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Extended Communication Analysis Project: Part 2

Time Inc.'s *Real Simple* magazine "exists to do the thinking for modern women" (*Real Simple* Media Kit). Catering to a demographic of women ages 25 to 40, the contemporary designed monthly publication acts as a simplified guidebook to food, lifestyle, home, family, beauty, health and more. According to the *Real Simple* media kit, 90% of the magazine's readers are women and approximately 8.1 million people read each issue. The February 2014 issue of *Real Simple* includes an article titled "Super Bowls," which teaches readers how to create quick, nutritious meals. *Real Simple*'s cover feature "Super Bowls" engages with discourses of simplicity and contributes to maintaining society's construction of gender roles.

The cover feature of the February 2014 issue of *Real Simple*, titled "Super Bowls," engages with discourses of simplicity. The mission of the 180-page monthly publication is summed up nicely by its tagline, "life made easier" (*Real Simple* Media Kit). The magazine serves as a guide to simpler living and uses various methods to convey the dominant ideology that simpler and easier is better. According to Dwight A. McBride's "Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch," these dominant ideologies can be spread in different ways through discourses. Discourses can be defined as tools that are used to help express an ideology. The way that *Real Simple* chooses to exemplify the discourse of simplicity is mainly through its visual design language. For instance, on the first two pages of the spread "Super Bowls," the backdrop to the spread is a plain white background, used to draw attention to the all-natural ingredients and beautiful plating present on

the spread. Furthermore, *Real Simple* places handwritten descriptions adjacent to the ingredients, reminding the reader of simpler times where old and handwritten recipe cards outnumbered online recipe printouts. The layout of the page is uncluttered, flowing from natural ingredients on one side of the spread to a meal on the other. This modern layout connotes the essence of farm to table dining with the all-natural beets and radishes speckled with dirt that end up beautifully sliced and placed on a bowl on the next page. In addition, another way that *Real Simple* communicates the dominant ideology that simpler is better is verbally, through the “Super Bowls” cover feature headline, which frames the article as “healthy dinners in minutes.” Based on Michael Schudson’s “Media Bias (Media Effects Part 2),” frames can be defined as “principles of selection...little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters” (Schudson 35). Frames help put a story into a certain context for the reader at the author’s discretion and are often used to support a dominant ideology. Through the sub-headline, *Real Simple* sells this article as a “healthy dinner in minutes,” appealing to their demographic of the busy, working, woman who is drawn to the word “minutes.” There is an emphasis on speed through the use of the word “minutes,” as the article is framed to help illuminate the dominant ideology of simplicity. “Healthy dinner in minutes” connotes simplicity, as opposed to framing the article as “dinner in half an hour” or “using leftovers to cook,” which would give the reader a much more subdued connotation of simplicity. However, one element of the “Super Bowls” spread contradicts with *Real Simple*’s attempt to engage with discourses of simplicity. Near the bottom of the first page on the spread is a small, black iPhone icon that has a small, purple “RS” in the middle. Underneath the icon, there is a small type package that encourages the reader to scan the page in order to view the recipes and save them to their smartphones. *Real Simple* is prompting readers to take an extra step and get out their smartphones in order to receive the

actual recipes. The cover headline advertises “healthy dinners in minutes,” which conveys that *Real Simple* wants to teach their readers to cook quick, nutritious meals with the goal of saving time in mind. However, *Real Simple* does not include the recipe to these “healthy dinners” on their magazine spread and asks readers to put in a few extra “minutes” to save the recipes and ingredient lists onto their phone. The “Super Bowls” spread itself is almost too simple, with only images of the ingredients and finished products, the ingredients list and no instructions for how to actually make the meals. Through the visual design layout and the verbal headlines, “Super Bowls” engages with discourses of simplicity. The portrayal of this simplicity goes hand in hand with socially constructed gender roles, as the magazine’s focus on simplification sustains the socially constructed dominant ideology of what the female gender is like and what the female gender is interested in.

The “Super Bowls” article in the February 2014 issue of *Real Simple* helps preserve society’s construction of and dominant ideologies regarding gender roles. According to the *Real Simple* online media kit, 90% of *Real Simple* readers are women. This reader demographic largely influences the content of *Real Simple* magazine, as the magazine “exists” to act as a guide for the “modern woman” (*Real Simple* Media Kit). The New York-based magazine therefore includes articles and features on subjects that appeal to what *Real Simple* believes is a “modern woman.” In the February 2014 issue, an image from the four-page spread titled “Super Bowls” is the cover photograph. Since an appetizing bowl of food graces the cover of the magazine, *Real Simple* seems to be highlighting this article on how to make quick meals as one of the major selling points of the magazine. The content of the magazine expresses *Real Simple*’s views on what a woman is interested in, which is a socially constructed view on the role of the female gender. The subject of the spread itself assumes that women are interested in food and

cooking, an ideology created by society in regards to gender roles. If *Real Simple*'s mission were to simplify life for both the modern man and the "modern woman," the content of the magazine would likely be drastically different. According to Judith Lorber's "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender," Lorber writes that "gender inequality...is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully" (Lorber 84). The content of this month's *Real Simple* is an example of how gender roles are built into the general social structure of society. *Real Simple* content is full of "deliberate" female gender assumptions: that women want to read about "cleaning upholstery in 15 minutes" or that "it's never too late to find 'the one'" or testing eye creams (*Real Simple* Contents 14). The contents of the magazine imply what a "modern woman" should be or how a "modern woman" should act, and are a "social process" that bolsters society's construction of what the female gender should be. *Real Simple* openly caters to women, participating in defining and maintaining society's ideology what the "modern woman" should be. In addition, in Julie D'Acci's essay "Television, Representation and Gender," D'Acci asks the question: "Why is the maintenance on these gender norms deemed so crucial? Why does the blurring or the crossing of the gender binary cause such discomfort, indeed such panic?" (D'Acci 149). *Real Simple* is upholding "gender norms" and the dominant gender ideology that keeps women in a world that expects them to "clean," "find the one," or look cook "healthy dinners." The fact that *Real Simple* creates a feature on different kinds of healthy foods maintains the dominant gender ideology that keeps women in a place where they are pushed to be creative in the kitchen. However, it is interesting to note the title of the piece is "Super Bowls." *Real Simple* is geared toward the "modern woman," and is a guide to "fixes for her home, meals... [inspiring] her... to buy that new dress, paint those walls, organize that closet" (*Real Simple* Media Kit).

The words from the publication's Media Kit convey a few of society's expectations of the female gender. Furthermore, society's expectations of the male gender include a fondness for watching sports. Why then, is *Real Simple* titling their article geared toward the "modern woman" article "Super Bowls?" There is a conflict between the gender roles that *Real Simple* is attempting to communicate and the title, a reference to the big game played in the NFL come February. It is interesting to note that this article is not online, so men would not be able to read the article without physically opening a copy of *Real Simple*. *Real Simple* is trying to appeal to the dominant ideology by creating a feature that society deems the female gender should like and at the same time trying to engage the audience by titling the piece a name that the female gender generally does not associate with.

The discourses of simplicity and the maintenance of society's constructed role of gender seen in *Real Simple*'s "Super Bowls" come with limitations. It is difficult to fully comprehend if *Real Simple* is truly preserving society's ideology of the role of the female gender based only on one issue of the publication. Since the magazine was founded in 2000 and releases an issue monthly, over 150 issues over the course of 14 years have been published. *Real Simple* is a changing publication that has published thousands of different articles that could potentially each take a different stance on the role of women in society. In addition, different people and different cultures have different views on the role of the female gender. In certain cultures, the dominant ideology of a woman's role could contrast with *Real Simple*'s definition of the dominant ideology of gender.

Works Cited

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"Give last night's potatoes or quinoa a new life - add a handful of greens, crispy vegetables, olives, or cheese (or whatever else you love)."

Sarah Copeland
food director

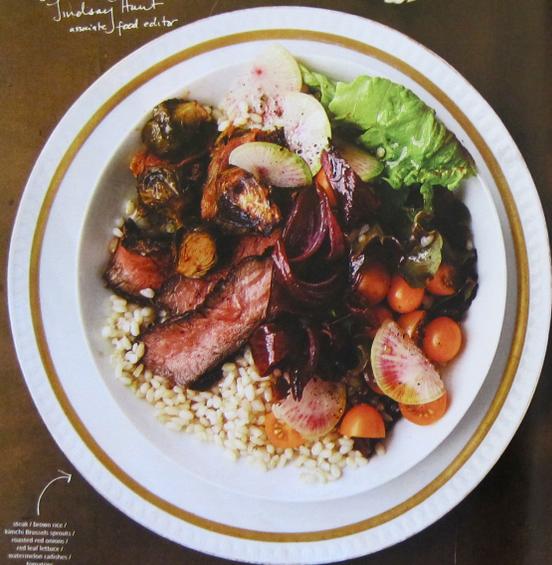
SAVE THESE RECIPES TO YOUR READER'S DIGEST. Scan this page for the recipe and ingredients list. For cooking instructions, see page 14.

tuna / quinoa / steamed beans / steamed fresh potatoes / watercress / olives / radishes / hard-boiled egg / capers / lemon / mustard vinaigrette

super bowls Curious to know what the *Real Simple* food department cooks up when they don't have time to cook? "Health bowls"—an ingenious mix of grains, vegetables, and anything else in the pantry and fridge (leftovers) that they want to feast on. Turn the page for a few favorite combos, plus a list of ingredients and some simple recipes to kick off your own.

RECIPES BY Charlyne Mattox and Lindsay Hunt. PHOTOGRAPHS BY Marcus Nilsson. FOOD STYLING BY Rebecca Jurkevich. PROP STYLING BY Angharad Bailey.

"There are no real rules. (Seriously, anything goes.) Just a few tips: mix protein + veg, warm + cool, creamy + crunchy, pungent + mild." —Lindsay Hunt, associate food editor



quinoa / brown rice / smoked salmon / roasted vegetables / hard-boiled egg / watercress / capers / olives

pick your lineup

Real Simple's food editors piled nearly 100 combinations of ingredients to come up with this deliciously versatile mix-and-match list of about 50. Keep your health bowl simple, or max out with something from every category.

- grains**
quinoa
brown rice
farro
bulgur
bulgar
- greens**
romaine
red leaf lettuce
arugula
watercress
mâche
radicchio
kale
Swiss chard
purple cabbage
- proteins**
steak
chicken
fish (canned, smoked, or freshly cooked)
cured meats
beans (black, cannellini, butter, chickpeas, kidney)
eggs (hard-boiled, poached, or fried)
- vegetables and herbs**
radishes
snap peas
snow peas
tomatoes
avocados
scallions
herbs (dill, parsley, cilantro, tarragon)
- cheeses**
feta
goat
fiorita salata
goat
Parmesan
aged Cheddar
any creamy cheese (like Camembert or Humboldt Fog)
- wild cards**
nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts)
seeds (pumpkin, sunflower)
kimchi
marinated artichokes
olives
capers



Turn to page 151 for quick vegetable recipes and dressings that will add a homemade touch to your health bowl.