

Non-gay sexual subcultures

A content analysis of Sydney sex contact publications

Jeanne Ellard

Juliet Richters

Christy Newman



National Centre in HIV Social Research
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The University of New South Wales

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Copies of this report may be obtained from:

National Centre in HIV Social Research
Level 2, Webster Building
University of New South Wales
Sydney, NSW 2052
Australia
Telephone: (61 2) 9385 6776
Fax: (61 2) 9385 6455
Email: nchr@unsw.edu.au
Website: nchr.arts.unsw.edu.au

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Contents

Abstract	ii
Glossary	iii
Introduction	1
Background	1
Aim	1
Method	2
Publications sampled	2
Coding	2
Results	4
1 <i>The Pleasure Guide</i>	4
2 <i>G'day Naughty Sydney</i>	8
3 <i>Searchlight</i>	13
4 <i>Sin</i>	17
5 <i>Link</i>	20
6 <i>Australasian Sexpaper</i>	23
Conclusions	26
Sex contact magazines three years later	27
The internet	28
Recommendations for future research	28
References	30
Appendix A: Initial categories for textual analysis	32
Appendix B: Office of Film and Literature Classification Guidelines	34
Appendix C: <i>TV Playmate</i>	36

Abstract

This report presents a content analysis of non-gay sex contact publications available for purchase in Sydney media outlets and sex shops in mid-2001. These media forms are approached as a means to conduct a preliminary mapping of sexual subcultures within Sydney (for example, BDSM/fetish, swingers, singles clubs) apart from the gay and lesbian community. The purpose of this project was to pinpoint sites for future ethnographic fieldwork to examine sexual risk practices for HIV, STIs and hepatitis in these 'high-intensity' sexual subcultures or networks. Criteria for inclusion in this study were that the publication be aimed primarily at an adult and non-gay readership and offer a means for the reader to make contact with people for non-commercial sexual encounters. Each publication was coded for the range of sexual interests represented, ways in which contact could be made, forms of representation and implied target audiences. These sex contact magazines serve as resources for meeting people for sexual contact, a cheap form of pornography and a source of information about sex. Censorship category was found to exert a significant effect on the content and form of presentation of each publication, particularly in the explicitness of the visual and textual representations of sexual interests. There is evidence that non-mainstream or esoteric sexual interests form part of the broader Australian sex culture without flourishing subcultures or enduring communities, social groups or networks being formed around specific interests. Of the six publications, only *Searchlight* was found to have a high proportion of content dedicated to facilitating non-commercial sex contacts between readers. These forms of media are not simply a representation of culture but an aspect of it. A study of the audiences and producers of sex publications would form a critical element of any future ethnography of the sexual culture of Sydney.

Glossary

Age play

Sexualised role playing in which one partner plays a baby or child and the other a parent, teacher or other authority figure.

Barebacking

Intercourse, usually anal intercourse, without condoms. The term often carries a connotation of eroticisation of the risk involved when an HIV-negative person has unprotected intercourse with an HIV-positive partner.

BDSM (BD, SM)

Bondage and discipline and/or sadomasochism. Sexual interests or practices that involve the use of restraint and/or mock or real punishment. As used in this report, the term bears no implication of psychopathology. Loosely used, the term also covers ‘DS’ or ‘dominance and submission’, i.e. sexual games that involve power-based role playing. Both are often associated with fetish clothing and equipment.

Esoteric

Term used by researchers to denote sexual interests or practices outside the mainstream repertoire of kissing, touching, oral sex and vaginal (and, for gay men, anal) intercourse. Generally practised by less than 5% of the population, esoteric practices include sexual role play or dressing up, BDSM or DS, group sex, fisting (hand or fist in vagina or rectum), rimming (oral stimulation of the anus), water sports (urine play) and scat (sexual play involving faeces).

Fetish

In medical usage, a fetish is ‘an inanimate object used to obtain sexual gratification’ (Dorland, 1988). In psychiatric usage, fetishism is characterised by sexual urges, fantasy and/or practices involving inanimate objects such as shoes, gloves, female underwear and BDSM equipment (leather garments and harnesses, ropes, whips, racks, hangmen’s hoods etc.). In sex magazines, ‘fetish’ is used adjectivally to cover a range of esoteric practices and BDSM as well as the associated clothes and equipment.

Introduction

This report reviews the content of sex contact magazines published in Australia for a largely Sydney audience. The purpose of this review is to report on the settings and methods whereby Sydney adults can meet people of the other sex for sexual contact other than through the usual social means for dating or courtship.

These magazines include a variety of places and methods for sexual contact, including readers' personal advertisements, listings for groups, networks for specific sexual interests such as BDSM (see glossary) or swinging, sex clubs, phone and internet groups, dance parties and social events, escorts and brothels. Seeking sexual contact via a brothel or escort makes the sex an explicitly commercial transaction. Other settings for sexual contact such as sex clubs, dance parties, phone and internet groups, magazine listings and contact advertisements are likely to require the participant to pay the provider of the contact service but not the sexual partner met through the service.

We explore the range of sexual interests represented, the ways in which contact can be made, the forms of representation and the audiences being targeted. We do not review pornography *per se*, although parts of the publications serve as pornography at both explicit and implicit levels: explicitly in the form of photo spreads and erotic stories, and implicitly via the pictures and text included in the contact advertisements.

Background

Research on sexual health risk among heterosexuals has concentrated on hegemonic mainstream attitudes and practice (Smith et al., 2003; Albury, 2002; Richardson, 1996; Chapman & Hodgson, 1988; Flood, 2000; Messiah et al., 1995). Yet we know that high-risk practice is not scattered randomly across the population but concentrated in certain groups and networks (Laumann et al., 1994). Although some work has been done on sex while travelling in foreign locations or travel for the purpose of sex (Mulhall, 1996) and research on backpackers' sexual practices is currently in progress (Egan, 2001; NCHSR, 2004), most Australian sexual health research on people other than homosexually active men has not gone beyond identifying behaviour patterns in the approximate way that they can be perceived from the clinic (Mindel et al., 2003; Fairley & Bowden, 2002; Skov, 2002) or recording prevalences (e.g. of reporting high numbers of sexual partners or participation in esoteric sex) in national surveys (de Visser et al., 2003; Grulich et al., 2003; Richters et al., 2003). Survey research reveals high correlations between various measures of sexual health risk such as high numbers of partners and participation in a wider range of sexual practices. An ethnographic approach to the settings and networks within which such sex takes place provides a means of studying high-risk or highly sexually active non-gay people, especially those with esoteric sexual interests.

Aim

This study aimed to carry out a preliminary mapping of the range of non-homosexual sexual subcultures within Sydney (for example, BD, SM, swingers, singles clubs). The purpose was to pinpoint sites for future ethnographic fieldwork in order to examine sexual risk practices for HIV, other STIs and hepatitis in these 'high-intensity' sexual subcultures/networks. The main approach was a content analysis of 'contact magazines', i.e. newspaper and other periodical publications aimed primarily at a non-gay readership, that offer a means for making contact with people for sex.

Method

Publications sampled

The criteria for publications selected for inclusion in this study were that they focused on:

- Sydney (thus international or interstate publications that did not enable contacts between people in Sydney were excluded)
- adults only (general youth or youth-interest publications that might include singles advertisements were not included)
- real world contact (correspondence or submission of reader stories did not qualify if there was no provision for readers or contributors to meet).

Newsagents, sex shops, adult bookshops and a few fetish clothes shops around Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, in Kings Cross and in the Sydney central business district were visited. During the material collection period in April 2001, seven publications were found to meet the selection criteria: *The Pleasure Guide*, *G'day Naughty Sydney*, *Searchlight*, *Sin*, *Link*, *Australasian Sexpaper* and *TV Playmate*. The current or most recent issue of each publication was purchased.

Coding

All of the magazine issues were coded for type of sexual interest, imputed audience, textual form, and type of contact offered. In addition we made a record of the number and type of photographs, and any mentions of safe sex or sexual health, including health promotion advertisements, advertisements for condoms, implicit safe-sex messages such as the inclusion of condoms in photographs or stories, and advertisers' claims to being 'healthy' and/or 'clean' or requests that respondents be 'healthy' and 'clean'.

The initial coding of sexual interest categories was very specific (see Appendix A), but for the purpose of producing representative and manageable figures, broader categories have been used for this report. During the process of coding it became apparent that many individual items (i.e. single advertisements or articles) included a range of interests and audiences. For example, an advertisement for a brothel offered both straight and esoteric sex (see glossary), and some contact advertisements expressed an interest both in fetish and BDSM and in sexual contact with heterosexual couples or bisexual women. Other items proposed a broad but non-specific interest for esoteric sex, an example being an advertiser who claimed willingness to 'try all things these pages'. The diversity of interests and audiences was included in the initial coding of the content, but for the purposes of representation the different audiences and sexual interests were distributed proportionally from each individual item to the relevant specific categories. Where the range of different esoteric practices within one item was so numerous as to make it impossible to calculate proportions, or a general reference to esoteric interests was expressed but not specified, the item was coded under the category 'multiple esoteric sex'. The category 'mainstream sex' included a range of sexual practices that are not generally regarded as out of the ordinary, including oral sex, massage, stripping and (for gay men) anal intercourse. Our assumptions about sexual practice norms were later borne out by the findings of the Australian Study of Health and Relationships, especially de Visser et al. (2003), Grulich et al. (2003) and Richters et al. (2003).

The textual form and type of contact generally fitted into one category, with the exception of a few contact advertisements implying that some sort of payment may be required or that the advertiser was willing to be 'generous'. The three main categories of audience, sexual interest and textual form were calculated on a column-centimetre space basis. In some cases where the

overall category represented less than 1%—for example, where the imputed audience included cross-dressers, gay men, bisexual women and lesbians—the amount was distributed amongst the individual categories.

What we took to be the imputed audience may not in practice be the only potential audience for a particular item. For example, some lesbian women may find the underwear-clad women photographed with motorbikes in *G'day Naughty Sydney* erotically attractive, but lesbians are presumably not the primary intended audience. For the purposes of coding we identified the primary intended audience. In cases where an item had more than one imputed audience, the percentage of column-centimetre space was distributed evenly between audience categories, as was done for sexual interest.

A distinction was drawn in the coding between commercial services where money is paid for sexual services and commercial ventures that potentially facilitate non-commercial sex (such as sex clubs, phone meeting lines and special interest dance parties such as a BDSM play party).

Overall the coding was interpretative and relied on a reading of the textual and visual content of the magazines. In some cases the content of a textual item was diverse but the accompanying photograph offered a more one-dimensional reading. An example of this was a phone sex advertisement targeting a varied audience and set of sexual interests, but accompanied by a photograph of an underwear-clad female, thus implying only a male heterosexual audience.

Results

The results of the content analysis and explanation of classification categories (see Appendix B) are presented here for all but one of the publications included in this study. The results for *TV Playmate* are presented in Appendix C, as this publication was found to provide negligible opportunities for non-commercial sexual contacts.

1 *The Pleasure Guide*

Publication details

Title: *The Pleasure Guide for Everyone*
Subtitle: *One Stop Guide for Sydney's Adult Night Life*
Classification label: None included (Unrestricted)
Format: Glossy magazine, 21 × 12.5 cm
Pages: 52 (including cover)
Price: \$8.80
Distribution: Sydney/NSW only
Issue date: Not published
Issue details: Issue 2
Frequency: Not published
ISSN: Not published
Publisher: MS-MP Enterprises Pty Ltd
Address: PO Box 829, Ryde NSW 1680
Other contact: Not published
Website: Not published

Censorship category

As an 'unrestricted' publication (see Appendix B), the *Pleasure Guide* has no explicit depictions or descriptions of sex. It is a highly stylised vehicle for marketing the Sydney sex industry and includes posed photographs of male and female models in sexualised poses, but not simulating sexual positions and always with genitals and nipples covered or facing away from the camera. To continue as unrestricted, this publication must also ensure that the promotion of sex products and services are 'discreet and low in impact' (OFLC, 1999), which is perhaps why the advertisements have been predominantly designed specifically for the *Guide*, and are thus uniformly 'restrained' in style, colour, size and language.

Format and content

The magazine seems fairly expensive, given the absence of any reportage and only a couple of photo spreads, but it includes a large number of discount vouchers for venues, adult bookshops and escort services. It is entirely Sydney-based and has no reader-supplied content. The *Pleasure Guide*'s front cover has a red background and features a photograph of a man with naked torso and a woman wearing a short black strapless dress. The cover promotes the publication as a 'One Stop Guide to Sydney's Adult Night Life' and also includes the words 'straight', 'gay', 'lesbian', and 'up to \$500 of discount vouchers'. While the front cover suggests it is a guide for everyone and the magazine certainly does include items for gay and lesbian readers, the vast majority of the content is aimed at heterosexual men.

The Pleasure Guide includes no editorial reportage, apart from publication information, contents page and maps of Sydney showing the location of the venues and shops advertised in the magazine. Two photo spreads, each occupying three full pages, show the male and female models featured on the front cover, billed as the ‘girl’ and ‘boy of the issue’. The woman is in a two-piece swimsuit and the man is in trousers with a naked torso. The images of the male model are published alongside advertisements for male escorts, marking this imagery as intended for a gay male audience.

Contact potential

This publication seems to be aimed at sex tourists or those ‘shopping’ for a variety or particular part of the Sydney sex industry. Thus the proportion of content focused on connecting readers for ‘amateur’ or non-commercial sex is negligible. The only casual or non-commercial sex opportunities listed by the *Pleasure Guide* are a few sex-on-premises venues for gay men and ‘swingers clubs’ for couples and single women. Of the five swingers clubs listed in the magazine, two are venues where patrons can meet other couples for sex and the others are brothels that offer a commercial sexual service. Although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the commercial services, one indication is that legitimate ‘amateur’ swingers clubs often specify that no single men are allowed.

While the front cover describes the *Pleasure Guide* as a guide for ‘everyone’, the intended audience of almost all of the magazine content is heterosexual and gay men. This may be a consequence of the much greater proportion of the sex industry that currently offers services for men, either because women do not want these services or because it is assumed they do not. Lesbians are included equally on the front cover, but only 1% of the content is actually aimed at this audience. Further, most of the material that is of interest or appeal to people other than gay or heterosexual men is in the form of products rather than sexual services, either commercial or non-commercial.

Table 1.1: Proportion of space in the *Pleasure Guide* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	70
Swinging	5
Multiple esoteric interests ^a	6
Transgender/Cross-dressing	0
BDSM	0
Fetish	2
Fantasy role play	0
Non-sexual	0
Safe sex information	4
Non-specific editorial, vouchers	13

(a) The category of multiple esoteric interests is distinguished from fetish by a clear interest in more than one type of esoteric activity, whereas fetish is a more definite focus on one specific activity or sexualised item.

Much of the mainstream sex coverage (12% of total space) is taken up by advertisements for strip clubs and topless or lingerie restaurants which offer titillation rather than physical sex services. The esoteric content is small, in keeping with the magazine’s unrestricted classification, and any mentions of non-mainstream practices or fetishes are mild or understated. For example, the Body and Soul Swingers Club claims:

An atmosphere of social behaviour and sexual fantasies, where everyone can join in and enjoy their fullest imagination with a difference (p. 14).

Rather than describing specific practices, such advertisements imply esoteric possibilities through coded terms such as ‘sexual fantasy’, ‘imagination’ and ‘difference’.

Table 1.2: Proportion of space in the *Pleasure Guide* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	52
Heterosexual women	3
Bisexual women	3
Bisexual men	3
Heterosexual couples	1
Sex workers	0
Lesbians	1
Gay men	13
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	0
Non-specific/Multiple audience	24

Table 1.3: Proportion of space in the *Pleasure Guide* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Commercial ads	40
Commercial ads for products	16
Commercial ads for products and sex-on-premises venues	7
Commercial ads for condoms and safe sex products	2
Community safe sex information	2
Commercial functions, events	1
Commercial networks chat lines	2
Editorial maps	12
Editorial publication information banners etc.	6
Editorial pictorial photographs	12

The textual form breaks down into 2% community announcements, 68% commercial and 30% editorial. The Sydney maps are included as editorial content but as they provide information on how to get to commercial venues they are also closely linked to the commercial content. While the vouchers may provide a discount for the reader they also serve as an advertisement for the venue and hence are included in the commercial figures in Table 1.3. The boundary between editorial and commercial content is somewhat blurred.

Most of the vouchers include images of young female models (mostly of Anglo-Celtic appearance with blond hair) in lingerie or swimwear, with the exception of those that are promoting gay venues. Some vouchers have no picture and the nature of the venue can only be determined by locating the full advertisement elsewhere in the magazine.

Safe sex

The Pleasure Guide includes an information page produced by the AIDS Bureau of the NSW Department of Health, which answers some ‘Questions people ask about AIDS’ including ‘Who gets infected?’, ‘What is the most risky form of sexual intercourse?’ and ‘Are condoms safe?’

(p. 12). This health promotion message is followed by a one-page advertisement for Ansell condoms and lubricants.

2 *G'day Naughty Sydney*

Publication details

Title: *G'day Naughty Sydney*

Subtitle: *The adult entertainment guide for 20 years*

Classification label: None included (Unrestricted)

Format: Tabloid newspaper, 40 × 29 cm

Pages: 32 (including cover)

Price: \$2.20

Distribution: Sydney/NSW only

Issue date: 20 April 2001

Issue details: volume 15, number 24

ISSN: 1442-4754

Publisher: Elren Pty Ltd

Address: Suite 2, 77 Willoughby Road, Crows Nest NSW 2065

Contact: Not published

Website: www.naughtysydney.com.au

Censorship category

G'day Naughty Sydney is classified Unrestricted, limiting the type of explicit material it can publish. It must not publish images that reveal nipples or genitals, nor detailed descriptions of sexual practice. The photographs are reminiscent of tabloid newspaper 'page 3' girls. For example, there is a full-page spread of the young Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova, whose photographs frequently feature in mainstream media publications, despite her relatively low ranking on the tennis circuit. The front cover claims that *G'day* covers escorts, massage, adult entertainment and sexy girls but does not mention explicit sexual interests or practices. The front cover features a photograph of an attractive young woman with long brown hair, but she is wearing an ordinary grey T-shirt, as opposed to the sexy outfits one might expect on the front cover of this type of publication.

Format and content

Although colour is used in the front cover design, the rest of this publication is produced in black and white newsprint. Interestingly, much of the editorial content does not address topics relating to sex but instead features articles about a World War II pilot, a storm, and the NSW town of Nimbin. The majority of venues, books and films reviewed are mainstream and not specifically focused on sex. The inclusion of this type of material is identified by the editor as a means of reaching a wider audience, which is claimed to have the flow-on effect of increasing the readership of the contact advertisements. The following appears on the banner of the contact advertisement section:

Hello readers,

As you have seen we have changed the name of this paper and also the content to quite an extent. We hope to make the reading more interesting and as such will be seen by a wider audience so your personal contact ad should be read by more people. We do have to cut the type of content down a bit so that it is not offensive to anyone! We will try and get the same information across for you but in the 'more acceptable' way.

Love, Jennifer (p. 24)

Clearly publishers are forced to make a choice framed by increasingly restrictive censorship rules and—given the amount of commercial content in this publication—the needs of commercial advertisers.

Table 2.1: Proportion of space in *G'day Naughty Sydney* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	48
Swinging	7
Multiple sex interests	6
Transgender/Cross-dressing	3
BDSM	3
Fetish	2
Fantasy role play	2
Non-sexual	29

Table 2.2: Proportion of space in *G'day Naughty Sydney* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	51
Heterosexual women	5
Bisexual women	2
Bisexual men	2
Heterosexual couples	2
Sex workers	2
Lesbians	1
Gay men	1
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	1
Non-specific audience	33

Table 2.3: Proportion of space in *G'day Naughty Sydney* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space	(%)
Readers' contributions	9	
contact ads		7
letters		2
Commercial advertisements	33	
for sexual services		20
for networks, clubs & chat lines		3
for venues (sex implied)		2
other		1
for non-sexual services		1
for non-sexual products		2
for sexual products		2
for job vacancies in sex industry		2
Editorial	58	
reportage, documentary non-sexual		17
humour, anecdote non-sexual		5
product review non-sexual		1
product review sexual		2
humour, anecdote sex-related		4
reportage, documentary sex-related		1
publication details, contents, banners etc.		11
pictorial photographs		16
pictorial cartoons		1

G'day Naughty Sydney's main intended readership is heterosexual males, with 51% of the content specifically aimed at this audience, including the majority of advertisements for commercial sex services such as brothels, female escorts, strip clubs and lingerie restaurants. While much of the editorial content of the magazine (33%) does not identify a specific audience, it is largely content of a non-sexual type, including the feature articles, film, music and book reviews, and items like the astrological guide. Significant exceptions to the non-sexual material contributed by the editors are the photographs featuring well-endowed, flowing-haired and underwear- or swimwear-clad women. While it is possible that these items may find an unintended audience, the intended audience is clearly male and heterosexual.

Given the evident appeal of this publication to heterosexual men, it is likely that advertisements for sex shops, reviews of sex toys, and advertisements for various sexual products are read by heterosexual men. However, in most cases we have identified them as appealing to a non-specific audience unless they explicitly name an audience or audiences, because sex toys, videos and pornography can be purchased by anyone,¹ whereas if a woman were to go to the majority of brothels she would be unlikely to be able to avail herself of any service.²

Likewise the feature articles in *G'day* were identified as having a non-specific audience, despite our impression that typically men (though not necessarily only heterosexual men) would be more likely than women to find these topics of interest.

Overall the publication targets a male heterosexual audience and mainstream sexual interests. The exception to this can be found in the contact section, where audiences and sexual interests are more diverse. The three pages of contact advertisements include requests for swinging, cross-dressing and other 'kinky' sex, although the specifics of kinky or esoteric sex are largely absent. The form of the advertisements may be a consequence of censorship by the contributors or by the editors. If it is a case of self-censorship by the contributors, this may be due to difficulties including explicit detail within the small amount of space given to each advertisement, or perhaps specifics are better negotiated at a later stage of the process, when and if someone responds. Two examples of contact advertisements are reproduced here:

Slim, young (over 18), horny Asian, unattached, Bi-woman. No ties, looking for guy's [*sic*] or couples who wish to have romantic times on the side. My place available on a regular basis. I'm not looking for a boyfriend or husband—just some interesting romance. Only letters answered that do include S.A.E. (p. 24)

Gent seeks females and/or males for fun activities. All letters answered. (p. 24)

Amongst the diversity of sought-after partners are bisexual men and women, male-to-female cross-dressers, gay men, heterosexual couples and husbands for women from Ghana seeking marriage. But it should be recognised that reader's contact advertisements (9%) and those commercial networks, dances, venues and functions that potentially lead to non-commercial sex (3%) take up only 12% of the space of the magazine.

While, in general, contact advertisements fall into the area of non-commercial sex, a small number are commercial, although the willingness to pay or the request for payment is not explicit, as the following example illustrates:

¹ Richters et al. (2003, p. 185) reported that 15.7% of women surveyed in the Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR) had viewed an X-rated video/film in the last year, and 14.1% had used a sex toy (e.g. vibrator, dildo).

² The ASHR study found that 15.1% of men aged 16 to 59 had paid for sex at least once in their lives, compared to only 0.1% of women (Rissel et al., 2003, p. 194).

Aussie nice guy, good means, 40s, seeking younger woman, 19–25, for outings. I love to spoil my woman with gifts and financial rewards to help you live on. I look younger than I am. See photo below. (p. 24)

Several of the advertisements in the contact section were from women who were interested in selling their soiled or clean underwear to any interested buyers.

Examples of some of the euphemisms used for articulating either an interest in or the availability of esoteric sex include: ‘some interesting romance’ and ‘broadminded sex sessions’. Again this is likely to be partly a result of censorship and partly due to the convenience of using a broad definition, particularly in advertisements for sexual services, where a service may indeed cater to a wide range of sexual interests.

Of the 49 contact advertisements, nine were placed by women from Ghana and separated into one section. The magazine claims that it allows Ghanaian women to place advertisements for free, requesting that \$5 be included with any replies in order to cover the costs to the publication. All of the advertisements from Ghanaian women include a photograph. About half are clothed; the others are in underwear or naked with the nipples and pubic area blanked out. The other 40 contact advertisements include only five photographs, four of male cross-dressers in women’s lingerie, one of a man in his garden sitting fully clothed beside a pet dog. The charge for advertising is \$10 per advertisement and 50c for each additional word beyond 28; photographs are free. There is also a \$2 charge for replying to an advertisement. *G’day* also offers a mail pick-up service (charge available on request) for those who do not want mail sent to their home or business address.

A total of 205 items was recorded, as well as 131 images. Many items include more than one image and some items include no visual imagery. The majority of advertisements for escorts include images of women, either in headshot only or wearing lingerie. Despite the unrestricted classification, three advertisements for brothels offering ‘special services’ include images which imply esoteric sexual interests: one of several women in leather corsetry, another of a woman kneeling with her hands behind her back (implying her hands are bound and she is in a position of submission although there are no visible straps or ties) and one small image of a woman apparently being spanked by another woman.

The majority of images involve female models and are intended for a male heterosexual audience, including 52 images of women posing in lingerie or swimsuits. One two-page photo spread shows different women wearing swimsuits posing with motorbikes. This is editorial material rather than advertising, although many of the images are included as part of an advertisement for a sexual service such as phone sex or escort agencies. There are 12 images that are not erotic and do not include people. Several of these accompany advertisements for non-sexual commercial items or the feature articles that are not about sex. Fourteen images are of women in leather or fetish gear or (in two cases) engaged in implied esoteric sexual practices (see above). As mentioned earlier, the contact advertisements include four images of male-to-female cross-dressing. There are only a few (nine) pictures of men; five of them are clothed or only a headshot and the other four are by implication naked, but clearly aimed at gay men, as they accompany advertisements for gay phone-sex services. There are only a few images that could be regarded as aimed at women.

Safe sex

G’day Naughty Sydney makes no explicit references to the reasons for safe sex, condoms or HIV in the editorial content. And although a few of the advertisements for brothels include mention that they are ‘safe’ or ‘hygienic’, the majority do not. Of the total number of contact

advertisements, only three make any allusion to sexual health, by describing themselves as ‘clean’ or seeking a partner who is ‘clean’. For example:

Sydney: Married couple, both attractive and slim, with athletic build, clean and easygoing, she size 10, he well built, seeking similar couple, 30’s to early 40’s for clean fun and friendship. Discretion assured.

Here the word ‘clean’ is apparently being used both to denote sexual health and to suggest limits to sexual practice (‘clean fun’), perhaps meaning safe sex.

Contact potential

Content of the magazine that could potentially lead to physical contact between readers is 25% (see Table 2.4).

Of the contact in *G’day*, 78% is aimed at heterosexual males and most of it is for commercial sex (see Table 2.5). There is no other significant audience for real or potential physical sex in the magazine.

Table 2.4: Type of contact proposed in *G’day Naughty Sydney* by sexual interest

	Mainstream (%)	Esoteric (%)
Casual	5	7
Commercial or professional	38	21
Networks or non-commercial sex	7	7
Relationships	15	0

Note: All percentages are of the total space in the issue.

Table 2.5: Type of contact proposed in *G’day Naughty Sydney* by imputed audience

	Commercial or professional sex (%)	Networks ^a (%)	Casual sex (%)	Relationships (including marriage) (%)
Heterosexual male	58	5	1	14
Heterosexual female	3	3	4	0
Gay men	1	0	1	0
Lesbian	*	0	0	0
Bisexual women	*	2	0	0
Bisexual men	*	2	1	0
Heterosexual couples	*	0	1	0
Not stated/Apparent	1	0	0	0
Other	0	0	3	0

(a) Such as clubs, phone chat lines, events and internet sites

3 *Searchlight*

Publication details

Title: *Searchlight*

Subtitle: *30th year of publication*

Classification label: Restricted (Category 1)

Format: Tabloid newspaper, 40 × 29 cm

Pages: 24 (including cover)

Price: \$5.99

Distribution: Sydney/NSW only

Issue date: Not published

Issue details: Number 93

Frequency: Not published

ISSN: Not published

Publisher: Not published

Address: 35 Francis Street, East Sydney NSW 2010

Website: Not published

Censorship category

Although *Searchlight* has a similar publication format to *G'day Naughty Sydney*, the content is very different. It is a Category 1 publication (see Appendix B) and consequently has a restricted audience, may not be on open display in retail outlets, but can be displayed in a plastic cover in a specialist store such as a sex shop. While *Searchlight* contains material for those interested in esoteric sex and more visual and textual detail of sexual types, its potential audience is likely to be limited by the censorship restrictions.

Format and content

The only colour print in *Searchlight* is on the covers and in a few banners. Unlike many of the other magazines in the contact market, *Searchlight* offers very little editorial copy. There are no feature articles, product reviews or professional photographs, and any editorial is in the form of information about subscriptions and advertisement placement. Readers' contact advertisements and accompanying photographs constitute the vast majority of the copy.

To encourage readers to include photographs, the magazine offers incentives in the form of discounts on advertising charges. Advertisements under the categories of 'Woman seeks Man', 'Girl seeks Girl', 'Swingers' and 'Threesomes [Couples seek singles/Women seek couples]' are free if a frontal nude photograph of the female advertiser is included, but cost \$5 if there is no photograph or if the preferred photograph does not fit this description. The rationale for this policy is presumably to encourage more women to advertise. However, men can also reduce the cost of advertising from \$10 to \$5 if they include a photograph for the categories of 'Threesomes [Man seeks couples]', 'Man seeks Woman', 'Mixed' and 'For Sale'. While the photographs are promoted as a way to enhance the appeal of individual advertisers they may also function as pornography. All of these prices are for advertisements under 53 words, and the price increases by 50 cents per word above this. Men can agree to pay for a woman's reply, also encouraging more women to advertise. Each reply costs \$5 plus postage and handling, or three replies for \$10.

The front cover has a colour photograph of a woman of Asian appearance in lacy underwear with her breasts and nipples exposed. The two other cover images are in black and white and

appear to be amateur photographs from readers. The first contains an image of a naked woman wearing stockings with her eyes and crotch blanked out under the headline ‘Housewife’s sex: single men wanted’. The second is published under the heading ‘Gang bang sex: wife’s story inside’ and contains an image of three middle-aged men and a woman, all with their eyes blanked out. One man is holding the woman’s breasts while she holds the erect penis of another man. Both images suggest the notion of willing housewives wanting sex. The front cover identifies the magazine as focusing on non-commercial sex rather than on the sex industry. And unlike *G’day Naughty Sydney*, this publication is dominated by readers’ contact advertisements, readers’ stories and photographs. To some extent the front cover may have a wider appeal to heterosexual men—the idea of the willing and available female sexual partner—but it is significant that the photograph of the lone female has been sent in by a woman. Hence, the cover would be better understood as heterosexual rather than just male. The image of several men with one woman raises interesting issues of the sociality of heterosexual men having sex with one woman. She is the focus of the sex in terms of penetration. The men touch only her but they want to be in each other’s company as they do it. Although some advertisements placed by couples interested in group sex or swinging explicitly state that the male will not touch the other men in any way, others will do touching but no oral nor penetrative sex with another male. The homoerotic potential in such scenes has been observed by Kaite (1995) in the context of heterosexual pornography and Sedgwick (1985) in historical British literature.

Many of the contact advertisements include a photograph, mostly naked and including genitals, but in some cases just the genitals. It is common for the faces or at least eyes of the people to be blanked out. It appears that the choice to blank out eyes is a gesture towards ensuring anonymity. It is not clear whether it is the participants or the editors (or the censors) that make this choice, as there are also images that do not blank out the face.³

Table 3.1: Proportion of space in *Searchlight* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	30
Threesome/Group sex	22
Swinging	10
Multiple esoteric interests	8
Transgender/Cross-dressing	1
BDSM	0
Fetish	5
Fantasy role play	5
People who want to watch or be watched having sex	8
Anal sex (heterosexual)	2
Non-sexual	9

³ These faceless images invert the usual boundaries of privacy where we show our faces in public but hide our naked bodies. However, it is common to print a bar over the eyes of patients photographed in clinical case reports. A debate on the World Association of Medical Editors email list in August 2003 revealed a diversity of opinion about whether this was effective in rendering faces unrecognisable.

Table 3.2: Proportion of space in *Searchlight* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	48
Heterosexual women	10
Bisexual women	7
Bisexual men	3
Heterosexual couples	14
Sex workers	0
Lesbians	1
Gay men	1
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	1
Non-specific audience	15

Table 3.3: Proportion of space in *Searchlight* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Readers' contact ads	60 ^a
Editorial information	14
Readers' photographs, self or partner	3
Commercial services, phone sex, brothels, massage etc.	16
Commercial products	2
Classified ads in the sex industry	2
Editorial photographs	3

(a) Although 57% of the 60% readers' contact ads are non-commercial, 3% are either explicitly or by implication commercial, e.g. 'generosity expected'.

While heterosexual men are the main audience, significantly more material than in either the *Pleasure Guide* or *G'day Naughty Sydney* is aimed at other audiences including heterosexual women, heterosexual couples and bisexual men and women. This greater diversity may be related to the greater emphasis on 'amateur' sex rather than commercial sexual products and services.

Contact potential

The proportion of magazine content that could potentially lead to physical contact between readers is 64%. For details of types of contact see Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Type of contact proposed in *Searchlight* by sexual interest

	Mainstream (%)	Esoteric (%)
Casual	27	48
Commercial or professional	4	19
Networks or non-commercial sex	0	0
Relationships	2	0

Note: All percentages are of the total space in the issue.

Table 3.5: Type of contact proposed in Searchlight by imputed audience

	Commercial or professional sex (%)	Networks ^a (%)	Casual sex (%)	Relationships (including marriage) ^b (%)
Heterosexual male	17	0	35	1
Heterosexual female	0	0	10	0
Bisexual women	0	0	10	0
Bisexual men	0	0	2	0
Heterosexual couples	5	0	15	0
Lesbians	0	0	1	0
Gay men	0	0	1	0
Not stated/Apparent	0	0	0	0
Other	1 ^b	0	1	1

(a) Such as clubs, phone chat lines, events and internet sites

(b) A quarter of the ads for relationships imply the relationship will have a commercial component, e.g. at least board and expenses.

Visual images

Searchlight includes 109 images. Not surprisingly, given the policy of not charging for advertisements that include images of women, 76 are of women only. The images of women range from wearing underwear (four images), full frontal showing the genitals or just the genitals (27 images), 17 full frontal where the genitals are not visible and five of women using or simulating the use of various sex toys. There are five photographs of heterosexual group sex, six photographs of simulated or actual heterosexual sex, either oral or vaginal, two transgender images including one with a male-to-female transsexual with penis erect, four images with a fetish or role-play theme and two photographs of women showing their anuses (one of these forms part of an advertisement offering ‘barebacking’). The magazine also includes 19 pictures of full frontal male nudity or of the penis; 15 of these show the penis erect. More of the visual material appears to be directed at a heterosexual male audience and may function for some men as a fairly cheap source of visual pornography.

Safe sex

Items occupying 9% of the space in the magazine allude to sexual health by specifically mentioning that the advertisers are clean, or that they expect someone who is clean. Three items explicitly mention barebacking in terms similar to the following:

Sydney – HARD COCKS wanted to fuck my blonde 24yo wife. She has a hot body and would love to have sex bare with virile men while I watch and play the wimp husband. Treat her like a slut while I watch. Black guys very welcome. Phone number for quick reply (p. 24).

The advertisement is written in the husband’s voice, but the wife appears to be a willing participant. She is present in the advertisement via the photographs, one of which shows her parting the cheeks of her bottom to expose her vagina and anus. (This item is repeated later in the magazine). One advertiser specifically says that safe sex will be required and another requests limiting the sexual activity to mutual masturbation for reasons of safety.

4 *Sin*

Publication details

Title: *Sin*

Subtitle: *devilishlywicked*

Classification label: Restricted (Category 1)

Format: Glossy magazine, 21 × 14.5 cm

Pages: 52 (including cover)

Price: \$5.50

Distribution: Sydney/NSW only

Issue date: Not published

Issue details: Australian issue 4

Frequency: Bi-monthly

ISSN: Not published

Publisher: 9mm

Address: 120 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale NSW 2008

Other contact: Phone number and email address provided

Website: Not published

Censorship category

Sin has a Category 1 classification which means that it is not available to persons under 18 years and must be sold in a sealed wrapper with covers suitable for public display. Within this category, actual sexual activity may not be shown in realistic depictions but simulated or obscured sexual activity and stylised depictions of sexual activity involving consenting adults are permitted. This may partly explain the high proportion of ‘artistic’ representations of fetishistic sexual ‘scenes’ or encounters in this publication.

Format and content

Sin is a mix of commercial advertising, literary erotica and erotic art, focused on BDSM and fetish. Of all the magazines included in this study it is the most stylish, creative and upmarket in appearance. The front cover claims that *Sin* is ‘the difinitive[sic] kinky guide’.

Table 4.1: Proportion of space in *Sin* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	2
Swinging	1
Multiple esoteric interests	25
Piercing/Jewellery	1
Transgender/Cross-dressing	0
BDSM	40
Fetish	21
Fantasy, role play	3
Toys	6
Non-sexual/Edit filler	1

Table 4.2: Proportion of space in *Sin* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	7
Heterosexual women	3
Lesbians	2
Gay men	4
Non-specific/multiple audience	82
Other ^a	2

(a) Including bisexuals, couples, sex industry, transsexuals and cross-dressers

Table 4.3: Proportion of space in *Sin* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Readers' letters	1
Commercial services, phone sex, brothels, massage etc.	11
Commercial products	29
Commercial networks	1
Editorial pictorial erotic art	22
Editorial product or event reviews	7
Commercial functions, events, clubs	9
Editorial fiction/Erotica	3
Editorial publication information	9
Editorial reportage	4
Safe sex info	2
Other ^a	2

(a) Includes readers' contact advertisements, community announcements, jobs in the sex industry

This analysis demonstrates that almost all (97%) of the content of *Sin* is dedicated to esoteric sexual interests (i.e. everything apart from 'mainstream' or 'swinging') and that 40% of these interests can be classified as BDSM. It is therefore unsurprising that 82% of the intended audience of this content was classified as 'non-specific/multiple audience', since BDSM is a sexual culture that does not exclude participation on the basis of sexual identities.

Contact potential

Since 50% of the textual content of *Sin* is commercial in form, it is unsurprising that reader contributions represent only 1% of the total content, and that opportunities for meeting other readers for non-commercial sex appear to be a very minor priority of this publication. The majority of commercial material in this magazine is about products rather than sexual services such as brothels and escorts. Of the total magazine, 7% of the space concerns services that offer sexual contact for money. As is evident from the low proportion of reader contact advertisements, the amount of space devoted to explicit offers of casual sex is less than 1%. Of the total magazine content, 16% offers a potential for meeting sexual partners interested in esoteric sexual practices. These include clubs, dance parties, phone and internet networks and social groups. Although the clubs and parties and some of the networks will mostly include a commercial component, the sex itself is not commercial. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the interest in BDSM, leather and fetish is in the realm of imaginary rather than actual sex. Fetish/BDSM is one of the few sexual interests with a specific style of dress and specific equipment. It is therefore more recognisable as a subculture than other forms of sexual interest. Swingers, for example, do not necessarily dress in a particular way or engage in role play or

fantasy. Unlike the other magazines reviewed here, *Sin*'s sexual interest is not attributable to a specific audience. Much (77%) of this magazine is not about making contact with other people but about buying products and looking at visual representations in the form of art. It could be argued that this is what the 'fetish' sexual interest involves. It is possible that readers may like the fantasy images of dominance and submission, or even enjoy being seen as someone who participates in kinky sex, but may have no interest in actually participating.

Safe sex

Sin includes two advertisements for condoms, representing 2% of the magazine's total content. One includes an image of a woman in a latex body suit, explicitly targeting the readership by associating condoms with fetish clothing. The other advertisement, for a store exclusively for women, is smaller and includes 'safe-sex products' as one of a range of products available. The only other mention of safe sex is in a letter from a reader to the advice page. A woman has written in because her husband has expressed an interest in buying a sex toy to 'spice up our sex life' (p. 47), but she has concerns about the safety and hygiene of using a sex toy. The magazine's 'guest advisor, Mistress Gwendolyn' (p. 47), provides information on where to purchase toys and how to clean them, but without mention of HIV or other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

Visual images

Sin includes 65 images, including 20 BDSM images and 19 of people wearing leather fetish gear. The majority of the images correspond with *Sin*'s dominant sexual interest of BDSM and fetish—a large number are in the form of art images or advertisements for leather and fetish clothing and equipment. Most product advertisements depict women in the role and dress of dominance (rather than submission). The presence of the art confirms the aesthetic aspects of these sexual interests.

Many of the images in *Sin* explicitly include at least one partner being dominant while the other is in a submissive position. These images include chains, whips, mangles, women in strap-on dildos etc. One painting has an image that closely resembles a swastika, and the use of military and fascist imagery is a common feature of the artwork.

The presence of advertising for condoms in this magazine may imply that the advertiser hopes to reach a gay audience, since gay men form a significant segment of the leather and BDSM scenes.

5 *Link*

Publication details

Title: *[Australian] Link*

Subtitle: *Contact Magazine*

Classification label: Restricted (Category 2)

Format: Glossy magazine, 21 × 14.5 cm

Pages: 88 (including cover but not including the attached issue of *New Zealand Link*)

Price: \$12.95

Distribution: National and international (New Zealand)

Issue date: Not published

Issue details: Issue 22

Frequency: Six-weekly

ISSN: Not published

Publisher: In Touch Publications

Address: PO Box 124, Beaconsfield NSW 2014

Other contact: Phone, fax and email address provided

Website: Not published

Censorship category

Link is a restricted Category 2 publication that includes graphic and detailed depictions of sex. It can only be purchased from a specialist sex shop or via subscription and even when sold in a retail outlet must be sealed, making it impossible for a reader to browse before purchasing. However, this rating also allows contact advertising to be explicitly frank about what kind of sex is being sought, without having to rely on the code words like ‘adventurous’ that are typical of the lesser categories of classification. However, in some cases, advertisements continue to be generally oblique in their descriptions.

Format and content

Most pages of contact advertisements include at least two accompanying photographs. The magazine advises that including a photograph can increase the success of your advertisement. Apart from the text, visual images in some advertisements make it clear that the focus of the majority of advertisers is sexual contact rather than companionship or relationships (although some may be willing to pursue these as well). Those advertisements that include a headshot usually black out the eyes, but many do not include face or body features at all, providing an image of the genitals only. This is the case for photographs of both men and women. This inverts the normative public convention of covering the genitals and exposing the face. Further, the genital-only pictures challenge conventional notions of ideal body types and sexual attractiveness. Some advertisers say they will require a photograph prior to making contact, while others are clear that physical appearance is of no importance. In the photographs that include the body as a whole, most are naked and some are posed during sexual encounters, particularly during heterosexual vaginal or anal penetration (of the participating woman) or ‘gangbangs’ involving multiple men around a single woman. *Link* is divided into sections by imputed audience and sexual interest, for example ‘Women seeking men, women or couples’ or ‘Bondage, discipline or fetish’. In some cases a pornographic photo spread separates the sections.

Table 5.1: Proportion of space in *Link* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	33
Threesome/Group sex	14
Multiple esoteric	12
BDSM	8
Swinging	7
Transsexuals, cross-dressing	5
Fantasy, role play	4
Fetish	2
Exchange, video, photos & letters	2
Heterosexual anal intercourse	2
Toys	1
Voyeurism	1
Non-sexual, fillers, banners etc.	9

Table 5.2: Proportion of space in *Link* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	29
Heterosexual women	11
Bisexual women	8
Bisexual men	3
Heterosexual couples	9
Men who like chicks with dicks	5
Lesbians	2
Gay men	17
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	1
Multiple audience	15

Table 5.3: Proportion of space in *Link* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Readers' contributions	
contact ads	37
classified ads	3
photographs ^a	2
letters	1
stories	1
Commercial advertisements	
for products	4
for sex-on-premises venues	1
sex networks	1
for services	1
Editorial	
publication information	17
listings ^b	3
pictorial/photographs	28
Editorial column	1

(a) Not part of contact ads

(b) Commercial and social

Table 5.4: Types of contact proposed in *Link*

Type of contact	Space (%)
Casual sex	30
Discreet casual sex	3
Relationship ^a	4
Commercial sex (contact ads and listings)	4

(a) Mostly overseas women, usually from Ghana, looking for marriage

Note: All percentages are of the total space in the issue.

Contact potential

The total amount of content in *Link* dedicated to facilitating non-commercial sex contacts is 33%.

Link serves an audience interested in both mainstream (33%) and esoteric (58%) sex, but with a greater emphasis on esoteric sexual interests. And, as with most of the other magazines, much (29%) of the content is directed to a heterosexual male audience. However, other audiences are also well represented, particularly heterosexual and bisexual women (19%) and gay men (17%).

Compared with most of the other magazines, the commercial content of *Link* is relatively small (7%), indicating that the magazine is attempting to serve the interests of ‘amateurs’ rather than the sex industry. A small number (less than 1%) of the contact advertisements are commercial in form, involving either an offer or a request for money in return for sex. However, these monetary expectations are masked through the use of language such as willingness to be generous or an expectation of generosity.

While there are claims by the swingers clubs that the majority of women in the couples are bisexual, this may only partially account for the greater number of requests for a couple or a single heterosexual or bisexual woman. Some of the males in couples may be avowedly unwilling to have sexual contact with another man. Some advertisements make clear that the male partner will only watch, or have sex only with the female member of the couple. The Couples Club website has previously suggested that, for some, swinging is about partner swapping while, for others, it is about group sex or just having sex around other people.

Safe sex

Link includes 226 contact advertisements. Of these, only 49 indicate any concerns about sexual health. Most of these references are not specific, using terms like ‘clean’. A few readers explicitly claim to be free of ‘disease’ and ‘drugs’, suggesting that they don’t participate in high-risk activities such as injecting drug use. Others request partners who are also ‘clean’, but only one contact advertisement explicitly requires ‘safe sex’. The only other mentions of sexual health are the inclusion of a support group for HIV-positive men in the gay listings.

The last section of contact advertisements in *Link* is for homosexual men. It includes a pornographic photo spread in which one of the participating men wears a condom during anal sex with another man. This is particularly interesting since none of the heterosexual photographic spreads includes the use of condoms. The editors of the magazine therefore appear to advocate safe sexual practices for gay men but not for heterosexuals. It is impossible to know whether the 50 people who indicate some interest in sexual health are the only people concerned with the matter, or whether they see this as something they might negotiate at a later stage in the process of making contact. If we were able to interview people who read or advertise in contact magazines for the purpose of meeting casual sex partners, the negotiation of safe sex could be explored in greater depth.

6 *Australasian Sexpaper*

Publication details

Title: *Australasian Sexpaper*

Subtitle: *Adult Contact Book*

Classification label: Restricted (Category 2)

Format: Glossy magazine, 24.5 × 17 cm

Pages: 182 (including cover)

Price: \$16.95

Distribution: National

Issue date: April 2001

Issue details: Volume 11, Number 115

Frequency: Monthly

ISSN: Not published

Publisher: Xpress (Australia) Pty Ltd

Address: PO Box 6293, Tweed Heads South NSW 2486

Other contact: Phone and fax numbers provided, also trading as World Wide Sex Net

Website: Not published

Censorship category

Australasian Sexpaper is classified Category 2 which requires that it be sold by specialist sex shops or by subscription and kept in a sealed cover until purchased. The majority of images in this magazine are supplied by readers and frequently depict explicit sexual acts. The front cover, for example, features a cropped photograph showing a woman being penetrated both vaginally and anally.

Sexpaper imposes its own censorship by refusing to print advertisements that involve mentions of pets, minors, families or sex that includes pain. Hence, while people can advertise for partners interested in dominance and submission, the advertisement cannot explicitly mention any forms of bondage or discipline.

Format and content

Sexpaper has a national readership, and so the contact advertisements are broken up into particular states and then subcategories of audience or sexual interest within those states. The magazine encourages readers to include photographs with their advertisements by offering them the next issue of the magazine free if they do so. Placing a classified advertisement is free, but readers are charged a fee to reply to an advertisement (\$5 for unlimited replies). The majority of photographs accompanying advertisements are of the genitals or, in the case of women, of breasts and genitals. Most are cropped to hide faces.

Table 6.1: Proportion of space in *Australasian Sexpaper* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Mainstream	30
Threesomes or group sex	21
Swinging	4
Multiple esoteric interests	17
Heterosexual anal intercourse	5
Transgender/Cross-dressing	1
BDSM	2
Fetish	13
Fantasy role play	2
Voyeurism	2
Non-sexual, fillers etc.	3

Table 6.2: Proportion of space in *Australasian Sexpaper* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	43
Heterosexual women	16
Bisexual women	4
Bisexual men	5
Heterosexual couples ^a	6
Men who like chicks with dicks	1
Lesbians	1
Gay men	4
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	1
Multiple audience	19

(a) This category includes one advertisement requesting a gay couple and another advertisement seeking a couple where both the man and the woman are bisexual. In general, advertisers seeking sexual contact with couples are looking for heterosexual couples or couples where the female partner is bisexual. In some advertisements couples advertising for a third partner or a couple are explicit that the man will not be involved in sex with another man.

Table 6.3: Proportion of space in *Australasian Sexpaper* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Readers' contact ads	31
Readers' fiction, erotica	3
Readers' letters	7
Readers' photographs, self or partner (not in ad)	8
Commercial services, phone sex, brothels, massage etc.	6
Commercial products ^a	9
Commercial networks	4
Editorial product reviews	2
Editorial pictorial, photographs	14
Reportage, interviews	5
Non-sexual editorial fillers etc.	10
Community announcements ^b	1

(a) Includes ads for condoms and safe sex products (condoms less than 1%)

(b) Includes safe sex messages from the publishers

Table 6.4: Type of contact proposed in *Australasian Sexpaper* by sexual interest

	Mainstream (%)	Esoteric (%)
Casual	10	17
Commercial or professional	1	4
Networks or non-commercial sex	2	2
Relationships	4	1

Note: All percentages are of the total space in the issue.

Table 6.5: Type of contact proposed in *Australasian Sexpaper* by imputed audience

	Commercial or professional sex (%)	Networks ^a (%)	Casual sex (%)	Relationships (including marriage) (%)
Heterosexual male	3	1	5	3
Heterosexual female	*	*	8	*
Bisexual women	*	*	2	*
Bisexual men	0	*	4	*
Heterosexual couples	0	*	6	*
Lesbian	0	0	*	*
Gay men	*	*	1	*
Other/Not apparent	1	3	1	2

(a) Such as clubs, phone chat lines, events and internet sites

* Less than 1%; included in Other

Contact potential

Content relating to making sex contacts between readers makes up 31% of *Sexpaper*. *Sexpaper* includes both mainstream (30%) and a range of other esoteric sexual interests, including threesomes or group sex (21%), fetish (13) and multiple esoteric interests (17%). The intended audience is clearly heterosexual men (49%) but, again, other audiences have also been incorporated into this publication. The total amount of reader-produced content is 49%, compared to 19% commercial and 32% editorial. This demonstrates a considerable focus on facilitating non-commercial sexual contacts, despite a shadowed commercial industry.

Safe sex

Explicit mentions of safe sex, advertisements for condoms or representations of sex using condoms represent only 1% of the total magazine. Of the total reader contact advertisements, 27% made an implicit safety claim: 22% said they were 'clean', 4% that they were STD-free, had a medical certificate or were blood donors, and 1% that they were willing to use condoms.

Conclusions

The explicitness of the visual and textual representations of sexual interests varies between magazines. This is no doubt a consequence of editorial choices, but will also reflect the interests of readers and advertisers. Decisions about content are also influenced by censorship regulations. If publishers want their magazines to reach a wide and mainstream audience they are required to limit the explicitness of the visual and textual content. However, the criteria or guidelines for the censorship categories do not always make clear what would be acceptable or unacceptable (see Appendix B).

There does not appear to be any particular relationship between level of classification and the amount of total content dedicated to facilitating non-commercial sex contacts between readers. For example, 25% of the 'unrestricted' *G'day Naughty Sydney* includes non-commercial contact potential, far less than the 64% of the Category 1 *Searchlight*, but similar to the two Category 2 publications, *Link* (33%) and *Sexpaper* (31%).

No evidence was found in the contact publications for the existence of flourishing communities, social groups or networks centred around specific non-mainstream sexual interests other than same-sex attraction. Nonetheless there is evidence that non-mainstream sexual interests form part of the broader Australian sex culture. Therefore, treating non-mainstream sexual interests as subcultures may not be the most useful way to think about or research sex culture in contemporary societies.

Contact magazines and internet sites are often the only options available for women to find sexual partners interested in esoteric sexual practices; there are few brothels and escorts that cater for women. While the mainstream bar and pub scene no doubt offers some women an avenue for meeting sexual partners, it is more difficult to explore esoteric sex in this context. Wysocki (1998) found that women used bulletin boards because they offered a safe way to explore sexually diverse practices, without risking rejection or dangers associated with having sex with complete strangers. The contact magazines also reveal a blurring of the boundaries between commercial and non-commercial sex in some circumstances. Commercial sex may be a first point of exploration for some people, a place to learn about specific sexual interests and to experiment and explore desire. Internet chat sites and phone chat lines may provide safe spaces for people to experiment and learn about particular sexual scenes and interests.

We suggest that forms of media like *Sin* and the other contact magazines reviewed in this report are not simply a representation of culture but an aspect of it. That is, these magazines form part of what Ortner (1999) has identified as 'public culture' and this is particularly true of the interconnections between practice and material culture in the public representations of fetish and BDSM culture, which has a predominant focus on performance and the representation of identifiable sexual aesthetics.

Sex contact magazines serve as resources for meeting people for sexual contact, a cheap form of pornography and a source of information about sex. There are many interesting ambiguities at play within each of these magazines in terms of the ongoing tension between their implied and actual audiences, which includes the important function of representing images of 'real' readers to help construct imagined (and actual) sex communities in Australia. There has been very little research conducted on these media industries and so a study of the audiences and producers of sex contact magazines could offer a fascinating contribution to any future ethnographies of the sexual culture of Sydney.

Sex contact magazines three years later

Three years after the initial purchase expedition in April 2001 we repeated the exercise of buying all the available sex contact publications in Sydney. Although we anticipated that many of these original publications might have gone out of business, to be replaced in function by phone services and internet sites, we were interested to discover that several new Australian publications had also been launched since that time. The magazines in this report that continue to be published in 2004 are *Sexpaper* and *Searchlight*, which are both published in the same formats and classified under the same OFLC categories.

New sex contact publications include the widely distributed monthly magazine [*The Australian*] *Rosie*, which claims to include ‘over 200 contact adverts’, with a spin-off speciality magazine called *Rosie Bizarre* dedicated to ‘genuine kinky contact ads’. Both are published as high-gloss, full-colour magazines (21 × 15 cm), priced at \$15.50 and \$18 respectively.

Another newcomer is the high-budget, nationally distributed *Australasian Vixsin Swingers* published by Australasian Vixsin in a high-gloss full-colour magazine format (29.5 × 21 cm). It is priced at \$9.90 and almost entirely filled with contact advertisements for the heterosexual swinger scene in every Australian state. A new stable of publications under the main brands of ‘Swinger’ and ‘Playmate’ is now published under various speciality titles, including *Pissing Swinger*, *Pissing Playmate*, *TV Playmate* and *TV Swinger*, each of which is published in the same high-gloss, full-colour format (26.5 × 19 cm) and includes contact advertisements from around Australia.

Finally, two new unrestricted publications appear to have filled the gap left by *Sin* and the *Pleasure Guide*. *Sydney Kink Scene* has a similar publishing format to *Sin* and covers ‘kink, BD, fetish, SM, Ds, gothic, news, lifestyle, culture & events’, but does not include any contact advertisements. *Sexy Sydney: The Ultimate Annual Guide to Exotica* is a more expensive annual publication that has a similar function to the *Pleasure Guide* in that it markets the sex industry in Sydney. Although it includes contacts for swingers’ clubs and other non-commercial networks, it is an entirely commercial vehicle.

The publications that have folded since 2001 are the *Pleasure Guide*, *G’day Naughty Sydney*, *Link* and *Sin*. It is perhaps not a coincidence that two of these publications were classified as ‘unrestricted’, a category of publications that—as Helen Vnuk noted in her book *Sex and Censorship in Australia* (2003)—has faced increasing restrictions in the past few years. Vnuk (2003, p. 9) suggests that the conditions behind increasing censorship include the introduction in 1996 of a classification board made up of community ‘representatives’, including those with a moral interest in increasing censorship and without the ongoing experience in gauging community standards that OFLC classification officers had the opportunity to develop over time. In addition, a new set of classification guidelines were introduced in 1999 (partly reproduced in Appendix B) that had the effect of opening up classification criteria to individual interpretation:

The enormous subjectivity of the guidelines, combined with the constant rotation of board members classifying magazines, makes the job of magazine editors very difficult. With every description of sex, they must ask themselves if it’s ‘gratuitous’ or ‘very detailed’. With every photo, they must assess whether it’s ‘high in impact’, whether it contains ‘genital emphasis’ and also whether there are ‘prominent and/or frequent realistic depictions of sexualized nudity containing genitalia’ (Vnuk, 2003, p. 10).

Vnuk (2003, p. 246) argues that the classification guidelines for publications need to be made much more specific: ‘Instead of regulations like: “Depictions of sexualized nudity, whether obscured or otherwise, are not permitted,” the rules should be brief and simple, along

the lines of: “No nipples, no genitals, no pubic hair”’. Indeed, it could be that this vagueness has contributed to the increasing phenomenon of ‘unrestricted’ Australian sex magazines being ‘censored out of existence’ (Carmody, 2001).

The internet

Clearly, the internet has to a large extent already taken over as the preferred mode of discreet contact between people with minority or socially unacceptable sexual interests (and indeed non-sexual interests, such as sufferers from rare chronic diseases, fans of obscure rock groups, and neo-Nazis) (Guidone, 2000). Apart from the sale of huge amounts of pornography, the internet has enabled worldwide contact between people who were formerly comparatively socially isolated and thus—in the case of people whose condition or interest is defined by medicine or psychology as pathological—more subject to the discipline of professionals supplying information (and treatment) to them for their ‘condition’. For example, the nascent but worldwide social resistance to the labelling of transgendered people and people with intersex conditions as needing corrective surgery would not have emerged without the internet.

Evidence for the role of the internet in enabling access to information about sexual issues and also social contact with like-minded people has been documented for heterosexual women (Wysocki), heterosexual men (Bull, 2000; Phua, 2002), gay men (Murphy et al., 2004; Elford et al., 2001; Weinrich, 1997) and young same-sex-attracted people (Hillier et al., 2001). Therefore it is interesting to note that the print format of these sex contact publications remains a popular and commercially viable medium for contact advertisements.

Recommendations for future research

Any future ethnographies of non-mainstream non-commercial sex culture should include both fieldwork and in-depth analysis of the type of media reviewed in this report. The media are a key aspect of what Ortner has termed ‘public culture’ (1999) and would therefore contribute to the type of cultural analysis ‘in which ethnography, theory, and public culture are held in a productive tension’ (Ortner, 1999, p. 57).

Although we did not find evidence in the magazines of subcultural institutions centred on sexual interests, this does not mean that non-mainstream sexual interests do not warrant further research or that it is impossible to do ethnography of sexual networks. For example, it would be possible to do an ethnography of the Sydney BDSM scene. Setting aside for a moment the difficulties of obtaining ethics committee clearance, an ethnographer could attend public venues such as the Hellfire Club, join the BDSM scene through the internet, attend BDSM parties and get to know people in neighbourhood networks of aficionados. The Australian BDSM Information Site (<http://www.master.webcentral.com.au/abis/bdsmoz.html>; dated 22 June 2003 and accessed 5 September 2003) says:

The BDSM scene, as far as Australia goes, is somewhat unclear. There is no national BDSM or SM organisation or representative body so there is no organised flow of information between the states or even the cities within a state. For the most part the people who are into any of the aspects of BDSM or fetishism just get on with it.

So. To find out what is going on and who is out there, professionally and privately, you need to basically keep your ear to the ground. This page should give you a bit of a head-start and tell you about activities and resources nation-wide and in the major population centres.

This introduction is followed by a list of magazines, suppliers and social contacts arranged by region (national then state). The site also includes articles, stories and poetry, personal advertisements, personal home pages, mailing lists and links.

Other things that could be done if NCHSR wanted to proceed with work in this area include:

- mapping of sexual interests (and to some extent of the associated social networks) via survey of local internet sites
- discursive analysis of documents—magazines, advertisements, pornography etc.—as distinct from the basic content analysis reported here
- in-depth interviews with people involved in scenes such as BDSM or swinging
- consultation with sexual health and other health professionals
- targeted field work in sex clubs, dances, saunas etc.
- recruitment for interview, in mainstream settings such as singles' dances, of people with high partner numbers or special interests.

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Appendix A: Initial categories for textual analysis

Sexual interest categories

Mainstream heterosexual

‘discreet’ (i.e. presumably adulterous)

toys

anal

big breasts

Swingers

Group sex

gang bangs

Water sports (wet sex; urolagnia)

scat

BDSM

spanking

bondage and discipline

Role play

age play

DS (dominance–submission)

Substance fetishes

rubber

vinyl

leather

other (feathers, food, fabrics?)

Sexual piercing and cutting

tattoos

Trannies

girls with dicks

bi and hermaphrodite group sex

Note that many of the above categories run into each other. For example, the boundaries between role play, age play and BDSM are often not clear, and water sports may have strong elements of age play (babies and nappies).

Textual form categories

commercial advertisements

for services (e.g. call girls, brothels, phone sex)

for products (e.g. dildos, corsets)

for functions (e.g. dances)

for venues (venues where customers consume each other or an entertainment product, excluding brothels)

copy from readers/amateurs

letters

contact ads

photos of self or partner

stories (cf. *Penthouse* Forum)

editorial prose

editorials

fiction

reportage/documentary

humour/anecdote

Other categories

gay/non-gay coded

commercial/non-commercial

illustrated/unillustrated (because illustrated ad forms part of content, just as a catalogue can be read as porn in its own right rather than just as an ad for porn)

Appendix B: Office of Film and Literature Classification Guidelines

(Truncated summary from OFLC 1999 Guidelines for the Classification of Publications and National Classification Code Schedule)

Unrestricted

Includes all publications not classified as restricted or refused classification.

- Covers must be suitable for public display
- Sexualised nudity not permitted
- Depictions that show or imply sexual activity involving consenting adults not permitted
- Promotion of adult sexual products and services should be very discreet and low in impact.

Category 1: Restricted

Includes publications that:

(a) explicitly depict nudity, or describe or impliedly depict sexual or sexually related activity between consenting adults in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, or

(b) describe or express in detail violence or sexual activity between consenting adults in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, or

(c) are unsuitable for a minor to see or read.

- Not available to persons under 18 years (not to be sold in Queensland)
- Must be distributed in a sealed wrapper
- Covers must be suitable for public display
- Actual sexual activity may not be shown in realistic depictions
- Simulated or obscured sexual activity involving consenting adults may be shown in realistic depictions
- Stylised depictions of sexual activity involving consenting adults may be more detailed.
- Realistic depictions of nudity may contain genital detail and emphasis and include touching of genitals
- Realistic depictions of obvious sexual excitement may be permitted.

Category 2: Restricted

Includes publications that:

(a) explicitly depict sexual or sexually related activity between consenting adults in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, or

(b) depict, describe or express revolting or abhorrent phenomena in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult and are unsuitable for a minor to see or read.

- Not available to persons under 18 years (not to be sold in Queensland)

- May not be publicly displayed and may only be displayed in premises that are restricted to adults
- Detailed descriptions of sexual activity involving consenting adults may be permitted
- Actual sexual activity involving consenting adults may be realistically depicted
- Descriptions and depictions of stronger fetishes may be permitted [but] fetishes in which non-consent or physical harm are apparent are not permitted
- Depictions of revolting and abhorrent phenomena may be permitted
- Stylised depictions and written descriptions may be more detailed than realistic depictions.

Appendix C: *TV Playmate*

While *TV Playmate* includes a large quantity of reader-supplied material, coding of the magazine reveals that it actually offers no mechanisms for making non-commercial sexual contact. This magazine serves more as pornography and information about sexual services for those interested in transgender partners. The readers' letters and stories might claim to provide authentic information about these sexual interests, but this does not provide enough concrete opportunity for making non-commercial sexual contact to qualify for this content analysis. Thus, it has been provided as an appendix. *TV Playmate* continues to be published in 2004, but under the new name of *TV Swinger*.

Publication details

Title: *TV Playmate*

Subtitle: *An Australian Mag*

Classification label: Restricted (Category 2)

Format: Glossy magazine, 26.5 × 19 cm

Pages: 84 (including cover)

Price: \$15.95

Distribution: National

Issue date: Not published

Issue details: Number 5

Frequency: Monthly

ISSN: Not published

Publisher: ASP Productions Pty Ltd

Address: PO Box 15, Northbridge WA 6865

Other contact: Phone, fax and email addresses provided

Website: playmate.com.au

Format and content

We have created an audience category called 'men who like chicks with dicks' but it is likely that the majority of men who buy and read this magazine identify simply as heterosexual. In very few of the stories are the male partners portrayed as anything but heterosexual. Although the magazine has a small amount of mainstream sexual interest material and items explicitly directed at heterosexual men, consumers would not buy this magazine unless they found something about transgender 'women' erotic. While the readers' stories and photographs imply the existence of a 'real-life' non-commercial sexual network, the magazine contains no contact advertisements and most of the commercial sex is in the form of phone sex. While the readers of this magazine are presumably interested in sexual fantasies and sexual contact with pre-operative transsexuals, the advertisements for phone sex do not specify whether the workers are transgender or biological women. There is also a small amount of gay content, but no more than in most of the other contact magazines.

Table 1: Proportion of space in *TV Playmate* allocated to different sexual interests

Sexual interest category	Space (%)
Transgender (oral—not clear willing to do anal) vanilla	18
Group sex	9
Anal sex	28
Transgender/Cross-dressing	8
Toys	1
Fetish	2
Multiple sex interests	21
Mainstream	9
Non-specific banner and fillers	4

Table 2: Proportion of space in *TV Playmate* addressed to different audiences

Imputed audience	Space (%)
Heterosexual men	10
Heterosexual women	0
Bisexual women	0
Bisexual men	1
Heterosexual couples	1
Sex workers	0
Men who like chicks with dicks	63
Lesbians	0
Gay men	4
Transsexuals/Cross-dressers	15
Non-specific audience	6

Table 3: Proportion of space in *TV Playmate* devoted to different textual forms

Textual form	Space (%)
Readers' letters	22
Readers' photographs and stories	42
Readers' photograph, self or partner	6
Commercial services, phone sex, brothels, massage etc.	16
Commercial products	3
Classified ads in the sex industry	0
Editorial readers' competitions	2
Editorial information, contents etc	7
Editorial photographs	2