

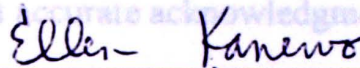
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POPULAR ADVICE COLUMNS: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS ANALYSIS

JENNIFER S. HOLLINGSWORTH

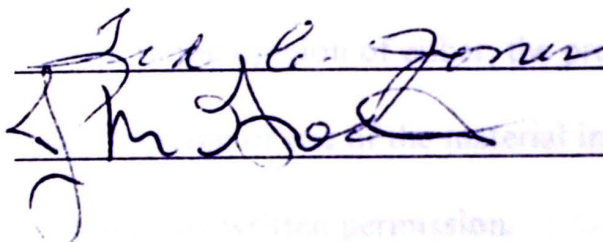
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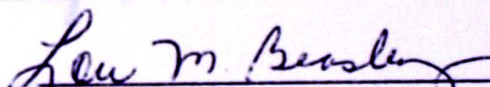


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POPULAR ADVICE COLUMNS: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS ANALYSIS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

Austin Peay State University

Jennifer S. Hollingsworth

December 2002

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ABSTRACT

Though popular advice columns have attracted little in the way of research, they have attracted millions of readers for various reasons. This research compares the popular advice columns of Dorothy Dix, early and late Dear Abby, and early and late Ann Landers, with the purpose of seeking the age and sex of those who write to the columnists, as well as the gratifications sought by the readers -- whether individual, interpersonal or societal. The intent and type of columnist replies and reader letters are studied as well, with results and the columnists themselves contrasted against one another. The personalities of the columnists, colored by the times in history that the columns and letters were written, factor greatly into the study, as the gratifications sought, reason to write to columnist, and ages of the readers differ in direct relation to them. Moreover, some variables, such as the sex of the reader, do not stray drastically regardless of the years or columnists tested. The results contend that the average readers have transcended from seeking purely individual gratification during the early years of American advice columns, to societal gratification in current times, coming full circle to the sense of community found in the earliest advice column, *The Athenian Mercury*.

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INTRODUCTION

The newspaper advice column was initiated in Britain in 1691. *The Athenian Mercury*, brainchild of bookseller John Dunton, was the first journal explicitly dedicated to providing society with answers to their many questions, questions of which often regarded the likes of physics, astronomy and literature, according to McEwen (1972; as cited in Hendley, 1977). In spite of those questions differing from present-day advice column fare, Hendley (1977) argued that the journal inspired a sense of community among readers, a kinship within the realm of other readers and a special relationship with those dispensing the advice. This sense of community surrounding advice columns has lasted for years due to uncommon support and spirit, and in spite of criticism and belittlement.

In describing those writing to advice columnists, Gieber (1960) maintained that “they are confused souls whose interpersonal communication is weak and whose perceptions of reality are befogged.” He portrayed the job of the advice columnist as one of lending a non-threatening ear to give support to these anxiety-ridden people.

A content analysis by Dibner (1974) demonstrated that people who use advice columns normally do so as a way to extend blame toward another, asking for help in changing another person’s flawed character.

The advice columnists themselves have also come under fire, with their responses studied for purportedly supporting damaging myths regarding marriage and mental health (Tankard & Adelson, 1982) to a lack of referrals to mental health professionals (Moran, 1989). In spite of the negative light sometimes thrown on advice columns, a small number of researchers have shed light on the subject; however, further investigation is

warranted. The questions of why people use advice columns, what benefits they receive and whether these columns and reasons for writing to advice columnists have changed over the years must be posed.

Despite advice columns' enduring popularity as a newspaper staple, they have attracted very little research about the roles they play for readers. Researchers have conducted analyses regarding the types of problems asked about by readers or types of letters written including columnist response content and style (Gieber, 1960; Dibner, 1974; Smith & Levin, 1974, Lumby, 1976; Tankard & Adelson, 1982; Moran, 1989; Kanervo, White & Jones, 1991); but there is presently no research with direct regard to the theory of uses and gratifications of advice column patronage.

This study will analyze the content of five separate columnist sets, with each set consisting of 24 columns from a period of twelve consecutive months. The columns of Dorothy Dix (1949), Ann Landers (1956), Dear Abby (1958-1959), Ann Landers (1999) and Dear Abby (1999) will be studied with the intent of obtaining answers to specific questions separately, and in relation to previous research. This study seeks answers to questions regarding the age and sex of those who write to popular columnists, as well as the level or type of gratification -- whether individual, interpersonal or societal -- sought by the readers from the columnists, as people are thought to use specific media to gratify needs or wants (Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, 1973). In addition, the intent and type of columnist replies and reader letters will be studied and contrasted against each other, with the consideration of columnist personality, history and time written. In doing so, the study will expand the theory of uses and gratifications with regard to measuring the above variables in a reader/columnist context, although the content analysis will result

only in analyst perception and interpretation in light of the theory's criticisms of the impossibility of truly knowing why other people do what they do and what they expect to gain from doing so.

Born a child of privilege in 1861 to a prominent southern businessman, the late Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer became the herald of popular advice column culture. Upon becoming a reporter at the New Orleans' *Picayune* in 1896, she chose the pen name of Dorothy Dix; and a writing legend was born (Kane, 1952). According to Philadelphia's *Ledger Syndicate*, this much-loved columnist enjoyed an audience of 60 million readers (as cited in Salvo, 1991) until her death in 1951.

Twin sisters Esther Pauline (Eppie) Lederer and Pauline Esther (Popo) Phillips were born in 1918 to Russian-Jewish immigrants in Sioux City, Iowa. In 1955, Eppie (a 37-year-old housewife with no writing experience) took over the *Chicago Sun-Times* advice column of the recently deceased Ann Landers, consequently keeping the pseudonym (Vespa, 1987). In 1956, her similarly qualified sister Popo challenged the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, stating that she could write a better advice column than the one currently being written. The rest is history; she chose the solid pen name of Abigail Van Buren and became 'Dear Abby' to thousands of advice-seekers (Dear Abby Website, 2000). Together these columnist sisters wrote the most widely syndicated columns in the world (Lifetime Television, 2000).

Before her recent death in 2002, Ann Landers proclaimed that she would be the last person to write under the pseudonym of Ann Landers. Now entitled "Annie's Mailbox," the column is written by two former assistants of Ann Landers, with the blessing of Ann Landers' daughter, Margo Howard (Washington Post, 2002). The *Dear*

Abby column remains syndicated, although now written by Jeanne Phillips, Abigail Van Buren's daughter (Dear Abby Website, 2002).

Uses and gratifications theory is a psychological communication perspective used to assess the reasons for media use and the gratifications received from it, stressing individual use and choice (Rubin, 1994). Warranted by the neglect of research in such a tremendously popular field, this theory will be used as the undercurrent in a content analysis performed on the advice columns of Dorothy Dix, Ann Landers and Dear Abby to discover the reasons people have used advice columns and the gratifications they have received from doing so.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advice Columns

A content analysis of 420 letters written to a syndicated advice columnist (name withheld in study) performed by Gieber (1960) resulted in several problem-theme areas surfacing over others. These themes involved psychological counseling, courtship, marital problems, pre-marital issues, parent-child issues, community resources, sex, social relations, sibling rivalry, intercultural and miscellaneous problems. In addition, it was found that these letters often included actualities or clues pertaining to the age, marital status and sex of the writer, with the most common writer being adult (20 yrs +), single and female.

In analyzing 202 of the columnist's responses (paired to the original letter), Gieber (1960) found that columnist's reply was moral for 40.6% of the letters, general for 57.4%, and light for 2% of the letters. Out of the 202 responses, the columnist referred the writer to an agency (ex. professional psychological assistance) 30% of the time, tried to steer the writer a certain way in 42% of replies, and gave support of some kind in 24% of replies given.

Geiber (1960) concluded that the columnist's function of support is important to a society that needs this temporary support. However, he maintained that the letter writers are perplexed people with flawed interpersonal skills and foggy realities in need of support and direction.

With the purpose of investigating the types of problems being sent in letters to advice columnists, Dibner (1974) conducted a content analysis on a combined 100 original letters from both a male and female advice columnist, who were also mental

health professionals. It was found that the columns were seen as a source for personal assistance, and not just newspaper entertainment as presupposed by many.

Dibner (1974) organized the letters into five categories respectively: advice for handling a personal problem (77%), a chance to be heard (7%), a chance to meet the columnist (6%), requests for specific information with no accompanying problem (5%) and requests for general information with no accompanying problem (5%). Of the 77% of the letters asking about a personal problem, 73% of those letter writers placed the blame for their problem on another person whom they saw as flawed, and they accepted no responsibility for the problem. Moreover, 48% of writers communicating a problem were seeking information on how to change the behavior of the flawed person.

A further analysis of the letters that concerned the writers' problems resulted in determining the type of advice requested. Fifty-four percent of writers sought explicit directions on how to act, 36% sought general information about human behavior, and 10% wanted specific information to help solve their affairs. Due to the fact that this form of advice seeking doesn't involve a face-to-face confrontation, Dibner (1974) found it surprising that 83% of the letters were at least signed with a name, regardless of the fact that it may have been an alias.

Judging from signatures or described relationships or roles, both columnists received around 20% of letters from men, leading to the prospect that the sex of the columnist does not influence letter writers of either sex. While 2% of letters were jointly written and 6% were vague about the author's sex, the majority of the writers were women (Dibner, 1974).

Dibner seems to support Gieber (1960) in saying that an advice column may be attractive to those fearful of seeking help elsewhere, in that the writer never relinquishes the control that he or she would risk giving up if seeking face-to-face professional help (1974). Along these lines, uses and gratifications scholars Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985) hypothesized that lonely people are more likely to develop an abnormal social relationship with media personalities than people who are not lonely.

Smith and Levin (1974) analyzed advice columns in the intervals of 1947-1951 and 1967-1971 to determine how the behavioral and conceptual aspects of sex roles had changed between these intervals, and if the changes were portrayed in the columns. The columns analyzed for the 1947-1951 interval were *Doris Blake*, *Letters to Mary Haworth*, and *Dear Miss Fairfax*; the columns analyzed for the 1967-1971 time period were *Dear Abby* (Abigail Van Buren) and *Dear Ann Landers*. These columns were chosen in particular because they were geared toward a large audience, and also for the reason that they dealt with interpersonal problems concerning both sexes of all ages.

A content analysis found that while 59% of letters to columnists from the first interval were concerned with male/female agendas, only 39% of the letters from the second interval were. In fact, writers generally veered away from dating and engagement dilemmas in the first interval to concerns of friendship and family in the second. Females were found to have written to advice columnists habitually more than males for both intervals (Smith & Levin, 1974).

Also noted was that the columnists' tendency to lay blame to either the male or female (involved in the problem at hand) shifted. The early time period tended to provide more columnist support for the male, whereas this was reversed for the later time period,

with columnists seeming to find the female as being right more often. It was concluded that while society's sex-roles may have been changing and reflecting evolving courtship norms, columnist responses indicated that they were not concretely changing with the times regarding their expectations for male and female behavior (Smith & Levin, 1974).

Regarding the subject of columnists mirroring the value changes over time, Lumby's (1976) content analysis comparing Ann Landers' 1958 and 1971 advice columns found that the columnist's value changes were in line with the corresponding value trends of society. Lumby found the 1971 columns reflecting a significant increase in readers' opportunities to give their opinions and have them printed than in the 1958 columns. He also noted that the 1971 group contained fewer mentions of material needs/economics than did the 1958 group.

The Ann Landers of 1971 seemed to be more open to discussing sexual behavior than in 1958 as well. Regarding the referral of writers to professional sources, Landers tended to refer people to clergy only when the issue involved questions of religion -- not psychological counseling. Psychological counseling wasn't highly stressed; however, the topics in the 1971 group were more varied and more of an individual nature than the 1958 group (Lumby, 1976).

Due to the large audiences reached by advice columns, concern was expressed regarding the journalistic representation of people with mental and emotional disabilities. Tankard and Adelson (1982) analyzed the columns of Abigail Van Buren, Ann Landers and Joyce Brothers to determine if the reading public was being misled by the columnists' support of myths regarding mental illness and/or marital problems.

Tankard and Adelson (1982) found that while there was some reinforcement of misconceptions regarding marriage (7.7 %) and mental illness (4.5 % to 15.1%) for all three columnists, there was more refutation of myths (15.4 % marriage and 15.6 % mental illness). There was no indication of misleading information being supported in the columns.

Along the lines of mental health professional columnist vs. non-mental health professional columnist, a content analysis of letters and corresponding replies from the columns of Dr. Joyce Brothers and Ann Landers was conducted by Moran (1989). He found that while the tone of Ann Landers' replies was usually of a supportive, often humorous nature, Dr. Brothers' tone was normally more authoritarian, in accordance with her credentials.

Moran noted that Ann Landers wasn't restricted to the letter-reply format, in that she often printed her opinion on a subject without a letter, but would also print a letter without her reply. Also, whereas Ann Landers went beyond simple writer correspondence, Dr. Brothers rarely took that avenue. Dr. Brothers hardly ever gave pointed instructions; something Ann Landers had no qualms about doing. Both columnists had different methods; however both enjoyed success.

The columnists' printed letters were classified as either requests for advice or statements of opinion. Analysis found that Ann Landers printed more letter-writers' opinions, whereas Dr. Brothers printed mainly advice requests. Both columnists encountered more female correspondents than male. Of the nine categories of columnist responses, Ann Landers' most frequent response was simple acceptance of the writer's

situation; Dr. Brothers' most frequent response was to recommend a course of action (Moran, 1989).

Due to previous research by Smith and Levin (1974) regarding the shift in male/female correspondent blame by columnists and the fact that the overwhelming majority of advice column correspondents are women (Gieber, 1960, Smith and Levin, 1974, Dibner, 1974), Moran felt that men may be under-represented by advice columnists. He was also concerned about both columnists' lack of professional help referrals; even Dr. Brothers' referral level was for one of every eight correspondents. Consequently, Moran concluded that advice columns could potentially reduce the number of people using mental health professionals (1989).

Kanervo, White & Jones (1991) conducted a content analysis comparing the content and style of Dorothy Dix columns from the 1940s and Dear Abby columns from the early 1990s. Regarding the questions posed, the results showed that Dix did not adopt the styles of writing from those that influenced her and that in spite of being coached by mentors toward a less complicated writing style, she did not adhere to it in her own writing.

Another question contrasted the columnists' writing styles, finding Dix writing up to three to four levels higher than Abby regarding readability, measured by the Flesch Reading Ease score, Gunning's Fox Index and Flesch-Kincaid grade level. Abby's sentences were found to be 25% shorter than Dix's, and her columns were three times smaller. The style of both columnists remained fairly consistent over their careers (Kanervo et al., 1991).

A comparison of content found differences between the two, mainly due to the time period in which their columns were composed. Also, the individual subtleties in the columns often prevented one from forming a concrete similarity to another. An experience found to be congruent with both columnists was that they both regularly advised women to stay away from married men and they usually advised pre-marital couples to solve dilemmas before they tied the knot or entirely dissolve the relationship (Kanervo et al., 1991).

Dix and Abby seemed to have disagreed on the subject of romantic involvement and the armed forces. Whereas Dix advised servicemen to stick to women they knew and had things in common with, Abby enabled many young couples to meet and eventually marry through Operation Dear Abby, a correspondence program for people serving overseas in the armed forces (Kanervo et al., 1991).

All in all, their analysis showed Dix's column as being focused mainly on the success of relationships, and Abby's column as being an all-encompassing site for opinion and advice on a larger scale of topics. It was found that Dix's answers were more dictatorial and maternal, geared toward an audience spanning from teenagers to the middle-aged. Abby's opinion-centered acquaintance approach often referred readers to professionals in seeking answers and allowed readers to comment on others' problems, with older people being the main correspondents (Kanervo et al., 1991).

Uses and Gratifications

The mass media, including newspaper advice columns, are very potent phenomena in our society. The choice of one form or selection of media over another has been a subject of study for years.

The power of media to influence society is evident; however, Katz (1959) maintained that people cannot be influenced by a media message that serves no purpose for them (as cited in Rubin, 1994). In alignment with this prior research, Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) stated that people use specific media to gratify needs or wants; people use media, instead of media using them. Moreover, people using the same media will be affected by it in different ways due to individual personalities and experience (Rubin, 1993). Pointedly, the way people feel about a form of media will influence the way they use that medium, and people choose a form of media because of what they surmise or expect to gain from it.

The uses and gratifications theory is versatile and has been tested against various media, with many avenues taken and models constructed. It has been used in figuring magazine choice and use (Payne, Severn & Dozier, 1988) to home computer usage (Perse & Dunn, 1998) and television viewing (Rubin, 1983). For example, the choice and use of certain television programs can be thought to be giving users gratifications at three levels. Seeking out information for personal knowledge through media is done at the individual level (Rubin, 1983). Choosing to use a certain medium in order to have information to discuss or have interaction with others comes at the interpersonal level (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980, as cited in Harwood, 1999). Utilizing a particular medium in order to feel included as part of a larger societal group associated with a certain meaning is the social identity level (Blumler, 1985). This societal level is akin to the kinship and sense of community that Hendley (1977) says the readers of the *Athenian Mercury* felt.

Regarding Geiber (1960) and Dibner's (1974) perspectives of advice columns being attractive to anxiety-ridden people fearful to seek help elsewhere, Armstrong and

Rubin (1989) have hypothesized that a medium such as talk radio or newspaper patronage may bring a safe opportunity for interpersonal communication to those who are nervous about person-to-person communication, or to those who cannot easily leave the house to obtain it.

Uses and gratifications theory is a psychological communication perspective used to assess the reasons for media use and the gratifications received from it, stressing individual use and choice (Rubin, 1994). This theory will be used as the undercurrent in a content analysis performed on the advice columns of Dorothy Dix, Ann Landers and Abigail Van Buren to discover the reasons people have used advice columns and the gratifications they have received from doing so.

After a literature review of advice columnists and those who use them, it is hypothesized that:

H1: More women than men will be found as readers writing to all three columnists, early and late.

It is surmised that a larger number of women to men readers (who write to columnists) will be found due to similar results of studies performed by Gieber (1960), Smith and Levin (1974) and Dibner (1974).

H2: Although readers writing to Dorothy Dix's were more interested in individual gratification than writers to early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers', the collapsed results of readers writing to all three columnists, early and late, will demonstrate that they sought interpersonal gratification more often than individual or societal gratification.

Since the advice column is situated in a medium designed for more than one person, it is reasonable to think that it will be utilized by multiple persons who will therefore engage in interpersonal communication regarding the column and its contents, whether it be with a spouse or friend, etc. However, Dix's authoritarian responses and the year they were written (1949) should provide individual gratification to more readers than Abby's or Landers' columns, as the stigma perhaps associated with advice columns at that time prompted readers to keep their activities and responses to themselves.

H3: A higher number of people in the young age group wrote to early Dear Abby, early Ann Landers and Dorothy Dix than to late Dear Abby and late Ann Landers.

The study performed by Kanervo et al, (1991) found that Dorothy Dix's audience of letter readers was mainly younger, spanning from teenagers to the middle-aged. The same study found Dear Abby's letter-writing audience to be older than Dix's, penning letters asking for guidance with their adult children, for example. As time progressed, the stigma of writing for outside help may have lowered, thereby not affecting the patronage of children or younger adults who were already writing, but causing older adults to write as well. It could also be seen as older adults having grown-up with these columns; there is a 50-year span between the 1949 Dorothy Dix column and Ann Landers' and Dear Abby's 1999 columns.

H4: Letters written to Dear Abby and Ann Landers, both early and late, were more opinion-centered than letters written to Dorothy Dix.

Moran (1989) found Ann Landers' columns to be opinion-centered when compared against Dr. Joyce Brothers, while Kanervo et al. (1991) found Dear Abby's columns to be a site for opinion when compared against Dorothy Dix's columns. It is

reasonable to contend that Dear Abby and Ann Landers' advice style has not dramatically changed from their early to late columns with regard to being opinion-centered, as Kanervo et al. (1991) found with their study on Dorothy Dix and Dear Abby.

H5: Both early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers praised readers more than Dorothy Dix.

Dorothy Dix seems to be clearly more dictatorial in her advice to readers, whereas both early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers have a more conversational tone. Moran's (1989) study of Ann Landers and Dr. Joyce Brothers found Landers much less authoritarian than Brothers in her response style. Kanervo et al. (1991) found Dorothy Dix's column responses to be more maternal and dictatorial than Dear Abby's column responses. A conversational, opinion-centered response style will leave more room for praise than will an authoritarian, maternal response style.

H6: Both early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers referred readers to a professional source for further assistance more often than will Dorothy Dix; late Dear Abby and Ann Landers referred readers to professional assistance more often than early Dear Abby and Ann Landers.

Due to the social stigma of obtaining outside help with personal problems until the later portion of the twentieth-century, the early columns concerned will not feature columnists advising people to seek professional help as often as the later columns. This projection is concerned with time in history. The generational difference between Abby and Ann Landers and Dorothy Dix should be noted as time progresses and the columnists deal with and print columns that slowly dampen the stigma of obtaining professional help.

METHOD

Considering the literature reviewed and subsequent hypotheses, a content analysis was performed to determine the popular reason to use advice columns and the possible gratifications these users might enjoy. Two trained coders from a moderately-sized southern university participated, coding for a variety of variables. When discussing the current study, people writing letters to the columnists were referred to as "readers" or "readers who write to columnists" when appropriate, and not "writers," so as not to be confused with the columnists.

Twenty-four columns of each columnist and time period were analyzed. The syndicated articles analyzed were randomly chosen from each month of twelve consecutive months, all from southern newspapers comparable in circulation size. The columns analyzed were Dorothy Dix (1949), Ann Landers (1956 and 1999), and Dear Abby (April 1958 through May 1959 and 1999). All columnists were chosen for their tremendous popularity as advice columnists and American icons.

Articles were read and checked for variables that were compared against previous research and variables that were new to a content analysis for advice columns. Intercoder reliability of 83% was found when tested, and the process continued with coders in agreement of the variables and their definitions.

The columns were checked for age, sex and race of reader, the subject of discussion, and the reason to read the columns if noted. The columnists' tendency to refer readers/writers to professional help and the uses and gratifications at the individual, interpersonal or societal level were also observed. The columnist format and response type were noted, as well as the reason for a person to write to a columnist -- if referenced

in the letters chosen to be printed in the column. It should be noted that the material analyzed is the material that was chosen for print by the columnists. Whereas original letters (before selection and print) would be better suited for an analysis of this nature, they are not available and not provided by these columnists. However, it must be remembered that the letters chosen for print also speak volumes for the columnist in that she could be considered to set an agenda or give her readers an idea of what to think about. The reading public never views the unprinted letters.

Coding Descriptors

Column Format

Each letter or section in the column was coded for the column format. The column format was coded for either being a question/reply, reader question only with no reply, forum for comment (one or more reader comments with no reply) or columnist reply only (or commentary) with no reader questions. Only one of these variables were coded per section. For instance, if the column included a question with reply, two different reader comments, one columnist reply only and one reader question with no reply, there were considered to be five sections in the column. The word "letter" was used to mean column section throughout this coding description as all sections were coded, even replies without letters or questions.

Age of Reader

The age of the readers were coded into four categories: young (0 to 25-yrs), middle (26 to 50-yrs), older (51-yrs +) and unknown, for which the age is unspecified or vague. Readers who made statements of currently being enrolled in any schooling

including college were considered young, unless otherwise stated. Readers who mentioned having young children or any child under the age of seven were also considered to be young. Second-grade-aged children and younger were considered to be young children. Third-grade and up, middle school, high school and college-aged children were considered to have parents being in the middle category. Readers mentioning grade-school children were placed into either the young or older category, based on the discretion of the coder and mitigating factors in the article. Readers that made statements alluding to having children seven or older, but 21-years or under were coded into the middle age group, unless otherwise stated in the column. People who wrote of their grandchildren or grown children 22-years or older were placed in the older age group. Readers speaking of caring for their parents, unless otherwise stated, were seen as being older. If the age of the reader was clearly unspecified with no factors pointing to age or was vague with factors pointing to more than one category, the reader was coded as unknown. Only one age variable was coded unless two readers, denoted by the signing of two people or as parents, gave clues as to their ages in the letter.

Sex of Reader

The sex of the reader was coded as either female, male or unknown. A reader was coded as female if she signed a predominantly female name, was in a female role (such as mentioning her husband or boyfriend) or said she was a wife, girlfriend, female, woman, girl or any word commonly used to describe females. A reader was coded as male if he signed a predominantly male name, was in a male role (such as mentioning his wife or girlfriend) or said he was a husband, boyfriend, male, man, boy or any word commonly used to describe males. Readers writing of being gay or transvestite were classified as

their true sex regardless if they dressed in clothing of the opposite sex, used names of the opposite sex or felt that they are truly the opposite sex. The sex was coded as unknown if there were no factors present that would define the reader as either female or male, or if there were no determining factors and the letter was signed with a name that can be construed as either female or male, such as Chris or Tracy. Only one sex variable was coded unless the letter was signed by two readers (at least designated by a plural noun) who gave clues to their sex status. An example of this would be a letter written by a husband and wife.

Race of Reader

The race of the reader was coded as either Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, other or unknown. Readers mentioning that they were white were coded as Caucasian. Latinos and people of Spanish-speaking origin were coded as Hispanic, and oriental people were coded as Asian. African-Americans were coded as black. If a reader stated that he or she was anything other than Caucasian, Black, Hispanic or Asian, such as being a mix of two or more races or nationalities, or being an American Indian or of a race not listed, that reader was coded as other. A reader was coded as unknown if no race-determining factors were present, or if they were a nationality that could include many races, such as being British, Scottish or from Africa. Only one race variable was coded unless the letter was signed by two readers who gave clues to their race. For example, a letter may have stated that a spousal pair was black and white. In that case, both white and black were coded under race.

Subject

The subject of discussion was coded as being about love and/or marriage, family, friends, etiquette, religion, sex, alcohol and/or drugs, homosexuality or other. Love and/or marriage included any type of romantic love relationship between a man and a woman or a romantic relationship between two people of the same sex. Readers discussing subjects involving a husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend were coded as love and/or marriage. Previous relationships of this type (ex-wife, ex-boyfriend, etc.) were also coded as love and/or marriage.

The variable of family constituted any family member, including a wife or husband when the situation was clearly not about love and/or marriage and involved at least one other family member. An example of this would be a reader's discussion of her husband's current feud with the reader's cousin or sister, with no mention of it being hurtful to the marriage. Family members were any sibling, parent, child, step-child, step-sibling, step-parent, grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild, step-grandchild, cousin, aunt or uncle. The mention of the word relative or family constituted family. Readers writing of far-removed relatives such as second, third, fourth, (etc.) cousins, aunts or uncles were still coded for family. Adoptive and foster families and their relatives, if mentioned, were coded in the family category as well. A letter by any reader suspicious of or trying to discover a possible family member, such as trying to find birth parents or siblings, was coded as family.

Letters were coded as friends if the subject of discussion involved or mentioned someone as being a friend, pal, chum or other word commonly used to denote a friendship or friendly alliance. These did not include friendly relationships of a love

and/or marriage or family nature. Letters were also coded as friends without the mention of a friend-denoting word if the relationship was one of obvious friendly alliance, such as a classmate that had surpassed the acquaintance stage or a close neighbor or coworker. For example, a coworker or neighbor was not considered to be a friend without the presence or mention of a friendly alliance; the mere mention of the words coworker or neighbor did not constitute a friendship.

Matters of an etiquette nature included discussions involving politeness, manners, etiquette or situations involving reciprocation for a deed performed. These situations ran from wedding guest and gift blunders, to appropriate appreciation actions to using the correct spoon at a formal event.

Letters were coded as involving religion if any strong spiritual belief or church denomination was discussed or involved. A strong spiritual belief or feeling may or may not have involved God, but also the universe. The mention of Jesus, Buddha or other spiritual icon constituted being coded as religion, as well as the mention of being Catholic, Christian, Methodist, etc. Even matters involving Satanism, cults or sects were coded as religion if the discussion involved a strong belief, way of life or single or group religious activity.

The variable of sex involved any discussion of the act of sexual relations, sexual intercourse, sexual dysfunction, or sexual thoughts or material. This involved a male or female of any group in any circumstance.

The variable of alcohol and/or drugs was coded if the reader discussed anything involving legal or non-legal alcohol and/or legal, non-legal, prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Circumstances arising from these items, such as a drunk driver killing

someone or himself or being addicted in the present or past were coded as alcohol and/or drugs. Any mention of something currently, previously or in the future involving alcohol and/or drugs constituted being coded as such.

Letters from readers discussing sexual or romantic love and/or sex with the same sex, or being curious about the possibility or ramifications of such were coded as homosexuality and/or bisexuality. Regardless of the present relationship of being married or otherwise engaged, any sexual or romantic interest in those of the same sex were coded as homosexuality and/or bisexuality. Any mention of homosexuality and/or bisexuality, or even situations denouncing them, were included in this variable. Discussions of pedophilia or incest were not included in this variable.

The reader discussion of any subject not previously listed was coded under other. As more than one variable under the heading of subject could be coded, if one was coded family, for example, the variable of other was not coded. For example, the variable of family, friends and homosexuality could be coded simultaneously, but if the variable of other was coded, it was coded alone.

Professional Help Referral

If any columnist advised a reader to seek professional help, whether it be to the clergy, psychological, law enforcement or other professional capable of giving advice in their field, the letter was coded as being positive for professional help referral. If there were no referrals for help to a higher source than the columnist, the letter was coded as negative for professional help referral. Simply being referred to the clergy without previous discussion of a religious matter was not coded for religion, but only for referral for professional help. However, if religion was indeed discussed and the columnist

referred the reader to the clergy, both the subject of religion and referral for professional help were coded. This response could come in all of the response formats available.

Signature

All letters were coded for the signature status of either being signed with a name, being the reader's full name or first initial and last name, or for an alias. Being coded under alias meant that the letter was either signed anonymously, with the first name only or first name and last initial only. Any signature that was not the reader's first name and last name or first initial and last name was coded as an alias.

Uses and Gratifications Level

All letters were coded for the level of uses and gratifications, if mentioned in the letter, as either being individual, interpersonal, societal or a combination. The individual level was coded when the reader made a statement with regard to their individual need and use of the column for their personal knowledge. For example, a person may have wanted to learn more about matters of mental health problems because they were suspecting that their spouse may have had similar issues. They read the column to gain knowledge about those issues.

A letter was coded for the interpersonal level if the reader made statements pertaining to using the column to have information to discuss with other people. For instance, a reader may have said that he or she had a bet hinging on the columnist's answer, or that he or she discussed the topics with his or her friends, relatives, coworkers, etc. The interpersonal level was different from the individual level in that the use of the column was important or used for interaction between two or more people.

A letter was coded for the societal level if the reader made statements regarding the fact that their use of the column gave them a sense of belonging to a bigger group; it provided a sense of community and likeness with others that read the column. For example, a reader may have made a statement that it is un-American not to read the column, or that their entire church congregation or ladies' cotillion reads it.

For the level of gratifications, it was possible to code one, none or a combination of levels. If the reader stated that not only the whole church congregation read it (society), but they talked about it as well (interpersonal), both the society level and the interpersonal level was coded. Moreover, if the reader added that they read for personal knowledge and/or to learn, all three levels were coded. It is very possible that not all letters could be coded to any level, as they would not all state or allude to the reasons for column usage.

Columnist Reply Tone

The tone of the columnist reply was coded as being plain advice, acceptance, a reprimand, humorous or praising. These variables could be combined as well. A columnist giving plain advice in the reply would simply offer advice or direct the reader in a straightforward manner to the solving of the problem; there were no unnecessary words involved in the reply. A columnist that offered or stated acceptance of the situation or reader accepted the reader's situation by not denouncing it; they offered their understanding. Acceptance was not quite praise; however, both were coded in the same section if both were present.

A reprimand from a columnist involved the columnist's denouncing or distaste of the reader or situation. They may have told the reader what they should do and corrected

them in their thinking or actions. If anyone or any action in the letter was corrected or reprimanded, such as a person that the reader was discussing, was also coded as a reprimand.

A humorous-toned reply involved humor and/or wit or made a statement that may have elicited amusement or laughter from a reasonable reader.

A praising reply praised the reader, the situation or anything mentioned in the letter. This praise was a strong expression of approving or commending anyone or any situation mentioned in the reader's letter, which was more than just understanding or acceptance of a situation or the subject in a letter. A praising columnist reply might have stated that she was glad that the reader's brother got his act together and that he certainly did the right thing. Another might have said that the brother might have needed to behave more like a young man should, but that his sister was doing everything properly. The sister was being praised.

Any of the variables may have been combined to code the column sections. For example, a columnist may have praised one thing and reprimanded another in the same reply. In that case, both praising and reprimanding were coded.

Reason to Write to the Columnist

If noted in the letter, they were also coded for the reason for the reader to write to the columnist, as to blame, to praise, to ask advice, to offer advice, to request a column rerun or other.

Letters involving blame may have had the writer finding fault, for whatever reason, with the columnist, another reader or any third party. For instance, the writer

may have held the columnist responsible for advising another writer in a fashion that they didn't see fit and may have offered his or her own advice for solving the problem.

A writer writing to praise may have said good things and offered appreciation of the proffered advice or handling of a situation to the columnist, another writer or a third party. Writer praise was coded as praise.

A person writing to ask advice of the columnist posed a question and asked for an answer or possible resolution regarding the problem or situation. The situation may have been complex or simply the matter of asking the columnist to side with the reader on an issue, and was coded as writing to ask advice.

Some readers may have written solely to offer their own advice to the columnist, another reader or third party. This advice may have been combined with writer blame or praise. In that case, two reasons to write were coded.

Many people wrote to request a reprint or rerun of an older column. These requests were coded as writing to request a reprint.

It was also reasonable to contend that the factors of blaming, praising and offering advice could have also been seen as writing to give an opinion.

Any other reason for writing to a columnist outside of writing to blame, praise, ask or offer advice was coded as other.

Reason to Read the Column

If mentioned in the letter by the writer, the reason to read was coded as habit, sharing columnist views, disagreeing with columnist views or other. Not all letters stated or alluded to reasons for reading, so many may not have been coded at all. However, some letters may have been coded for more than one reason. If reading for habit, the

writer may have stated that he or she read the column everyday or often. There may or may not have been a reason stated for reading.

It may have been stated in the letter that the reader shared the views of the columnist in general, or agreed with a specific piece of advice or a specific reply. When a reader wrote to praise, they more than likely agreed with the columnist's views and may have read because of that reason. The letter may have possessed a general tone of agreement with the columnist, causing the coder to code it as agreement with the columnist's views.

Very often, a person read a column for the reason that he or she disliked the columnist's views. Many people love to hate something. A reader may have stated that the columnist's advice was not sound and/or offered his or her own advice to another reader or to the columnist. Reader with letters simply offering their own advice without denouncing the columnist or her advice were coded as disagreeing with the columnist. The letter may have generally had a tone of disagreement with the columnist that may have prompted the coder to code it as disagreeing with the columnist's views.

Any other reason to read a column than habit, agreement or disagreement with columnist views was coded as other. A person may have read a column for the first time and because of that wrote to the columnist for whatever reason, or a person may have written that he or she read the column because they're afraid that their spouse was the author of an anonymous letter. A person may have been aware of a column because they heard it read aloud everyday by someone else, perhaps at the breakfast table.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis stating that more women than men would be found as readers writing to all three columnists, early and late, was supported when measured by the variable of sex, with a chi square of 52; significant at $p < .001$. See Table A1 in the Appendix. In every column the female readers outnumbered the men, equating with the research of Gieber (1960), Smith and Levin (1974), Dibner (1974) and Moran (1989). Out of all 314 columns tested for this hypothesis, 182 were women, 68 were men and 64 were unknown. See Table 1.

The first part of the second hypothesis stating that readers (who write to columnists) of Dorothy Dix's columns would be found to be more interested in individual gratification than the readers (who write to columnists) of early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers was measured by the variable of the three gratification levels and supported with a chi square of 24.17; significant at $p < .001$. See Table A2 in the Appendix. Table 2 show that while readers of all three columnists sought more interpersonal gratification than either individual or societal, Dix's readers sought advice more often for individual use than did readers of Dear Abby or Ann Landers. Table 2 also suggests that readers of late Dear Abby and Ann Landers were more likely to seek societal gratification, a definite change from Dix and early Abby and Ann Landers.

The second portion of the second hypothesis stating that the collapsed results of all three columnists, early and late, will show readers writing to columnists seeking interpersonal gratification more than individual or societal gratification was supported with a chi square of 61.88; significant at $p < .001$. See Table 3, Appendix A-3. It is

reasonable to contend that the advice column will be utilized by persons who have the express intent of discussing the column and its contents with others.

Table 1: Sex of Readers Writing to All Three Columnists

Sex			
Columnist	F	M	?
Dix 1949	43	12	8
Landers 1956	33	11	4
Abby 1958-1959	47	18	15
Landers 1999	36	11	25
Abby 1999	23	16	12
Total	182	68	64

Table 2: Level of Gratification Sought by Readers Writing to All Three Columnists

Gratification Level			
Columnist	Individual	Interpersonal	Societal
Dix 1949	20	34	9
Landers 1956	11	35	3
Abby 1958-1959	8	64	11
Landers 1999	6	18	48
Abby 1999	3	12	39
Total	48	163	110

Table 3: Collapsed Results of Gratification Levels

Gratification Level			
All Columnists	Individual	Interpersonal	Societal
Total	48	163	110

The third hypothesis stating that a higher number of people in the young age group wrote to early Dear Abby, early Ann Landers and Dorothy Dix more often than to late Dear Abby and late Ann Landers was found to be supported with a chi square of 28.7; significant at $p < .001$. See Appendix A4. These results bolster the study of Kanervo et al. (1991). However, of all columns tested, the “unknown” factor of the age variable held the highest number of readers. See Table 4.

Looking at the variable of “reason to write,” the fourth hypothesis stating that letters written to Dear Abby and Ann Landers, both early and late, express opinion more often than letters written to Dorothy Dix, was supported with a chi square of 22.2; significant at $p < .001$. See Appendix A5. This upholds the research of Moran (1989) and Kanervo et al. (1991). Collectively, the factors of blaming, praising and offering advice support the hypothesis that Dorothy Dix’ readers wrote letters to express opinion less often than readers of all other columns tested. However, readers of Dix, and early Abby and Landers wrote to ask advice more often than readers writing to late Abby and Landers, whose readers wrote more often to offer advice. See Table 5.

Looking at the variable of columnist reply, the fifth hypothesis stating that both early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers will praise readers more than Dorothy Dix was not supported, as the chi square was 3.3; significant at $p > .05$. See Appendix A6. Instead, while late Abby and late Landers praised readers more than Dix, early Abby praised as equally as Dix, and early Landers praised less than Dix. Consequently, all columnists had more plain advice replies than any other reply type except for early Ann Landers, who gave more reprimanding replies than any other type of reply. Overall, the content analysis results show that Dix, and early Abby and Landers were more likely to

reprimand than later Abby and Landers, while late Abby and Landers were more likely to praise than Dix, and early Abby and Landers. See Table 6.

Table 4: Age of Readers Writing to All Three Columnists

Columnist	Age			
	Young	Middle	Older	?
Dix 1949	29	15	3	16
Landers 1956	24	9	3	14
Abby 1958-1959	22	15	5	40
Landers 1999	6	16	11	36
Abby 1999	3	8	5	35
Total	84	63	27	141

Table 5: Readers' Reasons To Write to all Three Columnists

Columnist	Reason to Write				
	Blaming	Praising	Ask Advice	Offer Advice	Rerun
Dix 1949	20	0	58	4	0
Landers 1956	24	0	45	2	0
Abby 1958-1959	42	2	72	8	0
Landers 1999	30	3	19	41	4
Abby 1999	24	5	12	35	0
Total	140	10	206	90	4

Table 6: Type of Columnist Reply

Columnist Reply					
Columnist	Plain Advice	Situation Acceptance	Humor	Reprimanding	Praise
Dix 1949	39	2	2	21	2
Landers 1956	18	0	13	24	1
Abby 1958-1959	47	0	20	9	2
Landers 1999	23	10	1	7	11
Abby 1999	33	5	7	2	11
Total	160	17	43	63	27

Measured by the variable of referral, the first portion of the sixth hypothesis, stating that both early and late Dear Abby and Ann Landers will refer readers to a professional source for further assistance more than Dorothy Dix was supported with a chi square of 7.7; significant at $p < .01$. See Appendix A7. Only once did Dix refer a reader to professional assistance. See Table 7.

Table 7: Professional Referral

Professional Referral		
Columnist	Yes	No
Dix 1949	1	62
Landers 1956	8	40
Abby 1958-1959	6	68
Landers 1999	8	44
Abby 1999	10	43
Total	33	257

Again measured by the variable of referral, the second portion of the sixth hypothesis stating that late Dear Abby and Ann Landers will refer readers to professional assistance more often than early Dear Abby and Ann Landers was not supported, as the chi square was 1.5; significant at $p > .20$. See Appendix A8. Late Dear Abby referred readers to professional assistance more often than early Dear Abby; however, late Ann Landers referred readers to professional assistance the same number of times as did early Ann Landers. See Table 7.

Other significant results tested outside of the hypotheses are worth noting. Out of all columns chosen for print by the columnists and tested, no readers made any allusion to their race. Regarding the variable of subject, love and marriage was the most popular subject of all columns, although it was more popular in the early years of Abby, Landers and Dix. The subject of family was the next most popular. Interestingly enough, sexuality was more popular in the letters printed by Dix and early Abby and Landers than late Abby and Landers. Religion totaled a collective three letters, while homosexuality was never a subject. It must be remembered that the columnists chose the letters to which they responded and printed. See Table 8.

Out of the columns tested, 298 readers signed the letter with an alias or anonymous signature. Only six signed with a name, and collectively those were late Dear Abby and late Ann Landers. These results are considerably less than Dibner's (1974) findings that 83-percent of reader letters were signed with a name. However, it can never be truly known if a signed name is genuine.

The columnist format variable results found all columnists strongly favoring the question/reply format. It is notable that late Landers allowed the columns to be used as a

forum for reader comments or advice more than any other columnist (early and late) or format type excepting the question/reply format. Moran (1989) also found that Landers prints letters without replies, letting the readers use her column as a forum. See Table 9.

Table 8: Subjects of Reader Letters

Reader Letter Subjects									
Columnist	L/M*	Family	Friends	Etiquette	Religion	Sex	A/D**	H/B***	Other
Dix 1949	50	16	0	0	0	2	1	0	4
Landers 1956	31	23	2	3	1	6	4	0	6
Abby 1958-59	38	32	17	5	1	2	1	0	15
Landers 1999	12	12	4	1	0	1	9	0	34
Abby 1999	10	5	3	2	1	1	3	0	38
Total	141	88	26	11	3	12	18	0	97

* Love/Marriage

** Alcohol/Drugs

*** Homosexuality/Bisexuality

Table 9: Reader Signature and Columnist Reply Format

Reader Signature			Columnist Reply Format			
Columnist	Name	Alias/	Question/	Question	Forum	Columnist
		Anonymous	Reply	Only		Reply Only
Dix 1949	0	63	63	0	0	0
Landers 1956	0	49	49	0	0	0
Abby 1958-59	0	82	76	0	7	0
Landers 1999	5	64	49	0	20	3
Abby 1999	11	40	50	0	1	3
Total	16	298	287	0	28	6

DISCUSSION

It must be remembered that the content analysis was performed on letters chosen for print by the columnists, thereby influencing the results of the study. Although we are not privy to all letters sent to the columnists, we can surmise that the choice of letters answered and chosen for print was colored by social mores compatible with the date written, and also the personalities and sex of the columnists. Moreover, a content analysis possesses certain limitations in that conclusions are drawn from what is interpreted by the analyst -- not by what is absolutely known to be true regarding the reasons people use certain media and the gratifications they receive from doing so.

Dix's authoritarian writing style is an excellent example of writing being congruent with the social mores of the date written. As supported in the study and bolstered by Kanervo et al. (1991), younger people wrote to Dix seeking that motherly, authoritarian advice, as well as they did to early Abby and Landers. However, Dix was older in age than Abby and Landers by 57 years, and possessed a strict, Victorian-type personality which reflected the time in which she lived. Although the Dix and early Abby and Landers columns tested were within ten years of each other, Dix's replies continued to reflect her earlier, strict upbringing. As a result and a matter of respect, readers writing to Dix felt less free to express their opinion than readers writing to both early and late Abby and Landers -- a finding which is strengthened by the research of Kanervo et al. (1991). Also considered is the fact that Dix would have rarely chosen such a letter for print, finding it an insult to her stature, while Abby and Landers were gradually more forthcoming in the area of reader opinion over the years -- a finding mirrored in the research of Lumby (1971).

In addition, readers who wrote to columnists sought individual gratification from Dix more than did early or late Abby or Landers' readers. As advice columnists were often seen as taboo in the days that Dix wrote her column, younger people seeking "maternal" advice wrote for personal reasons, more than did Abby or Landers' readers. In addition, the stigma of possible shame from sharing Dix's replies or writing for a societal reason was more pronounced than the stigma related to writing to Abby or Landers, early or late, which would make writing a letter to Dix a personal risk that the reader hoped would yield the prized remedy. As the most popular subject of letters written to (and chosen for print) by Dix was love and marriage -- a subject of which problems regarding it were best kept under wraps during that time period -- it would stand to reason that Dix's readers would write to her for private individual gratification more than would readers writing to all other columnists tested. However, the total results of all columnists in gratifications sought resulted in favor of interpersonal gratification, as it is reasonable to contend that the column will be utilized by persons who have the express intent of discussing the column and its contents with others.

The types of replies given by the columnists overall favored plain advice, with acceptance of the readers' situations by the columnists appearing the least in the study, individually and collectively. This finding counters Moran's (1989) finding that Ann Landers' most frequent type of reply was simple acceptance of the writer's situation. Both personalities and the social mores of the times played a definite role in replies given, evident in early Landers responding with reprimanding replies more than any other type of reply and more frequently than any other columnist, as compared to her favoring of plain advice in her later columns. In addition, the results point to praise being less

than plentiful in the replies of Dix and early Abby and Landers, however increasing in time with late Abby and Landers. This finding relates favorably to Lumby's finding that Ann Landers' values changed relative to that of society across the years between her 1958 and 1971 columns.

In accordance with the more severe norms and authoritarian personality of Dix, both early and late Abby and Landers referred readers to professional assistance more than did Dix. However, while late Abby referred readers to this assistance more than in her earlier columns, late Landers referred the same number of times as in her earlier columns. This may allude to the factors of personality differences in the twins, the letters chosen for print or the randomly chosen columns for the study. In a similar vein, these findings compare to Lumby's (1976) finding that in columns from 1958 and 1971, Ann Landers tended to refer people to clergy regarding religious matters, but not psychological counseling with regard to those matters.

It is reasonable to state that female readers have written the majority of letters to all columnists involved, and may always do so, strengthened by similar results found by the studies of Gieber (1960), Smith and Levin (1974) and Dibner (1974).

Outside of the hypotheses tested, none of the readers of all columnists, from letters chosen for print, made any allusion to race. This could demonstrate the growing need for racial equality on the sides of the reader and columnist, the fact that the letter wasn't chosen for print, or perhaps the greater possibility of a columnist reply if the information was omitted, for the time written. Moreover, only two-percent of readers signed their name and not an alias or anonymous signature. Collectively those belonged to late Abby and Landers, coinciding with the higher probability of readers seeking

societal gratification in later years, proudly signing their names to their beliefs. In Dibner's (1974) study of columnists who were also mental health professionals, he found that 83% of the letters written by readers were at least signed by a name, albeit a possible alias.

As supposed by many, love and marriage was the most popular subject of reader letters overall, although the subject of love and marriage for Dix far surpassed the total of the other subject variables in relation to both early and late Abby and Landers. This relates positively to the study of Kanervo, White and Jones (1991) which found that Dix's column focused mainly on the success of relationships while Abby's column was more focused on opinion and advice on a larger scale of topics. Strangely enough, the subject of sexuality appeared more frequently in the columns of Dix and early Abby and Landers, than in the later columns of Abby and Landers. This finding is counter to Lumby's (1976) finding that Ann Landers' 1971 columns were more open to discussing sexuality than her earlier columns from 1958. Homosexuality/bisexuality was never a subject, and while that reaffirms the taboo of the subject in the times of Dix and early Abby and Landers, it does not explain the absence of it in the later columns of Abby and Landers, except that it was possibly avoided by the then older twins, indicative of the readers who write to columnists for that time period, or simply the result of the randomly drawn columns.

Further topics for future study would be to contrast Dear Abby and Ann Landers' columns against the columns of Dear Abby and Ann Landers' successors to note historical and social differences and similarities, as well as comparing the readers' letters to mark differences and similarities. A future study taking the findings of this content

analysis into account while testing for differences and similarities between maternal twins in relation to Abby and Landers' should prove useful. Moreover, studying columnists of different ethnic backgrounds and noting their relation to their readers as compared to the contemporary white columnists' columns and reader relations may also be warranted. In addition, investigating new forums for advice columns -- such as the internet -- and noting the gratification sought by its users as compared to the traditional paper method of the advice column would be an excellent topic to approach in study.

In closing, readers are now using advice columns for reasons other than purely asking advice. While still seeking individual and interpersonal gratification, reader letters in recent years feature a definite emphasis on societal gratification, not unlike the sense of community and likeness spoken of by Hendley (1977) regarding the first known advice column, *The Athenian Mercury* of the seventeenth century. The taboo of writing to advice columnists has been greatly lifted, with Gieber's (1960) general portrayal of the reclusive, crestfallen letter writer no longer seen as a current truth. Instead, the current trend of the letter writer seeking societal gratification has made the advice column a true staple of American society.

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Chi Square Variables for H1

Sex		
Columnist	F	M
Dix 1949	43	12
Landers 1956	33	11
Abby 1958-1959	47	18
Landers 1999	36	11
Abby 1999	23	16
Total	182	68

Table A2: Chi Square Variables for H2a

Gratification Level			
Columnist	Individual	Interpersonal	Societal
Dix 1949	20	34	9
All Others	28	129	101
Total	48	163	110

Table A3: Chi Square Variables for H2b

Gratification Level			
All Columnists	Individual	Interpersonal	Societal
Total	48	163	110

Table A4: Chi Square Variables for H3

Age			
Columnist	Young	Middle	Older
Dix, Early Abby & Landers	75	39	11
Late Abby & Landers	9	24	16
Total	84	63	27

Table A5: Chi Square Variables for H4

Columnist	Reason to Write	
	Blame, Praise, Offer Advice	Ask for Advice, Rerun, Other
Dix 1949	24	58
All Abby & Landers	21	156
Total	240	214

Table A6: Chi Square Variables for H5

Columnist	Columnist Reply	
	Praise	Plain Advice, Situation Acceptance, Humor, Reprimand
Dix 1949	2	64
All Abby & Landers	25	219
Total	27	283

Table A7: Chi Square Variables for H6a

Professional Referral		
Columnist	Yes	No
Dix 1949	1	62
All Abby & Landers	32	195
Total	33	257

Table A8: Chi Square Variables for H6b

Professional Referral		
Columnist	Yes	No
Early Abby & Landers	14	108
Late Abby & Landers	18	87
Total	32	195

VITA

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