaction between source and occupation had a significant effect on the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes. In other words, the effect of occupation on

Table 28. The effect of interaction between source and occupation on the number of words and the proportion of space allotted to the Barrier to Success theme(s)^a

	Degree of freedom	F-value	P-value
No. of words (facing)	1	1.852	0.174
% of space (facing)	1	0.003	0.958
No. of words (opposite to)	1	14.203	0.000**
% of space (opposite to)	1	2.139	0.095

** Significant difference at 0.01 level.

^a: since the relationship between source and the Barrier to success theme and that between occupation and the Barrier to success theme have both been discussed earlier, they were not included in this table. The effect of "interaction" between source and occupation was the major concern here.

the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes was significantly different for articles coming from different sources. A look at Table 29 which summarizes the results of 2 one-way ANOVAs reconfirms the significance of such interaction: articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations used a significantly different number of words to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes in the traditional magazine sample but not in the new one ($p = 0.000$ and 0.635 respectively).

Table 29. The difference between articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations in terms of the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes for traditional and new women's magazines respectively

	Mean words for male occupation	Mean words for female occupation	Degree of freedom	F-value P-value
New mg.	52.43	64.29	1	0.225 0.635
Traditional mg.	210.08	48.77	1	13.729 0.000**

** Significant difference at 0.01 level.

Summary of Key Findings

* New women's magazines were significantly more likely to feature women who held traditionally male-dominated jobs than traditional magazines.

* New women's magazines were significantly less likely to contain any information about a woman's lifestyle than traditional magazines.

* The distribution of three different lifestyles, integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children), integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children), and career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children), was significantly different for traditional and new women's magazines. Traditional magazines featured a higher percentages of women as integrator 1 (80.0%) and career-focused (16.8%) than new magazines (63.6% and 9.3%

respectively). On the other hand, the percentage of women portrayed as integrator 2 in traditional magazines was much lower than that in new magazines (3.2% and 27.1% respectively).

* New women's magazines devoted a significantly higher proportion of space to facing the Barrier to Success theme(s) than traditional magazines. However, no significant difference was found between the two types of magazines in terms of the number of words used to describe either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s) and the proportion of space allotted to opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s).

* In the new women's magazine sample, the percentage of articles that contained facing the Barrier to Success theme(s) was significantly higher than that in the traditional one. For the percentage of articles that contained opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s), there was no significant difference between the two types of magazines.

* New women's magazines were significantly more likely to cover both facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed) and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 (there is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed) than traditional women's magazines. For the presence of the other four Barrier to Success themes, there was no significant

difference between the two types of magazines.

* Articles with central figures in male occupations devoted a significantly higher proportion of space to facing the Barrier to Success themes than those with central figures in female occupations. However, in terms of the number of words used to describe either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success theme and the proportion of content allotted to opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s), no significant difference was found between articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations.

* Articles with central figures in male occupations were significantly more likely to cover facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed) than those with central figures in female occupations. In terms of the presence of the other five Barrier to Success themes, no significant difference was found between articles that portrayed women in male and female occupations.

* Articles that portrayed women in different lifestyles used a significantly different number of words to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s). On the number of words used to describe facing the Barrier to Success theme(s) and the proportion of space allotted to either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s), lifestyle of the central figure had no effect.

* The effect of lifestyle on the amount of both facing

and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s) contained was the same for articles coming from different sources. In other words, the interaction between lifestyle and source had no significant effect on the amount of either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success themes contained.

* The interaction between occupation and source had a significant effect on the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme. In the traditional magazine sample, occupation had a significant effect on the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s). In the new magazine sample, however, such an effect did not exist. On the number of words used to describe facing the Barrier to Success theme(s) and the proportion of space allotted to either facing or opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s), the interaction between occupation and source had no significant effect.

CONCLUSION

Discussion

Through the analysis of success stories in traditional and new women's magazines, it is clear that new women's magazines are more likely to portray women in traditionally male-dominated occupations whereas traditional women's magazines show them primarily in traditional women's jobs. In the new magazine sample, the largest percentage of heroines work as professionals (74.81%), which is not surprising considering the facts that Savvy is tailor-made for women executives and that Working Woman also has a similar nature. Interestingly, only one woman (0.67%) in the traditional magazine sample is portrayed as politician or activist compared with 38 (14.29%) in the new magazine sample. It seems possible that, according to the societal stereotypes represented by traditional women's magazines, these two spheres are still considered highly inappropriate for women to get into. On the other hand, the 21 professionals (14.09%) in the traditional magazine sample might indicate that female professionals have already gained a certain amount of social recognition that even traditional women's magazines cannot simply neglect.

In terms of the lifestyle of the successful women, traditional and new women's magazines also have significantly different treatments. First of all, new women's magazines are

significantly less likely to deal with this topic at all than traditional women's magazines. A total of 55.6% of new women's magazine articles do not provide any information about the lifestyle of the central figure compared with 30.9% of the articles from traditional magazines. An important part of the variable "lifestyle" consists of a woman's marital and family status. In a study of the sex role messages in prime-time network dramatic television programming, Signorielli (1989) found that men and women were presented differently in terms of the marital status in that only 13% of the female characters could not be coded regarding marital status compared with 31% of their male counterparts. Signorielli related such difference to the sexist views of women's roles where women were still defined mainly within the context of home and family. By the same token, the tendency of traditional women's magazines to provide detailed information about a woman's lifestyle can be interpreted as an indicator of sex stereotypes, too, whereas the large number of articles from new women's magazines that do not contain such information suggests alternative ways to define a successful woman, for example, focusing on her professional achievement only.

The difference between traditional and new women's magazines regarding lifestyle is still obvious after articles that do not contain enough information were dropped. In the

new women's magazines sample, there is not a single homemaker compared with 8 (5.4%) in the traditional one. However, since the expectancy value for the homemaker category was smaller than 5, it was not included in the ANOVA test. The result of ANOVA indicates that the distribution of three different lifestyles: integrator 1 (in the workforce, with children), integrator 2 (in the workforce, married, children not mentioned or no children), and career-focused (in the workforce, not married, no children), is significantly different for the two types of magazines. Both magazines present successful women mainly as "integrators" who combine career and family in some way. However, traditional magazines tend to pay more attention to integrator 1 than to integrator 2 while the opposite is found for new magazines. Not many career-focused women are profiled in either traditional or new women's magazines. Surprisingly, there is a higher percentage of career-focused women in the traditional magazine sample than in the new one (16.8% and 9.3% respectively). Such a finding seems to be contradictory to the conservative nature of traditional women's magazines. It can possibly be understood as a way in which traditional magazines respond to social change, as previous studies have identified some improvement in these magazines over the years in conveying non-traditional sex-role concepts. Nevertheless, a systematic analysis of how traditional women's magazines portray these

career-focused women must be done before any decisive statement can be made, given that mass media have been found to portray independent career women negatively during the '80s (Faludi, 1992).

The content of the success stories examined demonstrates the salience of the Barrier to Success themes. More than half of the sampled success stories (217) contain at least one Barrier to Success theme. The woman's magazines' attitude toward whether being a woman helps or impedes one's career is equivocal in that the number of stories that contain facing the Barrier to Success theme(s) is almost the same as the number of stories where at least one opposite to the Barrier to Success theme is present (149 and 146 respectively). Do barrier to success really exist for women to overcome? The women's magazines recognize the validity of this question and discuss it from both sides extensively but provide no clear answer.

Of the six Barrier to Success themes, the ones that are most likely to be mentioned are facing the Barrier to Success themes 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed), facing the Barrier to Success theme 2 (women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations), and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3 (success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it). Some extracts are provided here to supplement the numerical data. Quotations

such as

Women are not penetrating in sizable numbers at the managerial level in business yet. Women still are at the breakthrough stage, where it's newsworthy if a woman is appointed here or there.

In the fashion business when we're intuitive and creative we tend to be called flakes. Men aren't called flaky when they're intuitive and creative-fashion is an intuitive business.

Until recently, banks have not been as willing to fund women's business as they have been to fund men's.

indicates that women have to overcome prejudice and discrimination in order to succeed (facing the Barrier to Success theme 1).

The following comments imply that successful women have to balance between career and interpersonal relations (facing the Barrier to Success theme 2).

To tell the truth, I don't know if a woman can be fair to both her career and her family.

Organizations would call back and say the really prestigious spot was speaking at dinner. I'd say I'll give up the prestige so that I can be home with my family.

She admires other people's ability to balance a home life with a profession--something she hasn't been able to pull off herself.

The last two quotations illustrate opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3.

In fact, I was pretty shocked (by my achievement). Subconsciously I must have been working toward this all of my life.

I believe in trying to be the best because that's what has always worked for me.

It is noteworthy that in the traditional women's magazine sample, the frequency of appearance for the six Barrier to Success themes is quite different. Much emphasis was placed upon opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3 (success happened to those who wanted it and who had worked toward it) and facing the Barrier to Success 2 (women have to balance between success and interpersonal relations) whereas opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 (there is neither prejudice nor additional obstacles for women to overcome if they want to succeed) was rarely mentioned. These findings suggest that for women profiled in traditional magazines, most of whom work in traditionally female-occupations, success is neither unreachable nor unexpected. They dreamed of success, worked toward it, and finally attained it (opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 3). The problem that these women most often worry about is the conflict between interpersonal relations and career (facing the Barrier to Success theme 2). Whether there is discrimination against women is no big issue for them (facing and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1). Nevertheless, being a woman seldom brings them any extra benefit for achieving their goals.

The results are mixed when looking at the relationship between the source of an article and the Barrier to Success themes. The most obvious difference between the two types of magazines is that new magazines are more likely to contain

facing the Barrier to Success themes than traditional ones. In addition, new magazines also allot a significantly higher proportion of space to facing the Barrier to Success themes than their traditional counterparts. Such findings suggest that new women's magazines, more than the traditional ones, tend to socialize their readers to believe that they have to overcome additional obstacles not faced by males if they want to attain professional achievements. If prejudice toward women does exist in the real world, these seemingly negative portrayals of successful women in new women's magazines can be understood constructively, too. From the socialization theory's perspective, it can be argued that new women's magazines are raising their readers' consciousness toward the societal barriers so that they would know how to react when actually facing them. The research question raised for future researchers to explore thus is: whereas new women's magazines choose to expose the societal barriers, do they also give advice to their readers on how to deal with these problems?

When the six Barrier to Success themes were examined one by one, it was found that new women's magazines are much more likely to cover both facing and opposite to the Barrier to Success theme 1 than traditional magazines, suggesting that prejudice or discrimination against women, rather than the other barriers such as conflict between career and interpersonal relations, is much more likely to be discussed

in the new women's magazines than in the traditional ones.

The results of ANOVAs reveal that articles with central figures in male occupations allot a higher percentage of space to facing the Barrier to Success themes than articles that portray women in female occupations. Such a finding indicates that, in women's magazines, women are still not encouraged to pursue what have been considered as "men's careers". For example, a female politician is likely to be portrayed as facing more societal barriers than an actress does. Given that women who work in non-traditional occupations account for 63.13% of the total 415 stories, the message conveyed by women's magazines seems to be that women do have options--that many women worked in non-traditional occupations; however, these women have to pay a price for their freedom in that they have to confront additional obstacles not faced by other women who choose to be employed in more sex-appropriate occupations.

Another significant relationship between occupation and the Barrier to Success theme is that articles with their central figure in a male occupation are more likely to contain facing the Barrier to Success theme 1 (women have to overcome prejudice to succeed) than those in a female occupation. The finding suggests again that women who aspire to non-traditional occupations are more likely to face additional obstacles than those in female occupations and that these obstacles very often are caused by prejudice and

discrimination against women.

Regarding the relationship between lifestyle and the Barrier to Success themes, it was found that the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes is significantly different at the 0.05 level for articles that portray women in different lifestyles. It is interesting to note that of the four lifestyle categories, articles that portray homemakers is the one that uses the largest number of words to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s). A quick look at the four homemaker stories that contain opposite to the Barrier to Success theme(s) reveal that the achievements portrayed by these stories were mostly non-competitive in nature. One of them is about how a woman successfully stopped smoking in one day. Another deals with a grandmother who looks terrific at her age. Still another depicts a woman who fought against the loss of one leg to become a marathon runner at last. These achievements have less to do with the society than with the central figures themselves in that the successful ones did not compete with other people to attain their goals. Their efforts were at a personal level. The only competitive homemaker story that contains opposite to the Barrier to Success theme is about a housewife who made great efforts to get a role in a soap opera, the tone of which comes close to that of an exotic adventure story rather than any serious report of achievement.

As shown in Table 19, articles that portray women in male occupations use more words to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes than those in female occupations. Though the difference does not reach the level of significance, further analysis reveals that the interaction between source and occupation has a significant effect on the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes and thus has to be taken into consideration, too. When articles from new magazines and those from traditional magazines were examined separately, it was found that in the traditional magazine sample, articles that portray women in male occupations use about four times as many words to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes as those that portray women in female occupations do (210.08 and 48.77 respectively). The difference is highly significant. In the new magazine sample, however, the number of words used to describe opposite to the Barrier to Success themes is not significantly different for articles with central figures in male and female occupations. These findings show that new women's magazines tend to treat women in male and female occupations equally when discussing opposite to the Barrier to Success themes whereas traditional magazines tend to portray women in male occupations as either having more advantages in achieving success or being less likely to face additional obstacles than those employed in female occupations. The

contention that traditional women's magazines are conservative towards women who do not conform to conventional values is challenged here. The criticisms by women's movement leaders and the rising number of women who hold positions that had once been for men only may have forced the traditional women's magazines to take a position on some women's issues. However, the seemingly positive portrayals of women in non-traditional occupations by traditional women's magazines should be examined carefully to make sure that they are indeed a true reflection of life. If positive role models were not constructed within a context that mirrors women's status realistically, they might be used to deflect people's attention from the problems that women face rather than to solve them.

Future Research

In the Leder (1986) study, only the negative side of the fear of success themes was examined (women have to overcome additional obstacles, etc). With such a coding scheme, it is very likely that an article dealing with both sides of the barrier to success themes equally would be coded as emphasizing only on the negative consequences of success. To solve this problem, the current analysis attempted to measure both negative and positive sides of the Barrier to Success themes by adding three opposite to the Barrier to Success themes into Leder's original scheme. However, problems arose

regarding the integration of the two sides. Since the two aspects do not complement each other, facing and opposite to the Barrier to Success themes have to be discussed separately as two different variables rather than as two extremes of the same variable. It may be helpful if future researchers can create some kind of index so that the number of the Barrier to Success themes contained in an article, ranging from the very negative to the very positive, can be indicated by one score rather than two.

The large number of successful women's stories that contain the Barrier to Success theme suggests the need to look at how successful males are portrayed in terms of the same themes. It may be useful if comparisons between traditional men's and women's magazines can be made. Or, future researchers may simply choose a gender-neutral medium, such as a weekly news magazine, and compare the portrayals of successful women and men to see how they differ. It is hoped that those who are interested in such comparisons can benefit from this current research.

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