

(DE)CONSTRUCTING 'BODY LOVE' DISCOURSES
IN YOUNG WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

BY

REWA THERESE MURPHY

A thesis
submitted to Victoria University of Wellington
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Victoria University of Wellington

(2013)

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to all of the very long list of people who have supported and encouraged me through this thesis. I can trace fond reminders of each of you written throughout my research: a narrative of your suggestions, questions and interest; days when you supported me to keep working at it, and then days when you shared my achievements. Because of this, I know my thesis would not have been the same without you.

Thank you first, to my supervisor Sue Jackson. I don't really have words sufficient enough to tell you how grateful I have been for your incredible patience, knowledge and feedback, and all the time you've spent advising and guiding me over the past few years. I was inspired initially to ask to work with you because of my appreciation of the way you spoke about people as a 'psychologist'. Above all else, what I have learnt from you in this regard is what I most want to take forward with me from this thesis and into my future work.

Thank you also to my second supervisor, Ann Weatherall. Knowing that I had you as my back up in case of emergencies has been very comforting knowledge to me. Thank you for always having the time to be interested in what I was doing, and for your encouraging feedback on the final pieces of my work you reviewed.

Thank you to my university 'colleagues' in both the clinical psychology and discursive research fields. Thank you for challenging and reassuring me, and for some of you, becoming my friends. I have cherished the time we spent working together.

Thank you to Victoria University, for financially supporting me with work, scholarships and grants to travel overseas for interviews and conferences. I acknowledge too the incredible support of the School of Psychology having been my academic 'home' for more years now than I would like to count, and the academic and administrative staff who have made my learning such an enjoyable experience.

Having written this thesis within the discipline of feminist psychology, I also acknowledge the activists and academics who have worked throughout history to stake out a place for women to undertake study and research at universities, within psychology, and under a framework which makes sense to women's experiences of their lives. Without them, my

research and pending career would have been absolutely unthinkable. I am gratefully indebted to their history.

Thank you to the magazine participants who took the time to talk to me. I was inspired by your enthusiastic interest in my research topic and your passion for what you do. Your contribution to changing media body messages is one of the reasons that I can say with certainty in this thesis, categorically and uncritically 'blaming the media' for young women's body discontents today is not a legitimate option for psychological theory.

My final thanks must go to my friends and family, for being there and cheerleading for me along the way. Thank you for being my biggest fans and knowing that I would make it even when the finish line seemed far too far out of sight; for all the cups of tea, last dances, late night phone calls, and 'last' rows, thank you for everything.

I dedicate this thesis to my Dad¹ and my Simon, without whom I could not have written about love.

1. Unfortunately Dad, after all these years of psychological training, I do have to confess that still no-one has yet taught me how to diagnose a cashew. Sorry about that.

Abstract

This thesis is about the recent emergence of 'love your body' messages and discourse in mainstream women's magazines available to New Zealand audiences. It is situated culturally and historically, in a time when media discourses about women and their bodies are dominated by post-feminist and neo-liberal conceptualisations of bodies as commodity objects of production, representative of successful femininity and an inflexible natural order. This thesis contributes to the existing feminist research literature about magazines by investigating an apparently 'new' textual feature of young women's magazines, and through adding to an emerging literature about the production of magazine content. Methodologically, the thesis draws upon critical, feminist, and post-structuralist approaches as the basis of its own understanding of bodies and the undertaking of research.

The research upon which this thesis is based has two parts. First, an in-depth investigation of the text and image content of magazine 'body love messages' in two different titles – Cleo (New Zealand) and Cosmopolitan (Australia) – employed thematic and discourse analysis to explore the kinds of discursive ideas made available through the magazine's communication of positive body messages to their readers. The analyses presented illustrate how 'body love' magazine content i) is framed within heavily dualistic discourses of the woman and her body, using obsessively repetitive images to illustrate its point, ii) constructs women's bodies as essentially difficult to love, and then in turn constructs love itself as a visually evidential practice, and finally iii) introduces a heterosexual (male) partner as an accomplice / audience for this visual practice.

The second study involved a discursive analysis of interviews undertaken with magazine editorial staff based in New Zealand and Australia, asking participants about the production of positive body messages in the title(s) they work for. Drawing upon this work, the latter analytical chapters of my thesis address i) how various discourses are used by magazine employees to simultaneously legitimate the limits around positive body content in their magazines, and at the same time construct their practices as those of a 'good magazine', and ii) the centrality of 'images' as a carefully managed topic in these interviews, and what this implies about how 'love your body' content is conceptualised within the industry which produces it.

In undertaking this work, my intention was to provide a basis upon which feminist questions about the use and purpose of magazines as cultural-discursive spaces might be revisited in light of the new 'body love' content. The concluding chapter to the thesis comprises a dialogue in response to these questions about contemporary magazine body messages; weighing arguments of hope and promise against more conservative concerns about misrepresentation and appropriation. It also reconsiders the implications of the analyses with a view towards evaluating what, if anything, has changed about the way young women's magazines address their readers' bodies through the production of body love discourse.

Preface

It had always been my intention to open my thesis with a reflexive statement – some kind of account of how I came to this research, and a provision to my reader of enough personal context that they might make sense of my own investments herein. However, in writing this piece, I am also keenly aware of the critique I am about to make within this thesis of invested and emotional confessions about ‘real’ bodies in the media and the purposes they serve. Theoretically, I can easily make the distinction between research reflexivity and confessionality. Yet, I still feel that in sharing a piece of myself, I am walking a fine line: how can I discuss love and investment in the body, clinically detached from my feelings about my own? What does it mean for my practice of reflexivity if I am about to problematize (certain) confessions of the body? Should I still account for myself? As a case in point, Reavey (1997) discusses her constant frustration at people’s assumptions that because she studies child sexual abuse, she too must also have experienced this. The allegory for my own research comparatively though, is that clearly I have a body, and not one person yet has questioned me about this claim. In this way, my own body and my feelings about it were always going to be unavoidably written all over this research, and so reservations aside I have to say:

I am absolutely fascinated by bodies.

It has taken some effort for me to make sense of this interest, particularly when working within the (mainstream) field of psychology which at times outright denies the body, often refusing to engage with bodies in any way which bears any resonance to what embodied experience feels like. And of course – what did I expect? I did not enrol in medical school; although there were a few moments, when my high school friends were graduating from there, when I do remember having some regrets. But it was not a medical body which had captured my imagination. Rather, my fascination took hold in trying to comprehend how people inhabit and understand their bodies, the things expressed and explored through and on people’s bodies, and the way in which bodies necessarily mediate all human experience.

I trace my own interest in bodies back to my childhood, where from the age of three dancing has been my passion and my hobby. It is from dancing that I take my theoretical understanding of the ‘performance’ of femininity as masquerade, in caricatured bodies

which tell constructed stories through visual fantasies. My first grasp on panopticism and the instability of visual truth also came via the theatre; I was not yet even attending school when I learnt about electively making bodies available to an audience, and the un-captured magic which happens behind the curtains. Consequently, my demand for women's bodies to be more than static images can also be understood through my dancing background. From as far back as I can remember, bodies for me have always been expressive and experienced, and so perhaps it was inevitable that I would find mainstream psychological theories of 'body image' and brain mechanics to be somewhat short of satisfying.

As the other half to this story of my passion for bodies, movement and dancing, I also bring to this thesis a somewhat convoluted understanding of health and the 'loveable' body. As someone with an ongoing medical condition, my life in my own body comprises of both the above enjoyable and expressive experiences, and also some very frustrating experiences. When I speak about 'difficult to love' bodies in this thesis then, I do so through two different positions. First, through my own subjective understanding of what it is like to inhabit a body which at its worst, can totally disable me from living my life as I would like, and certainly is at those times difficult to love. But second, I am left wondering, what is it about women's bodies in contemporary culture which can lead even women without medical difficulties to find their bodies so unloveable? And how has it come about that magazines, of all places and spaces, have taken up the role of attempting to redress this problem?

For me, this thesis is yet another chapter in my story of psychological interest in the body. It has been an ironic challenge for me to express discursive versions of love and bodies, using words for once; an inevitable process of translation in which there will always be just that little bit lost. On top of that, against my own body and its inscribed history, it seemed a little absurd to be asking of static magazine representations of bodies which desperately claim to be 'real', where to from here for women's bodies? And yet, despite being fronted by bodies that more lend themselves to accounts of construction over experience, aesthetics over expression, for the last few years mediated campaigns of 'body love' have too captured my fascination. This thesis for me then, personally located in my attachment to bodies (including my own) is a part of my academic attempt to comprehend what bodies and people's feelings about them can mean to subjectivity. The rest of this life-long work is done in my dance shoes, and I also would call this 'love'.

Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Abstract	5
Preface	7
Chapter 1 Introduction	15
Introduction: Body problems to Body Love	15
Reading magazines	18
Ideal femininities and the production of women's body distress	21
Feminist histories: body acceptance, or body love?	24
Post-feminism?	28
Healthist discourses, neo-liberal individualism and body panic	31
Magazine (r)evolutions and the "recessionista"	34
Australasia as unique context	37
Summary and research contribution	40
Chapter 2 Conceptualising the Body	43
Overview of chapter	43
Mainstream psychological and Cartesian approaches to the body	43
<i>Body image</i>	45
<i>Relationships with bodies; dualistic discourses</i>	46
Which bodies? – Critical perspectives	48
Intelligible, disciplined and docile bodies	49
Visible bodies	50
Post-modern, multiple bodies	52
Material <i>and</i> discursive bodies	54
Bodies as real, imaginary and symbolic	56
<i>Desiring and desirable bodies</i>	58
Captured (imaginary) bodies	59
Gendered bodies	60

Experienced bodies	64
Conclusion	65
Chapter 3 Methodological Framework	67
Introduction	67
Theoretical approaches	67
<i>Critical theories</i>	68
<i>Post-structuralist theories</i>	70
<i>Feminist approaches</i>	72
<i>Supplementary approaches</i>	74
Feminist economy and ‘macro’ power	74
Psychoanalytic approaches	75
Key Concepts	77
<i>Subjectivities</i>	77
<i>Discourse</i>	78
<i>Authors, (producers)</i>	81
<i>Audiences, (readers)</i>	82
Research development and considerations	84
<i>A note on reflexivity / approach</i>	84
<i>Ethical Issues</i>	86
<i>Research questions and analytical method</i>	87
Chapter 4 Introduction to the Magazine Text Analysis Study	91
Overview	91
Data corpus and data set creation	91
Thematic analysis	92
Thematic analysis outcomes	93
Discourse analysis	95
Chapter 5 Bodies-As-Images and Bodies-In-Image	99
Dualistic discourses in magazine ‘love your body’ messages	99

Women against their bodies; bodies being images	101
Visible bodies : Images which accompany 'body love' texts	107
<i>Unclothed and unretouched bodies</i>	109
<i>'Real' and 'natural' bodies</i>	111
<i>Sexualised and gendered bodies</i>	113
Summary and conclusion	115
 Chapter 6 Discoursing 'Body Love'	 117
Theorising 'love'	117
The body which is difficult to love	120
Practicing 'love' upon the body	128
Summary: What has love got to do with this?	138
 Chapter 7 The 'Male Observer' in 'Body Love' Discourse	 139
The 'male observer' in 'body love' discourse	139
A final thought and summary	153
 Chapter 8 Introduction to the Interview Analysis Study	 155
Introduction	155
Method	157
<i>Participant recruitment</i>	157
<i>Describing the participants</i>	159
<i>Interviews</i>	160
<i>Transcription</i>	161
<i>Analysis</i>	163
 Chapter 9 Constructing the 'Good' Magazine: Discourses About Production	 165
Introduction	165
<i>Claiming media responsibility</i>	167
<i>Trust(worthiness) and brand</i>	171
<i>'Us' versus 'Them'</i>	179

<i>'Give us a break': legitimating limits</i>	182
A balancing act?: Making sense of discursive ambiguity	184
Summary	188
Chapter 10 Constructing Images in the Production of 'Body Love' Messages	189
Introduction	189
<i>Representing reader identity: "Where is the person that looks like me?"</i>	191
<i>Misrepresentation and the 'authentic' body: "This is (not) my body"</i>	194
<i>Photo alteration and representation: "But it might be their real skin tone in real life"</i>	197
<i>'Telling the truth' about bodies: "Why don't you put a real girl on the cover?"</i>	200
<i>Aesthetic versus ethic: "Like for example if I was going to appear in...."</i>	204
Reflection and conclusion	207
Chapter summary	208
Chapter 11 Synthesis: The (Im)possibilities of 'Body Love'	211
Summary: Analytical critiques of 'loving your body'	211
Where does this leave young women?	216
<i>Large bodies and the 'obesity epidemic'</i>	216
<i>The recession and 'recessionista' as a contemporary subjectivity</i>	218
<i>Take my picture: what about digital alteration?</i>	219
<i>Young women's bodies</i>	221
Limitations of this thesis	222
Solutions?	225
<i>Constrain and regulate: What are the limits of the body love project?</i>	225
<i>Should we be talking about bodies at all?</i>	227
<i>What would Susie Orbach do? What role is there for feminism here?</i>	229

References	235
Endnotes	269
Appendices	273
1. Data selection process flow chart	273
2. Table of magazine issues with examples of 'body love' content articles	274
3. Interview participant information letter	275
4. Interview consent form	276
5. Structured plan for magazine staff interviews	277

Chapter 1:

Introduction: From Body Problems to 'Body Love'

For many years it has been a “truth” of mainstream psychological literature that ‘the media’, particularly commercial women’s magazines, are one of the clear contributing factors to blame for a current “epidemic” of young women’s “poor body images” (Bissell, 2006; Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005; Cusumano & Thompson, 2001; Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008; Slater, Tiggemann, Firth & Hawkins, 2012; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). Such concerns are habitually validated by statistics about the rising rate of eating disorders, dieting and body image problems in young women media consumers today. Similarly, feminist and critical literatures have openly denounced contemporary magazine corporealities, pointing to the meanings readable in the figuratively and literally narrow portrayals of young women’s bodies as in the extreme, a form of symbolic gender “violence” (Wolf, 1991). Work in this critical field often asks what these magazine ideals of hegemonic successful femininity might offer (or invalidate for / obscure from) young women in terms of understanding their own embodied selves, subjectivities and experiences (e.g. Thornham, 2007). Despite their differences, what both the mainstream and critical literatures appear to be in agreement about is that the ways women’s bodies are imaged and discussed in women’s magazines is often problematic, and part of a wider system which sees young women come to understand their bodies in difficult ways. For this, qualified in one way or another, the media are seen to be at fault.

However, the magazine texts upon which these literatures have been based are no longer so clear cut. Certainly, the idealised, “sexualised” and commodified images of women’s bodies do continue to dominate young women’s magazines (e.g. Gill, 2008c; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005; Redmond, 2003). But recently, these difficult messages and images have increasingly appeared alongside new kinds of magazine content, encouraging young women to feel better about the way that they look, and emphatically, to “*love your body*”¹. These changes can be seen in various locations throughout the magazines, for example, prominently appearing as cover stories in these editions:

Worry about your weight less! Healthy women don’t diet! (Cosmopolitan Australia, March 2009).

“How we learnt to love our bodies”, by girls just like you, (Dolly Magazine Australia, February 2009).

Real bodies revealed: No retouching required (sizes 10-20) (Cleo Magazine New Zealand, October 2009).
 Skinny and miserable, vs. Curvy and Happy: Kim K hits back: 'I'm not fat, I'm sexy' (New Weekly Australia, July 2009).

And more recently:

Love your body: Learn to love the bits you loathe, (Good Health Magazine New Zealand, August 2011).
 Body Happy Guarantee: you can start loving the bits you hate (Dolly Magazine Australia, April 2011).
 Fall in happiness with you (Girlfriend Magazine New Zealand, April 2011).

These new body messages continue inside the magazine, for example, Cosmopolitan (Aust), Cleo (NZ) and Dolly (Aust)² have introduced entire sections of their magazines devoted to the subject, entitled the "Body Love", "Cleo Body", and "Body Happy" sections respectively. Delving deeper into the issue, some titles have even established specific 'body policies' for their titles. Perhaps the best known of these is Cosmopolitan's (Austr) portrayal of models in 'sizes 6-16 in every issue', but would also include Cleo's (NZ) "Campaign for Body Honesty", and the 'retouch free / airbrush free' zones in younger women's magazines Girlfriend (NZ) and Dolly (Austr). Finally, some of these new magazine body initiatives go beyond the content of the magazine itself, such as Cleo magazine's (NZ) annual partnership with the Eating Difficulties Education Network (EDEN) in their promotion of "Love your body day" each year (Tyrer & Burns, 2008).

The emergence of the 'new' *love your body* messages in women's magazines raises a number of complex questions about how these new outlooks on women's bodies might be appraised, and how such messages have been made possible. By introducing even further contradiction to already notoriously inconsistent ideas about bodies in magazines, what *love your body* messages theoretically could offer young women in the way of new subjectivities will be anything but straightforward. Yet what does appear to be clear at a surface level, is that *body love* messages must indicate some kind of shift in either the discourses or the practices of magazines: editors, for example can now expect commendation, not condemnation (or even the loss of their jobs) for featuring larger bodies as cover images or fashion models (Tebbel, 2000). But *has* anything really changed? Should it matter if *body love* messages are produced crudely, just as a lip service for profit? (Lynch, 2011). Specifically, what is it about now, only after many years of sustained criticism, which has

produced such a change in magazines and made contemporary *body love* media content culturally and commercially viable? (D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2011; Milkie, 2002) And finally, if magazines really are changing the way they talk about bodies, are they as 'media' still to 'blame' for the body discontents of young women today?

This thesis is about these new magazine *love your body* messages. It has developed out of my questions above, to investigate both the range of messages available within this new magazine content, and how the producers of such content understand its purpose. Building a research project based upon *love your body* messages in media represents an ethical opportunity to begin a project from the outset with a positive approach to bodies in mind – although of course work about difficult embodiment has a place, and unfortunately is never far from the analyses I present in this thesis. In addition, research about *body love* messages represents an opportunity to work beyond critique alone, to begin to consider what media could or should ideally be saying about bodies, rather than what they should not.

As with any academic work, both the subject of interest and the research work itself are multiply situated in a variety of cultural and epistemological contexts. I want to dedicate the remainder of this introduction to an account of some of the socio-historical contexts of the 'new' *love your body* messages, and in doing so, provide further background information about what preconditions *love your body* messages have come from. These contexts include, but are not limited to: the role of magazines and their use by young women; substantial histories of feminist investment in body acceptance and feminist critiques of magazine body messages; contemporary post-feminist and neo-liberalist social politics; current public panic about health, bodies and size; various environments for the production of magazine and media content; and so forth. This social context chapter is then followed by two chapters which describe the theoretical contexts of the project (about the body and of the method respectively); more information about the organisation of my thesis can be found at the end of this chapter.

Reading Magazines

Key to the social context of this project is an understanding of how the brands of the magazines referred to in this research and the practice of reading such magazines are constructed in culture and conceptualised in literature. At the outset, it is worth explicating the vast popularity of young women's magazines as media genre. Taking the two titles utilised in my text study as examples, Cosmopolitan magazine boasts a global readership of over 78 million across their international editions; Cosmopolitan Australia (the edition available in New Zealand) accounts for about 617 000 of these. Cleo Magazine New Zealand enjoys similar popularity, its readers number 149 000 every month (via ACP Media, 2011). The Australian and original edition of Cleo magazine was so popular when it was introduced, it increased its readership to over 1 million readers within a year of its introduction (although has declined somewhat since then in the face of market competition from popular, so-called 'me too' titles such as Marie Claire). Other titles mentioned throughout this thesis enjoy similar popularity – the top 25 selling magazines in Australia collectively *sell* about 5 million copies each month³. Moreover, research evidence suggests that even though these figures still represent a minority of the population, the ideas presented in magazines are well known beyond their readerships as part of mainstream hegemonic cultural knowledge(s) (Kim & Ward, 2004).

Dependent on the opinion of various authors working in the field, it has been said that magazines have been both a fruitful and under-utilised medium in and of academic research (Kim & Ward, 2004). When compared to film or television, for example, media studies departments at universities will rarely have dedicated schools of magazine research or hold devoted magazine research conferences (McRobbie, 1996). Yet, this has not meant that magazines themselves have been by any means an uncharted field. For decades, and particularly within the gender studies / feminist research domain, academics have turned to magazines as “commercial sites of intensified femininity and hence rich fields of analysis and critique” (McRobbie, 1997, p190). Indeed one of the many advantages of magazine research is that magazines deliberately and specifically state and hail their intended readership (“interpellation”; Althusser, 1971) and so allow for the researcher to take interest in a particular social group. Other advantages of magazine research include the

practicality of reasonably low cost and predictable research materials which are readily available at any time, without the requisite of specific equipment or technological literacy.

It is these same features, amongst others, which are indicated by readers when it comes to consumer studies and the question of why women read magazines. The predictable and portable format for example, means that magazines can be picked up and put down in the 'in-betweens' of busy schedules (Hermes, 1995). For similar reasons magazines are seen to be 'non-demanding' media; they can be read at any time of day (unlike scheduled broadcast television programming), and the regular reader knows what to expect in their format, i.e. small pieces of text which can be read in any order, accompanied by high quality graphics of low modality contexts. Research also emphasises the escapism / fantasy element of the magazine as important to women readers (Ytre-Arne, 2011). Magazines provide an opportunity for women to take time for themselves and imagine themselves elsewhere; much like the romance readers of Janice Radway's frequently referenced work (1984), women's use of magazine texts is at least as much functional as it is about pleasure. Furthermore, magazine readers use magazines to imagine their transformation / education into a better self. For example, by morally critiquing the lives of wayward celebrities (Fairclough, 2008), or by reading the recipes / health / beauty information, the reader can imagine her development into a 'better', more moral, knowledgeable, (feminine) ideal person.

Curiously less important though to women readers of magazines are the details of magazine content – in fact, Hermes' widely cited 1995 study found that magazine articles are rarely taken seriously nor are they well recalled by their readers at all. Instead, readers approach magazines more in the style of fiction readers (although fiction research itself suggests that the coherence of fiction for readers is dependent on their acceptance / assumption of a foundation of truth as the basis for the story presented) (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Even in other academic works which do suggest greater reader engagement with magazine content, research often concludes that readers can and do interact critically with texts and *can* contest what appear to be the most readily available meanings (Budgeon, 2003).

This depth of theory about why women read magazines owes its empirical knowledge basis to what has arguably been one of the most significant shifts to have occurred over the decades of women's magazine research: a move away from researching text alone to a combined interest of studying both texts and how readers use and interpret these texts. This seemingly straightforward change in the way that research about magazines has been undertaken belies a considerable transformation methodologically and theoretically within media studies, the impetus for which comes via a variety of sources. These include for example, cultural studies' interest in resistance (Raby, 2005) and de/reconstructed meanings (Macleod, 2002), the interest of feminist media studies in valuing women (Brayton, 1997; Press, 2011) and what have been thought of traditionally as 'women's genres' (Lumby, 2011). Such changes in magazine research can also be placed within the wider 'crisis' based move in social sciences towards studies of language, subjectivities and production of the self (Henriques et al., 1998; Weatherall, 2002). This work around shifting conceptualisations of magazine audiences was also preceded in the wider media studies literature, through concepts such as the audience consumer (Fiske, 2003), and reception theories (Hall, 2009).

This re-thinking of readers in magazine research has also inspired a parallel re-thinking of the interaction between reader and text, moving away from a 'media dupes' argument of blind acceptance of singular meanings in text, and towards a more complex re-conceptualisation of what it means to 'read' something, and to 'be a reader' (Hermes, 1995; Peterson, 2012; Ytre-Arne, 2011). Moreover, this change can be seen as part of the challenge to hierarchical valuing of academic knowledge over what 'everyday' readers can tell researchers in a (more) equal exchange of ideas about themselves. Altogether, these relatively new studies of readers in turn contribute valuable insight into the ways that readers receive, use and understand text. The major outcomes of this reader research therefore have obvious implications for the methods applicable and the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn in text studies, in addition to reader studies being a valid undertaking in their own right.

Although the project I present in this thesis does not incorporate a reader study, the text and interview analyses presented in this thesis benefit from the growing number of reader

studies now available, and the above re-theorisation of the reader which drives these. For example, if readers are not taking meaning from texts in predictable ways, then the magazine producer's role as a 'communicator' must too be modified (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Further research along these lines has chosen to reconceptualise magazine writers as "cultural intermediaries" who will enact their own complex relationships with both magazine text and reader consumers (Gough-Yates, 2003, McRobbie, 1996). This particular approach to magazine producers strongly informs the analyses of my interview study. Equally, a complexification of the theory around how readers interact with magazines requires a flexible approach to magazine text as readable through available cultural discourses, asking how this content could be used or interpreted by its readers. At the same time however, Gill (2011) argues that it is important not to lose sight of the cultural hegemony to which magazines contribute their voice – while media theories have moved on from an assumption that readers would predictably take on meaning from texts in straightforward and uncritical ways, it is equally problematic to leave the content of the text out of the equation altogether to assume that readers can and always will evaluate the meaning of text in detached, 'rational', and un-invested ways. Because of this, she argues, academic and politically invested critical text analyses continue to have a role to play.

Ideal Femininities and the Production of Women's Body Distress

It is no coincidence that a substantial portion of academic literature about magazines deals with how magazines construct gender. In part, this does relate to the abovementioned unique specificity of the magazine target audience – more so than perhaps any other conventional type of media, magazines address "you" the (gendered) reader with imperatives for action and calls for identification (Kim & Ward, 2004; Winship, 1987). For most magazine titles available on the market, this "you" is unequivocally and before anything else, a female reader. Magazines are introduced as a women's genre to girls from an increasingly young age; currently available in New Zealand markets, "Total Girl", "Little Angel" and "Girl Power" (all Austr) are aimed at young girls aged 6-12, 5-11 and 7-13 respectively. Incidentally, if a young boy wanted to read a magazine, he would have to wait until adulthood to find any wide-selling title of which he was the target market. From this

young age onwards, magazines are very much a part of “women’s culture” (Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer & Hebron, 1991; Winship 1987). Not only do magazines identify their reader as a woman, but they explicate their version of what being ‘woman’ means by their assumptions about what her interests are, what she (ideally) looks like, how she functions and what she should be thinking.

At present, there is little theoretical consensus in the literature about the process by which magazine messages about ideal femininity might contribute to young women’s body distress. Amongst other things, the task of offering explanations for young women’s relationships with media has become even more convoluted following the outcomes of research mentioned earlier which emphasizes the critical reading competencies of magazine consumers (Hermes, 1995; Ytre-Arne, 2011). Precise mechanisms aside though, the circumstantial accounts are compelling. Dramatic anecdotes about non-Western cultures’ increases in eating disorders alongside their introduction to Western media, and a vast quantitative literature which consistently correlates women’s media consumption with ‘measures’ of body dissatisfaction are common examples in testament to a ‘blame the media’ argument (Bissell, 2006; Chin-Evans, 2003; Fabrianesi, Jones & Reid, 2008; Groez, Levine & Murnen, 2002; Slater, Tiggemann, Firth, Hawkins, 2012). Furthermore, no matter whether or not the content of magazine body commentaries are taken on board by their readers, it is difficult to miss the provision by media of a ‘language’ by which women can name and describe their gendered bodies as inadequate, unhealthy, or needing improvement. Regardless of how young women come to find their bodies to be difficult, and by whatever means the media might contribute to this, what is important to the research presented in this thesis is that the media are *seen* to be at fault, what the nature of this fault is understood to be, and where critiques of media are coming from. For feminist commentators, the central platform for their concerns has been the earlier mentioned communication of gender via ideals in magazines; the following paragraphs outline the basis of some of these concerns.

Given the nature of magazines as highly visual medium, a large part of their statement about femininity is made via images of various women’s bodies (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2005). Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the key critiques of magazine femininity

have been directed towards (body) images. They include foremost, a complaint of inauthenticity (e.g. Etcoff, Orbach, Scott & D'Agostino, 2004); that the women imaged are not 'real' because they are captured only at their best, and are of women who have visually highly unusual bodies, which then are further transformed via photo retouching technologies. Relatedly, even if these bodies could belong to an existing 'natural' person, they are still heavily made up, modified and may be unachievable for most women by healthy practices (e.g. extremely slender bodies) (Chernin, 1983; Newman, 2007). These wagers of 'real' and 'natural' bodies have become central features to the new *body love* counter-messages, and are discussed at length throughout this thesis. Other critiques of magazine images bring into question the lack of diversity in race, colour, heights, shapes and so forth of media images (McRobbie, 1996; Sarbin, 2005). In particular, such critiques point out how the almost exclusive imaging of white women amounts to an exclusion of non-white women from discursive claims to power and beauty, and suggest that the emphasis on slender bodies could be read as a statement of women's limited cultural space and fragility (Redmond, 2003; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). In addition, the singularly expressive, inactive and submissive posturing, gesturing, framing and emoting by women in magazine messages is thought too to send a strong message about ideal roles of femininity and how a woman might participate in these (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Brown, 2005; Collins, 2011; Goffman, 1979; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; Winship, 1987). Altogether, more than just represented by her image, the ideal magazine woman *is* her image, her self and subjectivity encapsulated in the way she is seen.

Another feminist concern has been that the ideal bodies of magazines are premised on the dual philosophies of production of identity via consumption, and a fluidity of the body which allows for its transformation (Orbach, 2009, these ideas are addressed in a more technical sense as the commodified and 'post-modern' bodies in the next chapter). This ideology is seen to compound the 'problem' of ideal body representations in suggesting that women's bodies, facilitated by ever advancing technologies, could be easily and enjoyably made into anything she so desired. The irony, however, of this conceptual body plasticity lies in the stasis and singularity which is supposedly made possible by such transformations, for example, bodies must be held in time without ageing – in other words, sentiments of ever

greater possibilities have been tempered by ever greater abjections. As for emphasizing a consumer element to the making and making over of women's bodies, the concerns of feminist critics have been threefold. First, in basing the production of women's identity so much around these consumer activities, the media have excluded other ways of understanding, recognising and signifying women (and their bodies). Second, 'bodies' made out of consumer products might be more readily seen themselves as own-able objects. Finally and crucially, the time and cost involved in producing such commodity bodies revokes from women the hard won space, time and salaries they had claimed for themselves over the years via the women's movement (Chrisler, 2008; Wolf, 1991). Moreover, those who stood to profit from women's self-investment in ideal identities and appearances (e.g. the beauty industry, advertisers), have exploited for their own gain developments in cultural ideas about women and their nascent social power.

Finally, the ideal femininities of magazines have been identified as problematic for the way in which they designate a successfully feminine body as heterosexual and heterosexually attractive. Like the exclusions around race, size and age enacted by the idealised images of white, youthful and slender bodies, the designation by magazines of desirable femininity to only certain kinds of sexualities can be read as highly discriminatory against women of non-heterosexualities (Butler, 1993; Rich, 1980). On the other side of this coin, the mandate of successful women's bodies to be heterosexual (stressing both the 'hetero' and 'sexual' meanings of the word) limits not only who, but how women can understand themselves as embodying successful womanhood. It is in part, from the critiques around commodification of women's bodies and the bind of compulsory performative heterosexuality that the new *body love* media counter messages have grown.

Feminist Histories: Body Acceptance, or 'Body Love'?

The idea of promoting positive messages about women's bodies is in itself not new. Alongside their critiques of difficult mainstream media messages about women's bodies, feminists have also been major proponents of alternative ways of thinking about women's bodies. Such alternatives have spanned beyond the beauty/image framing of the *body love*

messages discussed in this thesis to consider both women's embodied lives as more than just appearance and the implications of cultural attitudes towards women's bodies as politically meaningful. Particularly from the 1970s onwards (the "second wave" of feminism), destabilising the social concept of a culturally sanctioned (woman's) body has been a key item on the agenda of contemporary feminism. These feminist messages of "body acceptance" are quite different to the new magazine discourses about "getting women to feel better about their bodies" discussed throughout this thesis; it is upon these differences that some of my criticism of the magazine *body love* messages takes shape.

Perhaps one of the first and best known advocates of a feminist message of 'body acceptance' was Susie Orbach, via her community work with women's groups, and her book, *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1978; and volume 2, 1987). Orbach proposed that women were using their bodies, via their fat, to represent their fears about their shortcomings, their anger about what they had been denied, and the weight of responsibility without freedom silently borne on many members of the female population. By recognising these issues as important, and accepting their bodies as a part of themselves rather than a representation of their place in the world, these works offered women readers the opportunity to face the gendered issues which their fat represented and to enjoy good relationships with food and with their bodies. Significantly, Orbach sought to challenge through her books the ways in which women's bodies are able to be valued in Western culture. Since and through *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, Orbach has continued to contribute to feminist literature and debate about women's bodies and western culture (e.g. Orbach, 1986; 2002; 2009; see Hood, 2005; Probyn, 2008), notably in recent years advising the formulation of the widely publicised *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott & D'Agostino, 2004, Unilever, 2007).

There have been numerous other well-known activists and significant literary contributions associated with the feminist 'body acceptance' movement; space and purpose limits me from including a comprehensive list here. It is worth mentioning too however, the Boston Women's Health collective's popular volumes of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1976; 2008), which have been aimed at providing women with the voice and the knowledge to be able to challenge discourses about the medical 'care' of women and make informed decisions about their own treatment. Equally, Kaz Cooke's illustrated book *Real Gorgeous* has proved to be

an influential contribution directed at younger women, credited with making positive body acceptance messages available to a wider audience than before (Cooke, 1996; Dixey, 1998; although Dwyer, 2006 questions some of the rhetoric around this work). Other examples of feminist advocacy in changing ideas about women's bodies can be found in 'fat activists' such as Marilyn Wann, and her associated work with the *FatSo?* and the *Health at Every Size* projects⁵ (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Murray, 2005; Wann, 1999). Finally, a number of well-known critiques of media / social body messages have also become key references in the 'body acceptance' vault, because of the way in which they encourage women to think critically about how their bodies are being imaged in visual culture. These include books like Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* (1991), and Jeanne Kilbourne's *Killing Us Softly* as the winner of the North American Consumer Film Festival in 1979 (Lazarus & Wunderlich, 1979).

By contrast, the more recent incarnations of these 'body acceptance' messages as *body love* and celebrations of femininity have taken a slightly different, commercially driven accent. New media *body love* messages are not just found in magazines, but have proliferated in the last few years across media in advertising, on television, and on the internet. Again, perhaps the best known of these has been Unilever's *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty*, and its associated *True You* program for growing self-esteem in young girls (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Murray, 2012; Unilever, 2007). These dual projects of the 'Dove' campaign were aimed at challenging social stereotypes of beauty, and broadening people's ideas of what it meant to have an attractive body. The crux of these efforts were that as a beauty products brand, Dove would begin to use "real" women as models in its advertising, and would set aside funding for schools and community groups to run media literacy courses for young girls and their mothers. Other similar examples of non-magazine media *body love* campaigns include the Special K cereal sponsored *Remember Me*, Tyra Bank's *So What?* and *T Zone* initiatives, and the internet sites such as *Operation Beautiful* and *LoveYourBody.org*.

At the time I began work on this thesis, these new initiatives existed for the most part outside of academic critique and review. Since then, a small but growing number of text study articles in the feminist literature have begun to look into the 'new' messages, (although none to my knowledge have expressly addressed those found in magazines) (e.g. Heiss, 2011; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Lynch, 2011; Murray, 2012). On the whole, these

studies have raised a number of concerns about the details of the new *body love* promotional. For example, the Dove campaign in particular has been questioned on the basis of possible commercial motives: evidence of a massive increase in brand sales and market share since the launch of the campaign, and Unilever's limiting of "real women" advertising to just one of their name brands are seen to support these concerns. Lynch (2011) has also questioned the financial deal-making of website Operation Beautiful in relation to book / publicity deals and advertising contracts with slimming products retailers.

Another key critique has been the continuing emphasis upon beauty and appearance in media *body love* type content; the new body messages at heart do not directly seek to challenge the association of image with successful femininity (Elphick, 2010). Instead, they indirectly advocate a continued commodification of the female body. Relatedly, new *body love* messages have been criticised for conflating empowerment with commercial consumption (Gill, 2008c), and for depoliticising and de-gendering women's difficult experiences of their bodies, providing simplistic solutions of attitude change – simply 'choosing' to feel better - as remedies (Lynch, 2011).

On the other hand, the new critiques of media positive body messages typically come with a proviso: that there is potential in current *body love* rhetoric for further development (Milkie, 2002), fostered by the good intentions of those producing them and the good faith in such intentions of those receiving these messages. To a greater or lesser degree and despite a clear statement of reservation, inevitably these critiques point out that almost any change in the media barrage of idealised and difficult messages about women's bodies must be seen as a (relatively) positive step forward. There are two key considerations here, i) the possibilities for mass distribution which these media messages represent, alongside the possibility of *replacing* (rather than just resisting) difficult media messages about women's bodies (see also, Braun, 2011) and ii) the opportunities new body messages represent for feminist media commentators to work in partnership and consultation with media. As Susie Orbach herself responded to critics of the "Dove" campaign she had worked upon:

"The question is, I've spent twenty years trying to talk to government about changing visual images, helping to educate young women"... "and I've never found a partner in government to do that"... "So, when a corporate global company came to me to say, is it true that our images are oppressing women, and what can we do about it cos we're women at the head of the brand,

I said, yeah I think there are things you can do about it". (Radio New Zealand Interview dated 28 February 2009).

Years of banging on the doors of clothing manufacturers, government, the food industry and advertising, to persuade them that by making fashion funkier and food more interesting they would increase sales, made this [meeting with Unilever] a dream meeting. I never thought the beauty industry would come asking. I was delighted. (Orbach, 2005, n.p.).

All things considered, the question of what feminist responses to 'new' *body love* media content should or could be like is still open for debate. Can feminists as 'stakeholders' (via their own involvement in body acceptance movements) realistically support media reproductions of a *love your body* message, given concerns such as those about the ways media have in the past exploited the representation of women's bodies for profit? This question also has historical significance regarding other kinds of feminist campaigns about women's bodies: having a knowledge of who promotes feminist messages about the body, and ideas about the possible purposes of their ultimate agenda is of paramount importance. For example, notable gains were made when prostitution and pornography lobbyists campaigned alongside 'second wave' feminists to increase the safety and availability of abortion and the contraceptive pill. However, some feminists respond that in hindsight this was at a price of altering the goal from making sexual freedom more available to women, to making women and their bodies more available for sex (Chesler, 2005). It is because current models of media profit similarly are seen to depend upon the retention of a deep-set commodity value of women's bodies that feminists might rightfully approach media *body love* messages with restraint and caution.

Post-feminism?

Adding to the complexity of the issue, feminism itself has been changing, with 'traditional' or 'second wave' practices of feminism arguably being on a decline. For example, new research suggests that young women, despite being grateful for the gains of feminism, are today reluctant to identify with or as feminists at the perceived price of their femininity (Banard, 2009; Petola, Milkie & Presser, 2004; Rudolfsdottir & Joliffe, 2008). For these (largely white, middle-class) women, their ambivalent distance understands feminism to be about haughtily loud-spoken and serious lesbian activism, focussed on (vocational)

‘discrimination’, and biased against men (Keller, 2010). Instead, they think of positive empowerment as an individual agenda, and take for granted the idea that gender should not limit their lives, although some researchers would argue that this very thought of ‘taking equality for granted’ is suggestive of a contemporary feminist consciousness (Aronson, 2003; Lazar 2009a). With a population of readers whom the content suggests should be hyper-feminine, non serious, and beyond chauvinistic attacks, popular women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* therefore appeal to this new contemporary woman, representing a ‘brand’ of womanhood which is starkly different to the feminist stereotype (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003).

What these magazines capitalise on is a current, ‘post-feminist sensibility’ (Gill, 2007b; McRobbie, 2004): where feminism is simultaneously ‘taken into account’, femininity is celebrated, but the idea of needing gender activism is made ‘past’, and no longer necessary (Press, 2011). With taglines like ‘for the fun, fearless female’ (Cosmopolitan International), young women’s magazines today promote a distinctive brand of ambitious ‘empowered’ femininity, attainable through motivated goal-setting and determined success. Post-feminism as the discursive battle cry and generational mantra of young women, has received close attention in recent years from feminist cultural and media researchers (e.g. Gill & Scharff, 2011; Lazar, 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Tasker & Negra, 2007). Although definitions vary, it is worth outlining a few common features of post-feminism taken from the literature and relevant to my own research here.

To begin with, post-feminism is plainly a discourse of the self-advancing individual (Tyler, 2005). Unlike feminism which is typically premised upon a collective concern about patterns of women’s disadvantage, post-feminism declines outright the ideology of victimhood upon which traditional feminist thinking depends (Aronson, 2003; Bartky, 1990). Instead, the ‘post-feminist woman’ is thought to empower or limit herself alone; her gender acting not as e.g. a precondition of her social being in the world, but rather, a celebrated trait of herself as an individual (Gill, 2007a). Problematically, taking on board these ideas about gender and established equality means her access to complaint or directed anger against sexist treatment is severely curtailed (McRobbie, 2007; Ryan, 2005). Within a post-feminist understanding, it is a woman’s own fault if her gender limits her, and her lack of

humour if she misses the irony behind sexist jokes; if women really are equal, then anti-woman speech/action could not be thought of as serious, effectual or meaningful (Gill, 2000). Similarly, this 'post-feminist woman's' means to 'empower' herself are equally insubstantial: as in the abovementioned analyses of *body love* messages, simply 'choosing' to be empowered somehow amounts to empowerment itself, without any recourse as to why a woman (or her body) might be experiencing feelings of disempowerment in the first place. Relatedly, post-feminist ideas tend to be grounded in essentialist conceptualisations of gender and gendered sexuality (Amy-Chinn, 2005).

Next, post-feminism has also been conceptualised as a largely media-led discourse about consumption (Lazar, 2009; Press, 2011). Most readily identified in conventional media spaces funded by advertisers, much of the academic literature about post-feminism involves textual analyses of media items of which women are the target audience (e.g. Tasker & Negra, 2007). As these post-feminist media voices 'recuperate' feminist messages about women's participation as equal subjects of culture, at the same time they also transform the meanings of feminist messages, offering subject-hood for sale through the enactment of consumer competency (Gill, 2008c; 2011; Gough-Yates, 2003; Jansson, 2002). This model of inaugurating subjects via consumer choices however, fails to account for what might be a limited range of consumer choices available to women (i.e. taking a spending market to be evidence of a free market; Meehan, & Riordan, 2002). Moreover, this model also fails to consider what may be very insidious constraints of class around either women as a collective whole, or around particular groups of women (e.g. mothers, women of colour), allowing full and free participation only to those who have the means to do so and constricting the social currency of those who do not (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008).

Finally, post-feminism is closely related to the post-modernist understanding of the world, and its accompanying sense of crisis / anxiety around identity and self (Gill, 2008c; Parker, 1992). For post-feminism, this manifests itself in an over-determined, caricatured, hyper-femininity which is centred upon the visual (making of the) body (Butler, 1993). In this, post-feminist approaches to the body are fairly similar to some 'third wave' and popular versions of feminism: the body is redeemed and reclaimed from past transgressions and

difficulties, its now liberated womanhood as ironically overstated femininity is presented in evidence of this (Bell, 2008; Fairclough, 2008; Redmond, 2008).

In this thesis, the concept of post-feminist magazines features in two related ways. Straightforwardly, the magazines in this research are described as 'post-feminist' because they are directed at a target market born after the peak of 'second wave' feminism, i.e. in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s. This decision was made following my earlier mentioned questions about the possible need for a 'new space of articulation' for positive messages of the body. But additionally, I assign the label 'post-feminist' to the magazines in my thesis in relation to their almost indiscriminate operation and skilful manipulation of the post-feminist discourses and ideas described above, the way these ideas permeate the entire body philosophies of mainstream young women's magazines today, and the question of whether such ideas could possibly be compatible with feminist-style positive body messages.

Healthist Discourses, Neo-liberal Individualism, and Body Panic.

This thesis is written at a time of increasing public 'body panic', particularly around the twin 'epidemics' of 'bad body images' in young women, and of 'obesity' as a 'global' (Western) health crisis (Jutel, 2005; Rice, 2009). In relation to each of these, magazine *body love* messages can be simultaneously seen to address both concerns: first, as mentioned earlier, working as a 'response' to public anxiety about how media might be contributing to young women's body distress, and second, as driven by a surge of interest in well-being, readable as and through a discourse of health.

Like the post-feminist media discourses discussed earlier, contemporary magazine health discourses are on the whole, highly individualistic, and based within a neo-liberal notion that health can be readily and equally chosen by the knowledgeable consumer citizen (Hinnant, 2009; Newman, 2007; Roy, 2008; Ryan, 2005). Health, more than just being the absence of systemic illness, has become in Western culture a lifestyle made up of specific practices and technologies. This shift can also be seen within contemporary psychology too,

with new emphasis placed upon mental 'wellbeing', 'mindfulness', 'positive' psychology and 'mental health' (Bell, 2008; Featherstone, 2006). Young women's magazines are significant participants/contributors in this 'new' health philosophy, offering health advice and strategy. In doing so, magazines both take up the role of /channel the instructions of the 'expert' while at the same time limiting the avenues via which readers might challenge or question what is laid out (Machin & Thornborrow, 2006). For young women's magazines, such health advice represents a significant portion of their content - excluding other body content about 14 percent (Hinnant, 2009), or in the case of specific health titles (like Good Health NZ) perhaps even more (Newman, 2007).

The value of pursuing health in this way becomes for the individual more than just a means to avoid illness. Additionally, this neo-liberal version of health comes to represent an individual morality of duty, of their competence in self-care (Moore, 2010), and as Hinnant (2009) would add, a "metaphor for a life in control". In other words, if health really can be wilfully chosen, a healthy body then can stand in to signify an individual who has made the right choices, and values herself enough to invest in her own improvement (Newman, 2007; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). In turn, the healthy body itself is represented *by* its physical, visible features; the cultural image of a healthy woman's body being above all else, slim (it is also invariably youthful, clear-skinned, tanned but not coloured, and symmetrically constructed). The social significance of the slender-healthy body can be seen well beyond media alone, enshrined in government anti-obesity campaigns and funding, the assessments of medical practitioners, and a proliferation of commercial dieting products, franchises and programs.

The moral marginalisation of fat has far-reaching implications. For a start, it attaches an ethical value to food and eating whereby what, where and how a person eats is seen to indicate something about their character (Hood, 2005; Wilson, 2005). But also, and manifestly more concerning to the political standpoint of my research, the fat which is found on people's bodies and the bodies of people who themselves which could be described as 'fat', is also made out to be unhealthy, out of control, corrupted and wrong (in fact, as Susie Orbach notes, the only kind of fat which seems to be acceptable today is the

fat profits of advertisers, gained in their exploitation of women's anxieties about what their bodies represent; 2005). This is all despite growing medical evidence that larger bodies (especially those of women) are not inevitably linked to poor health outcomes (Jutel, 2001; 2005). Nonetheless, research shows that larger bodies, as seen in media and according to participants, are routinely assumed to belong to people who are untrustworthy, self-indulgent, unattractive, unmotivated, inactive and altogether undeserving of / unable to achieve health, respect or success (Tischner & Malson, 2008; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). What is left out of this story of the unhealthy / immoral body are the socio-political conditions under which such bodies become and are defined as 'overweight'. Moreover, also not in the frame for discussion is the absolute bias through which some bodies of certain ethnicities, places or class demographics are disproportionately clustered into a categorisation of 'unhealthy' by the kinds of bodies these people are likely to have, and so how in turn these whole sections of the population can find their assumed morality and worth degraded.

Part of the packaging of these healthist discourses, particularly when they appear in young women's magazines, is a distinctive approach to gender not dissimilar to that described above of post-feminist discourses. On the whole, this includes an apparent lack of explicit reference to gender and so perhaps the clearest way to outline the covert gendering which goes on within healthist discourses here is through reference to some of the critiques which have been levelled against it. For example, the healthist, anti-obesity approach to health has been criticised for setting stricter standards around women's bodies which must not only be not-fat, but decidedly slim to be acceptable (Jutel, 2005; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Another example is found in the way in which health discourses undermine women's bodies as by definition unstable and unpredictable, and so are in need of greater restraints in order to be acceptably maintained (Ussher, 2006; 2011). In addition, healthist discourses can also work to hijack ideas of body care and maintenance as feminine virtues, making it women's responsibility and 'natural instinct' to want to know about her own (and others) bodies (Gill, 2009b, Harvey & Gill, 2011; Moore, 2010). As a final example, healthist discourses have been critiqued as discriminatorily gendered by virtue of their being image-evidential; given cultural sentiments which more closely associate women's subjectivities with what they

look like, overall the stakes will be higher in relation to maintaining a healthy image for women than they are for men (Moore, 2010).

And yet, as has been a theme of this introduction so far, there is also a potential benefit to the abovementioned prevalence of healthist discourses in women's magazines. Namely, this is that bodies continue to be a topic of interest in media and that despite misgivings about what exactly these terms might be taken to mean, 'health' has become a feature of the women's magazine genre. Whether the new media *body love* message can be read as a part of this healthist approach and, if so, how *body love* might intersect with associated anti-obesity and moralist discourses of health have remained guiding questions for the analytical work I present in this thesis.

Magazine (R)evolutions and the "Recessionista"

While the account I provide above presents some difficult challenges for women to negotiate, the years leading up to and during the production of my thesis can also be read as a time of momentous challenges for the magazine business as well. The way in which these challenges have been / are being negotiated also contributes as key context for the emergence of 'new' *body love* messages, arguably representing both the possibility for their articulation and the foundation upon which the magazine employees are able to build a story of their legitimate limitation (see Chapter 9). The following paragraphs overview some of these cultural and economic changes and what they may have meant for the (material and cultural) productions involved in communicating positive messages about women's bodies.

For example, the last few years of economic recession have multiply impacted upon the magazine industry, which in turn may have had flow-on effects for the nature of the content magazines produce. Starting at the broadest level, the conglomeration of mega-media empires and the buying or burning out of smaller, independent enterprises has consolidated the ownership of various magazine titles, in turn impacting upon the values behind the title, brand and commercial management of the magazines available in the Australasian market today. Another likely impact has been that both groups of magazine 'customers' (i.e. both

advertisers and readers), have had less income to invest in magazines given lower corporate revenues and higher rates of unemployment. It is also possible that any 'insulating' effect of being part of the apparently less affected Australasian market may have been negated by the 'international' business model of many titles available to New Zealand audiences; magazines which 'import and localise' many of their editorial pages and so are dependent on American and European titles for content (Freedman, 2009). Furthermore, with consumerist values at their core, and their production of capital being largely through symbolic value over material industry, the exposure of magazines to the current financial recession arguably has been considerable (Gough-Yates, 2003; McRobbie, 1996). Taken together, these financial changes may have meant that the kinds of content anticipated to 'sell' in this market, and the limitations contained in the cost of producing it could be seen as part of the impetus for a shift in the discursive messages communicated by magazines to their audiences.

On the other hand however, financial recession may not have been entirely bad news for women's magazines. Read for their simplicity, fantasy, escapism and hedonism, in the recession climate readers may find magazines appealing as a means to visualise themselves elsewhere and able to vicariously spend and consume in an imaginary commodified world without limit (Hermes, 1995; Ytre-Arne, 2011). Equally, the demand for simplified advice like that found inside magazines and relatively low cost leisure activities could both be factors which encourage increased sales of magazine titles in a time when this would otherwise be counterintuitive. As a case in point, I have noticed some titles directly catering towards 'recession fantasies' of spending limited money in uninhibited ways, with advice columns about how to be an informed 'recessionista', or how to go on a 'lip-gloss diet' in which spending on discretionary items is prioritised and so the reader might lose weight by being having less money to spend on food⁶.

Outside of these financial changes, magazines have also been facing a question of relevance. Starting in the 1960s with the increasing availability of television in the home (Winship, 1987), magazines have had to compete for advertising dollars with other visual media, seeking to position themselves as having exclusive access to a niche demographic of spending, ideal consumers (Gough-Yates, 2003). Similar challenges have been posed more

recently by the increasing availability of ‘new technologies’ such as the internet, which provide a greater diversity of options for advertisers and add additional strain to the competition for their sponsorship. Such technologies also compete with magazines on a readers and content basis – for example, gossip blogs are able to provide almost instantaneous access to celebrity news stories and opinions in a low cost, audience inclusive and participatory way (Fairclough, 2008). Altogether, what these changes mean is that the question of “what do magazines offer young women” is no longer just a research question being asked about subjectivity and by academics, but a question about content and use, being asked more broadly of the relevance of magazines in contemporary culture.

And yet, it appears that at least for the magazines which are at the centre of my research, media businesses have negotiated these challenges with almost outrageous sales success. For example, the current United States readership of Cosmopolitan magazine in 2011 at 3.03 million readers could be compared to the figures provided by McRobbie for their readership in 1995 – just 460,000 – representing approximately a six-fold increase in sales (Hearst Corporation, 2011; Mc Robbie, 1996). Similarly, the New Zealand edition of Cleo magazine did not exist twenty years ago and now attracts about 149,000 readers each month (ACP Media, 2011). In other words, despite all the possible difficulties listed in this section, somehow the way in which these magazines have changed / maintained / grown their ideas and business practices over time has resonated with readers and ensured that magazines continue to be an appealing media choice. What such numbers also illustrate perhaps is the dependence of magazines on readers – to buy or not to buy implies a significant consumer power (Tebbel, 2000).

Although there has been little written yet (outside of trade journals) about the detail of how exactly magazines have transformed themselves through the last ten years, other work about dramatic changes in the magazine business, particularly though the 1980s, talks about women’s magazines as ‘chameleons of survival’, (Gough-Yates, 2003; Winship, 1987) continually able to change themselves and their purpose to flexibly fit within the current environment (see also Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Farrell, 1994). This is achieved slowly; despite the apparent continual movement to stay on trend, as mentioned earlier magazines have also sold on the basis of their predictability for readers issue to issue. Astutely,

Freedman describes this process of change in magazines as “evolution” not “revolution” – magazines in theory must move neither too fast nor too slow in order to ensure success and survival (2009). This style of adaptation has clear relevance in evaluating the ‘newness’ and success of *love your body* style messages in magazines in that such messages can be assumed to have both a lengthy period of precession and perhaps some way to progress yet. It is also worth noting here that in the earlier mentioned research about magazine changes through the 1980s, it was in many cases the advertisers who were identified as pressing for magazine modifications (Gough-Yates, 2003). This matters here because theoretically, the change a *body love* message could / should represent flies directly in the face of the basis for advertiser business with magazines, i.e. that women must find themselves inadequate in order to find themselves in need of the self-improvement products and advice advertisers seek to market through magazines (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Given all this, it seems pertinent to ask, what then (instead) is motivating the ‘new’ *body love* messages in magazines and can whatever this is be sustained through the time it could take for positive body messages to be established as a feature of women’s magazines? Either way, the materialisation of *love your body* messages at what appears to be a crucial junction point in time of the meaning and use of magazines in culture, clearly has been more than just serendipitous.

Australasia as Unique Context

Although my research was undertaken within New Zealand and began with an interest in magazines which were available for the New Zealand market, it became apparent very early on that it was impossible to talk about New Zealand magazines without some reference to international magazine markets. Even for young women’s magazines produced in New Zealand, up to 80 or 90 percent of their content may be ‘imported’ from Australian (or other international) titles, which in turn ‘import’ much of their content from other international editions and then will ‘localise’ facts and products as appropriate for that market (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; this information was also located within the magazine staff interviews undertaken for this thesis). From one point of view, what this globalisation means is that the general outcomes of the text work my thesis could, with reasonable caution, be seen to

have some relevance beyond the Australasian market where positive body content also appears in women's magazines (see also Machin & van Leeuwen, 2005).

However, I would also like to emphasize the inimitable nature of Australasia as the context for this research. For a start, according to Freedman (2009), Australians are voracious magazine readers – to give an example, the Australasian edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine sells more copies per capita than any other edition, anywhere else in the world. New Zealand and Australia as geographical contexts also have unique blends of multiculturalism – here, we (Australasians) live with a specific set of intersecting cultural values about bodies unlike anywhere else in the world, reflective of the specific combination of ethnicities which reside here. This pluralism has been seen in some ways as presenting a potential local advantage to women, in the possibility of up-taking cultural values which are thought to protect against difficult experiences of the body (however see Turangi-Joseph, 1998). On the other hand, placed against the above mentioned American and European imported content of magazines this multi-ethnic profile is for the most part, severely misrepresented by the magazines available in Australasia – white women may be able to find some allegory of themselves in these pages, but for Pacific, Maori and Aboriginal women (for example) even the token images of African American women can only stand in to remind of their absolute erasure. Calls for greater diversity in magazine representations then, have particular resonances for this part of the world.

Of absolutely crucial relevance to this thesis with regards to the Australasian publishing environment though, has been the formation of the Australian National Body Image Advisory Board. The board included representatives from the magazine and fashion industries, academics with interests in health and psychology, and public figures including a member of parliament and representatives from non-government organisations. Amongst other things, the board was formed to advise the Australian government about 'body image' and compiled a voluntary Media Code of Conduct, which the government subsequently endorsed (Ellis, 2008). Organisations which sign up to the terms of the Code of Conduct are able to officially declare themselves 'body image friendly' and should abide by the principles set out in the code. These are to always use:

- “Positive content and messaging” when talking about bodies
- “Diversity” when representing body shapes, sizes and ethnicities.
- “Fair placement”; i.e. using only “advertising that supports positive and healthy body image behaviour”.
- “Realistic and natural images of people”, in which photo alterations are limited and the bodies represented are achievable through healthy practices. Consumers are informed about the extent of photo alterations.
- “Healthy weight models” of an “Appropriate modelling age”
- And asks that fashion retailers “Stock a wide variety of sizes that reflects demand from customers”.

Although New Zealand does not at present offer such a Code, the effects of its introduction in Australia have also had an impact here for magazines – directly, via changes to their imported content and indirectly, via increased (news) media coverage and resulting public awareness of the problems the report and Code addresses. At present and to my knowledge, Australia is the only country in the world to have undertaken a project like this in such depth. However, the ‘body image problem’ has clearly been a governmental concern in other jurisdictions too. For example, the British government’s Body Summit in 2000 raised similar concerns (Orbach, 2005), which have (only) recently been built upon in government inquiries about the use of photo alteration in visual media⁷.

Finally, New Zealand and Australia have become unique environments for the generation of media *body love* messages through the specific contributions of individual ‘activists’ who have worked over many years to try and change media messages about bodies. For example, in Australia Mia Freedman as the youngest ever editor of a Cosmopolitan franchise was pivotal in challenging magazine body representations at a time when media in Australia had begun to actively avoid bodies as a topic of contention and controversy. Her calculated, experimental (and to those in the industry, outrightly radical) changes formed the foundation of practices which continue in the title, and were adapted by others for use, to this day. Equally, these changes perhaps could not have been successful without the many relative failures and road-blocks encountered by those now less well known who tried before her, for example, Cyndi Tebbel, (Tebbel, 2000). Mia Freedman went on after her career at Cosmopolitan via her blog and community work to encourage women to support media enterprises which promote positive imaging and text about bodies and to hold to

account those who will not (www.mamamia.com.au). She also chairs the aforementioned National Australian Body Image Advisory group.

In turn, this group would not have existed without the initiative and insistence of the then Minister for Youth Affairs Kate Ellis (Ellis, 2008). Nor would the National Code of Media Conduct have been possible without predecessor work and an initial code developed in the state of Victoria, following the success there of lobbyists to secure funding for a state 'positive body image strategy' under now MP, Jacinta Allan. In Australia, organisations such as the Butterfly Foundation and the YWCA provided essential peripheral assistance to such initiatives, lending community support and weight to the arguments and concerns raised by the government lobbyists. In New Zealand, EDEN (the Eating Difficulties Education Network, until recently led by feminist author Maree Burns), has been one of the equivalent key voices in discussions of women's body difficulties, working with media, schools, communities and individual clients to promote positive messages of embodiment (Burns, Tyrer & EDEN, 2009). Unlike Australia however, organisations like EDEN operate their *body love* message without (i.e. having been refused) government funding or endorsement: these twin financial and government-mandate constraints often resulting in limitations around their possible reach and activities. Alongside many others unmentioned, all of the organisations and individuals noted above have contributed in some way to the local environment in which popular media *body love* messages have been made possible.

Summary and Research Contribution

Though grounded in a strong history of feminist research about magazines and bodies, it is my objective that the research presented in this written dissertation offers new perspective and a valuable contribution to this literature via a number of converging features. First, I hope to achieve this through the research design. For example, given the size of the research field, there is a relative absence of positive research about how women might feel better about their bodies and, to my knowledge, no published studies to date which directly and primarily address the topic of *love your body* messages in young women's magazines. Also, the interview study in this project places emphasis on the *production* of magazine

content, making it one of only a small number of studies in the field to have asked magazine writers for their perspective (e.g. Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Gough-Yates, 2003; Hinnant, 2006; Keller, 2011; Massoni, 2008; McRobbie, 1996) – and again, possibly the only research study to have done so around the topic of producing positive body messages (although Milkie, 2002; and Press, 2011 touch on these issues). One final example lies in the time and place of the research undertaken – as mentioned above, Australasia is a unique political (/governmental), commercial, and cultural location in relation to the research topic. This location intersects with a contemporary media publishing climate constructed around a range of (both material and discursive) contexts which shape the temporal conditions of the ‘now’ in which the *love your body* messages under scrutiny in my research are made.

It was also my intention from the outset of this research to offer ‘something new’ to the critical and feminist literature about women’s magazines and their discourses about the body. It should become apparent soon if not already, that this was perhaps an ambitious expectation on my own part about how significant the change represented in ‘*body love* messages’ for magazines might be. The outcomes of my text analysis for example, are broadly that within magazine (‘positive’) body messages, women’s bodies are still images (Chapter 5), still difficult to love, still a site of commercial subject-hood (Chapter 6), and still unequivocally heterosexual (Chapter 7). However instead, what I do believe is ‘new’ within my text analysis chapters is the detail of how the body-discourse status quo has been achieved; for example through new images and dualisms, through a commercialised discourse of ‘love’ and its embodiment. In addition, I also anticipate that this thesis could be read as a contribution towards a broader emerging literature about post-feminist media discourses and how they interface with existing feminist ones. As for my interview study (and my interviewees who would certainly contend that *body love* is something ‘new’), over and above the content of the analysis work provided, I hope that through the outlining of the processes and challenges involved in (especially the conceptualisation and recruitment stages) the method in the interview study, that I can inform other future research work with media producers.

In summary, ‘new’ *love your body* messages in young women’s magazines are a product of multiple social contexts and processes. As outlined earlier, these include feminist histories

of body acceptance messages and critiques of mainstream media body messages; current cultural discourses about gender, post-feminism and neo-liberal health; and magazine business traditions, operations and genred conventions. Like the generation of *love your body* messages themselves, the research presented in this thesis too has its own context – situated in a theoretical understanding of embodiment and a research tradition of how cultural texts might be read and ‘analysed’. The following two chapters (2-3) introduce this theoretical context. The rationale and methodologically situated research questions can also be found here, at the end of the ‘methodological framework’ chapter (3). Chapters 4-7, and 8-10 then contain the analytical work of this thesis, each introduced by a description of the method which was followed within these investigations. Finally this thesis closes with a synthesis / conclusion chapter (11), which returns to some of the key and repeated issues raised about magazine *body love* messages through my research.

Chapter 2:

Conceptualising the Body

This chapter outlines some of the key theoretical conceptualisations of the body addressed in this thesis. As a point of departure, it opens with an overview of mainstream psychological and Cartesian conceptualisations of the body, followed by an explanation of how the research presented in this thesis rejects such ‘missing’ conceptualisations of the body (Braun, 2000; Durham, 2011) in favour of alternative, largely critical and post-structuralist, feminist theorisations of the body. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of such theories as they pertain to the current thesis. Placing the emphasis on post-structuralist conceptualisations of the body, and in particular, Foucault’s writing about surveillance and docile bodies (1979) as it has been reinterpreted by feminist commentators, this thesis also draws upon post-modern, material-discursive, and psychoanalytic perspectives on the body. Finally, this chapter closes by addressing in turn the production of image, gender and experiences in relation to the body, as interests pertinent to the topic matter of this thesis.

Mainstream Psychological and Cartesian approaches to the body

The critical, feminist post-structuralist approach taken by my research is at odds with many of the implicit assumptions which have formed the basis of mainstream psychological research and theory about the body, body image, and identity. However, there are two key sites where traditional psychological conceptualisations and approaches to bodies are still evident in this thesis. First, mainstream psychological approaches to the body provide the start-point from which a number of critical approaches deliberately distance themselves – the critical, feminist post-structuralist framework of this research directly responds to concerns about these more traditional approaches (see Chapter 3). Second, traditional psychological approaches circuitously produce a cultural authority for themselves to infiltrate and influence everyday (non-psychological, non-academic) understandings and popular explanations of “common sense” about the body (e.g. Hasinoff, 2010). Therefore, recognising traditional psychological conceptualisations of the body and person where they

may be reproduced within magazine texts will be key in making sense of what the effects of these reproductions might be within the communication of *body love* messages to young women readers.

Mainstream psychology's relationship with the body is complicated at the least. Within the experimental paradigm's requirement for observable evidence, largely influenced by behavioural psychology, the body is privileged as a site or vehicle via which the mind can enact and exert its contents (Featherstone, 2006). Experimental psychology also privileges the study of the body in its preference for biological theories of behaviour – seeking first to rule out genetic and organic explanations, before allowing for alternative, developmental or 'nurture' based theories; alternatively, such biological explanations could instead be seen within a post-structuralist framework as anchored in discourses with specific, invested interests (see Chapter 3). Cumulatively, this approach has led to the production through psychological theory of specific kinds of knowledge about bodies and what can be considered 'natural' about them – as compared to what instead can be "factored out" as separable from the influence of the thinking, independent mind. This produced 'knowledge' further extends to what of the body can be quantified, measured and 'objectively' observed – how, and by whom – having powerful implications for future scientific studies and the new knowledge they produce (Unger, 2011).

On the other hand, in taking up an epistemological position of mind and body as independent functioning entities, traditional psychology as the investigation of the functioning of that mind, has for the most part silently detached itself from engaging with the body in practice, and even more-so, in theory (Grosz, 1994). In a way, this narrow viewing of the role of the body implicitly theorises the body as secondary, unimportant in traditional psychology's approach to understanding the 'individual', their 'functioning' and their 'behaviour' (Braun, 2000). For the most part, mainstream psychology has evolved as a discipline which frequently cannot / refuses to / does not allow for engagement with the body as an integrated part of a person, as invested with subjectivity, located in a culture or as intelligible in ways other than an objective, direct perception of its features (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1998). In other words – experimental psychology has

invested, via its practice, in a certain framing of the body as natural, consequently limiting the possibilities for how the body can be understood.

There has been one notable exception to the silence of mainstream psychology in relation to the body however, and one which has had considerable influence on popular conceptualisations of women and their bodies. The next section overviews and then critiques some of the elements of traditional ‘body image’ research as they relate to the current thesis.

Body image

The notion of women’s “poor body images” has been the subject of clinical and social concern ever since psychology’s “discovery”, (or perhaps creation) of the concept (Blood, 2005). Encompassing definitions which include everything from perceptions and emotions, to ‘attitudes’ and thoughts about the body, ‘body image’ as a topic of research is concerned with measuring both the degree of ‘accuracy’ of women’s ‘body image’, and the causes / effects of ‘having’ an ‘inaccurate’ or ‘poor’ ‘body image’. Since the 1970s, the idea of ‘body image’ has been taken up to become part of a vast organisation of academic and popular knowledge about how women’s supposedly erroneous perception of their bodies results in self-loathing, and an ensuing range of negative consequences (e.g. Ben-Tovim, Walker, Murray & Chin, 2006; Bosson, Pinel & Thompson, 2008; Verplanken & Velsvik, 2008). It has been so pervasive that without the idea of ‘bad body image’ the articulation of a *love your body* message perhaps would have been very different if possible at all. Through its inauguration as ‘truth’, ‘body image’ as a psychological construction has become part of the way women know and experience their bodies, as well as a basis for many of the understandings of bodies identifiable within popular magazine texts.

Underlying the concept of “body image” are a number of assumptions embedded in dualistic, scientific values which predetermine the possible knowledge that can be created about the body and the (experimental) methods which can be used in order to do this. For example, feminist researcher Sylvia Blood (2005) put forward that results of such ‘body image’ research have worked to reinforce myths about how women who experience distress relating to their bodies are suffering from an internally located, pathological

cognitive or perceptual disturbance. She continues on to describe how “body image” theories typically support notions of a body which is constant and unchanging, isolated from the life and context of the person who inhabits it and uninfluenced by the people who view it (see also for example, Grosz, 1994; Willig, 2000). These ‘body image’ theories also subtly pathologise, normalise and reinforce the ways in which women experience distress related to their bodies. In addition to all this, women’s body difficulties are compounded in ‘body image’ disturbances by the idea that their problems are caused by an ongoing trait, defect or error of personality or perceptual abilities: if the social is accounted for at all, it is via unmediated input of media images as an ‘independent’ variable, which further ‘damages’ women’s self-perception in often under-theorised ways (some striking examples include: Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005; Cusumano & Thompson, 2001; Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008; Slater, Tiggemann, Firth & Hawkins, 2012). It may well be that media contribute to problematic reproductions of discourses about women’s difficult embodiment. However given the above, it is worth keeping in mind that psychological science also has a history of producing, engaging with, circulating and advocating for, all with some authority, the ‘objective’ knowledge of women and bodies on which many media discourses stand (see also, Chapter 9).

Despite critical objections about how (poor) body image is (re)produced, experimental research into “body image disturbance” is gaining momentum, fuelled by its own dramatic and self-propagating statistics on the rates of eating “disorders”, body dissatisfaction, and the current “obesity epidemic”. Evidently, the idea of body image has an inherent appeal in a visually-fixated contemporary culture – this coupled with its self-evidential nature has meant the ‘body image’ concept is frequently called upon to speak for contemporary embodied experience. In this thesis, this problem of ‘body image’ has been responded to interchangeably with both deconstructive and interrogative approaches which respectively, seek to either dismantle and disrupt, or to question the function / effects of ‘body image’ as it is used in text and speech contexts.

Relationships with bodies; dualistic discourses

A related area of critical and feminist academic objection to the way psychology approaches the body relates to the inherent dualism which infuses almost every aspect of the language

with which bodies and people are described (Malson, 1997). In staking itself out as a discipline of behaviour and the mind, traditional approaches to psychology implicitly insist on the body as the other 'half' of the Cartesian divide, prioritising study about the the workings, intentions and personalities of the somehow disembodied and isolated 'self'. Through a dialectic of influence and effect, this 'self' is furthermore, singled out from its context and culture – psychology being a study of 'the individual' (or at the most, of groups made up of individual responses) and not society. Further dualisms in place within psychology also draw out distinctions between thought and emotion, sensation and perception, cognition and behaviour; psychology's arbitrary organisation of the world reproduces still more binaries, between man and woman, adult and child, racially 'white' or of other ethnicity, and stability and inconsistency.

The outright problem of this proliferation of dualistic discourses is not only the separations they (re)enact between constructed opposites. On top of this, such separations / binaries inevitably promote hierarchies between the two halves of the dualism: for example, man as above woman, mind before the body, and thought above emotion (Bordo, 2003; Gergen, 1995; Shildrick, 1997). Furthermore, these dualistic hierarchies themselves tend to cluster together to tell overall stories in which men, for example, become the ideal subjects and producers of psychological knowledge, being scientifically minded, rational thinkers. Women however, as the sub-plot to this version of the world, are constructed as beholden to and made lesser by their bodies, emotionally driven and unpredictably inconsistent (Bayer & Malone, 1996; Grosz, 1994; Ussher, 2006; 2001). Outside of mainstream psychology and for the research presented in this thesis, binaristic reproductions of women as separate entities from their bodies and from culture also pervade the analytic magazine texts under investigation; this topic is taken up again in more detail in Chapter 5.

Another effect of dualistic discourses and their oppositions is that created within the distance produced by their separations, a discursive space in which the *relationship* between each half of the dualistic pair should / must be explained (see also, Macleod, 2002). For example, when discussing some of the reasons why post-structuralist psychology aims to overcome the individual / society binary of traditional social psychology, Wendy Hollway emphasized the point that once you think of the two halves of the binary as

separate things, “the problem of their *manner of relation* is central” [italics added] (p. 28, 1989). Mirroring Hollway’s ideas, I would argue that a similar concept could be applied to the Cartesian style mind-body binary in place around young women’s bodies: that when those concerned with young women’s embodiment have described this as a problem of having a good / poor ‘*relationship*’ with their bodies, perhaps here they have pinpointed exactly where a significant part of this ‘problem’ is being sustained / reproduced. The question then raised is what function is being served by the imagining of a ‘relationship’ between women and their bodies. For example if women were able to partition off a part of themselves to which they can then attribute ‘undesirable’ qualities of femininity (i.e. unpredictability, the materiality of the body), perhaps the idea of a *relationship* albeit a difficult one, with this other-ed body is easier to imagine / allow / tolerate than those kinds of qualities being *part of the self*.

Which bodies? – Critical approaches

As discussed above, feminist and critical academics interested in embodiment have aimed through their work to disrupt and dismantle the Cartesian binary of mind and body (e.g. Bordo, 2003; Gergen, 1995; Malson, 1997; Shildrick, 1997). Instead, they argue for a conceptualisation of lived experience in an inhabited body, of the body not as secondary but an integrated part of human lives (Grosz, 1994). The impacts of this theoretical investment in an embodied self are far reaching. For example, an interest in embodiment calls for a recognition of bodies as available via a much wider range of perspectives – these new theories conceptualise the body as not just flesh and mechanical enactor of mental process but also for example, as invested with meanings, and knowable via discourse. Theories of integrated embodiment have also led to a disruption of ‘nature versus nurture’ disputes, arguing instead that neither nature nor nurture can be located entirely outside of the contextualised body they describe. Last, new methods, methodologies and further theories have been developed to reflect this standpoint, supported by a revival of interest in language and participant focussed research. These key theoretical developments which integrate body and mind within a model of *embodied subjectivity* have made the theoretical framework described in this thesis possible.

Just as different psychological theories of behaviour each rely on specific ideas of the individual as subject, the theories of the body presented in this chapter frame the body in different ways. For example, in her review of a range of different theoretical books about the body, Braun (2000) notes that some conceptualisations of bodies engage primarily with the body as physical flesh, others with the body as experienced, or just a surface, and some fail to theorise the body altogether: the meaning of the body is assumed to be implicitly known. What is evident from her review, is that at least while still bound to research and academic works which are language-based, the communication of a holistic understanding of the body which encompasses discourse, materiality, culture, image, experience etc. would be incomprehensibly complex (Gillies et al., 2005; Parker, 2005). Acknowledging such complexity, critical and feminist approaches do make an attempt to describe such a multifaceted body and articulate how the different aspects of that body might work together. The following sections of this chapter will overview some of the various critical framings of the body which are offered as alternatives to the traditional psychological approaches to bodies discussed above.

Intelligible, Disciplined and docile bodies

Abandoning the 'implicit' body of mainstream psychological research signals an important statement about bodies – that they are simultaneously worth knowing, and somehow knowable. This significance of bodies is not, according to a post-structuralist perspective, a function of bodies themselves. Rather, bodies have been constructed as 'worth knowing' and 'knowable' via a range of cultural practices, in particular through language (Gergen, 2009). Placing the now intelligible body alongside critical psychology's rejections of singular truth (Wetherell, 1995; 1999), discourses and messages conveyed about the body can be approached in a very different light. Knowledge, in the absence of 'truth', can be understood as having a history, as being culturally relative, and, importantly, as having the capacity to be *deployed* to serve a political interest (Parker, 2005).

This theory of 'deployed' and invested knowledge about bodies is central in Foucault's writings about discipline and power (1979). Particularly, he detailed how in the early

nineteenth century, bodies, being a locus of new practices of economic production and consumption, were 'discovered' as key objects of power and knowledge. In gradually and increasingly becoming thought of as intelligible and useful in this way, bodies by the same token had become legitimately manipulatable and analysable (Foucault, 1972). To expand, bodies increasingly came to be understood as endowed with the potential for increasing competence, efficiency, and self-regulation on which increasing demands could then be made. Well practiced bodies, made valuable by their newly endowed capacities for production, also became disciplined and *docile bodies*. This need for increasing capacity of the body developed alongside an increasing attention to detail: the more details there are to be known about a body, the more opportunities there are to regulate that body against an ideal. Foucault believed that philosophers and theorists needed to understand the foundations / history of what he saw to be coherent, deliberate social tactics in order to fully comprehend the implications and extent of disciplinary power and its potential to act on the individual, via the body.

Since the 1970s Foucault's theory about docile bodies/subjects has been placed alongside textual sites of body-knowledge (re)production by interested academics across a number of disciplines, notably those with feminist interests in how women's bodies are represented. Specifically, feminist interests have focussed upon how Foucault's theorisation of bodies being docile and *knowable* also makes them *vulnerable* to being known in ways which serve certain productive, consumptive and political interests. In the magazine context, questions have been directed to how capacities for production of the self or body offered to women within media texts may also make women docile to coherent, deliberate and motivated 'tactics' behind the selective communication of knowledge and ideas about women's embodied subjectivities, and additionally, whose interests these communications might protect and serve.

Visible bodies

In accordance with the above Foucauldian theory, one of the main ways in which a person / body *becomes* knowable is through being visibly available to be seen; other ways include

through 'confessions' of the self and body, (see Chapter 5; Foucault, 1984; Redmond, 2008). In his influential book, *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault explains how bodies which are seen are also subject to cultural surveillance and in turn, regulation through disciplinary forms of power. Foucault draws upon the concept of the 'Panopticon' to describe penal practice of the late 1700s, suggesting that this model prison can also be applied as a metaphor for contemporary experiences of bodies, where through visibility, cultural practices reproduce hegemonic social orders.

To explain, the architectural Panopticon, envisioned by Jeremy Bentham as the ultimate penal institution, consisted of numerous cells into which prisoners were separated, unable to see each other, but in full view of a guard tower from which the prisoner could never be sure if they were being watched. Through this system, inmates could be readily classified, categorised and organised, and large numbers of prisoners could be observed at any one time. However, because prison detainees constantly lived with the *possibility* of being watched, they became virtually and continually self-policing, even when there were no guards present in the watch tower at all. Translating this concept of the Panopticon into social metaphor, Foucault's theory was that the on-going possibility of being seen has resulted in a regulating society of individuals consistently aware of how they are known by virtue of the way they become (in/)visible, and what the meanings of their bodies might be to other potential observers (also, Tischner & Malson, 2008). Like in the Panopticon, the visual organisation of society also theoretically requires a system of isolated individuals, hierarchically distributed and different from each other (see also Walkerdine, 1991) and produces cultural citizenships where individuals are required to self-monitor and self-regulate the possible readings of their appearances.

These themes of discipline operating via social surveillance have been taken up by feminist theorists, particularly in the fields of media studies and advertising, to describe the intersection between power and visibility in a number of ways which are relevant to my research (e.g. Gill, 2008c). As far as magazines are concerned, theories about the way readers are invited to scrutinize, analyse and participate in the viewing of model bodies which are supposed to resemble their own is in a way evocative of the Panopticon concept; in practicing the evaluation and categorisation of power on others, theoretically readers

understand that they too, are object to the same classifying, subjectifying gaze (Malson, Halliwell, Tischner & Rudolfsdottir, 2011). Other theories, particularly those of Judith Butler, take up the idea of presented visibility to talk about a more directed and 'performed' femininity as exhibition of the self, made out of constellations of intricate details and embodied acts (Butler, 1990; Segal, 2008). The appeal of Butler's interpretation includes a theorisation of gender as done via the body in interaction, as opposed to being seen as a natural or essential property of the body. In addition, her re-visioning of Foucault provides a theoretical opportunity for subversion of visible practices of knowledge, through deliberate masquerades and agentic up-taking of identities via embodied performance (Durham, 2011).

Working outside of but still arguably compatible with Foucault's theory of visibility and power/knowledge, feminist researchers have additionally pointed out that in as far as looking / knowing can be thought of as powerful and political acts, they can be thought of too as gendered practices (see e.g. Mulvey, 1975, or from a different perspective, Bartky, 1990). This gendered frame of looking encompasses both the significations which are available to a viewer in realising specific meanings of particular kinds of bodies as well as the position from which the act of looking is accomplished (Coleman, 2008; Featherstone, 2006). To explain, women are encouraged to not only think of themselves and others from their own gendered point of view, but also to imagine how these bodies could be seen and known by, for example, a 'male' viewer. This 'male gaze' is not necessarily literal, but instead is more often conceptualised as a gender framed way of women looking at themselves as 'other'; a recognition that their identity as women is produced through being the 'object' (and men the seeing 'subjects') of a proliferatively visual culture (Berger, 1972).

Post-modern, multiple bodies.

Replacing the concept of a rational, unitary subject and texts which communicate transparent, objective and impartial knowledge, 'post-modernism' as a concept in this thesis refers to the conditions of uncertainty and flexibility which characterise contemporary experience (Parker, 1992). Epistemologically, post-modernism refers to a theory of multiple

possible world knowledges, relatively and contingently distributed across time and place. Some of the major theories and theorists which guide the methodology of the current research, including Foucault's discursive theory of power (1972; 1979; 1984; McNay, 1992), Lacan's theory of metaphor and significations (Grosz, 1990; Lacan, 1977; 1998), and Deleuzian theories of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; 1988; May, 2005; Potts, 2004); all contain sentiments of multiple possible interpretations of language, people, bodies or subjects and as such epitomise a post-modern viewpoint (Chapter 3 addresses these theories in greater detail). As applied in my thesis, a post-modernist destabilisation of the idea of a singular truth has allowed for the deconstructive style of the discourse analysis undertaken, which questions the effect of claims to knowledge where they appear in the data (Macleod, 2002). Post-modernism also forms the foundation of the post-structuralist questioning in this thesis with regards to 'which' and 'whose' knowledge comes to be valued as truth, on the basis of what power or purpose, and to which discursive outcomes.

In addition, post-modernist epistemologies are also relevant to this thesis for the way in which they pervade contemporary conceptualisations of bodies, especially those of young women, and more so than anywhere else, those contained within media constructions of western femininities (Brook, 2008). In a post-modern culture, young women magazine readers are called upon to imagine their bodies as an endless site of possibility with unbounded potential for creative transformation (Lazar, 2011; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). Young women are actively encouraged to experiment and 'try on' media-offered options for femininity: like a pop-music video with instantaneous costume changes, post-modern, embodied identities are presented as readily fluid, and the process of their production as pleasurable, exciting and low-risk (Orbach, 2008; Railton & Watson, 2005).

However, despite the sentiment of limitless possibilities for the body, in practice post-modern constructions of embodied femininity are contained by a range of culturally imposed constraints (McRobbie, 1999). For example, discourses of open choice and readily modifiable bodies obscure the processes of creative labour involved in producing such bodies and the material limitations to the flexibility of human flesh (Blum, 2007). Through neo-liberalist discourses of individual options, moralities of responsible and 'healthy' bodies place pressure on young women to select subjectivities which fit within socially sanctioned

norms (Rose, 1996) – subjectivities which in turn are bounded within gendered hegemonies which readily make themselves comprehensible to visual surveillance. Additionally, as a general rule the options offered to young women for the enactment of desirable feminine subjectivities are framed within specific engagements with consumerist technologies which commodify the female body; young women are invited to purchase, wear and advertise gendered identities, in a way that almost brands subjectivity as a purchasable product (Arvidsson, 2005; D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2011). Finally, engaging with post-modernist subjectivities represents somewhat of a double bind for young women – at the same time as they offer young women the ‘choice’ to experiment with multiple embodied identities, other related discourses also underline problematic social constructions of women’s bodies as unstable, unpredictable and unreliable (Chrisler, 2008; Grosz, 1994; Tischner & Malson, 2010; Ussher, 2006).

Material *and* Discursive Bodies.

Also incorporated in the analytical framework of this research is a recognition of bodies as *material* as well as discursive. Post-structuralist work has successfully integrated this understanding in places, often describing for example “institutions” of power as material, e.g. laws, corporations, the organisation of public and private spaces (Weedon, 1987). There is now a sizeable field of feminist work which positions itself as taking a “material-discursive” approach to understanding embodiment (e.g. Burns, 2006; Ussher, 2006; 2010; 2011), itself developed from the critique that radical applications of post-modernism and social-constructionism may imply a paradoxically limitless body. According to Ussher, when taking up a material-discursive approach “[t]he question is: can we acknowledge the regulatory power of discourse”... “at the same time as recognising the existence of distress?” (2006, p59). Without an understanding of the material limitations that discourses of the body might be working against in the construction of embodied femininities, it seems to be the case that this may not always be possible.

In relation to how the current research will incorporate the issue of the material, this project uses text and speech as data, the material adjuncts of which are not directly bodies,

but captured images, print on paper, and sound. Its access to the material is via the meanings made of language and image, it 'knows' the bodies and the subjects it is concerned with by the use of discourse. However, in terms of theorising the *effects* of discourse, this thesis is premised on the recognition that the physical bodies of women are often crucially implicated in the requirement to improve or modify bodies, often impossibly or painfully against their material limitations. There are also material conditions at stake in the production of magazines, such as the format of (re)presentation in image and text, or the financial backing of advertisers (Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Farrell, 1994; Gough-Yates, 2003; Jackson, Stevenson & Brooks, 2001). Of course, these production conditions have overlaid discursive meanings too, such as the practice of publishing and distributing magazine text in order to share ideas as a culturally worthwhile enterprise.

However, in adopting a material-discursive approach there are two issues which require particular care. Firstly, allowing the interest in the material to produce a space in which discursive objects are only recognisable as physical needs to be avoided. Given the framework of the current research, all objects become objects via the discursive, however mundane; material things are knowable because they have cultural meanings or purposes, (although not all discursive objects will have a material foundation) (Burr, 1995; Locke, 2004). Particularly so for this research, bodies and body related practices are saturated with cultural meaning; attempting to think of them outside of this would literally strip them of whatever was 'worth knowing' and knowable about them in the first place. Second, caution is required not to reproduce the dualism of material *or* discursive. A dichotomised opposition ignores the notion that the material is understandable via the discursive; the two are not mutually exclusive to each other. Moreover, polarising the two suggests the privileging of material as 'truth', and discourse as not; although sometimes it can be useful to label as 'fictional' mainstream or derogatory discourses which have been strongly held as truth in an attempt to diminish their power (Wetherell, 1995). Instead it is emphasised that theorisations of bodies as material *and* discursive aim to overturn dualistic models of the body as belonging to only one or the other category, in favour of a more integrated understanding.

Bodies as Real, Imaginary and Symbolic

The current research also draws upon some psychodynamic concepts as a secondary source of theory about bodies and subjectivities (see also Chapter 3). In terms of literature this makes sense, as it opens this research to another significant group of feminist writers' works whose theorisations of bodies have also been highly influential in this area. For the most part, I view their approaches and those of a more post-structuralist orientation, as largely compatible (Parker, 2005). Congruently, the strength of psychodynamic theories is they provide accounts of emotional experiences and internal worlds which are for the most part under-articulated within post-structuralist theory (Hollway, 1989; cf. Gavey, 2002); psychoanalytic theories also discuss, beyond discourse, how people come to take up various subject positions and their investments in these. In addition, psychodynamic theories are largely oriented towards describing people as products of their early social experiences of the world, resulting in a theory which is able to explain the *development* of subjectivities. Consequently, they provide multiple complementary conceptualisations about the body/subject alongside a theory of their integration, hence their appeal to the methodology of this research, in taking a multidimensional but cohesive (i.e. not dualistic) approach to the body.

One such psychoanalytic theory about the body is found in Lacan's account of developing subjectivity which organises human existence into three orders of being (Grosz, 1990; Lacan, 1998). Respectively, the 'Real', the 'Imaginary' and the 'Symbolic' each represent one of the possible levels on which a person or a body could be intelligible (Parker, 2005). Each of these levels in turn is associated with one of three effects / expressions of being in the order; the Real with needs, the Imaginary with demand, and the Symbolic with desire. To briefly explain, needs are conceptualised as concrete expressions / effects of lived experience in a 'real', material body. Next, demands are associated with the Imaginary or 'mirror image' self – a representational image which has been reflected back to the individual, of itself, via its experiences of / interactions with the world around the person and the 'others' in it. These demands are not just those directed at others to fulfil the person's needs but also are demands for certain kinds of relationships with these 'others'. Such 'others' though do not exist in the realm of the real; here, individual bodies / selves are

not yet imagined or signified as separable from the self, thereby making *relationships* in that realm impossible. Finally, desire belongs to the Symbolic realm, that in which a person signifies themselves, often but not always using language. Symbolic desires are conceptualised as a desire for signification as the object of another's desire. Moreover, it is important to point out that this 'other' object of desire is also located in the symbolic order. To try and put it simply, for Lacanian psychoanalysis symbolic desire is about a person wanting to think that they are known or thought of in specific ways; they gauge their success in this against the opinions of others, and these others in turn are known by the ways in which they are signified (Lacan 1977).

In terms of the body, the three orders of existence and the expressions associated with them are all closely intertwined. People exist first as a physical, 'real' body, and develop an idea / imaginary representation or image of what this body / self is like. They then express this idea of their bodies via various modes of signification, for example in text, in talk, in significant actions or the creation of images. A person's interpretations of and participation in cultural significations of their bodies can be understood as interactive and collaborative meaning-making processes, which in return can have an impact on the constitution of their imaginary and real bodies.

In relation to the current thesis, the ways that Lacan's theory can be mapped onto previously outlined post-structuralist, material/discursive approaches to the body offers significant utility when it comes to analytical attempts to comprehend media constructions of the body. For example, the Real and Symbolic orders could be said to broadly equate to post-structuralist concepts of the 'material' and 'discursive'. But added to this, the introduction of an intervening Imaginary order allows for dedicated attention towards representations as practices distinctive from significations, making this concept particularly relevant to the analyses presented around images and questions about 'misrepresentation' in this thesis. As a second example, Lacan's theory also marks out a distinction between the needs of a physical body, the demands of an imaginary representation, and the desires of the symbolic. Locating each of these expressions within the psychodynamic order they are the effect of, this theory is able to provide a comprehensive account, for example, of how desires for subjectivity, such as the signification of a 'loved body', are able to be enacted

through demands made of the imaginary self, with corresponding consequences for the functioning of the material body.

Desiring and desirable bodies

The need / demand / desire distinction discussed above of Lacan's theory of subjectivity raises the point that while desire is limited here to the symbolic realm, bodies apparently are possible across all three orders. In doing this, psychoanalytic theories have endowed the body itself with the capacity for signified desire – something removed from what is possible of the body in more traditional bio-psychological theories, which at most allow it a sexual, mechanistic 'response' (Kaplan, 1969; Masters & Johnson, 1966; Tiefer, 1995). On the other hand, and perhaps far more conceptually available to popular understanding, is the idea of the body-object as *desirable*, particularly when talking about women's bodies. Literally, magazine narratives / discourses about women are persistent in their presentation of desirable bodies in the context of heterosexual relationships (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Jackson, 2005b; Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008). Alternatively, in the absence of the opposite sex, there is also the desirability of the body as a libidinal object (something worth investing energy in) but also, something which must be positioned as 'other' to the self, in order to be the object of desire / love (see the earlier section on 'relationships with bodies').

In a departure from the above classic psychodynamic conceptualisations of desire, Deleuzian theories put forward desire not so much as a lack of something which is longed for, but rather as productive and positive, asking questions such as: what can the body, conceived of in a given way via what these desires have made possible, now do? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Potts, 2004) In other words, the focus is on desire as a creative act, and lives which are seen as fulfilling are those that promote, proliferate and produce desire for possibilities outside of the molar, i.e. the most available, mainstream cultural options (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; May, 2005). This theorisation of desire as productive resonates in some ways with ideas discussed earlier in this thesis of disciplinary power as productive, the difference being whether the possibilities of production are open, generative and multiple (Deleuze and desire; Potts, 2004), or limited (by discourse) and defining (Foucault and his earlier theorisations of discipline; 1979; cf. 1984; McNay, 1992).

Finally and debatably, the reason psychoanalysis has been so interested in desire is because, its existence being produced in the realm of significations and signifiers, it is always accompanied by anxiety about what is being signified, i.e. those ideas which are somehow so intolerable to subjectivity that they are unable to exist in the symbolic realm and instead have to be described through metaphorical approximations (Freud, 1999; Hollway, 1989; Parker, 2005). Certainly, what could easily describe many of the outcomes of research around magazine body messages to date is anxiety (Chapter 9 also discusses anxiety in relation to representations of the 'real girl'). Overall, in relation to representations and discursive significations, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism pose the same question – what meanings of women's bodies are being made? – the latter asks who these meanings might serve or disadvantage (Bordo, 2003), the former, what these meanings, stripped of defensive projections, could really be about (Orbach, 2009; Pollock, 1977).

Captured (imaginary) bodies.

In keeping with the theme of images of bodies, and given the above post-structuralist and psychodynamic theorisations, another way of theorising images of the body applied in this thesis is in terms of 'capture' and 'representation' (Coleman, 2008; 2009). As concepts, capture and representation imply a kind of imaged selectivity, a suggestion that while there will be some kind of resemblance of what is 'real', that somehow something is left out of the frame. Of course, 'media' are well known for and admit to the extensive use of a wide variety of artistic and digital *technologies* in imaging bodies, although admitting to the fact of their use does not say anything about the extent or whether this use is justifiable (Bissell, 2006; Huang, 2001; Oriez, 2009; Wheeler & Gleason, 1995; Winick, 1996). Putting the extent of creativity in imaging aside though, in as much as there are many ways to make an image there theoretically should be equally as many possible ways to 'read' that image as a representation (Locke, 2004). From an analytical / theoretical point of view, what is captured, and what is not; what is made visible, and what is purposely or otherwise invisible in representations of the body are all messages which can be discursively interpreted as replete with meaning (Brown, 2005; Machin, 2004; McRobbie, 2007; 2009; Mirzoeff, 1998).

Putting these theories alongside the content presented thus far in this chapter, images have multiple roles within the theories which ground this study. As above, they are conceptualised as located between what is 'real'/material, and what is signified about the body (Grosz, 1994; Lacan, 1998); they form part of a complex 'mirrored' relationship of understanding, in which simultaneous identification and distancing helps the 'individual' develop an idea of being a distinct 'self'. What and how images are, can be theorised as 'text' in which cultural discourses can be identified, and these messages in turn have a regulatory function which shapes individuals as a part of society. This regulatory function being invested by power, the images available in culture therefore can be thought of as somewhat socially architectural. Bordo describes the regulatory function of the media image upon the material, flesh and blood body as images which "*are teaching us how to see.*"..."Digital creations, visual cyborgs, teaching us what to expect from *flesh and blood*. Training our perception in what's a defect, and what's normal [*italics added*]", (Bordo, 2003 p. xvii).

Encapsulated in Bordo's quote is the idea that practices of seeing / being seen are more than just accurate and straightforward perceptions of 'true' things in the world. Recalling the earlier ideas about docile bodies requiring an in-depth knowledge of the signified self and about the Panopticon, overall it could be said that images are not just ink on a page. Instead, images are mediated through cultural practices of looking. This means that those things a person will find relevant to look at, and how a person makes sense of them will depend upon their culture, history, subjectivities, and the social and physical environment they are situated in. As mentioned above, practices of looking and being looked at will be as *gendered* as the constructions made of the bodies under observation (Berger, 1972; Coleman, 2008; Mulvey, 1975), and will be as such because of popular ideas about the meaning of being gendered / embodying gender in contemporary western culture.

Gendered bodies

I want to continue here to specifically discuss gendered bodies, to make explicit how the entanglement of gender and body is conceived of within the theoretical framework of this

thesis. From a post-structuralist point of view, gender is not really a special case as such in the sense that gender is primarily approached as one of many meanings made of the body. However, the overall conceptualisation of gender in this thesis differs so distinctly from widely held mainstream and popular ideas, and is so central to understanding how bodies are thought of, particularly the bodies which will be conceptualised within this study, that it needs its own space of recognition within this chapter. Further, there has been an abundance of theoretical work about specifically gendered bodies, partly coming out of feminist interests in the politics of the body. Finally, the post-structuralist orientation of this project is grounded in a political interest in gender i.e., feminism. It is important, especially given that post-structuralist theory, particularly Foucault's, has been heavily criticised for its non-mention of gender, that feminist interests in *women's* bodies which are brought to bear within this project are openly discussed.

Using the term 'gendered' to describe bodies in the context of a feminist-theory driven thesis comes loaded with a theoretical history of the use of the term 'gender' within the discipline. This history began with an attempt to differentiate between the biological concept of 'sex' (i.e. any physically / medically identifiable traits which could be used to designate members of a species as 'male' or 'female'), and 'gender' (i.e. the cultural, historical and behavioural elements which come together to designate a socially legible 'man' or 'woman'). The sex / gender distinction was first offered by psychologist Robert Stoller, (1968) in his efforts to comprehend the 'incongruence' of biology and identity in trans-people. However, feminist theorists also found the sex / gender distinction useful, in that the 'gender' concept resonated with existing feminist scholarship (e.g. De Beauvoir, 1972) about the cultural production of femininities, and the rejection of biological gender determinism (Mikkola, 2011; Rubin, 1975). In some ways, the material / discursive approach employed in this thesis roughly performs a similar purpose: it identifies both material and discursive possibilities for the realisation of womanhood and bodies, although would reject any notion of either the material or discursive existing prior to the other, unlike some mainstream incarnations of the sex / gender divide which could be seen to prioritise sex as somehow preceding gender.

However, the use of the sex / gender distinction by feminists has been subject to some significant and sustained criticisms (e.g. Butler, 1990; Gatens, 1996; Grosz, 1987; Walsh 2004). One common critique is directed at the dualism that can be read between sex and gender i.e. that sex versus gender is not a clear cut distinction. Related to this, another identified problem is how 'sex / gender' as a dualism can work in tandem with other hegemonic dualisms, e.g. alongside dualisms of choice, mind and body, and even gender itself, to produce gender as elastic, lucidly chosen and therefore masculine, above embodied sex as static, binding and associated with irrational femininity. Similarly, the sex / gender dualism can suggest the illusion that gender is a flexible, easily transformed site for feminist intervention, undermining the substantial investments (both material and discursive) of a variety of cultural institutions in maintaining the hegemonic status quo. Critiques have also been made of how each half of the sex / gender distinction is conceptualised. These include a questioning of the claim that 'sex' is really identified via biological factors, and how accounts of 'gender' can still be founded in essentialist assumptions of what womanhood really is. Despite the on-going problematizing by feminism of the sex / gender distinction though, it could be said that in feminism will always be somehow bound to a conceptualisation of sex and / or gender, in that as mentioned above, its' political movement concerns itself with 'women', however these women might be defined.

All this said, in this thesis gender is maintained as a primarily sociological construct, as opposed to an absolute physiological fact. It uses the magazine texts' identifications of 'women' and a gendered target market as a starting point upon which (de)constructions of femininity are premised, and acknowledges the minimal 'biological' and embodied cultural identifiers upon which their claims to gender are made (see Kessler & McKenna, 1978). But what is important within the epistemology which guides this thesis is how meaning can be made of material and imaged signifiers, and how they are built up into a whole system of definition which allows certain subjectivities to be made more or less available to certain groups of people. Having breasts, for example, would perhaps not feature so much in ideas about women's embodiment if there were not all of the attached meanings around size, post-puberty, sexuality, femininity, being curvy, motherhood, and so forth (Anijar, 2005;

Malson & Swann, 2003; Manheim, 2000; Railton & Watson, 2005). Amongst other things, approaching gender in this way allows for a challenge of gendered artefacts and actions, and especially, for an argument against the way in which a 'fact' of gender acts as evidence alone, without looking at what being gendered / embodying gender may require / allow / limit / suggest of a person. Moreover, gender in this thesis is conceptualised as primarily visually performative, achieved through embodied choreography and the visual production of the body towards or against known cultural meanings, rather than located in or as the body itself (Blum, 2007; Butler, 1990).

If gender and its embodiment can be spoken about as requiring, limiting or suggesting certain things of a person, and if, as earlier, various meanings about bodies and selves can be thought of as invested with cultural interests, then additionally, ideas about bodies can be thought of as truly a political space for feminism. Indeed, feminists have spoken about a 'politics of the female body' – arguing that where bodies can be thought of as differentially gendered, in these differences can also be found the disadvantage of women – 'physically' evident in the practice of and discourses about the embodiment of femininity (e.g. Durham, 2011). Hence, the very smallest details of gendered corporeality and subjectivity are not merely personal, but cumulatively part of a much bigger system of inequity, power and politics.

Conversely though, bodies can also be thought of as legitimate sites of political *resistance*, practices of change, and the building of counter-discourses. What matters then, is that the knowledge which makes women's embodiment a difficult experience shifts, and makes room for new ways of knowing the body. In relation to the current thesis and *body love* messages then, the limitations and definitions which are placed around the terms of 'love' (Toye, 2010), as well as what these messages enable and encourage, can be evaluated from a feminist point of view as a political statement about the terms and conditions of women's bodies. From this point of view questions relevant to this thesis might ask: why the popular cultural obsession with the female body? Why are popular media, whatever the target audience's gender, saturated with explicitly gendered images and ideas about women's bodies? Finally, why is the body-love message specifically directed at women to love their bodies, and not a message about people loving themselves?

Experienced bodies

From a feminist point of view, it is crucial that theories of body and person should account and allow for what being in the world feels like, to engage somehow with those things that people know and live as truth about themselves (Budgeon, 2003). When the individual is conceptualised as inextricably part of the social, i.e. the binary between culture and the individual is interrupted, experience can no longer logically mediate between the two (Henriques et al., 1998). Instead, experience becomes part of the package of a lived-in, social, embodied subjectivity, and bodies conceivable as both experiencing and experienced (Tucker, 2010). Constituted, via discourse, in history, culture and meaning, the body as multiply *phenomenological* is perhaps the best summation of the various representations discussed altogether in this chapter – far removed from mainstream psychology's construction of bodies as inagent, unfeeling objects.

While this thesis does not incorporate focussed concepts such as inter-subjectivity and phenomenology, it does draw from these an idea of bodies as experienced, located, inscribed and meaningful, and places the implications of this against the more static representations and constructions of embodied subjectivities readable of the data in the analysis chapters of this thesis (McNay, 2004; Zhavi, 2001). In particular, it is this viewpoint of an experienced/ing body which opens up the position of being able to critique magazine discursive and imaging practices which 'erase' experience, and any evidence of. These concerns about erased experience follow other feminist academic critiques of media discourses which advocate, for example, unageing, static and youthful beauty or the concealment of bodily evidence of motherhood (Bordo, 2003; Hallstein, 2011; Lazar, 2009a; Orbach, 2009). Overall, it could be said that it is this attention to how stories of women's experience are told which characterises critical feminist psychological scholarship and accounts of experience, which are comparatively distinguished by their absence when it comes to more popular, mainstream ideas about the body.

Conclusion

There are many ways to conceptualise women's bodies. In a departure from mainstream psychological traditions of leaving the body out, and in line with a feminist ethic to reinstate understandings of women back within their bodies (Durham, 2011), this chapter has outlined some of the key theories which inform the analysis chapters of this thesis. These conceptualisations inform the methodological approach taken in this thesis; the following chapter discusses these theories and how they have also informed the methods selected and undertaken in the current research.

Chapter 3:

Methodological Framework

This chapter introduces the theories and key concepts which guide the method of this research. It follows on from the previous 'bodies' chapter, which outlined elements of the theoretical context in which this thesis can be located. This methodology opens with a discussion of the central 'critical, feminist, post-structuralist' (CFPS) theoretical approach taken in this thesis, followed by an acknowledgement of two other approaches (psychoanalytic and feminist economic) which inflect the details of how the CFPS approach is applied. The second section of my methodology introduces four 'key concepts' utilised in my research. The first two of these – subjectivities and discourse - are laid out as conceptualised by the CFPS approach of this thesis. The latter two 'authors' and 'audiences' sections discuss continuities and variations in how these concepts are used across the two different 'studies' (text and interview) of my thesis. The final section of my methodology (theory into method) addresses reflexivity and ethics, although both these issues span the entire breadth of a critical research project from conception to conclusion, so in this chapter I have restricted this discussion to an overview of just a few main points. Last, I present the guiding research questions and some explanation of the key method of analysis (critical discourse analysis) used in this thesis. The specifics of the method associated with each 'study' are then found before their respective analysis chapters.

Theoretical Approaches

As a whole, this thesis takes a critical, feminist, post-structuralist approach (see Gavey, 1989; Lazar, 2007; Weedon, 1987), as its foundational theoretical framework. These intersecting approaches allow for an investigation of the ways in which magazine portrayals of bodies can be read as specifically gendered, and how such representations may function in terms of what they offer young women as ways of knowing their bodies. However, while my research is interested in the media's communication of different idea(l)s about women's bodies and the implications of doing so, it aims to avoid reproducing exclusions of its own

around the definition of moral, healthy and loveable bodies (regardless of whether these exclusions have appeared in the data or in psychological literature; Jutel, 2005; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008; Tischner & Malson, 2008). In a similar vein, it also endeavours to avoid the reification / pathologisation of a condition of “bad body image”, while still being able to acknowledge the difficulties posed to women in the experience and embodiment of problematised subject positions (Blood, 2005). Instead, this research seeks to question a) how new *body love* commentaries function as a media discourse about women’s bodies, and b) to ask what is on offer (hypothetically) to young women readers within or outside of the subject positions made available in *love your body* texts.

Although these three approaches (critical, post-structuralist and feminist) are used in an integrated way and have specific effects in constellation, for ease of reading I have chosen below to arbitrarily address each approach in turn, before explaining how they might join and work together.

Critical theories

Overall, critical approaches can be described as those which reject a mainstream discipline characterised by claims to ‘neutral and objective enquiry’ (Lazar, 2007) and the evidential practices of research which facilitate those claims. In the case of this thesis, realist psychological theories about a rational, singular and predictable subject (see the later section in this chapter on ‘subjectivities’) are set aside in favour of a more relativist, social constructionist epistemology which questions the taken-for granted ‘truth’ value of mainstream psychological ‘knowledge’ (see Burr, 1995; Gergen 1985). In practice, this critical rejection of mainstream psychology can be seen, for example, in clustered critiques throughout this thesis of concepts like ‘media effects’ and ‘body image’. Instead, these concepts are interrogated for their purpose and the effects of their use where they are able to be identified in the data.

The ‘critical’ aspect of the theoretical approach applied in this thesis also implies a socio-political critique of a hegemonic / dominant social order (van Dijk, 1993). Using ‘critical (discourse) analysis’ in this sense, Molina (2009) described critical approaches to research as those which will seek out texts and contexts for analysis in which it is expected that the

content will contain discriminatory commentaries and be reproductive of social injustices. In the case of the current research, magazines have certainly in the past been condemned for enacting symbolic 'violence' and disadvantaging limitations against women's bodies, and so would easily meet this stipulation (e.g. McRobbie, 2009; Sarbin, 2005; Wolf, 1991). However, this thesis is produced within a theoretical and cultural context in which a robust, positive and unproblematic understanding of women's bodies is "as yet unimaginable" (Bordo, 2003), and the analytical texts studied at the very least *offer* themselves as a possible solution. Accordingly, it is my hope and intention that where this research is critical, the attitude of this criticism also considers the possible, rather than pre-emptively expecting a need for media condemnation.

This pragmatically-oriented approach to criticism is facilitated by the intersection of critical and post-structuralist approaches in this thesis. By identifying discourse as a significant site of social 'struggle' and negotiation, post-structuralist approaches also allow for positive discussion of alternative productions of and resistances to power (Foucault, 1979). This is quite different to, for example, critical Marxist approaches to power, which are arguably predisposed to negative critiques by measuring the world against an idealist vision, or which locate oppression in a single source of class structure (Wetherell, 1999). With the spotlight on both possibility *and* limitations, participation *and* exclusion, post-structuralist modes of critique consequently require a stance of reflexive distance which constantly interrogates and evaluates both a) the claims to truth identifiable in texts and in the discourses which might be employed to make sense of them, and b) the process of the research (see later section: 'a note on reflexivity').

According to Parker (1992), the possible reflexive / socio-political positions available to critical researchers are practically infinite but, crucially, must be made explicit in outlining the approach taken to any given research project. For this thesis, the political grounding taken is largely represented within the ways in which its methodology could be described as 'feminist'. Being interested in how women may be reproduced in (or outside of) disadvantage, feminism has a critical stake in this thesis where questions are raised about how the *love your body* message may be constructed in discourses which have been identified as potentially problematic for women. From a feminist critical perspective, the

effectiveness of the research presented in this thesis can therefore be evaluated on the grounds of its potential for critical awareness-raising about the social construction of women's bodies and the commentary it offers around changing cultural and contemporary understandings of embodied media subjectivities.

Post-structuralist theories

Like critical theories, the epistemology which makes post-structuralist thought possible is premised upon a post-modernist rejection of a positivist, singular and knowable truth about the world. Instead, the post-structuralist approach to knowledge makes way for a plurality of possible meanings and embraces contradiction and complexity in thought (Gavey, 1989). In other words, knowledge is conceptualised as transient and unstable. Crucially for post-structuralism though, knowledge is additionally relative to and contingent upon the social, historical and cultural moment in which it is available. Post-structuralist approaches therefore seek to interrogate the relationship between power, knowledge and meaning. Correspondingly, the interest of a post-structuralist approach to research is invested in making sense of how various knowledges are produced, used and valued in a given time, place or space. In the case of this thesis, the spotlight is placed upon contemporary media understandings about women's bodies – how these bodies might be known (/knowable), and how media professionals comprehend their role in the (re)production of such knowledge.

Consistent with a relativist conceptualisation of knowledge, post-structuralist approaches also re-consider essentialist assumptions about the transparent and straightforwardly expressive nature of language. Alternatively, a post-structuralist approach puts forward that a variety of meanings are readable of language and other systems of signification – including of images, and even of bodies themselves (see Chapter 2; Locke, 2004). Language itself has no fixed meaning before or outside of the *context* in which it is located and the act of 'reading' or comprehension is done. Usually, this radical rejection of the idea that language has a singular or obvious meaning would imply that authorship strictly should be left out of any conventional post-structuralist investigation because without an agreed meaning interpretations of a text could be virtually endless, and an author could not

communicate their point (see Foucault, 1979b; Weedon, 1987). However, in this thesis the texts studied (contemporary women's magazines) operate in a highly specific historical, cultural and linguistic context; magazines are further considered for their implications for the 'young women' they hail as their 'target market' (Althusser, 1971). For this reason and in this case, I see questions of authorship and production as relevant to the post-structuralist search for meaning which provides the grounding for this thesis.

When it comes to considering the discursive context of the linguistic (and pictorial) texts analysed in this thesis, women's magazines and contemporary media culture comprise a profoundly complex but, (perhaps to my advantage as a researcher), well documented discursive environment. This media context is characterised by paradox and tension, for example, between fast-moving 'progress' and stasis; neo-liberalism and moments of extreme conservatism; constructions of 'realities' and documentations of fantasies (e.g. Freedman, 2009; Gough-Yates, 2003; Riordan, 2001; Winship, 1987). The post-structuralist approach of this thesis in particular encourages a reading of bodies (and constructions of bodies) as signified *cultural entities* framed by and readable through specific knowledges which go hand in hand with magazine media as a discursive location (McNay, 1992). The post-structuralist approach also requires careful attention to the history out of which contemporary media spaces and places have developed; Foucauldian methodologies especially emphasize this historical project (e.g., Blood, 2005; Foucault, 1979, 1984; Hepworth, 1991). For the current project, this history is an absolutely essential vantage point against which to measure claims of 'newness' and departure from 'old' and difficult body messages in the magazine *body love* messages.

For feminism, the post-structuralist approach's main appeal is found in its theorisation of power, especially how this theory may explain the action of power to (re)produce women in positions, experiences and subjectivities of disadvantage (Brayton, 1997; Waller, 2005).

Post-structuralism locates this cultural power in the everyday, taken-for granted practices and relationships of people's lives; in the trivial, mundane and expected and, above all else, in human knowledge (Widdicombe, 1995; see also Weatherall, 2002). It sees influential cultural *institutions* (like 'the media' or 'psychology') as not so much the enforcers of their own power, but rather as prolific sites of (re)production of knowledges which promote

understandings of the world that maintain (or provide the opportunity to question) current social hegemony (Weedon, 1987). In turn, post-structuralism also references a variety of *technologies* for self- production which essentially describe the variety of practices which might be undertaken in an attempt to construct the self within one of these aforementioned knowledges, or to manipulate and engage with the discursive subject positions on offer (Evans, Riley & Shankar, 2010; Foucault, 1988; McNay, 1992; Pini, 2004). In my research, the focus is upon technological practices of subjectivity enacted through and upon the body, as described within magazine text as practices of love. Within this focus, attention is also paid to the degree to which such practices are comprehensible because they are constructed within existing media knowledges about specifically *gendered* bodies and their role in the discursive production of femininity. In this vein, post-structuralism's utility in disrupting and calling into question the construction of a "natural body", where femininity and femaleness are framed as biological and inevitable practices, has been especially useful throughout the magazine text analysis pieces of this thesis (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Feminist approaches

According to Maguire, feminist approaches to research "consist of no single set of agreed upon research guidelines or methods" (1987, p.74). In fact, often diversity in method and approach is welcomed (e.g. Wilkinson, 1991) and perhaps this diversity itself could be seen as a clear feature of feminist research. Regardless, the one consensus located in the methodological literature is that a feminist approach to research must be one that, at the very least, openly defines itself as politically aligned with feminist values and makes clear what it sees this commitment to entail (Waller, 2005). From the outset, this political attachment could be read as an inevitable exclusion of any method which makes claim to unbiased and impartial investigations; making the 'critical' aspects of this methodology an ideal research combination.

However, feminist research methods also go beyond straightforwardly critical approaches to research and while they may not have an agreed upon definition, feminist methodologies do have some commonalities. For example, most feminist research methodologies share a

basic agreement in some degree or kind of disproportionate experience of disadvantage by women. As such, it could be said that the ideological position which drives feminist research is a consciousness of oppression (Bartky, 1990; Unger, 1993). Usually, this is accompanied by a desire to uncover what sustains and maintains these disadvantages, often followed by an agenda to inspire or enact change, even if this change cannot yet be imagined or contained within the actual project, time or place in which the research has been undertaken (Brayton, 1997; Waller, 2005). For the current thesis, the orientation to women's experiences of disadvantage is clearly located in questions around women's experiences of (difficult) embodiment, and theories about the scaffolding of such experiences contained in ("old") media discourses about ideal feminine beauty. In turn, the consideration of 'change' mentioned above is absolutely what drives the current research, identifying what is made possible by new *body love* discourses being its fundamental goal.

The research documented in this thesis conforms to another key tradition of feminist research: the use of women's experiences and cultural spaces as "data". The reasons for doing this in feminist research are two-fold. First, attention to women's experiences and practices is coupled with a value of respecting the context and content of women's lives as of viable and meaningful interest to research (Klein, 1983). Second, this method also represents a rejection of traditional experimental research in psychology which openly aspires to isolate and decontextualise experiential 'phenomena' into abstract and testable laboratory settings, reducing 'sex' to a 'variable', and variation itself to 'error' (Unger, 1993; Weisstein, 1968/1993). Returning to women's contexts and experiences, in the case of this thesis, women's magazines as a genre are often overlooked as analytical texts, certainly within mainstream psychology but even to a degree within critical media research; reading magazines has also been somewhat maligned as a recreational activity (see Chapter 1). However, women's magazines on the whole are written for and by women, are a notable feature of the landscape of women's 'culture', and address gendered issues in a way that few other genres do (Winship, 1987). Research about magazines therefore responds to feminist interest about putting women's experiences and women's worlds on psychology's research agenda in a unique way (Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer & Hebron, 1991). The magazine production study in this thesis additionally fulfils a feminist research interest in

women's experience by rejecting ideas of 'the media' as a monolithic entity, replacing this conceptualisation with interviews which sought out the commentary of the women who actually work in media institutions (Gill, 2012; Gough-Yates, 2003; McRobbie, 1996; Ytre-Arne, 2011).

While there are many ways of doing feminism and feminist research, the approach this thesis is most closely aligned with is that of 'feminist post-structuralism', primarily guided by the work of Gavey (1989) and Weedon (1987). According to Weedon, the defining aim of a feminist post-structuralist approach to research is to explain the working of (discursive) power in constituting gender and gendered experiences, seeking out any opportunities for resistance, and questioning whose invested interests these processes might serve. Notably, these questions are complicated when it comes to this research's magazine production study, with the interviewees potentially able to transverse between the 'gendered experiences' and the 'invested interests' pieces of this explanation – a dilemma perhaps more readily accommodated by the flexibility of post-structuralist theories of subjectivity than feminist politics which are more committed to seeking workable explanations around change.

Supplementary approaches

While the most readily identifiable perspective of my thesis is a critical, feminist, post-structuralist approach, I also acknowledge two other important influences which contributed to building the methodology of my research – 'feminist economy', and psychoanalysis. In each case, the ideas borrowed from these additional frameworks were taken up in response to concerns about what might be left 'missing' or unresolved if the CFPS framework was applied in a purist fashion.

Feminist economy and 'macro' power

According to McNay (1992), post-structuralist approaches pose a problem for feminist research in that their radical philosophical relativism could be seen to exclude value judgements about what concepts like 'freedom', 'oppression' and 'emancipation' could mean. Clearly, the implications of this philosophical exclusion for feminism's goals of

political practice raise questions about a possible incompatibility of the two approaches. For the research presented in this thesis in particular, attempting an evaluation of the possible meanings new *body love* messages might offer to young women requires some kind of political interrogation of 'whose interests' are served in the production of these new messages. The concern here is that a post-structuralist approach which evaluates these interests and the power behind them as merely symbolic, may not provide the same political purchase as a more concrete approach with commodity, top-down power and material outcomes / institutions at the top of its agenda.

In some ways, it is possible to respond to these concerns still remaining within a post-structuralist approach, for example, by not underestimating symbolic power and maintaining a focus on 'knowledge' and 'subjects' as the main productive outcomes of power. However, feminist economic approaches directly address 'top down' forms of power and allow for a conceptualisation of power as a commodity (Meehan & Riordan, 2002; see also Wetherell, 1999). In this way, they are also applicable to a study of the *production of body love* messages, allowing for questions which ask about such messages not just as produced knowledge but as a commercial artefact manufactured by an industry whose outputs (i.e. magazines) are *both* discursive and material productions (Lumby, 2011; Turner, 2010). Being open to questions about commercialism also allows the current thesis to connect with previous feminist work about magazines and media. More specifically, if up until now magazine content has been theorised as driven by invested commercial interests within material and recognisable institutions of power, it would make sense for this theorisation to be addressed in the rationale and evaluation of this thesis (Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Machin & Thornborrow, 2006; Ryan, 2005; Tebbel, 2000; Wolf, 1991).

Psychoanalytic approaches

Before discussing the use of psychoanalytic approaches in this thesis, it should be pointed out that their application in the text analysis chapters does raise one concern – psychoanalysis without a psychoanalytic subject or analysand technically is not psychoanalysis (Parker, 2010). The use of these approaches in this thesis then, is a purely

theoretical application of psychoanalytic theories, and pre-emptively recognised as a somewhat compromised approach.

This aside however, and as seen in the previous chapter, psychoanalytic approaches have also been influential in building the methodology of this thesis. Significantly, they address an 'internal' personhood which post-structuralist and performative approaches to subjectivity do not take interest in, asking not just how but why certain subject positions are taken up, and about the investment and desires at stake in this process. In doing so, psychoanalytic approaches avoid the 'risk' of constructing a subject as an empty summation of a constantly shifting range of subject positions, leaving the door open for the possibility of agency and choice, even if such possibilities may be limited (however see Gavey, 2002). For this reason, influential works like Henriques et al., (1998) and in particular Hollway (1989) recommend the combined use of psychoanalytic and post-structuralist methodological standpoints in psychology. In relation to the current research, a framework which is able to consider desire was seen as having potential utility in approaching questions about *body love* as gendered self-investment (see also Grosz, 1990; 1994; Lazar, 2011; Orange, 1996).

Also important to this thesis was the way in which psychoanalysis is able to provide a theory by which a 'person' and their experiences correspond with the material and discursive world (Grosz, 1990; Lacan, 1998; Parker, 2005). In this regard, psychoanalytic and post-structuralist approaches can to a degree be used compatibly (as addressed in Chapter 2). One example of these approaches working together can be seen in Chapter 6 of this thesis, where complementary theories about the visual signification of love are synthesized to explain how the body is produced as 'other' and 'love' is constructed as a commodity practice.

Key concepts

Subjectivities

The way people / identities are theorised in this thesis represents a significant departure from mainstream psychological approaches to “the individual” (Hollway, 1991; Marecek, 2002). However, it is also the concept of ‘subjectivity’ which maintains my research within the general topic of ‘psychology’, by retaining an interest in the ‘processes and dynamics’ which constitute an idea of subjective experience, and in turn, some kind of ‘self’ (Henriques et al., 1998). In the broadest sense, ‘subjectivities’ differ from the singular, stable and unchanging identities of mainstream psychological research in three key ways: i) that any one person might be comprehensible through multiple subjectivities and no single ‘subjectivity’ will be constitutive of the ‘whole story’ of a person at any given moment; ii) that these multiple subjectivities are fluid and changing – a person is not fixed within any one given (or any predictable constellation of given) identity across time; iii) subjectivities are seen to be contingent on context, time and place – rather than essentialising an on-going or underlying nature of the person they describe (Gavey, 2002). Taken together, these three differences allow for a multi-faceted approach to identity, one that does not always demand cohesion or consistency but rather is “dynamic and multiple” (Henriques et al., 1998). In this sense, subjectivity is at heart a post-modern conceptualisation of identity.

Perhaps fittingly, there are multiple and diverging theories around the detail of the concept of ‘subjectivity’ itself. In this thesis, the accent is largely informed by discursive approaches which emphasize the socio-contextual production of personhood and the use of language and representation as symbolically relevant practices. This method of approaching subjectivity fits well with the ways in which popular media (re)present post-feminist, neo-liberal and post-modern, multiple identities to the young women in their target market (Gill, 2008b; Lazar, 2011; see Chapters 1&2). It also informs the approach taken later on in this thesis in the analyses of the magazine employee interviews – allowing for contradiction, conflict and multiplicity in discussions of how the interviewees’ relationship with the *love your body* messages encompasses a number of social positions – as women, as employees of a brand, as of certain classes and identifications.

This thesis also takes an approach to subjectivities which emphasizes embodiment – as introduced by Chapter 2. Working against Cartesian conceptualisations of bodies as mere vehicles for the intentions of a separable mind (see Gergen, 1995), the idea of embodied subjectivities puts forward that in so far as bodies are crucial to experience and expressivity, bodies are key in the theorisation of how subjectivity is constituted (Bryant & Schofield, 2007). The role of the body in communicating identity is, within this theory, discursive, symbolic and performative – gender, for example, is produced not in a categorical way out of biological features, but constructed from an interpretation of (discursively intelligible) gendered practices enacted through and upon the body (Butler, 1990; Segal, 2008). This conceptualisation of subject and self was seen to be particularly relevant to the current study of media messages which hail their audience as gendered subjects (Kim & Ward, 2004; Winship, 1987) and media producers, who both produce messages for women and as women also take up their own gendered identities.

Accompanying this concept of subjectivity, post-structuralism also puts forward a theory of how people (as “individuals”) come to then know themselves within, engage with, perform, experience or be positioned as having particular kinds of subjectivities. Using the concept of ‘discourses’ as an analytical anchor (see below), post-structuralist methods of research seek to describe the cultural circulation of the ideas from which subjectivities are built. For a feminist analytical framework, the emphasis within this is placed upon feminine gendered subjectivities and what it might mean to uptake / be intelligible within these. For example and particularly, attention is paid to those situations which see the apparent “willing engagement” (Braun, 2005) of women with some of those cultural practices of producing self as subject of (especially body-related) discourses which have been described in previous research as so problematic.

Discourse

The data in this research are primarily analysed using discourse analysis, and just as statistical analysis is preceded in quantitative psychology by certain assumptions, preceding this selection of analytical method was an interest in theories about discourse – about meaning, language and power. For the purposes of this thesis, ‘discourses’ can be described

as repeated ideas or themes within the data and circulating within culture. They construct both a subject and object(s) and describe the relationship between the two or sometimes more explicitly, the usual action of the subject upon the object (Macleod, 2002; also Parker, 1992). Specifically, it is through the construction of subjectivity that psychologists (in particular, feminist and critical psychologists) have taken an interest in discourse, asking questions about how people come to understand and experience their world, other people, their relationships and themselves in the way that they do. In addition, discourses, as they are used in practice, work in tandem with other discourses to indicate a variety of meanings, implications and political inferences beyond what is literally apparent in text.

To use an example to illustrate, 'healthist' discourses are among those which have been identified in women's magazine articles about bodies (Hinnant, 2009; Newman, 2007; Roy, 2008; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 2001). These discourses describe how a person(subject), out of their own 'free choice' may engage in practices which have been inaugurated by some (usually medical) authority as 'healthy' or 'unhealthy', the outcome of all this being the production of a healthy or unhealthy body(object). Healthist discourses work under the assumption of the factuality of a range of other discourses, notably neo-liberal discourses of free will and responsibility, discourses about professional 'experts' who generate instructional truths, and Cartesian dualist discourses of a separated mind and body. In doing so, healthist discourses work to facilitate understandings of 'unhealthy' bodies as somehow immoral and by implication, to construct the subjects who inhabit these bodies as immoral people, obscuring any recognition of possibly restricted means to practice upon the body in socially endorsed ways (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Moreover, healthist discourses have clear political implications when considering the groups / classes of people which via this discourse, could be systematically disadvantaged or made abject because they are less likely to have the kinds of bodies which resemble those described by 'experts' as ideally healthy (e.g. Jutel, 2008; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008).

In practice though, texts are rarely if ever readable through one wholly 'present' discourse alone. Rather, parts of discourses may be pieced together to comprise any one given interpretation of a text, and with many potential interpretations possible of any one given text, the outcomes of textual discourse analysis are inevitably tentative, unstable, and

contingent. The overall 'story' told by this piecing together of discourses too may not necessarily need to be consistent or coherent. In fact, Machin and Thornborrow (2003) have noted that patterns of discourses which lend themselves to contradictory and conflicted readings could be seen to be a characteristic feature of post-modern magazine texts. Taken together, it could be said that perhaps the only predictable aspect of discourses is that they will variably collaborate *and* compete with each other in the production of meaning.

As for the potential subject constructed out of these discourses, the 'individual' then becomes a site of constant symbolic movement, tensions and conflicts (Foucault, 1979). When layered over with a critical post-structuralist approach to discourse, tensions and conflicts around subjectivities are seen to be made out of relations of power and are additionally investigated for their use and effects. In turn, for the feminist aspects of this methodology the gendered aspects of these power relations are of particular interest. Arguably, it is a theoretical and political framing (like the CFPS approach of this thesis) which provides discourse analysis with its direction and purpose (Parker, 1992).

Also of relevance to the current project are discursive theories about 'counter discourse', and what constitutes discursive 'resistance' (Foucault, 1984). For *body love* discourses which openly identify themselves as 'different' to what has gone before, understanding the mainstream magazine 'status quo' against which they construct this difference is pivotal to evaluating the 'change'. However perhaps equally important (at least within discursive theories) are magazine staff's intentions and expectations around the purpose of change. For example, Raby (2005) when writing about resistance discusses whether a statement of intention alone is sufficient enough to constitute discursive resistance. Correspondingly, Butler (1997) puts forward that the risk involved in a speech / linguistic act of deviation from hegemonic discourses even when unaccompanied by further practice should make it enough to constitute an act of 'resistance'. From both these perspectives, the focus on the rationale behind the production of *body love* messages within my thesis responds to these points – namely, are intentions around change enough (Lynch, 2011; Milkie, 2002)? How are these intentions translated by magazine employees into their discussion of industry practices and media content?

Authors, (producers).

“Discourses, located as they are in social institutions and processes are continually competing with each other for the allegiance of individual agents. The political interests and social implications of any discourse will not be realised without the agency of individuals who are subjectively motivated to reproduce or transform social practices and the social power which underpins them” (Weedon, 1987, p.97).

Theoretically, the location of discursive meanings is found not within a text or representation, rather, only in the interpretation of that text. In principle, it is this feature of the discursive approach which allows for multiple interpretations of a text, arguably, as many possible interpretations as there are potential readers of that text (Locke, 2004). A purist approach to discourse theory therefore would argue that “intentionality is irrelevant in establishing [how] discourses or other acts may be interpreted” (Van Dijk, 1993, p.262). Barthes (1969) went as far as to claim that the ‘author is dead’ once a text is produced, as they are no longer able to direct its meaning. In other words, while the contextual and linguistic production of discourses may be of interest to discourse analysis, strictly, a creative role for the producer in production is not. Foucault in his essay about ‘authorship’ even takes this one step further, suggesting that any notion of the author as a subject itself is a complex function of discourse and authorship should be analysed as a projection created in order to interpret certain texts (1979b).

In the text study of this thesis, the notion of “Cleo” or “Cosmopolitan” magazine being the identifiable source of a textual extract in many ways is the ideal example of Foucault’s point above (1979b). The magazine’s title as used in place of an author projects perhaps more meaning than the ‘actual’ author’s name of the piece alone would. The function of the magazine-as-author situates the articles studied within Cleo / Cosmopolitan ideology (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; 2006; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005), holding implications for the status and reception of the text in the same way that “Shakespeare” as the author of a play would function to inflect the possible readings of that text. However, the other function of the magazine title being the identifiable named ‘author’ of magazine content is that this maintains magazines as an artefact of ‘low’ culture (i.e. in comparison to ‘high’ culture in which (male) works are notable because of their authorship, e.g. a “Dickens”

novel or a “Da Vinci” painting; Hermes, 1995; Winship, 1987). From a feminist point of view, seeking out identifiable women who ‘author’ magazine text as is done in the ‘producer’ study of this thesis, in itself could be seen as an act of resistance against author-obstruction as a means of devaluing of women’s culture.

The producer interview research undertaken in this thesis then can be seen as a departure from post-structuralist theory with regards to authorship and thus warrants some further explanation. Continuing on for a moment with Foucault’s writing about the function of authorship (1979b), he points out that initially, early state regulations around declaring authorship were less about issues of intellectual property or plagiarism and more about accountability of the author for the content of what she or he had said. In some ways, a modified version of this historical function is present within the logic behind taking an interest in authors in this thesis: if it is known how magazine texts about bodies are produced, then hypothetically, it is also possible to discuss change and the invested political interests of those involved in these productions. From this perspective, magazine contributors belong to a symbolic elite (Van Dijk, 1993), with a symbolic power to “regulate what counts as truth [and so] are able to maintain their access to material advantages and power” (Gavey, 1989, p.462; Gough-Yates, 2003; also see the extract from Weedon at the opening to this section, 1987). From another perspective however, Weedon’s theorisation of the individual who is “subjectively motivated to reproduce or transform social practice” is complicated by the possibility that as women with bodies, the magazine staff have a potential stake in both the “political interests” and the “social implications” of the content and discourses they (re)produce (1987, p.97). Following from this, how interviewees negotiated this dual positioning and to what outcomes are of key interest to the current research.

Audiences, (readers).

This thesis takes its rationale from an understanding of media as purposed by consumption. In other words, without an assumption of circulation and of magazines having readers who engage with their texts, the orientation to what is ‘offered’ by magazine discourse in this thesis would probably be meaningless. Two slightly different interpretations of ‘readers’ are

taken up throughout this thesis. The first, primarily informing the text analysis, places the accent upon what kinds of discourses are made available to potential young women readers in terms of discursively making sense of self and body. Here, the goal is to look for both opportunities of engagement and resistance; taking an interest in dominant and possibly alternative readings constructed around an idea of the possible reader in mind. The second interpretation, found throughout the interview study, in some ways mirrors the approach to 'authors' found in the text study (discussed above). This approach understands the reader as a construction, a space of 'projection' for the magazine employee participants when they speak about the production of magazine content with audience in mind (McRobbie, 1996).

The decision to leave aside a possible reader study in my research was not taken lightly, being made primarily for reasons of scope and space, favouring instead the producer study for the reasons outlined so far. Conceptualising young women's relationship with magazines as not just about a circular influence of culture and texts, but a complex, interactive process was seen to be incompatible with a space-limited inclusion which would necessarily mean that detail would need to be left aside. So while the current thesis places emphasis on production, my contention is that future research about young women reader's reception and responses to positive body content in the media, and especially, how they make sense of the entangled messages and contextual information (Press, 2011), would be a useful and welcome undertaking.

One effect of setting the focus of this thesis to production (of possible meanings from text, and as described by 'producers'), is that it has allowed legitimate space in this thesis to also consider the production of readers – the 'target market' as an artefact of the text, so to speak. In fact, some media studies academics have suggested that the production of readers as a function of magazines is really the whole point of media itself – not to create entertainment, not to print words on paper, nor anything else but the creation of audiences (Meehan & Riordan, 2002). For example, Chapter 9 (about the construction of a 'good magazine'), provides an illustration of this point in how the reader is moved around and described in a variety of ways, all of which serve a purpose of endorsing the content and practices of the magazine.

Research development and considerations

A note on reflexivity / approach

My personal position in undertaking this research is strongly informed by my own self and experience, as any research project necessarily is. While providing an exhaustive ‘narrative of my participation’ (see Foss & Foss, 1994) would be excessive, I would like to map out here my standpoint as researcher, in relation to some of the personal and institutional positions I come to this work with (Finlay, 2002; Parker, 2010). Aside from my interest in bodies (detailed in the preface to this thesis), I came to this thesis having initially been interested in clinically defined psychological body ‘pathologies’; alongside my research I am also undertaking training within a clinical psychology program. Although I have always taken issue against strictly biological or internal-cognitive theorisations of body and ‘body image’ (see Blood, 2005), increasingly, I find my two areas of study difficult to reconcile. While my critical departure from mainstream psychology may be more available to readers in this thesis, the on-going negotiation I attempt between the two in my clinical studies is also an unseen product of my research.

Although I would not see myself as a committed magazine reader, from the outset of my research I had strong expectations about the kind of content which would appear within these publications – probably gathered in the in-betweens of visits to the dentist, supermarket checkouts, and my knowledge of the clinical literature about glossy magazines “making” women “feel worse” about their bodies. Despite this, I was not quite prepared for my own realisation that I was, by virtue of age, gender, ethnicity and so forth, ideal of the target market of these magazines. In terms of my thoughts about and approach to this project, this had a number of implications. For example, the text analysis of this thesis focuses on ‘address’ and what is ‘*offered*’ to young women readers; aside from questions around ‘misrepresentation’, it does not address erasure or obscurity in any great depth. I do not see this as a weakness of my argument – in fact I would contend it is just as important to talk about hegemonic conceptualisations of femininity as well as marginalisations (Redmond, 2003) – but it is a limitation of the thesis that I present, and one produced in part, out of my own subjective expertise. Equally, my interchanges around

‘post-feminism’ as context or discourse throughout this thesis are made with little experiential knowledge about what came ‘before’ [sic] the –‘post’. Just like the target market readers and many of the employees of young women’s magazines today, I acknowledge that my ability to undertake the work that I do (or even enrol at a university) is thanks to generations before my own (Wilkinson, 1988). On the other side of the ‘post-feminist’ coin, the challenges I make in this thesis against post-feminism are too a challenge of the entire span of the socio-cultural-historical moment I know.

Last, the *process* of my research also has been a product of and subject to my own “disciplined self-reflection” throughout (Wilkinson, 1988, p.493). Perhaps the clearest example of this was in the interviews with magazine employees. Starting even with recruitment, I was expectant of extreme difficulty in convincing potential interviewees to meet with me, both from the perspective of their limited time and possible scepticism of the interview topic (see Chapter 8). Although my expectation of difficulty was informed (by accounts in e.g. Gough-Yates, 2003; Stephens, 2007), it was also confirmed, and possibly in hindsight perhaps even partially self-fulfilled. On the other hand, it may well have been these expectations which, in leading me to handle potential participants with care, were the reason I was able to recruit any participants at all. My cautious approach to recruitment and interviewing could furthermore be read as facilitated by a gendered accent on research methodology – to use Willott’s words, “as a researcher, I was careful to nurture relationships, to avoid stepping over invisible lines in which these relationships might be jeopardised” (p. 183, 1998) (my intention in pointing out this gendered care of participants is not to outright delegitimize such approaches, but rather only to facilitate my discussion around the effects of this pattern in my own research).

I see this overriding ‘good’ intention to not ‘rock the boat’ with my participants above all else written throughout all my attempts at analysis of the interview data – which started with strongly content-based thematic work, and refusal to work outside of a very singular and literal interpretation of what had been said. It was a very uncomfortable moment to come to, to move from thinking about ‘talk about readers’ and ‘talk about images’ to considering this talk as discursively constitutive of the objects about which the interviewees spoke (see Foucault, 1969) – a difficulty I had not experienced in my text analyses. This

discomfort around my analysis work only increased in coming to the point that, figuratively, these varied constructions of readers and texts continually appeared to be supporting a discursive co-construction of a fundamentally 'good magazine'. Although I stand by the process of my final analysis, Chapter 9 about the 'good magazine' could also be read as the ironic outcome of my approach to these interviews. At the very least, the self-conscious and theoretical way in which I attempt to maintain that chapter within an analytic deconstruction of the meanings of 'the good magazine', and avoid personal criticism of interviewees is evidently the product of a negotiated subjective approach to the interviews as text¹.

Ethical Issues

The method of the interviews discussed in this thesis was approved by Victoria University's School of Psychology Human Ethics committee. As well as including features considered to be generally good practice in participant interviews such as 'informed consent' (as per American Psychological Association, 2002; New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002), some issues specific to these particular interviews were also raised. For example, careful consideration around the potential confidentiality issues of interviewing highly identifiable research participants from a very select group of people was resolved in strategies such as a clear written set of guidelines around which information was to be removed from interview transcripts as they were produced (see Chapter 8, which also provides some of the rationale around this).

In addition to considering the two psychological societies' ethical guidelines for undertaking work with participants, the epistemological framework of this thesis also had ethical implications for how the research process as a whole was undertaken (Waller, 1997). The effects of this are evident in a number of locations throughout this thesis. For example, starting right from the selection of a research topic and guided by the suggestions of my pre-research 'stakeholder' interviews², the intention of this project was to take a slightly different approach to bodies than some past research, by placing the emphasis on positive messages about embodiment, rather than difficult ones. Although much of my analysis of these *love your body* messages is still based in critique, through taking this positive

approach my intentions were that my criticisms could be framed as constructive rather than condemning, and I was able to consider possible discursive and institutional constraints in accounting for these criticisms (also, see my earlier discussion about ‘critical research’).

Other examples of theoretically driven ethical issues arose when formulating a conceptualisation of readers who I did not interview, and in interacting with producer-participants of whom mainstream psychology has made significant criticisms (see sections above about ‘authors’ and ‘audiences’). In the case of the former, I saw it as important to move away from mainstream psychological and atheoretical conceptualisations of ‘media influence’, rather working somewhere in-between post-structuralist theories of power and feminist allowances for ‘agency’ (Bartky, 1990; Gill, 2007a, 2012, McNay 1992). In the case of the latter, my intention has been to move beyond simplistic ‘media blaming’-type approaches (one of the inevitable counterparts to the ‘media influence’ theory), to be able to contribute to a discussion of how media is produced, and to maintain an open curiosity about what these modes of production might mean for young women readers.

Research questions and analytical method

With all of the above in mind, the research studies presented in this thesis were motivated by the following questions:

1. How are reproductions of the *love your body* message discursively constructed in young women’s magazines? What meanings of women’s bodies are brought into being by these discourses?
2. What subjectivities are made available to (hypothetical) readers by magazine *love your body* discourses and what are some of the possible implications of these for young women?
3. What do post-feminist messages in magazines constrain and enable in the context of current feminist debates about post-feminism?
4. How do magazine professionals position themselves in relation to:
 - 1). Their readership (i.e. young adult women)
 - 2). Knowledge and ideas about bodies

3). The range of discourses / subjectivities (re)produced and readable in their magazine?

Cumulatively, the intention behind these questions is to open an investigation of media *body love* messages as complex media phenomena, deeply entrenched in multiple discourses which appeal to psychology and society's most basic social understandings about women, about constructions of bodies, about personhood and power. This research seeks to approach these questions with recognition of a context of influential cultural commentaries about the neo-liberalist moral value of health, wellbeing and individual achievement and a close consideration of the socio-historical environment in which they occur (Lumby, 2011). It targets young women's magazines specifically in order to explore questions relating to the role of feminist and post-feminist messages (McRobbie, 2009); the two magazine titles which appear in the text study were specifically chosen as the women in their target age range were born in the late 1980s and 1990s – historically, “post”-feminism's first two major movements. Finally and as discussed throughout this methodology, my research places an emphasis on the production of media discourses, and the institutions, agents and technologies this process involves.

On the whole, the data collected in the research process of this thesis was primarily analysed using critical (feminist post-structuralist) discourse analysis (CFDA); with thematic analysis used in both 'studies' as a precursor to organise the process and presentation of the discursive work (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the details of my analytical approach are provided in the method sections accompanying each study, CFDA was selected as an appropriate method for a number of reasons, beginning with its compatibility with the approaches outlined in this methodology. In this, CFDA is a comparative method, encouraging exploration followed by politically guided evaluation. It takes a social constructionist approach to power, an interest in experience, language and signification, and is familiar in that it has been well applied across the feminist research spectrum. CFDA is also equally suitable for talk and written texts, as well as being a viable approach for images (Gavey, 1989; Lazar, 2007; Weedon, 1987), enabling a consistent but flexible multimodal approach across the two 'studies' presented in my thesis.

This chapter has overviewed the perspectives of some of the key theories and theorists which have guided the formulation of this research. Building upon the culture / context of *body love* messages discussed in Chapter 1 and the selected theoretical approach to bodies outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter has expanded upon the epistemological framework which has guided these understandings, and foregrounds the method through which they produce the analysis. The following chapter outlines the specifics of this method as applied in the text analysis component of my research.

Chapter 4:

Introduction to the Magazine Text Analysis Study

The next section of my thesis describes the magazine textual analysis component of my research project. Over the following four chapters (4-7), I present an investigation into the content of magazine *body love* messages, with a particular view towards their discursive constitution. The text analysis study was designed to directly respond to my first two research questions about i) discursive constructions of bodies and *body love*, and ii) the subjectivities made available, or limited from, young women readers through such texts (these questions appear in full towards the end of Chapter 3). The analytical work also provides the foundation from which Question 3, about the implications of post-feminist messages about bodies for feminist practice, is evaluated towards the end of this thesis (Chapter 11). Through its investigation of magazine content, the text study also can be located within a relatively longstanding tradition of magazine text study research in feminist media studies, and a broader practice of theoretically motivated critique of mainstream media as a key location of powerfully maintained, hegemonic cultural discourses.

This initial short chapter describes the details of the method applied in the text analysis study. It provides details of the data selection process, the initial thematic analysis undertaken of the data, and the method of the discourse analytical work which informs the following three chapters. The intention of this chapter is to provide enough information that the reader of this thesis could trace the processes which produce the outcomes of the work I present, and as a basis of information should this be required for future similar studies. The three chapters which then follow each take up specific features or themes identified through the analysis process.

Data corpus and data set creation

The process by which the textual data was selected for analysis is visually represented in Appendix A, which also shows the decision making process about which magazines to use as data sources. Initially, all *Cosmopolitan* (Austr) or *Cleo* (NZ) magazine issues dated between October 2008-July 2009, plus any issues of either publication which were available second-

hand dated between 2004-2008 were selected (48 issues in total). These magazines were read over and any content which either (a) encouraged love / acceptance / harmony / care for the body or (b) discouraged major body modification / unacceptance of the body, as central or significant concerns were selected – being inclusive in any ambiguous cases. The 301 identified articles were then read in more detail, taking inventory in each issue of article titles, page numbers, number of articles identified per issue and which articles appeared in either the “Cosmo Body Love” or “Cleo Body” sections within the magazines. Appendix B displays the number of identified articles per issue and examples of article titles for each. Although no statistical analysis was conducted using these numbers (which would be inappropriate if only for their selective method of sampling), the number of identified articles appears to be comparatively higher in recent years.

From this, a data set for the thematic and discursive analyses were selected, first by limiting the date range to the 10 consecutive issues of each magazine dated October 2008 - July 2009, and two Cosmopolitan magazines (May 07 and May 06) labelled as the “body love issue” and the “your amazing body issue”. Each of these remaining articles was read over again and notes were made about the central topic(s) of each piece. Articles which appeared in the “Cosmo Body Love” or “Cleo Body” sections of the magazine and any articles for which the primary focus was advice about diet, exercise etc and / or did not include a general message about body acceptance or “loving your body” were excluded from the data set. The remaining 72 items were then read in detail again, and cut down one final time to 40 articles which best exemplified the (a) and (b) criteria for original data corpus selection. These articles formed the core data set for thematic and discourse analysis.

Thematic Analysis

For the most part, the initial analysis was guided by the recommendations made for the undertaking of thematic analyses, set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). The 40 chosen data items were re-read twice more (after the initial readings from the data set selection) and the second time through brief notes were made of the topic(s) seen as central in each

paragraph of the text (e.g. 'body confidence is important to well-being'), and describing the main topic(s) of the article (e.g. 'against labiaplasty'). These topics were collated into groups containing similar ideas, which formed the initial codes of the thematic analysis (e.g. 'embracing what you have'; 'use of products and fashion'). At this point the written text of the data was digitised for ease of use, followed by several rounds of re-reading, coding and refining of codes by grouping these together, or the splitting up of codes across new code groups (e.g., 'normalisation of body difficulty' was incorporated into a code of 'un-loveable bodies'; text identified as being about 'natural bodies' was split and joined by other material in three new codes of 'un-loveable bodies', 'embracing what you have', and 'improving bodies').

Thematic Analysis outcomes

At the end of this process, a number of themes and sub-themes were identified which between them described the majority of the data and were of strong theoretical interest in their content and connotations. The two main sections of Chapter 6 (the difficult to love body; love as a practice), map closely onto the two most consistent overarching themes from the thematic analysis, and contain a number of identified sub-themes. However, despite all reasonable attempts to follow what would be considered best practice of thematic research with the flexibility, attention to detail, thoroughness and attentiveness required of this method, it should be noted that within the final thematic map the degree of overlap between the themes and the heterogeneity within the themes was still evident and notable. This was despite significant work going backwards and forwards between data and analysis, a number of complete new starts, and within these a frequent reworking of previous steps to see if anything could have been approached differently.

Given that the thematic work was primarily undertaken as a precursor to the later discourse analysis, a lack of reasonable cohesion in the themes identified does not mean the end of the analysis – my goals in undertaking this work were more than just a neatly laid out thematic map, and degrees of overlap and inconsistency are expected within thematic analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, while trying to make sense of my

difficulties in trying to produce some structured organisation out of the data, a number of other reasons which may contribute to explaining my thematic difficulties became apparent. In turn, these 'reasons' constitute important structural features of the data set, and so are worth overviewing here for what they can contribute to an overall understanding of the nature of the magazine data.

For example, a degree of heterogeneity in analysis was perhaps to be expected, given that magazine content is itself heterogeneous. To clarify – the data consisted of both image and text, of advertisements, advertorial and editorial (article) content, appearing across different sections of the magazines (although, it is not unreasonable to assume that even content which appeared entirely editorial would probably in some way be influenced by the demands of paying advertisers; Tebbel 2000). In addition, the *body love* message (meeting the above (a) and (b) criteria) was identifiable across articles of a number of different topics, for example in pieces educating about developing internet technologies or in relationship advice articles, as well as in 'standard' body related exercise or diet pieces. What these multiple locations of the data selected perhaps suggests is that the *love your body* message is being communicated to magazine readers across a number of different fronts. It also could suggest that where *body love* content pieces are directly in conflict with each other (for example, articles which are against dieting and articles promoting dieting as a method of body-love appearing in the same issue), that these conflicts could translate to or from conflicts in the subjectivities offered to the young women who read these texts. Somehow, embodied subjectivities in these texts seem to be able to be constituted from so many juxtaposed yet inseparable things and able to justify being so within a self-evident system of assumed knowledges – no wonder then, I found it challenging to summarise *body love* content.

Despite the cohesion difficulties outlined above, four quite broadly defined themes were identified as possible targets for further investigation following the thematic analysis work. The first of these, the *visible body*, comprised of text which emphasised the visual role of the female body, putting appearance before function, and bodies which could be understood as loveable or loved for what they looked like. The second theme, the *difficult to love body*, overwhelmingly dominated my data set coding, incorporating discussion about

the kinds of bodies which ‘women’ find difficult to love, within a constant assumption that most women will find it difficult to feel good about their bodies. The *worked on body* was the third theme, which consisted of discussions about practices of producing bodies which women could enjoy and be proud of, and these productions in and of themselves as actions which showed love for the body. In conjunction with the *difficult to love body* theme, content within this third theme often was seen to draw solid conclusions about which kinds of bodies ‘need’ and do not ‘need’ work, and to produce knowledge about what kinds of work are appropriate for what kinds of needs. The *powerful body* as the fourth and final theme identified in the thematic analysis, comprised of text which showcased women who are (by degree) confident in their bodies. It also consisted of discussions about qualities (like ‘inside beauty’, see Extract 3 in Chapter 4) which, in being more important than bodies, somehow in turn serve to make the visual features of bodies more loveable. Further work within this theme identified strong undertones about the gendered and heterosexualised location of this ‘power’ – Chapter 7 about the ‘male observer’s’ role in *body love* messages contains much of the final work ventured around this theme (see also, Machin & Thornborrow, 2006).

Discourse Analysis

What soon became apparent throughout the analytical process, was how crucially important, for this study and the *body love* research topic in particular, cultural events and context are. The *love your body* message, within magazines, within the broader media, and as an object of cultural commentary was and is evolving constantly, as are many of the interests of critical research in general. After having worked within a very tightly defined data set for the thematic analysis (and still encountering problems of heterogeneity in spite of this), the decision was made to work within this same thematic data set as a starting point for discourse analysis, but then to supplement this data as and where appropriate with other emergent examples and commentaries from other media sources. For example, in the first text analysis chapter (5) throughout the discussion of the repetitive ‘body love images’, examples are given where this image appears in the magazine data set, but also in advertising campaigns and on television. While in Chapter 7 the data extracts are all taken

from within the central data set, the way in which this chapter was conceptualised could not have been realised without constant reference and checking against items external to the original set. Both reasonable and ‘allowable’, even desirable within this type of data analysis (Parker 1992), this expansion I believe has extended what was possible of the analysis, allowed for clearer explanations, and supports the idea that *body love* rhetoric is not just limited to magazines.

The premises and principles upon which the process of discourse analysis undertaken in this thesis was based have already been addressed in Chapter 3, guided primarily by a combination of the recommendations and procedures suggested in Gavey, 1989; Lazar, 2007; Locke, 2004; Macleod, 2002; Parker, 1992; Van Dijk, 1993; and Weedon, 1987. In particular, the following three analysis chapters have taken close interest in the ways that *body love* and related discourses construct ‘women’ and their ‘bodies’ (in addition in Chapter 7, also the construction of the ‘male observer’). Using the thematic analysis as a way to organise the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a combination of coding, note-taking and comparative reading strategies were used to build the analytic conclusions drawn in this work, and the analysis offered alongside each extract in the following chapters is presented to illustrate thematic features and discursive practices identified within the data through this process.

The first analysis chapter (5) opens this analysis work by outlining two distinctive features of the magazine’s construction of *body love*. In communicating more positive messages about bodies, *body love* messages employ heavily dualistic discourses which separate the woman from her (visible) body, and use visually repetitive images to communicate their point. Chapter 6 follows this with more detail about how *body love* functions as a discourse, taking the description of the relationships between the woman and her body as a focal point. This chapter too is divided into two halves, addressing respectively the textual construction of a body which is difficult to love, followed by a description of practices which do or do not constitute *body love*. The final chapter of the magazine text study (7) presents an analysis of extracts thematically coded as containing reference to a constructed male observer often featured within *body love* content. Following this, my thesis moves onward to the second,

interview study to focus more on questions about the production of *love your body* messages.

Chapter 5:

Bodies-as-images and Bodies-in-images

There are two markedly distinct features to the ‘new’ *love your body* rhetoric. First, the heavily dualistic nature of the persistent imperatives directed at the reader —, to “love *your* body”, and variations of this, such as “*you’ve* got a gorgeous body, now *own* it!” (Cosmopolitan, July 2007, emphasis added). Second, the highly repetitive nature of the undressed and typically unretouched images which accompany these calls to action. It is these imperatives and images which are first encountered by magazine readers interpellated by the text (Althusser, 1971) and which could be seen as some of the most basic features of the magazine’s communication of new ‘body love’ messages. This chapter addresses each of these features in turn, and significantly, how each of the two work together to emphasize and rationalise the other.

Dualistic discourses in magazine ‘love your body’ messages

If nothing else, the concept of ‘loving your body’ is inherently dualistic: it assumes an essentially separated body from the ‘your’ who is called upon to love it. Expanding upon this idea, the dualism contained in the *love your body* imperative can be seen as a specific discursive production: in essence, *body love* messages describe a simultaneously prescriptive, constitutive, idealistic and hegemonic relationship between the woman and her body and, in doing so, constructs ‘woman’ and ‘her body’ in particular ways. Approaching the written magazine text from this perspective engages with the issue of ‘subjectivities on offer’ to women, and allows for a detailed interrogation of the purpose and effects of how the dualisms in the discourses around *body love* messages are put to work.

As discussed in Chapter 2, dualistic discourses inspire multiple signified meanings, and because of this have hallmark kinds of implications. To recap, dualistic discourses describe (/create) not only oppositions and segregations (e.g. man vs. woman; rationality vs. emotionality), but hierarchies (e.g. man above woman; rationality before emotionality;

Gergen, 1995; Shildrick, 1997). These hierarchies themselves then tend to work together to compose clustered meanings beyond the constructions of the original dichotomy alone, (e.g. man as a positively rational, thinking being; woman as problematically beholden to her emotions). The dualistic discourses which frame magazine *love your body* messages will also have their own specific effects. In the first part of this chapter, I reference and evidence a small selection of the more explicit examples of dualistic binaries from the analytic texts, discussing how the ways in which these dualisms are framed suggest certain things about the constructed 'woman' and her 'body' which run throughout the *body love* message.

In addition to this, the "you" or "your" term of address can also be read as asserting one half of another *body love* dualism – that of the *individual* who owns / inhabits the body as a separate entity from the *culture* in which they are situated. To parallel Henriques' (1984) work on prejudice, when the focus is placed on the individual and their attitudes, the social is effectively silenced: there are limited opportunity for the direct questioning of power differentials, or the way in which the individualisation of body difficulties can mask a broader system of the administration and regulation of women's bodies (or in Henriques' case, race). It also limits the possibility of political mobilisation of a group with combined and similar interests and as such *body love* is a post-feminist and neo-liberal message about the individual (woman)'s isolated responsibility for herself (Lazar, 2009). The logic of this dualistic *body love* discourse is that the problem remains solely between an individual who perhaps coincidentally happens to be a woman, and her body. Of course, this is not to gloss over the attempts in various places throughout the magazines to challenge or change problematic cultural messages which reference women's bodies. For example, there are articles which do question an absolute necessity of large breasts or looking eternally youthful, although these messages themselves are often presented within significant contradictions. But contained in these magazine excerpts the challenge to readers is virtually always for her, as an *individual*, to look at her own body attitudes as her own, rather than conceptualising bodies as culturally experienced with specific cultural effects (Lynch, 2011).

Women against their bodies; bodies being images.

The first extract below is similar in style to a number of the other articles in the data corpus in that it takes up the task of defining what is not *body love* and identifies a problem of those who participate in such practices, as opposed to problematizing the actual practices themselves or the conditions under which they occur. This extract appears in the article “7 Secrets the Weightloss Industry Will Never Tell You” (Cleo, December 2008, p.148).

Summarised from a book of the same name, the article discourages extreme methods of weight loss; this specific paragraph comes from a section called “Synthetic Food Is Not the Answer”.

Extract 1

Your body is designed to eat real food and not synthetics. Your body accepts this change to a degree, but as soon as you stop your programme of synthetics it responds by craving lots of real food, so you gradually begin eating more of the things you shouldn't. The body's also decided it was deprived and that, as a defence/survival response, it needs to store as much of the food as possible as fat. You and your body are at war.

In describing consumption of synthetic foods as something which could degrade a woman's relationship with her body into outright war, this extract assumes that the woman and the body are separate entities and, further, separate entities with different agendas. The craving, deprived body which mounts its defensive response is reminiscent in some ways of Susan Bordo's metaphor of the “Heavy Bear” (2003), which associates the body with animalistic needs, irrationally demanding fulfilment against the thought-through decisions and moderation of the ‘mind’ (see also Malson's analysis of women's bodies as associated with their flesh or their fat, as biological and illogical, requiring containment and management, 1997). But the body of this extract also significantly differs from that needy animalistic figure: in this piece it is *not* the body at fault for being a stumbling, bumbling and demanding brute. Here instead, it is the woman who, despite the conceding degree of ‘acceptance’ from the body, and in the face of the body's response for survival, has been feeding her body in an irresponsible way (Chrisler, 2008). Rather than it being the body which is associated with irrationality, here, by virtue of its biological fact of being, the *body* signifies *rationality* (although, under conditions of war); the woman is the unwitting

terrorist, doing all kinds of things that she “shouldn’t”. Put into a context of the tenacity in Western culture of the woman/body/irrationality association (Ussher, 2006), the reversal and remaking of this classic dualism is significant.

The dualist discourse identified in Extract 1 is also a healthist discourse – it speaks about the woman (the subject) acting in an unhealthy way upon her body (the object) (Hinnant, 2009; Newman, 2007; Roy, 2008). The body which is produced is deprived and defensive – it stores food as fat because of this. There is no mention of the cultural values around ‘fat’ or bodies which are identifiable as having ‘fat’ in the body’s logic of biology. Instead, there is a direct association between the woman’s actions, and (visible) fact of the storage of fat on her body. Whether in these actions she was duped or deliberate, the fat which has accumulated upon her body is evidence of what she has done and the wrongdoing she has undertaken against her body – by extension, perhaps readers can also assume that bodies which are thought to be /constructed as ‘fat’, are the kind of bodies which belong to people who cannot manage them correctly (Jutel, 2005; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008; Tischner & Malson, 2008; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).

Implied within this ‘fault’ is the notion of agency: another binary of the individual (woman) as agent, and the body as passive. Despite the body being “at war” with the woman, it “accepts” the changes she makes, it “craves” but does not act, it ‘decides’ that it has been “deprived”, and simply “responds” (this being reminiscent of a discussion in my earlier ‘theories of bodies’ chapter, where psychiatric science merely allows the body a sexual ‘response’, rather than being invested itself with desires, agency, or action)(Kaplan, 1969; Masters & Johnson, 1966, also Basson, 2005). This passive language around the body works to reinforce the above description of the woman terrorising a submissive, defensive body with synthetic food to achieve her own ends and interests. It constructs appearance as wholly the woman’s responsibility and by implication, her success or failure in maintaining a (visually) acceptable body as her prerogative alone (c.f. Foucault, 1979; Bartky, 1990). Interestingly, this passive defensive body at the mercy of the agent woman stands in contrast to discourses which talk about the agency of the male body (or at least his genitalia) – that, especially in sexual contexts, has a mind and desires of its own, and acts of its own accord (Potts, 2001).

Evidence of the female body being constructed without agency is also apparent in the terms of address throughout the extract. The author speaks to ‘you’ – the woman – the one who needs to change her ways (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005). The body is the third term – ‘it’ – clearly, the ‘Other’. The invisible author (there is no ‘I’ here) communicates the facts about this voiceless ‘it’ with omniscient authority – these are not framed as opinions (Murphy & Jackson, 2010)¹. Furthermore, by stripping the “it” body-object of the possibility of voice or agency, this dualistic approach allows for the implication of ‘design’ (i.e. the body being “designed to eat real food”). Allowing the body to be natural and “designed” reinforces its apparent rationality and factuality, as discussed above. This conflation of truth with logics of nature and biology is symptomatic of a wider cultural effect of the currency of post-modernist ideology: at a time of increasing instability of ‘truth’ and ‘facts’, ‘nature’ is still able to provide the illusion of some certainty and constancy in the void left behind (Burr, 1998; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2001).

There are other features of the central woman / body dualism which further add to this argument. The discussion of Extract 2 below considers further how the binary of ‘woman’ and ‘body’ are defined within the *body love* messages of magazines. This extract came from an article called “Bodysnarking – are you guilty?” (Cleo, June 2009, p.49) - a heading which immediately suggests the woman is potentially at fault before the article is even read. In her commentary, the author warns women that the ways in which they talk about their own and others’ bodies can be hurtful. This extract comes towards the end of the article, suggesting solutions to the problem:

Extract 2

Staying active and reminding yourself every morning what you like most about your looks will help you make friends with your body. “I tell my clients to stop thinking of themselves in terms of their appearance”, says Durrant. “Our identity isn’t wrapped up in our body; it’s just a vessel for our personality”.

The dualism most clear here is in the notion that “our identity isn’t wrapped up in our body”, implying that therefore, the body must be (about / for) something else. Looking at the text more closely, there are a few suggestions of what this something else might be: “*just* a vessel for our personality”, and by deduction, the “terms of their appearance”.

These things that the body is, in turn, are counselled by ‘Durrant’ as not good to think about compared to the apparently more worthy features of personality and identity. Far from being embodied, identity here is not “wrapped up in” (or for that matter experienced via or performed on) (Bryant & Schofield, 2007) the body. The body presented in the extract is merely an empty exterior. This conceptualisation of the body is a regular pattern in the descriptions of the body identified throughout the data set – time and time again, the body is depicted in this emptied, surface-and-image way (e.g. see also Extract 4 in Chapter 6).

In Extract 2, encouraging readers to think of their bodies in terms of what they like about their “looks” is arguably a beneficial exercise for magazines. This is because magazines are only able to illustrate bodies as two dimensional images; using a print medium, the physicality, movement, dimensionality and personality of the body is only available for communication via (single frame) visual signification (Coleman, 2009). In a way, this visible body almost belongs in a romantic, fantasy discourse – one in which the scene is frozen and the day to day functionality of the body is not captured in the framing of its ideal existence (Wetherell, 1995). Moreover, if the body were indeed only what is visible about it, this would make it much easier for readers to identify their own bodies as like those depicted in the magazine. Given the heavy image-branding and the substantial financial investment of beauty and image industries in magazines (Tebbel, 2000; Wolf, 1991), bodies being images could be theoretically framed as a highly desirable commercial strategy for these publications. The concept of a body that is not self nor flesh but only what is seen in many ways also legitimates a range of practices upon the body to produce a desirable image – the dualism of woman / body seen in this extract allows for a woman to practice on or even against her body as an object alien to herself. Thinking of the body as not about identity or self, but rather just a uni-dimensional kind of container also paves the way for thinking that what is done to, on or via the body is inconsequential in relation to the building of those ‘more important’ things such as personality and identity (c.f. Featherstone, 2006; Frost, 2005). This in turn has value-laden implications around what (or who) the body could be for instead.

Also readable in this extract is a direct contradiction. First, the reader is called to appreciate aspects of their appearance and make ‘friends’ with their body (of course, ‘making friends’

with the body would again suggest a body that is separate from the self). But then the text goes on to say that bodies are basically unimportant, that readers should not think of them because they are “just a vessel” for things which are more worthy to think about i.e. personality, identity. Contradictory and confusing texts are characteristic of the magazine genre (Eggins & Iedema, 1997; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003), and theoretically what they point to is something assumed of interpretative repertoire of the target market, which allows the contradiction to make sense. Accordingly, the extract’s contradiction could be read in multiple ways. Perhaps the implication is that the reader and ‘author’ both know that while making “friends with your body” might be a desirable thing, it is also a difficult thing which is likely to end in disappointment – better to distance the body and focus on things like personality and identity *instead*, (the implied ‘instead’ being part of the dualistic discourse).

I introduce a third extract next as being a little different from the two above, in that the mind-body dualism in which it is framed is not so immediately apparent or straightforward. It appears in an article written with ‘Mother’s Day’ in mind and features young women, some of them celebrities, alongside their mothers answering questions about bodies – with the emphasis being on what the pair have learnt from each other about beauty, and positive ways of being women in relation to their bodies (Cosmopolitan, May 2009, p.110). From “My Beauty Inheritance”:

Extract 3

Ashleigh, what’s been your mum’s best advice about appearance?

Mum’s always told me I’m beautiful inside and out, but to remember that beauty is more than skin deep. Treating others with kindness and respect makes you a beautiful person.

While the construction of beauty in this extract seems to transverse both “inside and out”, the dualism in this extract subtly remains intact. Similar to Extract 2 above, the outside / body is the vessel in which the (more important) inside / person is contained (Bordo, 1993). Literally, the woman here becomes the cognitive “ghost in the machine” except this time the body is not so much a ‘machine’ (endowed with physicality and functionality), as more straightforwardly her “skin” and her appearance. Constructing women’s bodies in this

image as “appearance”, “skin deep” and in an a-physical way severely curtails the ways in which these bodies can be known (and women can know their bodies). In particular, indirectly leaving the functionality of women’s bodies un-captured in magazine discourse perhaps suggests that this functionality is unsuitable for cultural knowledge and discussion and that women’s bodies should only be knowable / visible as skin and appearance (Matthews Covering, 1995).

Also readable in this extract is a disjoint between question and answer: although asked directly about “appearance”, ‘Ashleigh’s’ reply instead talks about being “beautiful inside *and out*” (emphasis added), and “treating others with kindness and respect”. The assumption required in order to make sense of what happens in the in-between of this exchange is an association of the terms of an ‘appearance’ with ‘beauty’, and moreover, an importance of beauty to at least appearance (see Lynch, 2011). Somewhat convolutedly however, this ‘outside’ beauty is then quickly cast aside to emphasize beauty that is “*more than skin deep*” and more than what a body could be alone. This conflation of inside and outside beauty coheres with previous academic work about evidence of ‘inner beauty’ on the ‘outside’ body, identifiable by the experienced spectator (in this case, Ashleigh’s mother) (Blum, 2007).

In summary, the three extracts presented above introduce some of the ways a dualistic construction of the woman as separate from her body underpin the ‘new’ magazine *body love* texts. In setting out the terms of the divide between the two, the constructed woman (reader) exercises a problematic form of agency over and invested in her body. She also consists of a personality and identity without (or perhaps within, but certainly separate from) her body, having a depth and agenda beyond what her body alone could contain. Conversely, her body is a logical, responding and natural entity; crucially, her body is the agentless object over which she has ownership. At the same time, the constructed body of these texts is content-less – emptied out of substance and meaning, the body is simply a surface. Here, women’s bodies are “just” an appearance; to be seen but not self.

Visible bodies: Images which accompany 'body love' texts².

Of course, textual constructions of the body *as* a surface and image are not the only way in which bodies *appear* in magazine *body love* messages. The repetition of stripped down visual images of naked women's bodies which frequently accompany *body love* texts also literally make bodies visible, unclothed and unedited, communicating something specific about what it means to *love your body*. It is these images which take the focus of my analysis in the second half of this chapter. What these images of bodies convey about what exactly is loved and how *body love* can be expressed is intensified by the above conceptualisation of the body as 'just' appearance. In other words: if the body is just the visual, then the making visible of the body and what this act of visibility might symbolise is so much more significant a process. In this way, magazines create an interesting position for themselves as a cultural-textual site which communicates both understandings of the woman's body as an image, alongside (re)presentations in images of women's bodies.

To be specific, the images which accompany *body love* type messages in magazines overall are highly formulaic. Within these, there is a distinctive subset of images, virtually identical in composition to each other, and also to various well known images aimed at promoting positive body messages which have appeared across the media in the last five years. To describe the repeated subset of images I refer to here, a series of women appear either in matching underwear or entirely naked, as part of a body-focussed media / magazine campaign (one well known example is reproduced in Gill, 2006, p.89 and in numerous web locations, including: <http://www.dove.co.uk/campaign-for-real-beauty.html>). The women in the images clearly reference and represent a wider diversity in shapes, sizes, ages and skin tones than might be expected of mainstream media images. Arguably however, this diversity is limited: most of the women are white and relatively slender; older women or women with 'disabled' bodies, for example, are rarely included (Heiss, 2011). The women stand beside each other lined up, posing to show off their bodies or, if naked, posing in ways which cover their breasts or genitals. Somehow, it is communicated to the viewer that these images have not been digitally altered. Variations within this formula seem to be rare, although an occasional exception is that a celebrity woman might appear alone, unclothed to promote positive 'body image', or that the group of women might for example, appear

on individually separate pages across a magazine article. The following are examples that have been published over the last few years:

- *Cosmopolitan* Australia's "*Body Love*" section: in "Beautiful Women Bare All" in December 2009 (p. 198-204); in "The Bare Truth About Boobs, Bums and Love Handles" in May 2009 (p. 192-197), in "The Photoshop Test" in October 2008 (p. 246-247), in "The Reader Stripped Bare" in May 2008, and as the cover of the "*Body Love*" section in October 2008 (p.233) and May 2008.
- *Cleo* New Zealand magazine, for example in October 2009 as part of a promotional article with the "Eating Difficulties Education Network" for "Love Your Body Day" in New Zealand, and similarly for the magazine's "Body Honesty" campaign in September 2008 (p. 152).
- Celebrity feature pieces on the cover of *Madison* Magazine Australia November 2010, in *Glamour* Magazine America September 2009, and as the cover of *Marie Claire* Australia February 2010.
- Multiple international reproductions of the award winning "Dove" brand "Real Beauty" advertisement by Ogilvy and Mather, from 2006 onwards.

The collection of these images as 'data' is described in more detail in Chapter 4. While the "Dove" image is perhaps the most circulated example of these 'body love images', it is difficult to argue that all of the many variations have been deliberate replications of that image. Instead, it seems that there is something about the way media messages ask young women to love their bodies which drives the compulsive production of these unclothed images to signify *body love*. The remainder of this chapter is premised on a contention that exercises of the body stripped down and *made* visible clearly had some textual relevance to the *body love* media message, to the degree that images of (semi) naked women have become almost iconic of, or even representative in their own right, of a positive body media statement. The following paragraphs discuss three key features of the repeated 'body love images': the use of unclothed, 'unretouched' bodies; the appeal to discourses about the 'real' and 'natural'; and the representation of a sexualised, gendered body. In each case, a description and examples of each feature is presented, followed by a discussion of how each feature might encourage various conceptualisations of the body.

Unclothed and unretouched bodies

As mentioned earlier, the ‘body love images’ are on the whole, not photo-retouched. In magazines, this information is often communicated to the reader alongside some kind of statement by each imaged person about how difficult it has been to come to terms with their body. For example, in February 2010 Miss Universe of 2004 Jennifer Hawkins appeared on the cover of *Marie Claire Magazine Australia*, undressed and unretouched to promote positive body image on behalf of the Butterfly Foundation Australia with the title “The Naked Truth: Jennifer Bares All for Charity”. In the accompanying magazine article, Jennifer discussed some of the body difficulties she has had throughout her time modelling, and the writer acknowledges the potential ‘nightmare’ an unretouched image could be. The cover received news media attention internationally, including discussion of the unedited ‘flaws’ visible in the image, such as dimpling and uneven skin tone.

In common with this *Marie Claire* example, the double emphasis on the body being both unclothed and unretouched in the ‘body love images’ is often aligned with statements about ‘baring’ the ‘truth’ about the body. What this association perhaps suggests is that if being naked is associated with the ‘truth’, then the act of appearing naked or without digital alteration is like a confession of the self and so by extension ‘loving the body’ will require some extensive knowledge about what the body ‘really’ is (cf. Foucault, 1978). But also, the “Naked Truth” simultaneously conveys the idea that a particular kind of image of the body can tell the entire truth of that body, or that reality is wholly available via the image. Of course, this kind of ‘unaltered reality’ leaves out the long list of things which can be done to modify an image other than digital alteration (for example with lighting, specific posturing, make-up), and also that an image is just one captured moment of angle, time and space for a body – with much left out of the frame (Coleman, 2009).

The idea of what is visible and observable being associated with knowledge and truth is not a new idea. Behavioural theorists, for example, have required visual and/or observable evidence as their standard of truth at least since the work of B. F. Skinner, and Foucault’s (1979) writing about the Panopticon documents and interrogates the association of visibility with knowledge in Western culture (Jutel, 2005; Mirzoeff, 1998). However, where the ‘body

love images' differ from behavioural psychological 'evidence' and the Panopticon metaphor of social control, is that the latter two speak about the observation of behaviour and things which are done via the body – i.e. bodies known or made docile by the visual observation or policing of those things which they *did*. By contrast, the bodies in the 'body love images' are (instead of physical, and as discussed earlier) *just* images. If practice were implied at all, it would be via analogy in the image, of those things which are done to the body *for the purpose of producing the visible image* (Orbach, 2009). This connection between the Panopticon and the policing of the image has been made by a number of feminists who use Foucauldian theory (e.g. Bartky, 1990; Giovanelli & Ostertag, 2009), but it is important to recognise the ways in which policing of the image as a production is different to policing of the productive body.

Foucault was also interested in how 'confessions', as a technology of culture, make available to the discursive system of surveillance / visibility / power otherwise unobservable thoughts and emotions. He posited that a confession provided an acknowledgement by the speaker of the ownership of both thought and action, requiring them to stake out their position in discourse as a defined and knowable individual, electing to make the detail of their subjectivities available to knowledge (Foucault, 1984). In a similar way, Jennifer's visual confession in 'revealing' her unaltered image conveys an idea of naked flesh being able to communicate the honest 'truth' about the body; telling the viewer the story of her body without pretence or deviance (other examples of this included in the list above were the Cosmopolitan articles "The Bare Truth About..." and "How I Really Feel About My Body", and Cleo's "Body Honesty" campaign; in May 2008, Cosmopolitan announced, alongside one of the 'body love images', the publication of their "Most Revealing Body Special Ever!"). This act of visual revelation by which the 'body love images' expose the unclothed body conveniently conflates / aligns itself with feminist discourses of liberation by alluding to historical ideas of religious redemption, which Foucault noted were closely associated with the act of confession, and in particular confessions of the body (1984, also Redmond, 2008; c.f. Walkerdine 2004).

To a public so used to seeing retouched images in media, being provided with an unaltered image in which they are invited to survey the flaws is something of a novelty. In the case of

being given a model body like Jennifer's (in the earlier *Marie Claire* example) to practice this problem-finding surveillance upon, it is necessary to look in extreme depth and detail, (or to perhaps even use an active imagination) in order to find such small flaws. A problem arises though when this level of extreme depth, detail and imagination is turned upon the bodies of others or upon the reader's own body; under this kind of intense gaze, any non-model body must necessarily be fundamentally flawed. Overall, the entanglement of unclothed, unretouched images which tell the 'truth' about the bodies which have been bravely bared, does not provide much challenge to the idea that women's bodies are imperfect and *difficult* to love. Nor does it do anything to move contemporary culture beyond a place where women are consistently images, and subject to close visual scrutiny.

Furthermore, that Jennifer Hawkins chose to make her statement about positive embodiment by the act of posing naked in a very public visual space, over and above just lending her celebrity to The Butterfly Foundation's cause via a public announcement illustrates the strength with which being photographed unclothed, without digital alteration, has come to signify a message of positive embodiment in the media context. That women's unclothed bodies hold these kinds of significations in the media does not appear to be new. For example, in Amy-Chinn's (2006) analysis of lingerie advertising, women being partially clothed in expensive underwear were seen to signify similar kinds of meanings of liberation, confidence and self-investment (also see Gill, 2008c). Importantly, the strong subscription to these kinds of neo-liberal discourses of commodified self-investment and apolitical empowerment is where the *body love* messages of media and magazines see their major departure from political feminist messages about body acceptance (Lynch, 2011; McRobbie, 2009).

'Real' and 'natural' bodies

A second related feature of the 'body love images' is that they are loaded with discourse about the 'natural' and the 'real'. In part, this is communicated via the images in both the refusal to use digital alteration and in the cases where these images are of 'non-model' bodies (often magazine readers). Apparently, through its repeated use in positive body types of messages, the word "real" in a magazine context has almost taken on the new

meaning of describing an average weight body, or a body which has 'curves' or 'flaws' (Brown, 2005). The message about the 'body love images' showing 'real' bodies is often emphasized in the text caption as, for example, in the well-known "Dove Campaign for Real Beauty". "Real" seems to be of such importance, that in their October 2008 '*Body Love*' section *Cosmopolitan* Australia asked a group of readers who had been photographed in their underwear to identify their "real bodies" out of a line-up of digitally altered alternatives ("The Photoshop Test, p. 246-247). In the same issue, male writer Ben McKelvey tells readers why "Men Crave Real (Not Perfect) Bodies", and calls upon his audience too, to love their bodies for what they 'naturally' are (p. 238), once again underscoring the value of an 'authentic' body (Bell, 2008). *Cleo* magazine, in the launch of their "Body Honesty Campaign", even accompanied one of the 'body love images' with a large heading telling their readers to "Get Real!" (September 2008, p.152).

Celebrating these images of stripped down, photographed bodies as "real", "natural" women, coheres with the earlier discussion about the benefits for magazines if women should learn to identify their own bodies with the images that they see. It also highlights the use of digital alteration by magazines as one of the key issues in the problematic of how the media portray the body. While the frequency and degree of digital alteration by media has certainly been a concern of magazine critics, in some ways this emphasis acts to obscure the wide range of other issues about the way media portray and convey women's bodies (Bissell, 2006). For example, making 'real' or otherwise an issue of digital alteration directs an understanding of the bodies which appear in unaltered photographs as 'real', 'natural', not worked upon, and this is problematic for a discursive framework which understands the body as always made out of a variety of body 'technologies' of production (see Butler, 1990, Orbach, 2009). The lack of photo alteration in the 'body love images' also appears to be at this time, largely a token gesture amongst a continuing tradition of the majority of media images being digitally 'improved'. However, it still represents what could be seen as a start to positive change in an industry which does not respond well to drastic measures; described by Freedman (2009) as a preference in magazines for 'evolution' versus 'revolution'.

The promotion of 'real' and 'natural' bodies also must be understood in the context of other magazine messages about what is meant by 'real' and 'natural'. For example, pieces about fashionable 'nude' or 'natural' looks in make-up, or articles about eating 'real' food are commonplace in young women's magazines and, as such, 'real' and 'natural' can take on a constructed meaning of *real-looking* and *natural-looking*. Along the same lines, the back cover of the above October 2008 edition of *Cosmopolitan* Australia features an advertisement for a foundation which promises "healthy looking" skin – of course, if the body is indeed just the image, then its health too, becomes a visual concern (Tischner & Malson, 2008). Relatedly, Gill (2006) has noted that the use of 'real' women as models when such images appear in advertising allows for the idea that these products *actually* work to fix *real* body issues which *all* women will experience; discursively building these products up as effective, needed and used by 'real' women (or perhaps in other words, used by women who are 'real' / normal, or even to be 'real' / normal).

Sexualised and gendered bodies

In addition to visibility as a body 'truth' that is 'natural' and 'real', stripped down 'body love images' evoke gender and imply heterosexuality in an almost strategic way. This can be seen both comparatively via the differences in visual coding in rare instances where men do appear in the images (Pollock, 1977), and via specific signifiers of femininity which make the womanhood of imaged bodies salient.

In the vast majority of cases, the 'body love images' are of women. Where they do contain men, the images still emphasise that the *love your body* message is directed at women, and is about female bodies. For example, in a publicity image produced for the television show "How To Look Good Naked" (according to the program's website a show dedicated to "making the people of Britain feel positive about their bodies"), male presenter Gok Wan stands alongside four women posing in front of an escalator at a mall. He is wearing a full black suit; the four women are wearing nude coloured underwear. As if the show itself did not make the point clearly enough: here it is women's bodies that are for looking at, and men are the ones who do the looking (Berger, 1972). The Dove campaign image was also produced in one instance with only German men. Whereas in the equivalent women's

image the caption explains that these women are beautiful, the male image tells us where the men work. The posturing is also different – the women pose almost flirtatiously, inviting us to look at them, their hands touch their own (or each other's) thighs; the men stand staunchly with their hands on their hips and each other's shoulders (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Goffman, 1976). The single male image is the anomaly in the series, casting it as tokenistic, it does not belong.

The contradiction here is this: in theory, these *love your body* texts and images celebrate female bodies and are produced largely in a context which assumes (or hails; Althusser, 1971) a female audience. In many ways this is what makes the nakedness of the bodies imaged acceptable (see Gill, 2009c; and Thompson, 2000). But at the same time, the images and their accompanying messages often point out that women being more comfortable with their naked image perhaps also would benefit the men who might be interested in seeing these naked bodies (Weinberg & Williams, 2010). So who indeed then, are these images (and by extension, the benefits of 'loving your body') for? (Lynch, 2011). Such questions about naked *body love* images were raised recently when a prison inmate in New Zealand had his copy of Cosmopolitan magazine confiscated and destroyed on the grounds that the images it contained of naked women's bodies could be deemed inappropriate or offensive ("Inmate goes to court", 2010). The particular article in question appeared as part of a *body love* themed spread in the magazine, discussing the differences between 'false' and 'real' breasts, including photographs. The original magazine article may well have been aimed solely at women readers and their opinions but this incident points to the inevitably *hetero*-sexualities which are implied within a supposedly women-targeted *body love* message.

The cumulative gendered message of these images is that the woman who loves her body is proud and willing to show off this body – she is attractive and loveable because she is confident. However, when these images appear within the strongly heterosexual content of magazines or advertising, the message additionally implies that a woman who loves her body is willing to show off this body *to men*, and she is confident *in the bedroom* (see Harvey & Gill, 2011). (Further discussion of how bodies are sexualised and gendered in *body love* texts appears in Chapter 7). On an even more fundamental level, constructing the

‘body love images’ as being of women communicates that *love your body* is a message directed *at* women. In other words, that there is something in particular about being women, or having a woman’s body, which means that it is women who need to hear this message.

Summary and Conclusion.

This chapter has discussed two key features of ‘new’ *body love* magazine messages. In the written text, a persistent dualistic discourse sees women constructed as separate from their bodies, in a way which both reproduces but also re-organises some of the very classic dualisms of contemporary western culture. This segregation works to a number of concerning effects, including the individualisation of women’s body difficulties, and the reduction and capture of women’s bodies in a limited “just an image”, surface and substance-less way. This construction of body-as-image has particular relevance when considering the striking consistency of how particular images of (semi) naked women have come to almost iconically represent the media’s *body love* message. These (body) images are replete with discourse about the ‘real’ and the ‘natural’ and contain heavily gendered ideas which in their context imply an assumed heterosexuality, but perhaps most problematically, do little to disrupt cultural ideas about difficult female embodiment. Together, the multiple meanings which can be made of these constructed women and their (separate) bodies offer a powerful message to young women readers about what their bodies signify and how they might relate to them.

Chapter 6:

Discoursing 'Body Love'

The previous chapter of this thesis addressed the dualism within *love your body* messages: the mind separated from the body (or perhaps more accurately, the woman acting upon her separated image), and the idea that this differentiation has specific effects. Paradoxically, what this separation furnishes in cultural terms is a space for a relationship between the two characters of the divide (cf. Hollway, 1989), and through the description of what this relationship entails, *body love* messages become a discourse of how a woman might or should act on, and relate to her body. The purpose of this second analysis chapter is an interrogation, via the magazine text, of what kind of a relationship 'loving your body' describes, and the terms it uses to construct the 'woman' and her 'body' in that context. In a technical sense then, *body love* can be thought of as a discursive description of the actions of a subject upon an object (Macleod, 2002; Parker, 1992), and an account of their relationship to each other. The chapter begins by outlining two theoretical conceptualisations of love relevant to the methodological approach taken by my research. The presentation of the discourse analysis which follows is organised into two thematic sections – I have titled these the 'difficult to love body' and 'practicing love upon the body'.

Theorising 'love'

Just like the 'missing' conceptualisations of the body within mainstream psychological research (Braun, 2000), for positivist psychology, the construction of 'love' has been perhaps equally problematic. Where 'love' as a subject is addressed, for the most part it has been operationalized either through biopsychological interests in hormonal and neurological processes or 'responses' (e.g. Bartels & Zeki, 2000; Komisaruk & Whipple, 1998; Zeki, 2007), or interested in "variables" of (usually heterosexual) relationship or developmental functioning (e.g. Franiuk, Cohen & Pomerantz, 2002; Knee, Patrick, Vietor & Neighbours, 2004). By comparison, feminist and critical academic writing which discusses love has taken a less clinical approach to the subject. Still, work which addresses love in this

area has often been presented within some tense negotiations, for example: arguing a case or space for women's desire (Fine, 1988; Tolman, 2005); discussing the cultural (ab)normalisation of particular kinds of love (Rich, 1980); questioning the deployment of romantic discourses in popular culture and their theorised impacts (Radway, 1984; Wetherell, 1995); or even in the extreme, explicating what misogyny can be / has been enacted against women in relationships under the guise or excuse of certain constructions of love (Ouellette, 1999).

The topic of 'love' in the current thesis is also subject to some similar considerations – legitimisation and negotiation of spaces for women's desire and extending in places to those questions of misogyny, when considering some of the practices women engage in against their gendered bodies. Notably in this chapter, where (body) love does appear as a concept in the text, the spectre of an unloveable body is never far behind. Equally, just as the previous chapter detailed some of the limitations which were placed around the construction of women's bodies in the magazine texts, 'love' itself appears to have been conceptualised within tight and specific constraints in the discourses which facilitate the reading of *body love* messages. Setting these constructions within the context of the abovementioned critical literature about love, two particular theorisations of love stand out as possible ways to make sense of the analysis which follows.

Drawing on post-structuralism as a theoretical framework, the first of these appears in Valerie Walkerdine's work on the social construction of gender in schooling (1991), where she discusses how current models in the education system fitted well with Foucauldian conceptualisations of disciplinary power (e.g. Foucault, 1979). She describes how the increasing individualisation and confidentiality of the students' assessments were justified within an ethic of care and responsibility for proper (and 'natural') development:

"At the very moment when nature was introduced into pedagogy, the shift to covert surveillance was enshrined in a word – 'love'. 'Love' was to facilitate the development of the child in a proper supportive environment". (Walkerdine, 1991, p. 21).

Love, according to this perspective, requires both a knowledge of what is loved and further, that knowledge is part of the act of love (see the previous chapter, Extract 2, about knowing

and ‘making friends with your body’). What Walkerdine acknowledges, is that knowledge is a motivated enterprise. That something (for Walkerdine a student, or in the present study, a body) is knowable makes it vulnerable to the use, context and effects of that knowledge. Furthermore, the surveillance of the body, subject to what is known about it, produces it as already docile to that knowledge (Foucault, 1979). As such, love in this context becomes a technology of power, seen to facilitate (a construction of) nature and *requiring the visibility of the body* in order to operate. In this context, surveillance enacted in the name of love facilitates a *discursive* production which need not necessarily be in the interests of the object of that love (Foucault, 1984). As a case in point, this conceptualisation of love as visual knowledge could be used to make sense of my question as to why undressed bodies have come to be almost iconically representative of a *body love* message in their own right (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Another theorist who has had much to say about love is Freud; and although his theorisation of love was intended to describe primarily the relationship of the heterosexual couple, it has not been exclusively used in this way (Blum, 2007). To summarise, Freud theorised most love relationships as having two ‘characters’: the anaclitic “lover” and the narcissistic “beloved”, and that both of these positions, despite the names, are made out of a primary position of self-interest (Freud, 1914; Grosz, 1990). The interest of the ‘lover’, residing in a desire *to be seen* as doing those things that position him (sic, because this position usually was of the male according to Freud) as loving someone; and the counterpart interest of the ‘beloved’, similarly being *identifiable* as someone who is loved. Furthermore, according to Freud, although the halves of this pair are the best possible match for each other, due to the primary narcissistic interest the relationship is also in some ways doomed at best, to misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Whatever criticisms Freud’s theory might be open to with regards to the heterosexual couple relationships he intended to describe, his theory does provide a way of further thinking about the visibility at surface, (and the anomie which might underlie), the *body love* relationship between a woman and her body. This is seen through the analysis below in the question of a body which may or may not be loveable, and its parallels with the dilemma of the narcissistic ‘beloved’. It is also evident in the idea of *body love* as a *practice* with visible

results, a practice of love which it is important to be *seen* as engaging in – paralleling the position of the above, anacletic lover (and also Walkerdine’s post-structuralist version of ‘love’). Another example is found in the ways the dualistic opposition of the positions of ‘lover’ and ‘beloved’ resonates with the binary drawn by magazine discourse between the woman and her body (see Chapter 5). Finally, the significance of *being seen to be loved* / engaged in love describes love as a *visually evidential* practice of what is produced and made available by enacting ‘love’. Conceptualising love as a productive practice, the outcomes of which are visually particular ‘loveable’ bodies, can be understood as absolutely central to the analysis of magazine *love your body* messages discussed below.

The Body which is Difficult to Love.

Somewhat ironically given the *love your body* selection criteria of the analytic texts, one of the most persistent themes produced as an outcome of the initial thematic analysis undertaken was the construction of ‘the body which is difficult to love’, or even ‘bodies which are unloveable’. As a whole, text extracts which were placed within this theme talk about the features and kinds of bodies which women find difficult to love, and assume as given that women will have some problems loving their body. These ideas as a theme appeared in a variety of locations across the data set – in celebrity confessionals, in reader photo-spreads, in editorial commentaries about positive ways of conceptualising women’s bodies, and, as for Extract 4 below, in advice-oriented content. This extract is taken from an article called *The Power of the Positive* (Cleo Magazine NZ, Apr 2009 p 47). The article presents a number of “negative thoughts” which women apparently frequently conjure, and replies to each with ‘expert’ advice on how to overcome the problem.

Extract 4

Negative thought #3: “I don’t like my mirror image”

As women, we’ve probably all had days when we’ve looked in the mirror and not loved what we saw. But are we too hard on ourselves? “Putting surgery and the like aside, we’re stuck with what we have; so we can either go through life feeling miserable about our appearance, or we can accept what we are and get on with things”, Dr. Sharp says. To rid that negative voice, we should think about

ourselves as more than just a physical entity. “Remind yourself of what strengths, qualities and beautiful characteristics lie within – even if they’re not visible in the mirror”. Bent says you can learn to change your thought pattern in several ways. “Each time you look in the mirror, ask yourself, ‘What bits do I like? How can I focus more on these bits?’” she advises. “And say to yourself, ‘So what if I don’t like what I see in the mirror, others do!’”

Consistent with the pattern of individual responsibility previously identified in Chapter 5, Extract 4 places the onus on the individual woman for her management of any difficulties she may have with her body; that body difficulties are ‘negative thoughts’ which need to be rectified. These “negative thoughts” are communicated in the almost didactic language of cognitive behavioural therapeutic discourse (Westbrook, Kennerley & Kirk, 2007), accompanied too by two ‘experts’ who advise the unknowing woman of her mistakes, and how to rectify her errors. This use of expert commentary within the magazine advice genre (Kim & Ward, 2004) can be read as discourse which undermines the ability and expertise of women in understanding their own bodies and subjectivities. Although the text recognises that women’s body difficulties are a *gendered* ‘problem’ (through the inclusive “as women”, “we” and “ourselves”), what it also does is frame the problem as one of attitudes of an *individual* woman, who may or may not love what she sees “in the mirror” (Lynch, 2011). As earlier, discussions of individual attitudes often work to obscure the ways in which the cultural administration and regulation of *groups* of people is achieved via differential access to power / powerful discourse (Aronson, 2003; Henriques, 1998).

Rather, the purpose of the questionably collective statement about “probably all” women having “looked in the mirror and not loved what we saw” is perhaps better conceptualised as a textual normalisation of the ‘problem’ of women’s body difficulties; moreover, also as language which *normalises* these ‘problems’ (Butler, 1997) and a call for young women readers to identify with this ‘problem’ (Althusser, 1971). To explain, if magazine texts are conceptualised as cultural resources which not only describe but further, offer hegemonic examples of the performance of subjectivity, then this extract suggests that it will not be easy for women to look in the mirror and love what they see: women’s bodies are expectedly difficult to love. Furthermore, by reducing the ‘problem’ of body difficulties to women just “being too hard on ourselves” and body difficulty to the everyday and ordinary, this extract severely diminishes what the literature indicates about women’s experiences of

body difficulties – that in their extreme they can be viciously debilitating and distressing, born and effectual of circumstances which may not be so easily overcome (Lynch, 2011, McRobbie, 2007; see also Ussher, 2010).

There are ways to describe a prevalence of body difficulties without invoking normalisations which prescribe a cynical approach to the body and diminish the body difficulties which some women do describe. Susie Orbach's feminist work about women's bodies is a good example of accessible writing which does this (e.g. Orbach, 1978; 1982; 1986). However, it could be said that it is the way in which women's body difficulties are normalised in *body love* advice texts that makes them marketable: for women to want to consume the expert advice magazines offer on the problem of a difficult relationship with the body (like Extract 4), women need to feel like they have a difficult relationship with their body (the possible 'misery' of being "stuck with what you have"). The more that good relationships with the body are constructed as hard to come by, complicated, and start at a body which is expectedly difficult to love, then comparably, the more that the 'expert' body advice magazines offer is a valuable commodity (see Jansson, 2002).

Like Extract 2 of the previous chapter, Extract 4 above also reproduces a binary between appearance and personality as well as a contradiction between women being told that there is more to themselves than their bodies ("more than just a physical entity"), but at the same time, told to focus on the specific 'bits of the body they do like'. In addition, the advice presented within this message to think of the body in 'bits' and pieces is an incitement to a certain kind of knowledge about the body – specific, compartmentalised and detailed, and as such is a kind of knowledge which makes the body docile to power which would act on or through this knowledge (cf. Walkerdine's theorisation of post-structuralist 'love', 1991). Extract 4 openly encourages women to survey their own bodies and take note of the details, albeit with good intentions and in the name of *body love*. Moreover, the invitation to women to think of their bodies as made up of 'bits' and pieces resonates with (a) previous research on images of women's bodies in media which appear in their parts as gendered objectification, (b) notions of 'capture' which emphasize parts of the body and do not speak to the whole (Coleman, 2008; 2009), and (c) problematic cultural discourses which evaluate women's bodies via the functions of these parts (such as those around pregnancy).

The next extract was selected because it offers opportunity to further discuss some of the issues around the ideas of being “stuck with what we have” and the body in bits and pieces. It appeared in an article entitled “*The Bare Truth About Boobs, Bums, Love Handles & Other Body Bits We Obsess Over*” (Cosmopolitan “Body Love” section, May 2009, p.192-197), which presents a series of full page photographs of nude women ‘readers’, alongside each a statement which they have made about their bodies. Accompanying Extract 5 in the magazine, the unretouched image of Mariah stands with her back to the camera, turning slightly to look over her shoulder. Her hands are clasped behind her back; around one of her wrists post-production the magazine has added a tag reading ‘Size 14’ in large lettering. Covering the side of her breasts, a text box with a ‘body confidence tip’ written in it has been overlaid on the image. Although I would not describe her as overweight, this image coheres with Brown’s (2005) article about images of large bodies, in that Mariah’s closed posture and deferred gaze could be seen as an effort to minimise the space her body takes in the frame:

Extract 5

I’ve always been a big girl – that’s what I am. I can diet and try to change it, but I can guarantee I’m not going to be happy. I might feel good in my clothes but getting to that point would be so restrictive, so I may as well be happy the whole time.

In the initial coding undertaken in the first stage of my thematic analysis, this extract was coded for ‘body acceptance’. At face value, the idea of body acceptance is a positive one – something which feminists have been advocating for years and an idea which does not carry some of the same romanticised undertones that “loving your body” does. However, in Extract 5 the implication arguably is that Mariah has something *to* accept and further, something to accept which is perhaps difficult to accept. As a whole, this extract can be read as full of significations which hint at what is valuable of certain kinds of bodies. It could also be read as a narrative of Mariah’s choice between different values which are identifiable via the body: her decision being dichotomously either to have a body which is something that she has always (naturally) been and she ‘may as well’ be happy with, or a body which is changed via diets and restrictions, perhaps the practice of which may impinge on her happiness but allows her to feel good in her clothes. Amongst all of this, what is

communicated is an idea that there is an inevitability of large bodies which can be changed via diet, but the cost of this is a restriction on happiness.

The choice to be happy in spite of the body is presented for Mariah as relatively straightforward. Her happiness, being a personal, cognitive decision alone, leaves no room for the discussion of her cultural circumstances (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). Perhaps not having access to a discourse of the social construction of gendered bodies, in a magazine culture where neo-liberalism and individualism dominate, 'Mariah' may have no choice but to take responsibility for her embodied difficulties (Hinnant, 2009) - presumably, this is why McRobbie (2007) termed the distress which might arise from such a position, 'illegible'. The first-person address in her account emphasizes this message. Conversely, via a neo-liberal concept of individual choice, the magazine covertly, discursively exonerates itself from years of feminist criticism, over whatever might be argued as their social contribution to young women's body difficulties (Lynch, 2011).

'Mariah's' opening quotation states that "I've always been a big girl, that's what I am". This essentialist statement could be read as supporting the idea that there is a truth / a natural state of selves and bodies – the platform from which magazines are also able to justify imaging women who happen to be "teeny" or 'naturally petite' in their range of representations of the 'real' reader, and defend the reality of the 'size 6' (see Chapters 9 and 10). This appeal to a discourse of the natural size of bodies allows for a continuation of the 'old' ideal images of magazines, (such as those which accompany the article of Extract 6), while closing the space in which the discursive abjection of large bodies in media might be discussed (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Additionally, Mariah's labelling of herself as a 'big girl' as opposed to someone with a 'large body' could be read as linguistically significant. Somehow the presented size of her body has made the slide in signification across the deep-set woman body dualism of *body love* discourse, to define *her* as a 'big girl'; "that's what I am" (as opposed to, 'that's just the body I have') (Grosz, 1990; Hollway, 1989). One possible interpretation of this could be made through healthist media discourses (Roy, 2008): that her visibility as a large body, combined with cultural knowledge about people who have large bodies, allows the reader to position her (to *know* her) heuristically as the kind of

person who would act in such a way as to irresponsibly, uncaringly produce a large body (Jutel, 2005; Tischner & Malson, 2008).

Equally, I would argue the choice of “girl” instead of ‘woman’ or ‘person’ can also be read in specific ways given the magazine discursive context in which it appears. For example, it may indicate Mariah’s recognition of her (discursive) vulnerability appearing as a naked (exposed, view-able) body (MacNeill, 2010; Weinberg & Williams, 2010). Alternatively, it may hint at various paradoxical, cultural negotiations around what a developing female body might mean – such as cultural aversion to the ageing female body, or alternatively, a signification of her tenuous position in relation to the power associated with adulthood / possible powerlessness associated with adult womanhood. Third, ‘girl’ as the address of post-feminist culture could be seen at work here to construct ‘Mariah’, representational of the ‘reader’ of the magazine, as comprehensible within particular mediated post-feminist subjectivities (Lazar, 2009; McRobbie, 2008). Finally, the use of ‘girl’ may instead / additionally indicate ‘Mariah’s’ desire to distance herself from other meanings associated with embodying womanhood – such as those which accompany the next extract presented below.

Extract 6 appeared on the cover of *Cosmopolitan’s Body Love* section in February 2009, entitled “Embrace Your Woman Body”, accompanying a cover image of two young (slim) women lying on the beach (p.199). The juxtaposition of ‘new’ seemingly positive body messages indicated by the text, with the magazine classic staple image of flawless model bodies, creates a rather contradictory combination to negotiate. Comparatively, when non model bodies do appear, it is often with less prominence yet rarely without some kind of fanfare in the text which notes the larger size of the woman in the image, as well as how important it is to publish images of bodies of all shapes and sizes (see Chapter 10, p. 2). Arguably, it is this very celebration around the appearance of larger bodies in media which acts to mark them out as ‘other’ and negates the positive representational work done by the appearance of non-model bodies in the first place (Brown, 2005).

Further to the context of Extract 6, the text omitted in the middle of the extract introduces reasons why young women may gain weight after leaving school (contraceptive pill use,

drinking more alcohol, working in an office, and having more money to spend on food). Following the extract, the article gave instructions on how a reader might measure their waist, and what their waist size should be. These omitted elements tell a complicated story about the lifestyles of the projected reader of the magazine and certainly would be interesting texts to study in their own right. However, the following selected pieces are more salient to the argument being proposed in this chapter:

Extract 6

Noticed a shape shift since your teen years? Here's why...

There are many factors that contribute to our "woman body" – the softer more curvaceous version of our teenage selves, and while some of these are an inevitable result of lifestyle changes that we need to embrace, there are one or two we need to watch.

[text omitted]

These reasons probably explain why your body has changed a little since you were younger and the good news is, they can all be addressed with a healthy diet and regular exercise. But what if your body has changed a lot? "Don't hide behind excuses – get the tape measure out and watch your waistline", says Deakin.

There are a number of different ways to read the construction of the "woman body" within this extract, the first being as a reference first and foremost to the advancing age of the body, with gender secondary to this bodily change. According to the "many factors" which contribute to the "shapeshift" into the 'woman body' outlined by Extract 6, the transition to this new body is primarily about behaviour / "lifestyle changes" – an explanation which minimises other embodied changes which may become salient as a young women ages (including 'biological' and 'psychological'). Extract 6 also constructs most of these 'woman body' changes as needing to be "addressed" or as indefensible by "excuses". These ideas are predominantly supported by a healthist discourse (Roy, 2008); the woman is responsible for "addressing" the evidential bodily outcome of her own "lifestyle changes", the text does not address either the material implications of a growing body, nor what discursive ideologies are supported in the differentiation between a woman's and teenager's body and

certainly not what the implications of such a way of understanding women's bodies might be (Hinnant, 2009; Newman, 2007).

Supporting this reading of Extract 6, the article in which this piece appeared is one of a number of very specific mentions of a 'woman body' in the magazines of the data set. Another example of its usage appears throughout an article entitled *A Naked Woman Walks into A Bar...* (Cosmopolitan, April 2009 p111-112). In this article a mixed gender group of commentators 'found' sitting in a bar are asked their opinions of and to rate the various body parts of a female 'reader' who supposedly is brought naked into the bar for this purpose. Under each body part heading (e.g. 'stomach', 'thighs'), one commentator continually replies that the specific body feature under discussion of the reader indicates that she has a 'woman's body', that "she looks like a woman", and she is a "real" woman. When all the other commentators unanimously identify details of dimples and curves, the collective meaning available through the article is that those features of the body are explainable through that body being identifiably 'woman'. Moreover, this supplementary example highlights that being signified authentically '*woman*' in magazine text, beyond just being female, is accomplished through visual practices, surveillance by the 'other' and particular embodied features readable through discursive explanations (Featherstone, 2006).

The constructions of the "woman body" within Extract 6 are described through discursively laden terms. This body is "softer and more curvaceous", for example. "Curvaceous" in the context of positive magazine body messages has elsewhere been applied as a celebration of larger women's size. However, even through Extract 6 alone, the magazine reader is informed that the cultural limits to the acceptability of being "curvaceous" are measurable in centimetres. Or perhaps instead 'curvaceous' could be read here for its positive connotations and associations with being busty – and in that case, the "woman body" can be large, but only in certain places; essentially, a woman's body is made in its management (Tischner & Malson, 2008; Ussher, 2006).

Along these same lines, the description of the "woman body" as "softer" can be read through feminist analyses of dualist terms of the body: its counterpart being "hard" and

associated with male power and rationality, which in turn implies a female incapability and powerlessness (Sherif, 1979). Compared to the idea of the teenage body, one possible reading of “softer” within Extract 6 is that a woman’s body becomes more gendered and requires more containment as it ages. In all, the “woman body” is one which is acceptable only within prescribed limits, (and) by virtue of its gender, has *become* one with issues which may need “addressing”. This constructed body, difficult to control and contain within a context of strong neo-liberal messages about the moral value in producing an orderly body (Chrisler, 2008), no doubt will also become difficult to love.

Practicing ‘love’ upon the body.

It is against the above construction of the difficult to contain body that the construction of ‘love’ as a practice in *body love* texts is made. Rather than practices of containment and management being seen as punitive or corrective, ‘love’ as the redemption and care of the body encompasses those practices which support the production of the body in its best and ‘natural’ state (Bell, 2008; Gill, 2008b). Facilitated by an in-depth knowledge of body and body practices, (body) love as both visually evident and evidential is the topic of analysis in the second half of this chapter.

Beginning with the topic of care of the body, Extract 7 appeared in Cleo Magazine’s May 2009 issue (p.120) as part of a piece entitled “Body Overhaul”. The first part of the extract is the introduction to the article, which is about a number of products and activities recommended if the reader wanted to ‘treat’ themselves / their body to some “me time”, as well as some techniques via which the reader could observe if their body was in distress and needed some such attention. The second part of the extract is an example of one of the recommendations contained within the article.

Extract 7

We talk a lot about “me time”, but besides flopping down to watch *Home and Away Omnibus*, do you ever really put a moment aside to focus entirely on yourself? After months of late nights, over-

indulgence, fun in the sun and slackened skincare routines, your body may seem a little frayed around the edges. This month, detox, revive your body and enjoy a shiner, sexier version of you.

[text omitted]

Lucky enough not to have cellulite? That doesn't mean you can drop the ball on body maintenance. Silky skin is still important, so try an ultra-nourishing exfoliating cream, like the new Clinique Turnaround Body Smoothing Cream, \$65, which is ideal for elbows, knees, shoulders and legs. An all-over glow is vital when you want to feel good about yourself.

Discursively, love of the body within Extract 7 is specific. The woman acts upon her body; love is to repair and redeem the run-down body after its toxification and mis-treatment. This is done via a series of circumscribed actions recommended by the magazine, by product use, but more importantly, correct use of the correct products (Ballentine & Ogle, 2005). This kind of *body love* is (in)vested, (rather than emotional or mutual), underpinned by neo-liberal values of investment and the expectation of performance in return. In the introduction to this thesis, I raised the question of whether the placement of *body love* messages into glossy magazines as a context could change their accent and produce instead an altered, commercialised meaning of love. Following Extract 7, this seems to be the case, and concerningly so. A first concern is that this construction of 'love' continues to endorse the problematic technologies and practices of body surveillance which magazines have been so criticised for in relation to women's experiences of embodied distress (Lynch, 2011). Another concern is that by harnessing the linguistic, cultural space of *body love*, commodified body messages like the one above theoretically make the discursive survival of other similar (feminist) messages of body acceptance tenuous (Foucault, 1984; Mouffe, 1979; Riordan, 2001).

On the other hand however, and from a different perspective, it could be said that Extract 7 does manage to talk, at least at a surface level, in a positive way about women's bodies, and at the same time still fulfils magazine advertorial requirements of product placement and advertisement (see Farrell, 1994; Ryan, 2005). What this illustrates is that it is evidently *possible* to do both at the same time, despite the above reservations about how this is achieved (Press, 2011). Therefore, it could be said that Extract 7 demonstrates that there is no excuse to overtly create deficits in, and talk in negative ways about, women's bodies in

magazine text – even outside of *body love* type content, product placement and ideology are not mutually exclusive in any absolute way (Cunningham & Haley, 2000). Indeed, a number of other commercial organisations have started to promote *body love* editorial messages with significant profit outcomes, most famously, the ‘Dove’ campaign for “Real Beauty”. In fact, Dove’s combination of ‘positive’ body messages and product was such a sales success for their brand that *body love* seems to have almost become a contemporary commercial marketing strategy in its own right.

Returning to Extract 7, also contained within the text of this article is the idea of body surveillance and administration being experienced by women as pleasurable activities (e.g. “me time” “enjoy” “feel good about yourself”). Much has been made in feminist literature around ‘false consciousness’ debates of engagement and pleasure in activities also identifiable as social discipline (e.g. Gill, 2009b; 2011; 2012; McRobbie, 1996; Peterson, 2012). However, it is arguably quite a different thing to read in magazine text which instructs women in the maintenance of their bodies, such practices already defined as unquestionably enjoyable / the idea that enjoyment should be had in embodying the results of these practices (Gill, 2008c; Lazar 2011). Conversely the frustration which may be experienced in, for example, attempting to remove ‘cellulite’ from the material body by comparison becomes unspeakable, illegible (McRobbie, 2007) – contemporary women are no longer told to bear pain or exasperation for the sake of improving their appearance, no longer simply instructed in their behaviour, but instead / additionally told how they should feel about engaging in such practices. Even cosmetic surgery, on the ‘right’ person, should be a *liberating* experience (Extract 9).

Finally, this extract instructs the reader: “Lucky enough not to have cellulite? That doesn’t mean you can drop the ball on body maintenance”. This instruction requires some substantial prior knowledge. The reader must in order to engage with the ‘enjoyable’ practice of smoothing her skin, know what cellulite is, how to detect it upon her own body, have an unrelenting knowledge of her body which catalogues the presence or absence of this cellulite, and finally, a knowledge of the technologies / commodity products (and their use) which may be deployed against cellulite (McRobbie, 1996). Needless to say, any of these knowledges may be premised upon assumptions which make women vulnerable to

power, as all of these knowledges will certainly be knowledges of what is normal, as well as themselves being normalising. This knowledge implied in Extract 7 also invokes yet another dualism, between bodies being made out of what you have (naturally, and partially out of luck – “Lucky enough to not have cellulite?”), and what you do with them. The analysis following Extract 8 continues discussion of this point.

Appearing in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in March 2009 (p.239), Extract 8 comes from an article entitled “*The boob wars – which side are you on?*”. The article contains the opposing comments of two different young women – one who has had breast enlargement surgery, the other who speaks in the extract below founded a ‘Facebook’ group called “Breasts of Small Proportions United”:

Extract 8

If women want to get breast implants that’s their choice. But if a friend told me she was considering it, I’d probably tell her to think about counselling first. So many women out there believe enhancing something on the outside will make them feel better inside. I think to feel good about yourself, it needs to come from the inside.

Like so much of the text in the data set, Extract 8 is readily comprehensible through neo-liberal discourses: “then that’s their choice. *But...*” (emphasis added). Readers are left in no doubt that they are free to and inevitably must make a wide range of decisions about the body, however, that they are entirely responsible for how these decisions might be read upon their bodies. Compare this to the ‘inside’ versus ‘outside’ discussion in Chapter 5 – here the ‘inside’ features of the woman’s self are made available through her practices upon her body, visually written on the outside body (see also, Extract 5) (Hinnant, 2009; Jutel, 2005; Lynch, 2011). According to Extract 8, not only has the woman who chooses the breast implants made the wrong decision and is in need of counselling, but she has also, immorally refused to interrogate and face her ‘inside’ qualities, and has been either duped into breast implantation surgery or won over by an inadmirable lack of self knowledge. Despite this, the constructed lack of will-power in the woman who decides to undergo the procedure does not make any attempt to disrupt an idea that breast implants will enhance appearance, or discuss the violence of the surgery involved (Wolf, 1991).

Another possible reading of Extract 8 is through a popular social psychology theory of the 'actual', 'perceived' and 'ideal' selves. In this theory, the degree of discrepancy or harmony between each of these measurable identities is predictive of mental health, including 'good body image' (Higgins, 1987; Marsh, 1999; Moretti & Higgins, 1988). Psychological work undertaken to increase well-being should be focussed around encouraging more realistic perceptions or ideals for the self, with major overhaul of the 'actual' self conceptualised as either impossible or reserved as an extreme measure (Higgins, 1987). Similarly to body image, this theory is based in ideas of a constant, singular, measurable and natural self, with the perceived and ideal selves being borne out of (errors of) cognition and thought. Predictably, research applications of actual-perceived-ideal self theories often conclude that women suffer greater such discrepancies than men, speculating the underlying cause of this to be differences in cognitive function and women's interpretations of culture, rather than interrogating differences in the ways in which women are taught to look at and expect of themselves (Engeln-Maddox, 2006; McKinley, 1998; Strauman, Vookles, Berenstein, Chaiken, & Higgins, 1991, see also Blood, 2005).

Extract 8 makes sense framed in self discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987; Marsh, 1999) because the quoted text concerns itself with the erroneous *cognition* of the 'friend' who wanted to undergo breast enhancement surgery – without questioning, for example, where the social demand for a large-busted aesthetic comes from (Blum, 2007). From this point of view, Extract 8 could be seen to illustrate how effortlessly and easily psychological discourse is incorporated into the magazine text, to support ideas of individualism and deny the cultural logicity of the woman who desires larger breasts – she is not responding to a social demand, but rather, needs counselling because she has made a poor decision (Bartky, 1990; Gill 2007a).

In a similar vein, Extract 9 is a piece of an article which appeared in Cleo Magazine (*Forever Young*, June 2009, p.50-51), about, and largely against, the injection of Botox (botulinum bacteria toxins) by young women as a preventative treatment for wrinkles. The article is accompanied by a full page photograph of a very young woman pretending to inject into her face, the photo itself has quite apparently been extensively retouched (removing virtually all lines from the model's face, including the bridge of her nose and contours of her upper lip).

Although it could (just) be argued that the overstatement of smoothed over skin in this image might be read as caricature or parody (Redmond, 2003), the continuing availability of ideal images in which entire features of the face or body are virtually erased in magazines should be placed alongside increasing requests by women to enact this plasticity and erasure on their own bodies. To be direct, and in relation to Extract 9, there seems to be some coincidence between the ‘erasing’ of lines off mass-consumed images of women’s faces via Photoshop (such as in the image that accompanies the article), and the increasing demand of women for “Botox” to systematically erase lines off their faces¹. The text extract selected from this article for analysis opens with ‘Wenman’ (a female ‘cosmetic nurse consultant’) commenting on whether she would agree to inject a client in her 20s with Botox:

Extract 9

“The majority of people we see in our clinic are over 35, but we do occasionally see young people and, if their lines are severe enough, I have no hesitation in treating them. Especially if they’re self-conscious because of it – treatment can boost their self-esteem”.

Cribb agrees, but believes it needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. “A young person with severe facial scarring from an accident or cleft palate could benefit psychologically from cosmetic surgery, as such disfiguration can cause unnecessary social and self-esteem problems”. As Dr Gerarchi puts it, “The right cosmetic procedure on the right person can make a meaningful change in that person’s life, no matter what their age. For many people, self-esteem is closely bound to appearance. Both confidence and beauty have been shown repeatedly as characteristics associated with success in life”.

Natural Beauty

Lifestyle can play a big part in the development of wrinkles. “Smoking and sun exposure are the two main culprits, so quit smoking and always wear sunscreen and a hat when outside”, Wenman advises. According to Dr Gerarchi, there are several safer – and more effective – treatments for fine lines than Botox. And, funnily enough, “prevention” is key. In addition to Wenman’s advice, he says, “stressing less, maintaining a normal weight and healthy diet are all doable and effective methods for preventing them. Cosmeceuticals, such as medical-grade vitamins A and C and lactic acid, can also offer significant benefits on skin quality”.

Even when reading *body love* style articles which largely argue against extreme (surgical, injectable, etc.) modifications of the body, the reader is presented with significant amounts of information about these techniques. For example, bestowed upon the reader in Extract 9 alone is a kind of incidental education about at what age someone might attend a Botox clinic; that this treatment can potentially “boost self-esteem”; that appearance, “confidence and beauty” are “associated with success in life”; that lifestyle factors “can play a big part in the development of wrinkles” (and perhaps by association, those who develop wrinkles are those with lifestyle issues – who do not maintain a “normal weight” or a “healthy diet”); and finally, about some of the other alternative ‘cosmeceutical’ treatments which can be purchased should the reader decide they do not want or require Botox at this time. Many of these ‘truths’ are supported by being framed in expert quotation, the weight of science behind the medical discourse they appeal to (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).

In addition to these medical ‘truths’, there are a number of other pieces of information available to the reader in Extract 9. For example that usually ‘Botox’ and other similar treatments are not required by women in their twenties; unless they are the ‘right’ person, or their situation is ‘severe’ enough, younger women should instead prefer ‘lifestyle’ based preventions and lower-grade treatments. ‘Needing it’ then, only comes about ‘if their lines are severe enough’ or in the case of ‘disfiguration’. However, recalling the extreme detail in which media and beauty discourses encourage women to examine their own bodies, against the flawless perfection of media images (Fairclough, 2008), it may well be that somewhere in the middle a significant number of young women find themselves virtually disfigured by what they cannot compare to. Conflictually, this message about what constitutes ‘needing it’ changes throughout the extract and article – for example, in the first paragraph, severe lines or severe self-consciousness are sufficient, however, in the next paragraph “severe facial scarring from an accident or a cleft palate” may warrant cosmetic surgery to the face.

Extract 9 could also be seen to contribute to the age discrimination which permeates media discourse about women and bodies. This abjection of older bodies can be found throughout in magazine *body love* texts as a whole. While the limited target market of the magazine texts studied could be seen as an explanation for older bodies’ severe representational exclusion, this account does not fit with the wide use of model images of women apparently

younger than the target market. More blatantly, this also does not explain the anxious values of 'prevention' and 'vigilance' against ageing which run throughout Extract 9. Here ideal femininity is anxiously maintained against womanhood, age and change (see also Extracts 5 and 6, Chrisler, 2008; Gill, 2008b; Redmond, 2003; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). In other words, if improved appearance is found in the erasure of lines which may come with age, and improved appearance is strongly related to "confidence and success in life", then physical ageing is to be avoided. Ageing aversion is furthermore a heavily gendered message; it is the evidence of the ageing *woman's* body which is to be prevented, concealed and perhaps even erased (Lazar 2009).

Finally the idea presented in Extract 9 of working within 'lifestyle changes' and long-term prevention strategies being preferable to short term surgical interventions upon the body is consistent throughout the articles which fit into this 'practice' theme in the data set. As if women's bodies were not difficult enough to produce in the first place, through supposedly 'positive' body messages the neo-liberal woman is now faced with a new tyranny of discursive administration of the *methods* of production of the body. Altogether, the idea is that the woman should work hard to 'naturally' gain and maintain her body, rather than taking the 'easy way out' through a 'quick fix' of the lifestyle damages incurred upon her flesh (Wilson (2005) suggests that instantaneous body solutions are now discursively condemned for the way in which aberrant bodies are not made to 'pay' for their violations). However at the same time, nor is it acceptable to be fixated upon and obsessed with the body – like the 1950s housewife of her home, the contemporary woman must effortlessly produce via authentic methods (cf. McRobbie, 2006), her socially adequate, loved body.

The final extract of this chapter is taken from an opinion piece written for Cleo magazine by Johnny Ross, entitled *In Praise of Quirky Beauty* (October 2008, p.97). In this article, the author, using celebrities as examples, attempts to convey that men prefer women who are quirky and unusual-looking, as opposed to women who are "fixated" upon perfecting their image. It should be noted that the 'laddish-yet-loving' tone of the article as a whole purveys the irony which is not well represented by taking this small piece (Benwell, 2004; Fairclough, 2008; Jackson, Stevenson & Brooks, 2001; McRobbie, 1996). Extract 10 was selected for the way in which it constructs 'good' practices upon the body, contrasting the 'admirable' and

‘endearing’ embrace of the body by some celebrity women with the ‘insecure’, ‘fixated’ and ‘desperate’ body practices of others:

Extract 10

Another reason why you should embrace your flaws is evident in hipster icons like Chloë Sevigny, who looks like she was born to play a polygamist’s wife, and Christina Ricci, who has the forehead of a bald man. Scruffy Maggie Gyllenhaal may look like a bizarro Mr. Potato Head, but that’s exactly what makes her and the other gals endearing. Unlike, say, that poster-child of insecurity, Heidi Montag, these actresses don’t look like they spend their days fixated upon other people’s opinion of them. Plus they make up for any physical awkwardness with amazing clothes, which is much more admirable than doing it with cosmetic surgery (one is a creative act, the other’s just desperate).

Drawing on the sub-theme which runs through the previous three extracts, this sample of text again makes one thing very clear – plastic surgery and extreme interventions into appearance are ‘desperate acts’, reserved for extreme cases and certainly not admirable. Later on in the article the text goes on to say that the woman who successfully negotiates the binary of ‘creative’ or ‘fixated’ is worthy of presidential status, where the woman who does not is ‘desperate’ and would only frighten small children. Desperate, in this context, takes on a meaning where how someone might become desperate is unimportant; being a desperate person is no longer about circumstances by which someone becomes desperate, but an adjective which describes the *character* of the person / woman, and the nature of her actions (Redmond 2008; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008).

The known body in ‘bits and pieces’ discussed in relation to Extract 4 is re-imagined within Extract 10 as comprised of ‘assets’ and ‘flaws’ which, when appropriately negotiated and confidently embraced, will win the ‘admiration’ and ‘endearment’ of this male writer. This text calls on the reader to look at the bodies (or rather, the parts of bodies of), well known and classically beautiful celebrity women, and find them ‘scruffy’, ‘bizzaro’, ‘physically awkward’ and lacking. At the same time, readers are also called to find unique and creatively different features between these relatively similar women and their homogeneously classic beauty (Gill, 2007a). Calling the readers to engage in these methods of reading the body and then in other sections of the magazine constantly calling upon the

reader to inspect their own bodies by the standards just laid out, potentially invites the readers to engage in a hugely difficult task.

According to Extract 10, it is important for women to be creative in fashioning their bodies and appearances; to not be fixated upon but still to embrace what their bodies may portray them as. The next and final chapter of the magazine text analysis addresses this idea further where it talks about men who like women who are concerned with their appearance but are not 'high maintenance'. The message in Extract 10 though is that women should not care ("she don't care!") about their appearance, but still be effortlessly confident and knowledgeable in her management of her appearance, while further undertaking the honest, non-desperate work required to maintain her body (cf. Czerniawski, 2012).

Extract 10 puts forward the use of "amazing clothes" as one way to undertake the complicated body work of overcoming insecurity and physical awkwardness. In the context of negotiating the visual availability of body 'assets' and 'flaws', Guy and Banim's (2000) research about women's use of clothing as gendered technology to conceal and reveal the body fits well here (also, Coffey, 2011). However, the problem with Extract 10 is that, the way in which unusual features tenuously may be interpreted as either desirably "quirky" and "endearing", or "the forehead of a bald man", is no straightforward matter. McRobbie (1991; 2009) argues that the line walked in these kinds of decisions is a powerful, class matter, in the sense that some women / people (like the "hipster icons") will have the cultural capital to designate 'quirky' features as endearing, but others will not. Class here is not just about a financial position, but also about other hierarchies of power which value or devalue the knowledge on which a woman might interpret her features as assets or flaws (Ouellette, 1999; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008; van Dijk, 1993). Presumably, the magazines in positioning themselves as informed, knowledgeable and trustworthy 'cultural intermediaries' need to maintain this class distance in order to protect the value of the cultural body advice they have on offer (Gough-Yates, 2003).

Summary: What has love got to do with this?

This chapter has covered some of the key constructions of *body love*, figured as a discourse in which the subject woman practices 'love' upon a more or less difficult to love body.

Although located within magazine content which claims or appears to be about positive 'relationships' with the body, overwhelmingly, the construction of women's bodies within the magazine texts under analysis consistently provides the reader with accounts of difficult appearances, problematic size, flaws to accept and unsettling changes to embrace.

Paradoxically, body 'love' was constructed in the first half of this chapter as a (somehow straightforward) individual change of attitudes (Lynch, 2011), about a body with fundamental inconsistencies and issues. This idea of the body which is difficult to love is arguably central to the question of how magazines might be able to commercially benefit from their deployments of *love your body* discourse: creating a market in which magazine body advice is a valuable commodity.

In the second half of this chapter, 'love' was then explained as a practice by the woman upon her body. This practice was described first in terms of the visual production of an image, where the investment of love in the body could be evidentially seen upon the body's surface as the "shiner, sexier" version of the self (Extract 7). In addition, the 'choice' to love their bodies offered to young women readers could also be understood as limited within neo-liberal discourses of health, discourses of consumption and essentialist discourses about the 'nature' of women's bodies. Here, body 'love' was defined as a practiced ethic of care, and the circular production of a more loveable body.

Taken together, love in the case of magazines and bodies appears to be tightly and contingently defined. Above all else, love describes the practice and production of a specifically gendered (and aged, classed and sized) body. The following chapter maintains this emphasis on gender, as it continues on from production and practice, to suggest one of the discursive *purposes* of loving the body.

Chapter 7:

The 'Male Observer' in Magazine 'Body Love' Discourse

You're having one of those fat days, but your new boyfriend wants to hang out (translation: get busy). You:

- a) Invite him over. Rolling around usually wipes away any insecurities.
- b) Hook up with him, but covertly position yourself so that he can't see your belly
- c) Tell him you're not feeling too good.

(*Cosmopolitan Australia: Body Love* section, January 2009, p138, "The Naked Quiz")

Gender is central to the *body love* messages of magazines. As discussed in previous chapters, the directive to *love your body* is a message specifically for women, about their 'woman bodies'. This chapter introduces another gendered figure encountered throughout the analysis: a male with an interest in women's bodies. The analytical work presented herein is centered upon the this male subject and the ways he is signified, in particular and as in the quote above, discussing his construction as an expert heterosexual spectator and participant in women's performance of *body love*.

In some ways, it comes as no surprise that men do feature throughout the *love your body* content of magazines like *Cleo* and *Cosmopolitan*. A large proportion of the content in these publications is overtly related to understanding, catching, keeping and pleasing the opposite sex; most articles having a 'sexuality and relationships' theme (Farvid & Braun, 2006; McMahon, 1990). Both readers and researchers have additionally pointed out that even when women's magazine content appears to fall outside of these topics, (for example, in beauty, fashion or lifestyle pages), the impetus to follow the advice in such content is still framed by the magazine as the reader's desire to be attractive and interesting to potential male partners (Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008). Additionally it should be noted that men are not only present in women's magazines in the content of the copy but also contribute as writers of about twenty percent of the content, influence which topics are written about via their roles as high-paying advertisers who fund the magazines, and frequently oversee women's magazines in the management roles of media corporations, supervising and employing the female editors of such publications (Gadsden, 2000; Tebbel, 2000).

The magazine-constructed male who dominates women's magazines is highly specific. For example, he takes up a much more nurturing and relationships-oriented role than portrayals of men in both men's magazines and male audience oriented media; he is as such a commodity representation designed for consumption by women readers (Craig, 1992; Fredrick, Fessler & Haselton, 2004; Vigorito & Curry, 1998). These portrayals of magazine men are often aimed at helping women to 'demystify' the opposite sex, which in magazine discourse will be important if she wishes to obtain and maintain a relationship with a man (Gill, 2009b; Hollway, 1984). In turn, this excess of information directed at understanding men in women's magazines arguably belies a deep-set anxiety about women *not* understanding men and therefore unwittingly setting themselves up for singledom solely through misinformed actions of their own fault (Chang, 2000). Writers concerned with masculinities and male well-being have noted that this huge amount of information about 'men' in women's magazines sets up a significant and problematic burden of expectation about what men should be like (e.g. Goddard, 2000). While this may be the case, other feminist writers have pointed out their concerns that 'men' still benefit from overarching messages about women meeting the needs of men and about women being responsible for the functioning of heterosexual relationships, as well as concerns about the problematic, hegemonic constructions of both men and women in gendered magazine relationship content (e.g. Farvid & Braun, 2006; Ramazanoglu, 1992a&b).

All of the above also appears to apply in the general body related content in women's magazines. For example, even where body content does not overtly mention men, the implication is still that following the advice will make women's bodies feminine and (heterosexually) attractive; men are writers of a notable minority of the content; the bodies of women (and men) are largely conceptualized as existing within heterosexual relationships; the bodies of men (and women) are 'demystified', as are the 'preferences' 'men' have for particular kinds of women's bodies; and knowing all this information should help a woman secure and (up)keep a (sexual) relationship. In the magazine context, both 'men' and 'women', and in particular their bodies exist as 'other' to each other within narrow and hegemonic discursive frames.

In turn, the fantasy male of women's magazines serves a number of purposes within *love your body* content and there are many possible ways in which to make sense of his inclusion. Representative of "the underlying source of women's fulfillment, security and happiness" (Farvid & Braun, 2006, p.299), in some ways it makes sense that the magazine 'men' should make an appearance in order to signify these same outcomes within the *body love* messages of the dataset in this study. Before presenting my own analytical work around this, it is worth pointing out that his presence has not escaped the notice of popular culture commentators either. For example, Angela Shanahan (2010) writes:

Perhaps Dolly wants to encourage Australian girls to lose their body image inhibitions, so that they can lose their virginity if they wish when they morph from girls to young women, most of whom are morphing rapidly, to size 20. [text omitted]

Boys are just as exploited, perhaps more so. They are confused and vulnerable, especially about the availability of girls.

When girls start reading magazines such as Dolly and plastering Facebook sites with imaginary exploits with hot guys, most of the real boys of their age have barely graduated to Top Gear and Mad. (Shanahan, 2010, n.p.)

Although cynical about an ulterior purpose to *body love* messages, the less alarmist features of Shanahan's quotation above provide a summary of some of the main points to be found in this chapter. For example, the "hot guy" of women's *body love* messages often stands to remind the reader that men have body issues too; he also is the implicit benefactor when "girls lose their body image inhibitions" (and, as somewhat contemptuously suggested above, their virginity). He looks at women's bodies and so is more than just a theoretical gendering of the woman's surveillance of her own body (Mulvey, 1975; Pollock, 1977). Figuratively, he is also the intricately constructed counterpart of a magazine version of women's heterosexuality; in this way he is quite distant from the literal "real boys" referred to in the article above. Collectively however, this constructed "hot guy" has some kind of stake in the *love your body* message of women's magazines, and so further analysis of what he might signify is highly relevant to my research.

Alternatively, other commentators have considered the inclusion of male commentators in women's body messages to be perhaps a positive step. Consider this comment from male

internet writer, Joe Hildebrand, which reads the expertise awarded to men in relation to women's bodies in a positive frame:

[The fashion industry] "presents the ideal woman as a waifish figure with no breasts, no arse and, for that matter, no personality. I find this particularly insulting, given that breasts and arses are my favourite parts of a woman, followed closely by her personality". [text omitted]

... "according to my investigations fashion designers all tend to be gay men or straight women. It strikes me as rather interesting that in trying to work out how to make themselves attractive women seek the advice of the only two groups of people in the world who aren't attracted to them. Obviously this will not do wonders for one's self esteem". (2009, n.p.).

Given Joe's comments, one possible alternative reading of the magazine 'guy' in *body love* messages is that it is a positive thing that *Cosmopolitan* has turned to the heterosexual male population, who *are* interested in women's bodies, and asked them to contribute to the 'body love debate'. From this point of view, conceivably the interest in the (heterosexual) male's opinion represents a step in the right direction. However, Joe's comments in the quote above are specifically about men's expertise in relation to making women's bodies attractive to men. In other words, his interest maintains women and women's bodies as commodity objects of heterosexual attraction, invalidating any purpose of *body love* as being about women finding investment and enjoyment within their own bodies.

Overall, what is clear from the above brief tour of the literature is that 'men' have come to represent something crucial to the magazine 'woman'. The following analysis uses sample extracts taken from a thematic subset of the data, incorporating articles which spoke about men, relationships and sexuality in relation to loving the body. The initial coding phases consistently noted articles with content about 'men' or (hetero)'sex and sexuality', however these data spanned across a number of the other identified themes and so in the final thematic map were subsumed across other categories (i.e. difficult to love bodies, how to love the body, etc.). However, what was noted as relatively unique about the 'male oriented' extracts, was that they were one of the few places in the data set where 'being confident' in the body was overtly discussed. Also noteworthy about these men-focused data excerpts are their significant overlap with extracts coded in the thematic analysis as being about the (woman's) body being (made) visible. Both of these features will be evident in the analysis below. Finally, one of the aims of this thesis is to critically interrogate a claim

that ‘new’ *body love* discourse represents a departure from the ‘old’ magazine messages of difficult embodiment. If it is to do this, then it is crucial that my analysis addresses how discourses of relationships and sexuality are incorporated in the ‘new’ messages, having been one of the most consistent and consistently problematised features of the ‘old’.

The three extracts discussed below represent typical examples of different kinds of male-featuring *love your body* content. Each of these pieces has been written by a different female author (but as discussed above, men do author *body love* content, see Extract 10, Chapter 6 for an example of this). In keeping with the objectives of my research, in each case the analysis is focused on constructions of women and their bodies as part of a *body love* message. However this final text analysis chapter additionally explores the construction of men as women’s ‘counterpart’ in a heterosexual discourse, men as a commodity signifier for the positive outcomes of having (/displaying) love for the body, and how men are positioned as commentators on women’s bodies.

The first extract appeared on the cover page of *Cosmopolitan’s Body Love* section in October 2008, with the title “537 Men Reveal: The Sex Appeal of Women with Real Bodies” (p. 233), and accompanied by one of the lined-up ‘body love images’ of undressed women (also note cf. Chapter 5 the word choices of ‘real’ and ‘reveal’ in the heading). This short introduction to a ‘men tell’ themed body section claims to have uncovered the ‘truth’ about men’s opinion of women’s bodies:

Extract 11

Every woman at some point in her life wonders what a man thinks of her body. It doesn’t live up to any feminist ideals – but it happens. Sadly, these thoughts are not always positive. Most women worry whether or not a man will find us attractive naked. In a recent online survey of 537 men, we learnt this angst is unfounded. The truth? Men love our bodies. The majority don’t notice or care about our so-called imperfections and prefer girls who are happy and confident. Here, they tell us their side of our body image story.

The second part of the extract appears on the following page of the magazine, again using the ‘Man Panel’ survey results to tell readers about ‘guys’ opinions of their bodies:

Cellulite and stretch marks... Do guys care?

NO! TURN THE LIGHTS ON, NOW!

Cellulite and stretch marks are a natural part of being a woman. When asked if our biggest body hang-up turned them off in bed, our man panel said:

15% "Yes, and it turns me off"

32% "Not really, I never notice that stuff"

53% "No. As long as she's confident and passionate, I don't care".

*that's a whopping 85% of guys who don't care – so why should you?

Immediately apparent within both parts of this extract is the exclusive address of a solely *heterosexual* audience – the emphasis here being on both the 'hetero' and the 'sexual'. From one point of view, this extract assumes that all of its readers will be attracted to men, and concerned about men's opinions of their specifically naked bodies (Weinberg & Williams, 2010). Like the white, slim bodies which dominate the pages of images in contemporary women's magazines (Redmond, 2003; Wykes & Gunter, 2005), these kinds of texts send a limiting message about what bodies are and should be for, which excludes many women – in this case lesbian women and women who identify with a variety of other, non hetero- sexualities (Levy, 2005). Perhaps such women are less likely to read publications like *Cleo* and *Cosmopolitan* precisely because of their lack of address – however this is not the issue here. The problem is that the text claims to speak for "Every woman", and so renders 'alternative' sexualities invisible (Kitzinger, Wilkinson & Perkins, 1992). If being comfortable with revealing the body (in bed, to a man) is an act of loving the body, then women who do not have sexual relationships with men are made invisible and so excluded, unable to participate in this expression of *body love*.

At the same time, the text seems to suggest that heterosexual women have no reason but their 'body hang-ups' to not be revealing their bodies to men. The assumption of the extract is not only that all readers are heterosexual, but it assumes too that all readers are having sex with men, and that they will be relieved to hear that men do want to see their unclothed bodies. It also places heterosexuality at the forefront of importance to women's (embodied) subjectivity. Altogether, this trivialises women's body difficulties as irrational (as in Chapter 6; Bosson, Pinel & Thompson, 2008), as well as minimising the importance to subjectivity of some of the meanings which can be made of certain acts of sexuality and diminishing the options for relations between men and women to sexual relationships. This double act of dissolving other possibilities for women's sexuality and relationships alongside

the assumption of engagement in heterosexual behaviour is produced through a discourse of 'compulsory heterosexuality' endemic in contemporary, mainstream media (Rich 1980). However, what is particularly pernicious about the 'compulsory heterosexuality' discourse appearing in the *love your body* messages is that it means certain bodies become categorically unloveable not just by virtue of their 'physical features' (which is bad enough), but by the practices of sexual subjectivity of the woman who inhabits that body. In other words, it is not just the (real or imaginary) identified physical attributes of a body which can designate a woman's body as 'difficult to love', but also the preferences, subjectivities or circumstances which encompass her expressions of sexuality. In this way, *body love* is constructed as a highly restricted commodity object of identity.

Extract 11 takes the discussion in Chapter 5 about the association of *body love* with stripped down images of women's bodies one step further. Beyond the idea of the body being visible and *available* to be seen, *Extract 11* discusses an active and purposeful practice of revealing the body to the opposite sex, and a designated (male) viewer (Berger, 1972) who wants to see the woman's body. Similarly, where Chapters 2 and 5 took up a generic application of Mulvey's work to discuss 'the gaze' and women's visually embodied subjectivities, *Extract 11* lends itself to a more specific application of her 1975 paper about '*scopophilia*' (i.e. men's *pleasure* in looking at women's bodies), and the visual image of woman as a signifier for male desire (Pollock, 1977). But particularly, what I see in this extract is a specific call for women to act to affirm the desirability of their bodies. This happens via an incitement to make these bodies available to a male gaze, which the readers have been told will find their bodies pleasurable to look at with the lights on. In turn, this call for women to *literally* make their bodies visible to male partners is justified by an idea of what magazine-constructed 'men' think of women's naked bodies.

The 'male opinion' is a common component in *body love* content which references men, as it is in the text of *Extract 11* where readers are offered "their [men's] side of the body image story". The value of these 'male opinions' on women's bodies within *body love* discourse is dependent on a number of discursive ideas. These include first, an appeal to an implicit knowledge that men (and men's bodies) are different to women and as such men have a different perspective to offer. The construction of a binary between the differing opinions

of men and women in relation to women's bodies is clearly illustrated in *Extract 11*. Moreover, the opinion of the "man-panel" appears to be valued above the woman / reader's concerns about her own body. Secondly, much of the value of the 'male opinion' lies in the claim / assumption of men's universal desire and attraction to women's bodies and through this there is a positioning of male investment in women's "body image story". Angela Shanahan's opinion piece at the beginning of this chapter suggesting *body love* is about a loss of inhibitions and virginity may seem ironic and cynical, however men *are* openly framed as sexual benefactors of women being able to love their bodies. Third, the value of the 'male opinion' to magazine *body love* messages draws upon a 'psy-discourse', based in research which concluded that there is a discrepancy between the bodies which heterosexual men identify as attractive compared to women's estimates of their responses (Fallon & Rosin, 1985). This, coupled with another 'body image' 'psy-discourse' of women being unable to know their bodies as they really are (Blood, 2005), in a way builds a psychological expertise of men in relation to women's bodies, in turn allowing again for the value of male opinions within magazine *body love* commentaries. Finally, the value of the 'male opinion' here, being based in 'his' 'expert' evaluation of women's bodies, constructs *body love* as an issue of the actual *body*, its 'desirability' and what it looks like, as opposed to an issue of women's *subjectivity* and how she learns to understand her embodiment.

A final point about *Extract 11* is the use of the word 'feminist'. 'Feminist' and 'feminism' are generally words deliberately avoided by magazine writers because they believe readers and advertisers will respond negatively to their use of "the 'f' word" (Keller, 2011, p.7; Tebbel 2000); these terms are substituted with words like 'empowerment' which ironically can act to de-gender and depoliticise important issues of women's power (Gavey, 2012; Gill, 2008b; McRobbie, 2009). In *Extract 11*, 'feminist' appears to index an ideal of thought where it would be a failing if women were interested in the ways in which their gendered bodies might be socially comprehensible, or perhaps were interested at all in what 'men' think (Tyler, 2005). Grossly misrepresenting feminism as a singular movement with demanding ideals displaces possibilities for young women's engagement with feminism in favour of magazine discourses of post-feminist femininities (McRobbie, 2008; Riordan, 2001). In blaming feminism for the high standards it sets for young women, perhaps the greatest

irony of this extract lies in the singularly impossible ideals the beauty and body messages of *magazines themselves* set for young women.

The second extract comes from a feature article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, (February 2009, p.154-155), titled “Why Men Like Us Love Girls Like You” (note the use of “Girls” instead of “Women” – as in Extract 5, Chapter 6). The article consists of six black and white photos of men with “perfect torsos” without their shirts, accompanied by a comment from each about their bodies, and what they find attractive in women’s bodies:

Extract 12

Gary Dempsey, 25, personal trainer

Gary may not have an ounce of spare flesh on him, but he likes women to be curvy. “I definitely prefer a J.Lo to a Posh Spice”, he says. There is one thing he doesn’t like about us, however: “I’m not a foot-lover. It drives me mad when women wear heels, then complain that their feet hurt. Also, women who preen in front of the mirror can be a turn-off”.

And Gary says he wouldn’t want his girlfriend to go under the knife. “It’s an easy way out. Women should work out to achieve the body they want, and grow old gracefully”.

He reckons he’s no perfect specimen, either. “I like my teeth and my arms, but I have women’s calves!”

Luke Cassell, 22, Sports Science Student

Despite his hot body, single Luke reckons he’s riddled with insecurities about his looks. “I’m self-conscious about my height – at 180cm, I believe I’m too short”, he says. “I also think I’ve got a big nose and bags under my eyes”. But one thing he’s sure about is what he’s looking for: “I like a girl to take pride in her appearance, but I’m not keen on high-maintenance women. I’m attracted to women who are confident and happy”. Which is how he explains dating women who’ve had boob jobs. “I didn’t know they’d had them!” he says. “I think it was their new-found confidence that attracted me”. We’d like to think so, too!

The message that ‘men have body issues too’ appears throughout the *body love* content of women’s magazines: in this extract, ‘Gary’ “reckons he’s no perfect specimen” and ‘Luke’ is “riddled with insecurities about his looks”. The magazine’s claim about men’s difficult embodiment coheres with a relatively new, yet noteworthy body of academic literature, (Bordo, 2000; De Visser, Smith & McDonnell, 2009; Fredrick, Fessler & Haselton, 2005; Gill, 2008a). However, it is possible to still acknowledge both a cultural ‘reality’ of problematic male embodiment, while also recognising the discursive effects of bringing the subject up in the context of what is supposed to be a positive body message directed towards women. These include an overall message that all bodies are difficult to love, and consequently support for the idea that body difficulties are ‘normal’. Furthermore, these articles convey that men are just like women in relation to how they feel about their bodies, and experience

the same difficulties in the same way. These two effects work in conjunction with each other, implying both that gender is not a factor in women's disproportionate experience of body difficulties, and gender is irrelevant to how women's (or men's) body difficulties are experienced, developed and sanctioned in culture (cf. Blood, 2005; Orbach, 1986; 2008; Ussher, 2006). For example, the 'men have body issues too' discourse fails to acknowledge that due to the wider range of less appearance-dependent masculinities / subjectivities available to men in mainstream culture, the impact of the 'body issues' they do experience may (possibly) be more escapable in some domains than the body difficulties experienced by women (however Gill, 2006 & 2008a suggests that men are increasingly being defined by their bodies).

The accounts of both 'Gary' and 'Luke' contain a message about how they feel about women's appearance focussed body practices. Contained in each of the above commentaries and anchored in neo-liberal discourse is a complicated discourse about 'body maintenance', emphasized by its appearance in this 'relationships'-focused article because of the way the outcome of 'catching' / (keeping) a good man is placed right in front of the reader as incentive (Farvid & Braun, 2006; see also Gill, 2009b; Harvey & Gill, 2011; Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008). This discourse is constructed through a number of contradictory ideas. For example, both of these men provide a largely appearance focussed commentary of what they are searching for in a partner: Gary wants a partner who "work[s] out to achieve the body she wants", and Luke wants "a girl to take pride in her appearance" and be confident, in the past having achieved this by dating women with breast implants. However, they are both also clear that they are "not keen on high maintenance women", who "preen in front of the mirror" or have taken the "easy way out" by having surgery. In a way, these ideas work together to produce a 'triple' bind – where women should produce a desirable appearance, without 'taking the easy way out' or short cutting this process but equally, without being seen to engage in the maintenance of this desirable appearance. Together the triple condemnation of quick fixes, less than ideal, and high maintenance bodies seems more like an escalation of magazine body tyranny than an improved, positive body message.

The concept of an article about "Why [attractive] Men Like Us Love [average] Girls Like You" in itself says something interesting about the roles men and women are assigned in the *love*

your body messages of women's magazines. For example, this article extends the value of the 'male opinion' on women's bodies to indicate particular expertise awarded in the case of hegemonically 'attractive' men. Most likely, this is related to the general expertise granted to 'men' on the basis of being attracted to women('s bodies) perhaps exemplified for 'attractive' men because these should be the 'men' heterosexual 'women' are most attracted to and therefore 'should be' most concerned about their opinion. This article is also a good example of how men are constructed as both benefits and benefactors for / of women's practices of being confident in their bodies (Gill, 2009b; Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008). Finally, by its implicit hailing of the 'regular'/'average' woman reader ("Girls Like You") the article indicates that there are classes of men and women based on attractiveness which are transcendable by the successful (confident, non-high-maintenance) woman (Scanlon, 2009).

Aside from the mention of 'attraction' in 'Luke's' comment, the expressive content of both of the pieces of *Extract 12* is somewhat emotionless given that supposedly these men are speaking about women they potentially would like to have relationships with; the kinds of 'girls' that the article tells the reader 'guys' "love". Equally, the magazine's synecdoche in labelling the commenting men 'six perfect torsos', mirrors the detached, image focussed idea of what heterosexual women should be "looking for" in a partner. This kind of carefully managed communication of desire, according to McMahon (1990), is part of a magazine ideology which sees relationships and attraction as 'things' rather than 'processes', and arguably encourages the commodification of both the relationship and the participants in it. Rich comments on a similar void of emotion identifiable in both advertising and "soft core pornography" as directly linked to the commodification and objectification of (women's) bodies, amongst other things stripping "women of their"..."potential of loving and being loved"..."in mutuality and integrity"¹ (1980, p. 641).

In contrast, LeMasurier (2010) in her article about male centrefolds argues for this kind of invested-desiring-looking as a positive expression of appearance-focussed attraction in culture, which should be available to and celebrated for women as well as men. She does not deny, however, that this looking is an expression of power which can objectify its object (cf. Foucault, 1979); her analysis suggests that taking up an appearance-focussed gaze could

empower the person looking, but she does not interrogate the problem of the objectification of the 'person' being looked at nor the problem of a gaze which objectifies (to be fair, this is not her purpose in the article). While the idea of a visual "sexual desire [not] sanctioned by love" may be applicable in LeMasurier's analysis and acceptable to the 'popular feminism' discourse which justifies it, the article referenced in *Extract 12* is about "Why Men Like Us *Love* Girls Like You" (emphasis added). It seems that somehow 'love' and expressions of 'visual (hetero)sexual desire' have not been so cleanly detached here in male focussed *body love* messages (cf. *Extract 11*: "Men *love* our bodies"; underlining added, italics in original). Consequently, the concerns about commodification in / of emotionless media relationships and bodies discussed in the previous paragraph could be seen to apply here. Equally, in keeping with discussions about 'love' in the previous chapter, perhaps the commodified, emotionless, "sexualised" 'love' in the *Extract 12* article has been mirrored in some of the things 'love' has come to mean when the magazine tells young women to *love your body*.

The commodification of bodies and sexuality continues in *Extract 13*, which appeared in *Cosmopolitan* magazine's *Body Love* section (October 2008, p.240), this time in the article "Boost your Body-Esteem". The article introduces the concept of 'sex kitten confidence', and then presents the reader with a series of strategies for attracting male attention "in bed", "on a date", or "at a party". *Extract 13* is taken from the introduction to the article:

Extract 13

There's a brand of self-assurance SO HOT, it can only be called one thing: *sex kitten confidence*. Here's how to get it...

Cleverly dubbed "feline confidence" (purr!), it goes beyond making eye contact and serving up a strong handshake – it requires harnessing the power of your sexuality. "Certain movements, expressions, and gestures send signals that subconsciously pique men's interest", says Peter Andersen, author of *The Complete Idiots Guide to Body Language*. "And when you sense that a guy is into you, it gives you a real boost".

Which is certainly not to say feeling great about yourself relies on gaining a guy's approval. Sex kittens have a high level of self-validation. They refuse to fall prey to body fascism and know transmitting an irresistible vibe to guys has more to do with how comfortable they are with themselves than it does with achieving physical perfection. The bottom line is this: acting confident is a self-fulfilling prophecy. These tricks will make it happen for you:

At face value, Extract 13 contains a number of seriously contradictory ideas - a feature which is common in the prose of women's magazines (McCracken, 1993). However, Machin and Thornborrow (2003 & 2006) have argued that in the case of magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, it is important in analyses to not get too lost in the complexities of the contradictions and look towards the trends in discursive meaning available within the text piece and across the publication's style as a whole. Compared with the first two extracts then, the 'male figure' here is more constructed / fictional / hypothetical: no males have been surveyed, there are no "perfect torsos" which inform the readers about what they are 'looking for' in a partner, these are not Angela Shanahan's "real boys". But regardless, there still is a discursive undercurrent of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980), which assumes that all women will find male attention desirable and reinforcing of their confidence, and that all men will respond to these gestures of heterosexuality.

The "brand" of heterosexuality spoken about in *Extract 13* invokes Judith Butler's concepts of 'performativity' and 'masquerade' (1990; 1993; 2004). The "movements, expressions and gestures" women are invited to perform in order to signify themselves as confident and 'irresistible to guys' seem to be more about 'validating' a particular kind of subjectivity, as opposed to being targeted towards attracting the sexual interest of men (Ferreday, 2008). It even seems possible that some of the gestures and practices this article calls for women to engage in would not need to be directed towards someone she actually was (sexually) interested in, but instead are aimed towards all or any men who given their status as 'men', are seen as recipients / audience for these gestures (although some "tricks" are certainly designed for a sexual context). Accordingly, this piece of text understands any woman's gestures of (hetero)sexuality as powerful and confident (Machin & Thornborrow, 2006), and equally, disempowers and strips the possibility of signifying (embodied) confidence from the woman who will not / cannot make herself intelligible within the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler 1990; Gavey, 2011). Furthermore, these particular performances of "sex-kitten confidence" are not only sexualised, but this sexualised framing of 'confidence' is also heavily gendered (Gill, 2007a; 2008c; 2009a; Kim & Ward, 2004). Even though *Extract 13* seems to communicate that "achieving physical perfection" is not necessary, like both *Extracts 1* and *2* (Chapter 5) the message overall is that being confident, happy and taking

pride in the appearance are important attributes, not because they are valuable qualities in their own right, but because women's performances of these qualities *are attractive to men*.

The persistently effortful production of confidence in subjectivity and embodiment throughout the article *Extract 13* comes from also lends itself to being understood within Foucauldian conceptualisations of docile bodies which are constantly under surveillance (Foucault, 1979). In this article women are encouraged for example, to watch the way they walk ("take long strides" and make sure to "walk in front of him"), make eye contact for a designated number of seconds, and even to lie down only in specific ways when in bed (one way of lying down "emanate[s] brazen seductiveness", another "puts you in a lusty frame of mind" and "your stomach will look flatter"). As such, women are required to be always vigilant about their bodies and actions – and in doing so successfully, will be able to signify and experience confidence in those bodies (Bartky, 1990; Orbach, 2009). *Body love* as a practice within texts like *Extract 13* then, becomes something incredibly contrived and complicated, a matter for 'experts' (like Peter Anderson) and their advice. Yet, this is perhaps where the marketable appeal of pieces like *Extract 13* comes from: if *body love* and confidence are indeed constructed as so complicated yet so central to success with 'men', a magazine like *Cosmopolitan* which is able to break down the issue with clear instructional advice which is easily readable and understandable can ensure its sales popularity. That *Cosmopolitan* is simultaneously contributing to *both* the complexity as well as the advice is a much less straightforward issue.

Coding men as the source and sounding board for women's confidence, security and happiness can be understood as gendered power at work. *Extract 13* makes the assumption that women *want* to be the subject of the sexualised attention of men, covertly closing off the possibility that women will be able to 'self-validate' / feel good about themselves via any other method - despite the text's denial to the contrary. The assumption that 'women want to be the subject of the sexualised attention of men' as part of a discourse of 'compulsory heterosexuality' has been used in other contexts to justify the *unwanted* sexual attention of men towards women, including within 'rape myth' discourses (see Burt, 1991; Gavey, 2005). On one hand, I would argue that women should be able to hold the attention of men without concern that this automatically places them within sexualised discourses

and that their efforts to invite attention could be framed as (in the extreme) justifications for sexual violence. However on the other, calling upon the reader to act like a 'sex kitten' and to constantly monitor and control the body in the ways *Extract 13* and its associated article suggests, seems almost humiliating, contrived and quite bizarre (Wolf, 1991). If the communication of desires, sexuality and relationships between the sexes in magazines like *Cosmopolitan* is expressed within a tightly controlled, commodified and defined ideology (McMahon, 1990) then *Extract 13* seems to be an outstanding example of this. *Extract 13* can also be read as a powerful eroticisation of women's body issues, body issues which are seen as made through a problem of women's gender but resolvable via heterosexuality.

A Final Thought and Summary

In 2008, Menard and Kleinplatz published a thematic analysis of magazine articles about how men's and women's magazines constructed 'great sex'. Five themes were identified, and included amongst these were that a magazine version of 'great sex' required women to *be less inhibited*, and *confident* about initiating sex in a variety of ways, times and places. Two of the themes ('pre-sex preparation' and 'psychological factors') were found almost exclusively in women's magazines. The former advised women about the importance of grooming their bodies and their environments to make for a better sexual experience (for their male partners). 'Psychological factors' included advice to women readers to *know* their bodies and what does (/ how to) 'turn them on'; on how to not be distracted by the other things in their lives during sex; and on how to bring their sexuality out of the bedroom and into their everyday activities (Gill, 2009b; Harvey & Gill, 2011). Still within the theme of 'psychological factors' contributing to 'great sex', the authors then go on to add:

Good body-image as a prerequisite to the experience of "great sex" [...] was approached with a focus on female bodies exclusively within both men's and women's magazines. A woman's increased comfort with her body was considered an important contributing factor to the experience of "great sex". Readers of *Men's Health* were told, "The way a woman feels about her body correlates with how inhibited she feels in bed... praising her most guarded body parts – butt, thighs, waist – may be more important to your sexual satisfaction". (Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008, p.12).

The striking intersection between magazine ideas of gender, women's confidence, their body and their sexuality identifiable via the Menard and Kleinplatz analysis (2008) clearly

seems to have made its way into some of the *love your body* messages in *Cleo* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines discussed in the analysis above. Somehow, male satisfaction and desire has become an important issue to the magazine *love your body* message. Coupled with neo-liberal discourses of individual choices around the body (Hinnant, 2009; Roy, 2008; Walkerdine, 2004), the heterosexual framing of *body love* in magazines seems to be working to obscure other issues about how for example, women have come to find their bodies difficult to love, or why women might need “guys’ approval” in order to construct themselves as confident.

In summary, this chapter has found little different from what might be generally expected from a women’s magazine analysis piece given previous research in this area. The contribution of this chapter then is found in the work it does to deconstruct the magazines’ claims that these are “new” body messages about ‘love’, which should encourage women to feel better about their bodies and subjectivities. On the whole, magazines are still communicating tyrannies about the management, production and cultural meanings of women’s bodies (however in much more covert and less consistent ways). But in particular, women’s bodies continue to be understood within these messages as the sexualised objects of gendered discourses about heterosexuality; these being discourses which hail / construct magazine readers as ‘other’ and visible to a heavily constructed version of the magazine ‘man’. It is my contention that until magazines are able to move the issue of women’s difficult embodiment outside of the understanding of women’s bodies as inevitably heterosexual, the *body love* / positive body messages they attempt to convey will continue to disempower, commodify and create discursive problems for women’s embodied subjectivities.

Chapter 8:

Introduction to the Interview Analysis Study

This next section of my thesis introduces a second study undertaken investigating the nature of *love your body* messages in magazines. In the following chapters I present my analysis of interviews conducted with magazine staff who work to produce various women's magazine titles available throughout New Zealand and / or Australia. Broadly, these interviews aimed to inquire about the practices and opinions of those who produce magazine body-related content: how they describe what they do, their perspectives about bodies as a topic of media content, and how they conceptualise the readers of the messages they produce.

The rationale behind interviewing magazine employees is multifaceted (see also, Chapter 1). Historically the balance of academic work about magazines has been about texts and readers (e.g. Blood, 2005; Currie, 2001; Gill, 2009b; Hermes, 1995; Hinnant, 2009; Jackson, 2005a&b; Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; 2006; McMahon, 1990; Pattee, 2009; Roy, 2008; Ytre-Arne, 2001), as opposed to a relatively much briefer literature about magazine production and producers (e.g. Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Gough-Yates, 2003; Hinnant, 2006; Keller, 2011; Massoni, 2008; McRobbie, 1996; Milkie, 2002). The theoretical reasons for this discrepancy have been discussed elsewhere in this thesis (Chapters 1 and 3). These are also compounded in a practical sense by constraints on the number and availability of potential participants, comparably making text and reader studies a far more viable option. As such, interview research with magazine contributors adds a relatively unique perspective towards understanding what is seen on the (body content) pages of a magazine. In particular, without the perspectives of editorial staff a conceptualisation of *body love* messages in magazines as a possible remedial response to historical feminist (and other) criticisms about media body messages is only an assumption. Even if this assumption were valid, a discussion about the perspectives of magazine staff against the nature, context, development and intention of what this 'response' might entail is currently (to my best knowledge) missing from the literature.

Relatedly, if the 'old'/'problematic' body messages in magazines are theoretically conceptualised as being a combined product of the institutions and discourses they are produced and readable within, then an investigation into the 'new' *body love* messages should also entail an interest in their production. Earlier in this thesis, I framed my research interest around 'what exactly *is* new' about the body messages seen in magazines and media; these research interviews extend that question to ask now, 'what has *allowed for* this kind of content to be produced?' This question is crucial from a feminist perspective which has long argued that the body messages made available to women through a variety of discursive forms and forums are problematic (e.g. Bartky, 1990; Blood, 2005; Bordo, 2003; Cooke, 1996; Etcoff, Orbach, Scott & D'Agostino, 2004; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Manheim, 2000; Orbach, 2005; Pollock, 1977; Tuchman, 1979; Wolf, 1991). Understanding the context and methods of how magazine media have undertaken to make such change would be a valuable exercise for both current and future feminist work which seeks to shift problematic meanings of women's bodies.

Alongside the motivations outlined above for interviewing magazine staff, I was also curious about what it meant to be both involved in the production of women's magazines but at the same time, to be a subject woman who is or inhabits a body, writing publicly for the media about the ways in which women can be in and feel about their bodies. Hence, I was interested in not just how body messages were produced in magazines, but how interviewees negotiated and understood themselves as women producers of media body messages. These curiosities became incorporated into the interview study, shaping both the course of the interviews and the later analysis undertaken.

To provide an overview of what will follow, the magazine staff interview study is presented across three chapters. This first short chapter discusses the method for the interview study, including information about the participants and how they were recruited, about the actual interviews themselves and their transcription, and finally, an outline of the process of the analysis. The second chapter (9) presents a discursive analysis about constructions of the ('good') magazine, including how these constructions suggest specific roles for both magazine producers and readers. The last analysis chapter takes topical interview material

about 'images' as its focus, investigating how discussions within the interviews located images as a key site for the production of magazine body (love) messages.

Method

Participant recruitment

Locating potential participants for the interview study was a significant challenge. It involved many hours of researching media institutions, understanding the different positions and roles which make up a magazine environment (including their relationships to each other, and following the constant staff turnover in many of these jobs), and learning about magazine calendars in terms of when staff would be busy with 'on sale dates' and media events. These things all were important to know in order to increase my chances of successful contact with potential participants, (for example, calling when a potential participant was actually in the office was far more preferable to leaving multiple messages with a secretary). Furthermore, many magazine employees, particularly editors, are bombarded with huge numbers of requests for their time from other forms of media, and students doing school research projects (Freedman, 2009). Because of these multiple demands on their time, contact information is made incredibly difficult to source; many people are very reluctant to even discuss participating, and I discovered that some magazine titles have strict no-interview policies. Furthermore, even when I was able to get in touch with a possible participant, many non-editors declined because they were 'unable to speak on behalf of the title' and I found that even when they gave me the chance to explain, they found it very hard to appreciate why I would want to conduct interviews about their personal ideas.

I found that emails were rarely answered, and that phone calls, if ever answered, were relatively more successful. However, often the only available number at a title was for a sales representative, and it took many calls before I would have any contact information for a potential participant. I was frequently told in these information-seeking calls that there was no benefit for the title in spending time listening to my request or providing the contact information I asked for. I would then agree, but say that I had contacted them because I

believed that my research sought the response and opinion of people working in an industry which had been heavily criticised in the research field. It was often advantageous here to be able to point out what it was about my contact's magazine work which had led me to specifically request their personal input and, again, here my background research became very useful. On many occasions, this response was still met with a polite no, or the other person hanging up the phone. A number of times, a potential participant would agree over the phone, but would not respond to emails or answer calls following this first contact. About half of those who did agree to participate and did continue contact were in the end unavailable or cancelled.

These recruitment issues were compounded by two other problems. First, all of the potential participants were very aware of the controversies around magazines and bodies – staying on the phone long enough to reassure them of my purpose, while still being upfront about being interested in the challenges was a matter of making each word count. Second, 'magazine staff' are a very small group in the first place, (particularly in New Zealand, most contributors work for more than one title; each title may only have one or two dedicated employees). Moreover, being a small group with close relationships also sometimes made confidentiality issues difficult to negotiate in terms of not confirming other participants' identity, and also in describing the participants: there are not many people who could describe themselves as I do below.

However, when I did finally get in touch with those who became this final set of participants, each of them was really enthusiastic and keen to share their thoughts. Half of the eight interviewees met with me outside of work hours or during their lunch break, that is, in their own time. Where instead (or additionally) I was invited to the workplaces of participants, this provided me with a valuable experience in terms of being able to see the environment they work in and getting a sense of the media organisations they work for. Without exception they are all extremely busy people and it is important, I think, that I acknowledge here my gratitude to them for meeting with me.

Describing the participants

The following description of the participants is the outcome of a tension between needing to describe the research undertaken in enough detail that readers of this thesis might understand the nature of the interviews, and the ethical commitment made to protect the identity of the participants as much as possible. There are few published studies of magazine personnel available as a resource on which I could model this section, and I held significant reservations about using their participant descriptions as a format given the amount of descriptive information provided. For example, Hinnant (2006) lists participants by the type of magazine they work in, their roles and their years of experience; Keller (2011) names the titles her editor interviewees worked for: in my research I chose not to obtain consent to disclose such identifying information because I wanted to offer my participants a more reserved level of confidentiality (although see Chapter 11). In part this was because the Australasian context of my research could easily facilitate participant identification given the select number of individuals employed by young women's magazines here (c.f. the United States where Hinnant and Keller conducted their research). As Stephens (2007) notes, there are a number of confidentiality challenges associated with selecting participants on a name-by-name basis as opposed to recruiting 'random' people to represent a segment of the population. Because I had used this name-by-name recruitment method a deliberate decision was made to prefer to 'protect' the identity of the participants over providing a full and disclosing description of who these participants were.

Broadly, I aimed to invite to these interviews participants who either currently or previously have worked for a women's magazine title which is available for purchase within New Zealand or Australia, and who have or have had some role in producing or overseeing the body messages which are published in these titles. This search eventuated in six interviews which were transcribed and are central throughout the analysis presented in this and the following chapter. Coincidentally, all of the participants were women (reflective of the fact that most employees at women's magazines are women, but I did also attempt to recruit male participants to the study). Although this was not true of all participants, I was often surprised to find that participants were much younger than I had expected them to be – my expectation perhaps being a testament to their articulate professionalism throughout our

initial contact, and the age of the participants perhaps not necessarily representing a trend in magazine staff but perhaps more a trend in the staff who I was able to recruit to participate.

I also undertook two additional interviews with people who work in Australasia, in an advisory role to the media / magazines in relation to body messages. Appropriate to the roles of the participants, one of these interviews was conducted as a full research interview using similar questions to those asked of the 'magazine staff', transcribed and included directly in the analysis. The other was undertaken more as a mutual discussion, finding out about the 'purpose' of the role of the person interviewed and discussing the progress of my research to date. This interview was not conducted as an 'official' interview nor transcribed but I mention it because the discussion was invaluable to me in terms of how I have come to understand the issues which I raise in this part of my thesis, and my approach to the interviews which followed. In addition, I have supported the information from my interview dataset with other sources authored by magazine professionals about the production of positive body messages in magazines. These include, for example, Freedman, (2009) and Tebbel, (2000), which are written by ex-magazine editors who were influential in shaping the body messages seen in Australasian women's magazines today; also included are items from Freedman's online blog (mamamia.com.au), and other written (reflexive) media pieces available over the course of my research on this topic (e.g. Elphick, 2010; Leive, 2012; Shanahan, 2010; Tankard-Reist, 2012).

Interviews

In the lead up to each interview, the participants were sent an electronic copy of Appendix C, which outlines the research and its purpose (some participants on request were also sent the consent form for them to view in advance, this appears as Appendix D). If participants indicated an intention to participate, a time and place to meet was arranged. The interviews were all conducted in a location convenient to the participant across three major cities in New Zealand and Australia. The interviews typically would take just over an hour, ranging in length from half an hour to over two hours. Each interview was voice-recorded with the consent of the participants.

The interviews were semi-structured (following Willig, 2001), meaning an outline of topic areas guided the interview but ultimately, the interview questions asked were directed both by what was said and the discussion of shared interests, and varied by participant to allow questions specific to their job and the direction which our conversation took. An electronic copy of the interview guide was sent to all participants prior to the interview, and they were given a copy to look over as the interview progressed and to keep if they desired; the interview outline appears in Appendix E. This outline, like other aspects of the design and anticipated undertaking of this interview research (including the appendices C-E), was approved without amendment by Victoria University's School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee.

As Appendix E shows, each interview was organised into six sections. The first encompassed 'pre'-interview formalities such as recapping the interview outline and the consent form with the participants and giving them the opportunity to ask any questions they wished before the two audio-recorders were turned on (a second recorder was used in case the first recorder failed. The second recorder was erased as soon as the original recording was checked in all but one case where the first recording did indeed fail!). Participants here were also given the opportunity to request a summary of initial interview analyses when available, to which all participants agreed. The next four interview sections comprised the body of the interview. Participants were asked about following areas: the magazine title(s) they work(ed) for, how content is produced, their readers and their role; commentary about positive body messages in their magazine and what they thought about them; responses to past criticisms of magazine body messages and what those criticisms now mean in light of any changes they believe have been made; finally, discussion of other positive media body messages they are familiar with, with attention to what they think is needed in / of such messages. The final section gave interviewees an opportunity to ask about my research or anything else they wished to add. The participants were then thanked for their time and the interview came to a close.

Transcription

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and so the process of transcription itself informed the first stages of analysis, as being present in conducting the actual interviews

certainly did. The interviews were conducted over a period of five months. As such the earlier interviews were being transcribed as later ones were in progress and so the transcription of interviews influenced not only the early analysis but also how later interviews progressed. Both these factors I believe to have been of benefit to the final analyses by providing a sense of continuity and progression.

The transcription conventions applied are a simplified version of that appearing in the appendix to Potter and Wetherell (1987), the major goals of the initial transcription being to record as accurately as possible the words spoken throughout the interview, and simultaneously to identify and remove any information which might disclose the identity of the participants. Where text has been removed from / replaced in thesis extracts, this has been indicated in square brackets as in the fictional examples below. The information removed included:

- Names e.g. Nicole Kidman would become [name of celebrity]
- Magazine titles e.g. Knitting Weekly would become [name of craft magazine]
- Interview pieces where participants spoke descriptively of their target market e.g. for Knitting Weekly, “granny crafters” would become [readers].
- Identifiable features / articles / covers from their magazine / branded ideas the magazine is associated with e.g. “last week’s article about knitting socks” would become [text removed]; “the Knitting in Homes promotion” would become [name of magazine initiative].

Some participants also requested that I protect any ‘commercially sensitive information’ (e.g. if they mentioned any upcoming stories they were writing: this was also removed from all transcripts).

The transcription notation identifies each participant by a single letter e.g. ‘A’ or ‘B’ and the interviewer as “R”. Length of pauses, intonation, pronunciations, emphasis and so forth are not recorded – since the research questions which inspired this interview study were interested in the broad meanings readable in the content of what had been said, minimal notation was required for this purpose. All quotations which are used as extracts throughout this thesis were carefully re-checked against the initial recording to confirm accuracy, to determine the tone of the quotation suggested no obvious misinterpretation in

analysis, and also to take the opportunity to confirm that the quotation met the standards set by the researcher for protecting the anonymity of the participants.

Analysis

Following transcription, the interview transcripts were repeatedly read over and annotated for what was ‘interesting’, what ‘fitted’ or was unexpected with my current thinking about *body love* messages (cf. the text analysis) and so forth, in addition to noting major ideas / themes in each piece of speech. I also listened through each interview recording twice as part of this process (i.e. outside the process of transcription), which I believe helped to consolidate my overall ideas about the dataset as a whole. Following Braun & Clarke, (2006) and similarly to the procedures described in my text analysis (Chapter 4), these ideas were organised as the first stages of thematic analysis. The initial thematic map was at this point reworked, remodelled and a number of times entirely restarted, due to concerns that the major themes identified in the first attempts of this analysis drew a direct parallel with questions asked of the participants. Eventually, after much more work back and forth between the transcripts, appropriate literature and the research questions, a core set of ideas seemed to constitute patterns across the transcripts. Continued work within these ideas produced a set of themes which were thought to describe key concepts which repeated across the dataset. These ‘themes’ cut across different ‘levels’ (e.g. some themes were directly named for their topic content, e.g. ‘talk about clothing’, others were more abstract, e.g. ‘balancing reader requests with industry knowledge’), and addressed a range of topics.

The following two chapters each originated from different discursive deconstructions of the functions of particular ‘themes’ produced through this analysis process. The first of these (Chapter 9, about ‘Constructing the Good Magazine’) originated when a cross section of dualistic themes which repeatedly juxtaposed different topics were collected together. To give some examples, these themes included ‘real’ versus ‘model’ women, ‘education’ versus ‘entertainment’, ‘profit’ versus ‘responsibility’ and so forth. In terms of process, these binaries spoke about a wide range of ‘strategies’ and ‘tensions’ involved in producing magazines and their content, and how the constructed dualisms were weighed, “balanced” and managed. To me, these conflicts and cohesions seemed entirely appropriate for further

analysis based in Foucauldian, discursive theories and approaches (Gavey, 1989; Lazar, 2007; Weedon, 1987). This further discursive analysis of extracts identified within this meta-theme (following the processes outlined in Chapter 4) noted a consistent construction of a 'good' magazine as a part of this process, paired with flexible interpretations of readers and content: this work is collated and presented in Chapter 9. The second analytic chapter (Chapter 10) takes up one of the most prolific of the abovementioned content themes, that being to interrogate the construction of 'images' as a topic across the interviews, and in particular questioning what these discussions of images as content facilitated or limited in terms of understanding *love your body* messages in their production context.

Chapter 9:

Constructing the 'Good' Magazine: Discourses About Production

In the introduction to my thesis, I discussed how the magazine media research literature was revolutionised by the contribution of audience studies, which moved academic understandings of magazine reading beyond theorisations of young women taking on straightforward meanings from media texts (Hermes, 1995; Ytre-Arne, 2011; see also Gill, 2012). Rejecting the idea of a purely linear, isolated and unidirectional relationship between text and reader, these studies discussed the *potential* for young women to engage critically and reflexively with magazine text. These studies also investigated the ways that readers draw upon the rich contexts of their lives in order to make sense of what they have read. Like their readers, magazine producers can also be thought of as working within cultures, subjectivities and ideologies to enact their own ideas of production within the possibilities and restraints of the media institutions and formats they work within (Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Farrell, 1994; Milkie, 2002; Ryan, 2005). Encompassing their role as producers, they must draw upon their own impressions and experience of what it means to be a magazine reader and a member of the social world they write about (Gough-Yates, 2003).

Ultimately, magazine production is not just done in print by 'the press' as a mechanical corporation, and what magazine employees produce in their work is not just magazine content. In addition, also produced and reproduced are ideas and ideologies each encompassing conceptualisations of the roles of consumer, media-maker and magazine and in the process contributing to a building of producers' and readers' subjectivities (McRobbie, 1996). This is necessarily done in a way which will reflect (but not necessarily always be invariable from) cultural and organisational investments in the brand of the magazine and the traditions / conventions of media making (Arvidsson, 2005; Leitch & Motion, 2007; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003). Because this discursive work is accomplished beyond the magazine text and includes employees' manifestation of themselves in a professional role, the commitments and negotiations involved in producing magazines should also be available in magazine employees' talk, about their job and what they do.

This chapter presents a discursive analysis of magazine producer's talk about how and why positive body messages are reproduced in their title(s). From initial analysis of the interviews it soon became apparent that *body love* messages in magazines are multiply justified and defended through a range of intersecting viewpoints which stand in to represent the various interests and investments of the magazine employees I interviewed. Continually, interviewees would draw on and move between a variety of discourses, using pieces of each to stake out their meaning and position. Like all discourses, those that they appeal to in their talk suggest a constitution of the 'objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972). As above, this includes readers, the magazine as text and themselves in a professional role. It also includes for example, intersecting ideas about women and bodies which encompass both their reader and themselves, or similarly ideas about the culture which they both address and participate in. All of these commitments, justifications, investments and constructions which inform the way magazine text is produced are of as much interest to the feminist approach I take in this research as are the outcomes readable in the text itself. In particular, choosing to interpret the reader in the analysis of my interviews as alternately a subject or more often, as a 'deployed' magazine construction has proven undoubtedly illuminative (McRobbie, 1996).

In this chapter, I overview a selection of such discourses about the production of magazines as identified through the above analytic work. I open the chapter looking at how interviewees take up and use discourses of media responsibility. I consider what positions this discourse makes available to them and their title, and how the discourse is modified to make room for these positions. Second, I discuss how the magazine is framed, in part via discourses of truth and brand, as trustworthy. The third section of this chapter addresses how brand, trust and responsibility combine to construct the magazine as uniquely enlightened or worthy in its presentation of (body) content above other competitive titles, and so is in a position to educate their readers. Last, I present some extracts where the interviewees set out to defend their magazine. Through their talk, the interviewees legitimate the limits of *body love* content in magazines, and defend a contradictory or curbed commitment to positive body messages. Ultimately, the themes I discuss throughout this chapter work to construct a 'good magazine', figuratively moving a

constructed reader around to adopt positions which support this claim. I conclude this chapter by presenting some ideas of how such magazine discourses might work together, to explain what I read as a multiply, and perhaps over-justified approach to contemporary body messages in magazines.

Claiming Media Responsibility

I have grouped Extracts 1-4 together here to give a sense of their close similarities. Regardless of the variation in questions, similar ideas seemed to come up in each interview. I would venture that this general uniformity in talk may relate to both my relatively narrow topic of interest in the interviews (i.e. positive body content in media), and to a highly specific group of interviewees. Even if these women do not directly know each other, they are still part of a select, discursive, genred 'Australasian publishing community' in which circulating ideas about magazines and *body love* have been consistently debated, rehearsed, and received.

Extract 1

A: One of my personal philosophies has always been that, when my reader finishes the magazine and gets to the back page of the mag, I want them to feel better about themselves than they did when they open that magazine, so if the magazine makes you feel like shit, y' know, right no one's going to pick it up again, because who wants to buy a magazine that makes them feel horrid? So I think if you've got a [genre of] mag that makes you feel great or motivated, then you're going to pick it up again, and again and again, and I think that, that's part of the success of these types of magazines, it's the way they make people feel?

Extract 2

B: You know I always want people to get to the end of reading my magazine and feel great, rather than think, oh my god there's so many things I'm not doing I should feel terrible about myself, yeah.

Extract 3

D: I think when we do something that the readers like, they tell us, and then we know that we've, made a difference, and I think one of our things that we like to think at [magazine name] is that by the time you've finished reading the magazine you feel better about yourself than when you picked, when you first picked that magazine up, and I think, if, if that is achieved, then we've been successful and we've made a difference.

Extract 4

G: So, I guess the main aim of our body pages would be to make [our readers] feel good about their body.

Over and above explanations of specific research questions and select participant groups, the likenesses produced through Extracts 1-4 are striking. In these pieces, interviewees all seem to be drawing on the same psy-discourse: that women read magazines and feel 'worse about themselves', principally, that women will see images in magazines and feel worse about their bodies. This discourse implicitly references a range of experimental psychological studies undertaken largely since the 1990s (for example Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Tiggeman & McGill, 2004, see also Groez, Levine and Murnen, 2002; Harrison & Cantor, 1997). To give a general description, in these studies, experimenters would ask women to look at either a magazine or participate in a 'control condition' for a designated period of time, and then comparatively measure the two groups' relative scores on various measures of self-esteem and body satisfaction. Inevitably, the results would conclude that even just a few minutes of magazine reading would make women 'feel worse' about their bodies. The following discussion of the 'results' then would relate that media at least in part were to blame for women's body dissatisfaction, and perhaps also for promoting eating disorders in 'susceptible people'. These conclusions would also indicate that importantly, a whole range of further manipulations and reproductions of the research were seen to be necessary to confirm this trend (clearly making participants 'feel worse' about their bodies just once was not enough). These studies as a whole have become part of popular knowledge about psychology – entering 'magazine', 'women', 'feel depressed', and 'psychological study' into the Google search engine (a strategy of entering so many words would usually yield very few results if any), returns nearly 30 million possible web pages (search last undertaken in September 2011). On these pages, for example, one particular "1995 study" is referred to consistently without reference and in many hours of searching I was unable to find any academic paper with matching results. Yet this is the point: somehow the idea of women 'feeling worse' after reading magazines has taken on a life of its own to become a popular common knowledge.

A common knowledge which, returning to my participants, seems to carry such incredible social currency that it has become part of the way in which they understand their job as magazine producers. Interestingly, the notion of media responsibility is so apparently entrenched that my participants did not really even seek to contend this; it had been wholly

accepted that media were part of the story of women's body difficulties (Slater, Tiggemann, Firth & Hawkins, 2012). Therefore, not only has the psy-discourse of women 'feeling worse' possibly had an impact upon what *readers* will bring to their reading and opinions about magazines, but psychology-as-truth has somehow made its way here into an understanding of intent in media *production* – a committed desire on behalf of magazine staff to make women "feel great or motivated", to "have made a difference" and pre-emptively defend themselves against any suggestion that they contribute to women's body difficulties.

The appeal by my interviewees to a psy-discourse of media responsibility has specific implications for their self-positioning as producers. Key to this discourse is an assumption of the power of the magazine in successful, direct communications to readers: magazines *do* make a 'difference', magazines can *make* "you" "feel horrid" or "terrible", or if 'successful' will make readers feel "great or motivated", 'good about their bodies' and so on. Specifically, this is a direct power of magazines to intervene in women's *emotional* lives; conversely though, the weakness of this 'power' is that it is conditional on women 'picking up' or 'opening' the magazine (as in the extracts above) (Tebbel, 2000).

Discourses of media responsibility were not just limited within statements like Extracts 1-4 however, and can also be seen more explicitly in Extract 5, which follows where C had been talking about how important she thinks it is that magazines talk differently about beauty:

Extract 5

R: Why do you think it's [body love messages] needed, where do you think the need for this has come from?

C: Because, it's actually really sad that [our readers] feel this way and, they learnt to feel this way or they learnt from generations before them because [text removed], people learn to feel this way because of the images portrayed in media, and, we need to change that now, it's our fault, we need to do something about it,

R: would you say it's just the media? How much, how much would you put on the media?

C: Um, I'd put a lot on the media, and then I would also say that a lot of it is um, kind of a [social thing as well] but, um I mean, the media is what, for some reason oh the media has a deciding factor [in saying what should be popular], I mean these stick thin models, I mean they're only, people are seeing them because of us, and we're, we're advocating that they're, they're hot, because we've got photos of them in the magazine, so we're combating that by using reader models...

In this extract, C clearly takes up a discourse of media responsibility; her use of 'our' 'we' and 'us' places her firmly within the group culpability: "we need to change that now, it's our fault", "people are seeing them because of us". By taking on and using a media-blaming discourse, C is able to contribute to how this discourse is used to make meaning; in particular, C is able to reconstruct herself as media-maker to blame by accepting responsibility and using the opportunity to talk about change. Quite contrary to the 'manipulative conspirator' I imagine to be behind the production of magazines when I read text studies which express their concerns about exploitative capitalist or misogynistic undertones in content, I find it very difficult to think of C in this way. From this perspective, Extract 5 is a good example of how media production is ultimately done by people, and so is more complicated and nuanced than many 'media effects' theories allow for (see Gill, 2012; Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).

Extract 5 also makes available a number of potentially beneficial positions for both media maker and magazine. For example, as with Extracts 1-4, Extract 5 continues the theme of media power: that "people learn" particular emotions from media images, that media have "a deciding factor". C's magazine also benefits from a discourse about the 'currency' of change in *body love* content, e.g. "we need to change that now". In other words, magazines are marketed in part on the basis of being new and contemporary (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005), and in Extract 5 C is seen to be doing something new and different through contributing to changing fashions of body shape. Finally, C, textually making herself over becomes a benevolent contributor who considers her public in publication. She 'advocates' without necessarily placing herself at the service of the public or framing the magazine as a place of public service announcement, she 'combats' the problem of "stick thin models" as not so much a contrite amendment, but rather as progress.

Overall, the discursive production of these positions is not necessarily a problematic thing – it is not my intention to reposition C as a 'bad magazine employee' or imply a conscious objective behind her discursive work by dismantling her talk about responsibility. Instead I want to highlight what has been 'achieved' in a relatively short passage, keeping the *body love* theme in mind. In addition to the 'good and influential media' construction, C is able to define what exactly she sees to be the problem with magazine body messages, probably

doing so in a way which means her magazine can respond to the issue and does not create difficulties for the idea of magazine as enterprise. C is also able to frame body difficulties as an emotional issue for readers and as something which has been learnt “from generations before” (Orbach, 2008). Both of these ideas see *body love* as an issue of how young women (individually) “feel”, and turn body difficulties into an important on-going issue which though the magazine is not entirely responsible for, it is timely in its address of the problem (Murray, 2012).

Just as the discourses at play in Extract 5 construct magazines as able to effectively communicate via the image, and magazine producers as having a responsibility to use their ‘deciding social factor’ in different, responsible ways, constructions of ‘readers’ too are elaborated as part of this discourse. Or perhaps alternatively, following McRobbie’s (1996) work in relation to magazine discourse, it should be said instead that rather than constructed, the reader is sometimes instead being ‘operated’ throughout these interviews as a discursive object piece, an afterthought in a supporting act to the constructions of magazine and producer. In the case of Extracts 1-5, the reader takes on the position of the emotionally affected, responding to (media) images in an invested and predictable way. These constructed readers want to feel good about their bodies, taking their cue about “things I’m not [or should be] doing” from magazine advice; they are also interested to know what’s “hot”, and trust the magazine to be a reliable source of such information.

Trust(worthiness) and Brand

Such reader trust, evidenced not so much via interviewees’ descriptions of reader responses but in talk about the practiced gestures of the magazine to be trustworthy, is critical to the ‘success’ of magazines (Ryan, 2005). Overall, ‘trust’ is constructed almost like an obsessive, pre-emptive undertaking to protect ‘readerships’, which in turn may be constructed in the sense of sales volumes. In other words, ‘trust’ becomes a part of an evidential practice by which a magazine might show that it is doing the right thing. Like the psy-discourse of readers ‘feeling better / worse’, the ‘trustworthy magazine’ construction perhaps is a response to coinciding popular discourses which a) devalue women’s magazines as unfavourable media providing information of no real use (Winship, 1987), and b) imply that magazines do not tell ‘the truth’, moreover that they are openly engaged in selling lies for

profit to gullible readers¹. As with the previous Extracts 1-5, it is interesting to see magazine employees claim, resist and rework these negative discourses about magazines as opposed to denying or ignoring them, working within rather than against known cultural meanings of magazines (Munoz, 1999; Raby, 2005). Either way, these discourses of trust and value are particularly relevant to the production of positive body messages. For example, as Extract 6 shows, magazine staff are keen to move on from the conception that magazine content is held to ransom by unrealistic advertising, or as Extract 8 shows later, away from the conception that magazines purposefully image unhealthy, unrealistic bodies (see also Chapter 10).

Extract 6 was taken from my discussion with A where we had been discussing advertising in her magazine and she had been telling me about the role of the beauty editor at her particular title. The extract is split into two halves, across which a progression of the topics can be followed from advertising, to talk about being trustworthy, to the opening of a discussion about fact checking and professionals, illustrating the progression of these topics in our conversation:

Extract 6, part 1

A: If you were doing a story you'd you'd go yeah you'd have your kind of pick of the bunch, and then you'd just try and work a couple of your top advertisers in there, because they're giving well yeah y' know, in terms of helping the mag stay alive, so yeah, but only if she believes in that product, so if she thought it was a really shit product,

R: Then maybe not so much

A: Not so much, um like, ah [name] our beauty editor for [magazine name] she was saying, saying last week, I know they want in, but, y' know, I just don't, it's not ideal, or it's just not, not good for our readers, so yeah. And that's her job, it's her job to put products in that y' know, she believes are good for readers, so even if an advertiser's spending money it doesn't have to be, only if she believes in a product.

R: I'm thinking though that there's there's probably a flip side to this, because I mean, we've been talking about, people want to hear, about messages y' know about [magazine name], and about positive body image and stuff, so they buy the magazine, and they see the advertisements, I think advertisers are still going to be happy, I wouldn't worry!

A: Exactly, well exactly, well they're getting their y' know, their, the point of putting an ad in is that they're gonna get seen and they're still going to be seen if y' know if the mag trusts, y' know that's the other thing the mag still has to be trustworthy, if, there's a lot of magazines out there

that you can just blatantly open and just see like oh my god, they've just, yeah, they've just copy-edited stories off Google, there's no depth to the, there's no professional quotes in there, or, it's just one person's opinion on a story, where, if you read anything in like, [magazine name], and there's like quotes, from all the professionals, like y' know, there has to be...

Somewhere near the beginning of each interview, I asked each of my interviewees about “who gets a say about what goes in the magazine” (and specifically, the body content pages). For the most part, advertisers were not mentioned without prompting. When questioned about this, my interviewees explained that while it's important to ‘take care’ of top advertisers who are “helping the mag stay alive”, they also wanted to point out that there had been times when particular advertisers were rejected, and also that, regardless of advertisers, on the whole editorial staff can write about ‘whatever’ they want. These discussions often quickly felt tense: I note my attempt to diffuse this tension about a third of the way through Extract 6. But I wanted to ask my interviewees directly about advertisers because if advertisers do indeed command an omnipotent directive over magazine content as other literature indicates that they do (and particularly of content pertaining to femininity and body), then it follows that advertisers could make the production of positive body content very difficult (Farrell, 1994; Wolf, 1991). I was particularly convinced of this after reading anecdotal stories (like Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Ryan, 2005; Tebbel, 2000) which suggested that editorial staff would face difficult sanctions or perhaps even lose their jobs if they should refuse to concede to advertiser demands about body- and beauty-related content. From this point of interest however, the answers I received were somewhat unsatisfying: (Extract 5), C: “it's *our* fault, *we* need to do something about it” (emphasis added); “R: Have you ever said no [to an advertiser]? G: Yeah I actually said no to something the other day”. Overall, what tended to happen when I asked these kinds of questions was a reclaiming of the agency of the magazine, accompanied by a restatement of the role of the advertiser – who is “helping the magazine stay alive”. This mirrors my earlier analysis – if magazine employees are not ‘malevolent conspirators’, then the advertisers they do engage with will not have demanded their complicity.

Regardless of whether magazine content is in practice restrained by their demands to a greater or lesser degree, where discussions in the interviews about advertising often *did*

lead was to a kind of negotiated dissonance. For example, in Extract 6, A relates that “you’d try and work a couple of your top advertisers” into the magazine copy, but that the advertisers are there because they represent a product that “she believes [is] good for our readers”. In other words, the presence of advertisers seemed to be doubly justified in a somewhat convoluted way. This dissonance in talk is practiced to a number of effects. For example, it forms a part of the reclaiming of magazine autonomy and agency: the beauty editor makes her “pick of the bunch”, choosing only products she “believes in” or are “good for [her] readers”. She also acts as a gatekeeper of sorts, keeping out any business relationship with a product which is “not ideal”. Overall, this double justification of advertiser presence seems to concede that either one of the explanations given (i.e. that the products represent the best possible choice anyway, or that advertisers are given added benefits as business practice), are not quite reason enough alone. Yet in giving many reasons for why advertisers are accommodated in the way that they are, magazines via this dissonance strategy can be seen to be dually committed to both their customer bases: considerate of the interests of the readers who buy their title, and the advertisers who buy space within (Leitch & Motion, 2007). In practice however, a division between the interests of readers and the interests of advertisers is not so clear-cut: it is in the interests of retaining both the reader and the advertiser customers that the title is thought to be “trustworthy”; in the extract above, A is able to reconcile her commitment to each of these by shifting the conversation away from advertisers alone, into the discussion of trust. The extract continues:

Extract 6, part 2

R: Do you think that’s important, the professional quotes?

A: Yeah definitely, I think, there has to be some sort of valid thought, for people to go, aw yep, I trust that? And I believe that, and

R: Yeah

A: Y’ know if it’s kind of , y’ know, I could kind of write a story on um, oh about, about motorbikes, and I could go and interview a few people and I could put together a story on motorbikes, but I don’t know, really, anything about them, and I’m not, a trusted source? But if I was to write it and put in y’ know, quotes from everyone I spoke to, and make it all about, what the professionals are saying, it’s going to be a lot more of a trusted article, by the readers?

[text removed where she gives an example]

A: and so it's gotta be, so yeah everything's got to be from a trusted, a trusted source, and with [magazine name], every kind of [health] fact in there has to be double, has to be double checked by two nutritionists, minimum,

R: So you get everyone to, ok,

A: So yeah every kind of fact is kind of checked and checked again so it's not just one person's random opinion, it's at least kind of agreed in by two, two or more professionals so we know that we're, we're y' know getting the right kind of information in there? Yeah.

In contrast to the first half of Extract 6, what A appears to be constructing was an argument for the autonomy of the magazine, which is put to use in adherence to “professional” journalistic standards of ‘truth’ and investigation. This in turn ‘benefits’ readers in their access to “the right kind of information”. In doing so, A claims for magazines a kind of borrowed authoritative legitimacy when professionals are consulted through fact-checking processes when producing magazine copy (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005). Additionally, an interest in ‘facts’ and truth telling implies that my interviewees understand the purpose of magazines not just to be about entertainment, but also about the *education* of readers (Ytre-Arne, 2011) who need or want to know such things. For example, in another section of our interview, A told me that while “you read magazines first and foremost to be entertained”, that “we had to get it [educative content] in there” in part because “people are looking for more information on their health and wellbeing” (see Hinnant, 2009; Newman, 2007; Roy, 2008).

While it appears that fact checking practices A refers to happen across magazine content topics, bodies and health seem to be the exemplary case in point. Bodies are not a matter of opinion or fashion; beyond the knowledge or experience of reader or writer, (women's) bodies belong to the realm of ‘professionals’, where, in order to ensure the “right kind of information”, “facts are checked and checked again so it's not just one person's random opinion”. In my interview with D, she explained to me that while she was able to write for the magazine on some topics “I don't need a psychologist or a doctor to [address] those”, body-related topics needed the expertise of “proper advice”, for example, readers might write in with “body questions that I wouldn't know the answer to”, and as she was not “trained in those fields” she felt she was totally unqualified to respond (cf. McMahon,

1990). Similarly, in Extract 6, A compares articles about women's bodies to those about motorbikes; both equally, something she believes she has little expertise in. In amongst this discourse of the qualified body professional and the associated practices of fact checking, what perhaps has been overlooked is the very notion of 'fact checking' itself. What if instead body content in magazines was premised on 'fact' *seeking*, or curiosity, or open critical discussions of experience? (Keller, 2011). Why instead are magazines so concerned about being trustworthy and factual when it comes to bodies?

In between the multiple undertakings made to gain readers' trust, an editorial staff member working for a magazine should also, according to Extract 6, choose to feature "products she believes are good for our readers". In Extract 7, B talks about screening celebrities so that her magazine does not feature "bad role models". Together, these kinds of commitments can be read (like in Extracts 1-5), as an ethic of care towards readers and conscientious use of magazine 'influence'. Moreover, they can also be made sense of through a decision making process about what will be "good for" *readerships*, i.e., sales volume and reader numbers. At stake in the featuring of good products and good role models are the reputation and therefore the brand of the magazine: from this point of view, values (and exercises) of trustworthiness and brand go hand in hand. In Extract 7, B has been discussing the kinds of covers and content she thinks her readers enjoy; followed by Extract 8, again from A, which adds to the discussion about magazine image brands:

Extract 7

B: Um, so that's a challenge for me, cos, I'm not – but I obviously, I'm, used to have a lot of content like that but we try and have rules, so that if anybody's too trashy or doing thing, like you know, Lindsay (laughs) Lohan at the moment being sent to jail,

R: Yeah, I've heard a bit about Lindsay Lohan actually (laughs).

B: I know yeah, so it's a matter of almost, screening the celebrities, and putting in a nice mix that, aren't going to be bad role models.

Extract 8

A: Yeah it's kind of, it's quite hard and um, I guess in some, we choose, for both mags, we've gone, happy and healthy people, y' know like, nothing else really matters, physical looks or anything doesn't matter, it's, is the person happy, is the person healthy, yep they can be in the magazine, y' know?

R: Yeah.

A: Ummm that's really all y' know, in summary, that's kind of what we look at and yeah, it does, it definitely does make you think, and it's good because um, [the magazines she works for have] the same thing when we're looking at cover people we're like, ok, is this person who we want to portray our brand? And there's been a couple of people who, might sell really well, for a business guise, but no, they're not, not the right kind of person? Or we might have heard some negative press about them, in terms of them not respecting themselves, like their bodies, and um, so y' know...

[text removed about specific covers]

A: Yeah, so um yeah we've got some great ideas of people we would love to have on the cover, because we think they are, we think they're very, they've got a good story to tell, and they'll sell us the magazine which is great for business, but just one even on Friday, we're just like nah she's um, with, y' know, we've heard some really bad stories that one that she, doesn't just doesn't respect herself just doesn't y' know in this instance, just doesn't eat at all and has a really negative kind of y' know eating habits, or it could be drug abuse, or something like that, so we just like, of course, they'll be, they'll go nowhere near the cover, because of that, and I think, maybe, five, five years ago it probably wouldn't have been, people probably wouldn't have been so aware?

Covers are an integral part of a magazine's identity, and many hours each month are spent debating cover models, wording and configurations, on some occasions, even directly attempting to determine formulations for the success of various cover attributes (Freedman, 2009). Essentially, the cover of the magazine can be thought of as an advertisement for its brand (Winship, 1987). It is the first piece of a magazine to be seen by potential readers / purchasers, telling them what they can expect from this particular edition. It also visually represents the magazine's brand to non-readers in public spaces, which matters because non-readers too contribute to cultural meanings of what being a reader of a specific title might entail. The role of the cover model image is to embody this brand, to stand in as a signifier for the meanings and atmosphere to be drawn upon within the edition. This can be done via appealing to generalised popular cultural meanings about bodies, (e.g. flowing dresses as feminine, slender bodies as desirable, or a direct gaze as agentic and inviting identification; Goffman, 1976; Redmond, 2003; Thornham, 2007). This can also be achieved by selecting well known celebrities as cover models (Tebbel, 2000), by 'borrowing' specific cultural meanings of their fame. Celebrity cover models are also used to increase sales via fan purchases. As G put it, someone who is well known, well respected

and well liked on the cover will sell far more magazine copies than a “Joe Average” (see Howells, 2011).

A and B were keen to impress that someone “trashy” or “unhealthy” would “go nowhere near the cover” of their magazine: “it has to be the right kind of person” “to portray our brand” (Bell, 2008; Fairclough, 2008). At the time of our interviews, Lindsay Lohan appeared to be the favoured example of this point, most interviewees even describing having lists of celebrities who were currently “banned” from appearing in their title². This ‘new’ ethic my interviewees describe as behind the selection of magazine cover models takes into account not only sales but representation, which “five years ago (it) probably wouldn’t have been” done. In theory, such an ethic would exclude bodies which are ‘unhealthy’, presumably including bodies which are severely underweight, from appearing on the covers of these titles and as such is open to a potentially positive reading. However, no longer does the cover model just need to be someone who will “sell us the magazine” and be “great for business”. She additionally must also ‘respect herself’, have “a good story to tell”, be “happy and healthy” and a be “good role model” – not “trashy”. These requirements mirror the discourse of *body love* discussed in my text analysis chapters: not only is it still important to maintain a standard of image in order to show that a woman respects her body, but additionally, she must do this in a ‘healthy’ way – the *method* by which she produces this body, and her emotional and personal life(styles) are too under scrutiny.

There is of course also the possibility that the cover of a magazine could have an image of something other than a cover model (Projanksy, 2007) but perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of discussions about covers were framed around a cover model (and I did not at the time ask about any alternative). This limitation provides an illustration of how most issues regarding change are approached within magazines. Working within tight restrictions of format and expectation, small changes become heavily symbolic. Historically for example, Tyra Banks as the first African American woman to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated Magazine* (in 1996), or Elaine George as the first Aboriginal model to appear on the cover of *Australian Vogue* (in 1993) were treated as significant media events, despite these models having relatively light skinned and ‘western’ appearances. Within this context, featuring more diverse cover models who are both undressed and unretouched, or the

imaging of a larger model on the cover of a magazine must appear monumental. By contrast, choosing *not* to feature Lindsay Lohan for example, leaves unopened a space in which issues of drug abuse and eating disorders could be discussed as relevant and gendered issues in a critical and timely way (McRobbie, 2007). Not doing so silences any exploration of how ‘Lindsay’ came to understand her own body as so inadequate, or how her ‘demise’ and “trashy” public image has been constructed by and through various forms of media (Bell, 2008; Fairclough, 2008; Redmond, 2008).

Like the image of the magazine cover girl, academic literature about magazines has also discussed how magazine staff themselves are compelled to represent the brand of the magazine via occupational and personal identities, to literally embody their ideal reader. According to Gough-Yates (2003), these constructions of the self belong to and arise from discourses of legitimation and identification: that the lifestyle the magazine is selling is indeed desirable, and that these employees demonstrate their practical and proficient knowledge of how their target market might adopt its principles. It is this link between representation and cultural proficiency that perhaps can help to explain the translation of positive body messages into a competitive advice market³.

‘Us’ versus ‘Them’

As well as attempting to construct their own practices as trustworthy and ‘good’, the magazine editors I interviewed also discursively worked to separate themselves from ‘other’ magazine titles and media businesses, which did not engage in these practices. Extract 10 illustrates a clear example of this ‘us’ versus ‘them’ divide, naming and blaming a range of other titles who do not participate in the production of positive body messages “at all”. Similarly in Extract 11, I have been discussing the latest issue of C’s magazine with her, which had been released on the day of our interview; she also compares herself to her competitors. I note her repeat of “being completely honest” (which also appears in Extract 14), which can perhaps also be conceptualised as supportive to the ‘good magazine’ discursive construction:

Extract 10

B: And I think a lot of magazines as well um, there's a lot of the higher fashion magazines that don't really give a damn about the body love message, at all. And a lot of our readers, I'll get girls who say I read [B's magazine] but I also read [magazine name 1], you know, there's not going to be any body love messages in [magazine name 2] or [magazine name 3] or [magazine name 4] you know?

Extract 11

R: Now this is published you must be, you know, you must be so excited to have this out,

C: Yeah I am very excited about it, I just, and this is just being completely honest with you, I like I just wish that our readership our circulation figures reflected what we're doing, like our competitor is just outselling us, with not a lot of real stuff in there, it's just, entertainment kinds of waffle, but it's huge, really huge, but it doesn't really matter, like we're doing stuff that really matters and I just wish that [people] could, I, I'm just trying to think of a way, and I'm hoping that [a particular feature of her magazine] is part of that, I'm just trying to get [our readers] to understand that we are doing something about it.

In contrast to the “us” she used earlier to place herself within media (Extract 5), “us” here for C serves to *separate* herself as responsible media, from her competitor who produces “just, entertainment kinds of waffle” (Van Dijk, 1993). Similarly, B (who works for a different production company), also separates herself out from other magazines and rival titles who “don't really give a damn”. Overall, this ‘us’ versus ‘them’ discourse is likely to be reflective of a competitive market which the magazine industry itself maintains; even between titles which are produced by the same media corporations, competition for both advertiser and reader customers is typically encouraged. For the most part, this is achieved by fostering symbolic differences between title brands (Freedman, 2009)⁴. Employees must be able to demonstrate that they know their potential reader better than anyone else, selling their cultural expertise (or, in the case of Extracts 10-11, perhaps their responsible guardianship) as commodity (Gough-Yates, 2003).

This competitive market could be conceptualised as a good thing for the promotion of positive body messages – as long as such messages are seen to be on trend or as something that ‘works’, the continued commitment of magazine businesses to producing such messages should, in theory, be ongoing. For example, the recent international ‘copy-cat’ run of un-airbrushed model magazine covers (see Chapter 5 for some examples) was probably facilitated by such competitive attitudes. Each title was eager to claim via various

press releases that what they had done was unique, better, more genuine and more committed to the *body love* 'cause' than what had gone before or what anyone else was producing. Moreover, by their use of an 'us' versus 'them' discourse, magazines are also able to endorse their magazine title as legitimate journalism against the idea of magazines as a substandard genre, incorporating a concession that there are some other kinds of magazines which are not so upright or trustworthy as them when it comes to writing and imaging women's bodies. However, *body love* being deployed as a competitive message of who can offer better advice between different magazine titles also raises questions about the impact of this use upon the detail of what is communicated. When compared to collective feminist messages of social change and women as a population negotiating cultural messages of difficult embodiment, competitive magazine advice is routinely aimed at individuals about their own self-located improvement (Keller, 2011).

Yet again, magazines are not organised as collective establishments, (and may struggle to stay in business when they are; Cunningham & Haley, 2000; Farrell, 1994); working in anything but a competitive fashion just may not be feasible, which in turn is likely to significantly restrict the kinds of messages magazines are able to communicate about bodies. Moreover, it is the nature of this competitive market that magazines must be unique not just in relation to the range of body messages on offer, but also in general. If every other title is discussing how to 'love your body', then providing "just, entertainment kinds of waffle" and not 'giving a damn about the body love message' may be what makes a particular title stand out. When I asked H about if or why she thought magazines were changing the way in which they spoke about bodies, she told me:

Extract 12

H: I think they're just appreciating to a greater extent that they won't lose market shares, if they're more sensitive.

But what if magazine employees are not finding encouragement and benefits in the (largely voluntary) efforts they do make to rethink body messages in magazines? It is this issue, albeit in the more relative form of 'legitimizing the limits' of positive *body love* messages in magazines, which I take up next.

“Give us a break”: legitimating limits

Recruiting participants for these interviews was not an easy undertaking, and made more difficult by wariness within the industry of the “constant bashing” which had been levelled against magazine body content, including types of content intended to be more positive. For example, B informed me of the “backlash” in reader comments which occurs when images of larger bodies are included in her magazine. Similarly, G complained that negative media response to the Jennifer Hawkins cover (not run by her title, and referred to earlier in this thesis) overshadowed the symbolic positive step that had been taken in the publishing of an un-airbrushed cover image. The message which I read in such examples and from the Extracts 13-14 below is that there are limits and restrictions - some material, and some ideological – to what can be done by magazines in relation to changing how bodies are approached. Extracts 13-14 address these points:

Extract 13

G: I just think that the mags get a bad rap for, for I guess pushing negative body images and stereotypes and stuff like that but I think if you actually opened up like a [magazine title] or something, and looked at the whole, the, I think we’re actually pretty well rounded, I think actually, I think we’ve, we definitely try at least, and I think that maybe, you, y, positive reinforcement rather than the constant bashing of magazines is probably what’s needed.

R: Yeah.

G: Like you know,

R: So to let them know when they’re doing something really well,

G: Yeah exactly, yeah. And I think positive reinforcement, well, it’s the best, you can’t beat that, and I think by keep, by bashing magazines, and saying you know,

[gives specific example]

G: You know you can’t do everything right, there’s always gonna be like you know, whether it’s circumstances or budgets or whatever it is that doesn’t allow for the whole magazine to do something like that, but if you’ve got nine, even seventy percent or fifty percent, that’s still seventy percent of really good stuff in there, we’d love the number to be a hundred, but you know, there, we’re working towards that.

R: Towards change,

G: Yeah so I think you know, we can, give positive reinforcement for the stuff we are doing right, and then yeah then we can keep going and, yeah as long as, and like I say the [inaudible word] decision is the decision at the end of the day so, yeah, sales don’t reflect it, then there’s no way

it's going to come in, no matter how many, you know, [critics name] say it that it should, yeah, like if it's not, yeah, I could go on for hours about her, (laughs).

Extract 14

C: Well I mean, to be brutally honest if they say we're not going far enough, we can't go any further at the moment the market wouldn't be ready for a completely untouched person on our cover [each edition] because, it has to be appealing photos as well, we couldn't,

R: People have to want to buy it,

C: I mean if we've put [celebrity] on the cover and we'd left this massive this yellow pimple on her cheek people would go (makes face), oh that's disgusting, and put it back down like, ew, like, like that's quite, quite internal, so we can't, we have to sell the magazine.

R: Right, no I understand that,

C: And if we, if some are then are not going far enough I'd say well, what would you do, we can't go any further at the moment cos no one reads those.

For both G and C, one of the limitations placed upon magazines was clearly the financial balance of the magazine: "whether it's circumstances or budgets or whatever"; if "sales don't reflect it, then there's no way it's going to come in"; "we have to sell the magazine"; "we can't go any further, cos no one reads those". But the references to "sales" and magazine "budgets" are more encompassing and ambiguous than they appear to be. Not only do magazines have their 'dual customership' of advertisers and readers to consider, but printing, publishing and distribution costs, cover sale price, and ownership all also weigh in on the financial stability of magazine titles. Each one of these issues is relevant to the production of new and / or positive body messages in magazines – right down to the grade of the paper a title is printed on, and how this might influence image quality. Even when G mentions "seventy or fifty percent" of the content in magazines being "really good stuff" and appears to be on reprieve from discussing finances, percentage amounts of content in magazine often refer to things like the balance of advertising to editorial pages, or the balance of overseas imported content to locally written and 'localised' pages of content: both of these can be heavily financial considerations given the differential costs involved in producing each of these kinds of content.

Another example of a limit mentioned by C in Extract 14 was the aesthetic appeal of magazines – again this is as much an issue of 'sales' as it is of what magazines are, and how their business is constructed. Interestingly, the example dilemma of the cover girl with a

“massive yellow pimple” came up in a number of interviews, illustrating both the abjection of blemished skin by magazines, and the centrality of image retouching to the *body love* issue (something taken up in my next chapter about images). Similar limits were placed around the ‘unhealthy size sixteen’ and the “fat girl on the catwalk” (F) across different interviews. Various other interviewees would also make content based limitations, justifications or decisions “just for health reasons” (A), “because they’re just not as entertaining” (F), “because it’s too engrained” (G) or “because I would be uncomfortable saying that” (D). Overall, the effect of each of these statements is to defend a containment of the issue of magazine body content, by a logic of health, aesthetic and social truths which are both difficult to contest from the outside, and reduce questions about representation to a manageable and self-evident common sense (see also the conclusion to Chapter 10). In emphasizing the tenacity and truth of whatever limits they do refer to, functionally these limits allow magazine employees to position themselves as “unable to go any further”, having taken the issue as far as possible while still maintaining a “well rounded” magazine which people will want to read (Milkie, 2002). In turn, they are able to illustrate their status as a ‘good magazine’, for example via their care and concern for readers, via their expert knowledge of these limits, and via their ability to be trend-making in pushing such rules to their absolute limit.

A Balancing Act? Introducing Strategic Ambiguity...

Like the magazine texts they produce, one of the few constants of the positions these employees take up is that they are built between and around number of contradictory discourses – I interviewed for example, a fashion and beauty editor who told me her readers would write to her saying they were ‘ugly’ and felt unable to wear ‘fashion’; a number of the other interviewees I spoke to were highly critical themselves of media and media images, and yet worked for a media institution. Or, to use examples from this chapter, discourses of magazines as trustworthy and educational would stand against the interviewees insistence that magazine content was primarily for frivolous entertainment and didn’t matter anyway; and the suggestion that magazines were powerful enough to straightforwardly *make* women feel one way or another did not fit well with the almost ritualistic fact checking and

“unhealthy” / “trash” avoiding behaviours which seemed to be more about protecting the title’s reputation than it did their readers. As a pattern, my interviewees would move between different and often contradictory discourses, using pieces of each to explain themselves and stake out their meaning / position (van Dijk, 1993).

The effect of a constant play on contradictions, the over- and under-justifications, and the deliberate back and forth with constant shifts in meaning is difficult to capture in any one extract, largely because this ‘back and forth’ kind of talk was done across the interview. What I want to address then is how these contradictions are managed – how one way or another interviewees set out to explain that they worked for a ‘good’ magazine, with their readers’ interests at heart, with (unique) integrity, insight and standards, which could and would enable them to tell the truth about bodies. I see this style of management as a product of the organisation of magazines as institutions with multiple stakeholders, necessitating a system of multiple interests and values which will variably act in tension or collusion. It is part of the work of magazines and their employees to convene and administrate this system.

Overall the ‘back and forth’ positioning seen in the interviews appears to be an artefact of a wide range of magazine commitments – these include to advertiser and publisher, to public demand and sales, between such things as expectations of format (especially for local editions of international brands) and innovations in style (Arvidsson, 2005; Cunningham & Haley, 2000; D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2011; Jansson, 2002; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005; Ryan, 2005; Scanlon, 2009). If nothing else, it is on this basis that interviewees could certainly make a claim to their expertise as cultural mediators, describing how they were able to oversee such tensions with astute proficiency (Gough-Yates, 2003). All this taken together, my original conceptualisation of the talk of interviewees as they described the genesis of body content in their magazines was that they were engaged in a delicate discursive *balancing* act of ‘fine lines’ and ‘bottom lines’. My data seemed to support this idea, for example:

B: So what I try and do now is um, absolutely to include all that kind of [body and health] stuff, but to have a balance, I’m all about balance, and not telling anyone what they should or

shouldn't be but just presenting a really balanced um, a lot of reader, getting a lot of readers in there so that there's naturally a lot of different types of body shape um, and a lot of features...

In some ways, the research literature offered support for this too. For example:

"Such chameleon-like but self-conscious transformation is one key to *Women's Own's* commercial success; another is achieving what Iris Burton refers to as 'getting the balance right' (interview, 1982). And *Woman's Own's* tone of address is only one of the many balancing acts the magazine is engaged in: serious articles are balanced against more lightweight ones; busy, highly informative visuals are set against simple and bold illustrations; the very occasional romance takes its turn alongside abrasive 'modern' fiction. However, at the heart of *Woman's Own* is an adroit ideological juggling act, in particular concerning marriage". (Winship, 1987, p84-85).

Similarly, Gough-Yates (2003) discusses the "fine line" editors walk "when they attempt to balance the needs of the different stakeholders in their titles" (p.143), and Keller (2011) discusses the management of "tensions" in *CosmoGirl*, which "ultimately needs to balance what advertisers want, what readers want, and what editors want" (p.10) ('balancing' is also used to describe the practices of editorial staff in Cunningham & Haley; Jackson, Stevenson & Brooks 2001; McCracken, 1993; Milkie, 2002; Tebbel, 2000; see also Arvidsson, 2005; D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2011).

However, reading and thinking about the 'balancing' concept ironically only seemed to lead to further inconsistencies. For example, 'balancing' is an account based in assumptions of an on-going baseline of context with perhaps some minor fluctuations, where a variety of tensions are channelled into a strategy of calculated balance and 'ideal compromise' (Deephouse, 1999) to produce a singular, coherent outcome. This stability is anathematic to the very concept of the magazine, which arguably thrives on being able to construct itself as constantly culturally 'new'. Moreover, if indeed a 'balancing act' is what magazine producers are engaged in when producing positive body messages, then practices could be measured against a quantifiable ideal, and 'success' determined at an identifiable tipping point. Comparatively, the methodical rationality implicit in this process of creating 'balance' is at odds with my methodological approach to this research around plural, moving and living post-modern cultures and subjectivities: a singular, strategic outcome just does not seem to fit (see Benwell, 2004; Machin and Van Leeuwen 2005; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003).

One alternative explanation for how magazines and their contributors resolve competing demands can be found in the advertising and branding literature, through Foucauldian re-workings of the concept of 'strategic ambiguity' (Eisenberg, 1984; Leitch & Motion, 2007). 'Strategic ambiguity' theorises multiple positions made available by an opening of discursive space, created through indistinct and vague discursive commitments. Through doing this, a corporate brand (or a magazine's approach to bodies) can be understood in a variety of divergent ways. In this strategy, the risks are that interpretations are perhaps not as predictable or direct-able as the 'ideal compromise' strategy, or that drawing upon a raft of different viewpoints might result in a lack of clarity or confusion, (Arvidsson, 2005; Jansson, 2002). On the other hand, the outright advantage of this strategy for the skilled practitioner is being able to highlight various pieces of an approach in different ways at appropriate times to the benefit of their purpose e.g. this supports my reading of a continued construction from multiple angles in the extracts above of the 'good magazine'. Equally, should any part of the ambiguous approach become problematic in any given context (e.g. the value of working with an advertiser who has an interest in maintaining a discourse of perfectible beauty), then the brand / magazine has not outrightly committed to this ideological 'problem' (Eisenberg, 1984).

In terms of my research, conceptualising the multiple production commitments of magazines as ambiguous rather than 'balanced' allows for a factually accurate account of magazine practice to be set aside. Instead, with these concerns out of the way, the discursive management magazine employees engage in when discussing positive body content can be interrogated for what it offers, achieves, and justifies. Additionally, if magazine staff are able to ambiguously commit to multiple, flexible and possibly conflicting values, then theoretically the advantage for women is that a space is opened in which a more community sensitive, body considerate value to be *accommodated* in the production of magazines, albeit, still alongside other commercialistic and ultimately problematic values of bodies. Whether 'accommodation' of positive body content is a suitable outcome for feminist principles (especially considering how the 'accommodation' of women / feminism has been part of the foundation of post-feminist cultural ideology), is a key question here (Lazar, 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Tasker & Negra, 2007). Overall what this re-presentation

strategic ambiguity as a theory seems to provide is a much closer account than the idea of 'balance', when it comes to explaining the management of multiple discursive and ideological commitments at play in the production of magazine body messages.

Summary

In summary, a wide range of discourses are taken up by magazine staff in their talk about magazine production of positive body messages. For the most part, these discourses work to (re)produce a construction of a 'good' magazine, using a variety of other constructions of magazine readers, employees and stakeholders to scaffold this effect. Evidently, it could be said that interviewees applied a distinctive discursive management style of the flexible and sometimes ambiguous commitments involved in the production of magazine messages about women's bodies. Critically, this chapter illustrates that the contradictory and elastic character of *textual* magazine discourses about bodies are complimented by similarly ambiguous and multiple approaches to their production, and equally flexible commitments around what it means to produce positive media messages about the body as part of being a 'good magazine'.

Chapter 10:

Constructing images in the production of 'body love' messages

Images are absolutely integral to the concept of a 'women's magazine'. Images help a magazine title identify its reader and represent its brand; without their glossy and high resolution images, the messages magazines would be able to convey about women's bodies might be very different (Gough-Yates, 2003). The extracts presented in the analysis of this chapter have been drawn from a broad 'talk about images' category produced during my initial thematic analysis of the interview data. Given the role of images in the magazine text analysis I had undertaken, I asked interviewees directly about images and their function within *body love* messages as the opportunity arose. But in later listening to the interview recordings and reading through the transcripts, I noticed that talk about images pervaded the interviews, apparently independent of questions on the subject, being frequently brought up both as topic and example. In other words, participants repeatedly made images salient in their talk. The extracts in this chapter have been selected as illustrative of the range of material discussed around some of the implications of 'representing' women and their bodies as magazine images, as well as what these imaged bodies communicate within *body love* messages.

To review the discussion of *body love* images in my thesis so far, Chapter 5 discussed how bodies are constructed *as* images in the dualistic discourses of magazine *body love* content, and provided some analytical work around why many of the images which accompany *body love* written content may be seen as so repetitive. However, in contrast to this idea of body-as-captured-image, the thesis then moved on to talk about 'real' and 'natural' bodies (Chapter 6), and the possibility of conceptualising *body love* as a response to (perhaps feminist) grievances of 'misrepresentation' of women ('s bodies) in media. These 'real' and 'natural' conceptualisations of the body do not sit so well with research about how magazine *fantasy* worlds are captured in images which only *represent* ideas, rather than provide witness to 'reality' (Jutel, 2005; Machin, 2004). From this point of view, the story told about images in this thesis is thus far incomplete and somewhat contradictory. In this final analysis chapter, I return to the topic of images to examine how magazine staff interviewees negotiate the tensions between constructions of the role of fantasy images in

their genre, and of how the 'real' has become integral to the concept of representing *body love*.

Previous research about images in magazines suggests that it is a magazine's glossy images which direct the characteristic (detached and relaxed, 'flicking through' the pages) style of reading associated with magazines, and in turn, the sentiments which are able to be taken away or made by readers from these texts (Hermes, 1995). As a case in point, at one time in its history *Ms Magazine*, simultaneously constrained by budget and in an attempt to reduce the emphasis on images of the ideal feminine, chose to produce their magazine in reduced colour and with less advertising pages (Cunningham & Haley 2000; Farrell, 1994). Following this, staff reported that the entire editorial atmosphere of the magazine changed, content came to 'feel' much 'heavier' and producing a visually appealing magazine which engaged readers in a relaxed way became a much more difficult task (Ytre-Arne, 2011).

The function of images in the magazine is also discussed in David Machin's work (Machin, 2004; Machin & Thornborrow, 2003; 2006; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005). In this he puts forward that magazines' staple low modality, highly saturated style of photographs (typically purchased from 'global' image banks), use a vocabulary of signifiers almost like a known language to communicate with readers. These magazine images stand in to represent particular feelings, ideas and values (as opposed to being about e.g. photographic documentary), and convey their message through heavily staged visual fantasy moments, overstated caricatures, and specific stories of subjectivity captured in the absence of substantial contextual detail (Coleman, 2009; Redmond, 2003). For example, a magazine image accompanying an article about the benefits of yoga might show a woman wearing sportswear (to indicate her athleticism), sitting smiling under a generic looking tree (to invoke a sense of placeless nature) with only a token yoga mat beside her to show the purpose of the story. Arguably, this fantasy 'language' of visual communication is a hallmark of post-modern media culture (Machin & Thornborrow, 2006; Mirzoeff, 1998), as well as part of the overall 'text' about women's bodies within contemporary magazines. Keeping these theories about the reading of magazines and 'communicating' images in mind will be key then, to any analysis of (talk about) the images which accompany *body love* magazine messages.

Representing reader identity: “Where is the person that looks like me?”

Before enquiring about any specific topic (such as that of images), I asked interviewees early on in each interview broadly whether, and then inevitably why (and how), they thought magazine body messages had been changing over the last few years. My first extract in this chapter is taken from D’s immediate response to this ‘why’ question. The image D refers to in Extract 15 (below) was produced by *Glamour* magazine, originally appearing as a small (less than 10 by 10cm) image on page 194 of the issue. However, media commentators quickly redistributed and commented on the photograph¹, which eventually even was covered in news media in the months leading up to this interview². The photograph itself shows ‘plus sized’ (size 12) model Lizzie Miller undressed and sitting on a chair – her legs are crossed and she covers her breasts with crossed arms. Her stomach, as opposed to being concave, folds once to rest upon the tops of her thighs (not quite the “all the stomach rolls” which D describes below). The image is captioned to say, “Once and for all: the sexy things that men really love”:

Extract 15

D: I think maybe, women are just sick of always seeing the same type of person in a magazine, but if you were a size twelve, and all you’re seeing in a magazine is size eight models, it’s going to get to a point where you’re like well, where is the person that looks like me, how, yes, you’re putting all these, all this clothing on models, but how do I, how do I wear it, why is, why is that model not my size, and, there was, that, um, oh I can’t remember what magazine it was, [magazine name] I think that run, ran the picture of the model and she was sitting down and she was naked and from the side and you could see all her stomach rolls?

R: Oh yeah yes.

D: and, the, number of women they had commenting on how amazing it was to see that, I think, things like that once one magazine does something a little bit different, and women see, oh they see the reaction from, readers, I think that has a snowball effect for other people to take on that kind of message as well?

As in the previous chapter, D’s self-positioning as the proficient magazine producer and up-to-date representative of her publication both constructs her as someone who knows what readers want through having listened attentively to their commentaries, and distances her from the production of bodies her readers are “sick of seeing” repeated over and over again. D notably locates her expertise about what women want to see in magazines within an account of her experience working in the industry (Gough-Yates, 2003) and notably not

so much from her experience of being a woman with a body herself (see Extract 21 later: “we all know that because we work, work, work here”). The change she sees within women’s magazines body messages and images therefore does not come from a place of participatory activism on her own behalf (Aronson, 2003). Rather, it comes instead from her detailed construction of her reader as a *knowable* Other to herself, on the basis of *their* ‘amazement’ in seeing a body that’s a “little bit different” in a magazine, from *their* need to see someone “who looks like me” in order to partake in the fashion and advice she, taking up the role of the (disembodied) magazine producer, is offering to them.

The way that D responds to my question about change defines *body love* and other new magazine body messages as primarily an issue of images and specifically, a problem of inadequate or inaccurate representation. From a feminist perspective, seeing the (mis)representation of women at the forefront of a positive body agenda in the media could be seen as long overdue (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, D’Agostino, 2004). Western cultural images of women’s bodies which have been seen to lack diversity, ‘accuracy’, and relevance have been a target of feminist criticism for many decades – a critique which can be read as the crux of Extract 15: “all you’re seeing in a magazine is size eight models”; “why is that model not my size”; “where is the person that looks like me?”. Here, D takes on the ‘voice’ of the reader and functionally represents their concerns. Within contemporary feminist accounts however, the issue of imaging women has become broader than just misrepresentation. This expansion is in line with changing feminist theories of identities which themselves have evolved alongside contemporary and post-modern shifts in culture. For example, where mainstream feminist understandings of what it means to be ‘woman’ arguably have become much less singular and definitive (Lazar, 2007), so too has imaging this diverse, plural ‘woman’ become a much more complex task than just attempting ‘accuracy’. Equally, an image can still be ‘accurate’ and / or be of models who are more representative of women’s sizes in the general population, and yet still be problematic. For example, larger “plus sized” model bodies might be framed or postured in ways which minimize their proportions. Moreover, even (or perhaps especially) plus-sized models’ bodies are still subject to strict regimes of body work, presentation and size regulation as well as abject discourses of health, race and failure, (Czerniawski, 2012). In all, by formulating the ‘problem’ of

magazine images as just within the frame of misrepresentation, D's argument is able to contain critique and pre-emptively limit further discussion to specific changes which have already successfully been made.

Working within this 'misrepresentation' frame, D then goes on to use the *Glamour* magazine image to 'illustrate' how representations of women's bodies in a magazine *have* changed, referring to a "message" ("that kind of message") which has been articulated in the very fact that a magazine 'ran this picture'. D explains that this "message" was in turn supposedly well received by women readers who had understood what this picture (and its presence) might communicate – "something a little bit different", something "amazing". Through her talk, D describes here a mutual visual literacy between readers and producers of magazines (Jansson, 2002; Machin, 2004; Mirzoeff, 1998). This mutuality implies that both readers and producers understand (perhaps through a shared understanding of the magazine genre) that imaging "stomach rolls" is a simultaneously unusual and significant interjection, even if it does only appear on page 194 of the issue.

Also identifiable in Extract 15 are some of the practical issues which might be at stake when D talks about changing images in magazines. For example, D suggests one of the problems when magazines image bodies of a limited size is that many readers may be unable to imagine what they themselves might look like 'wearing' the fashion items featured, or alternatively perhaps may assume that these items are not for them because their bodies are unlike that of the model promoting the item (this is not for her a personal concern, but rather, her knowledge of the concerns of her 'reader'); her imagined readers feel unable to identify with the bodies which 'model' clothing and identities in her magazine. This identification issue is perhaps most evident in the way that when D delineates the bodies of readers she does so by not just size – "if you were a size twelve", "size eight models" – but specifically, by their dress size. "Size eight" model bodies then, are not the same as a readers body ("like me"), and the categorisation of size by dress size suggests that different sizes might purchase different clothes, 'wear' these clothes in different ways and so come to mean different things (see Guy & Banim, 2000). Moreover, "size eight" here works as a synecdochical descriptor of a model's body or a feature of an identity ("size eight models"; "if you were a size twelve"), as opposed to a property of a piece of clothing (a size ten

dress), adding to the sense that it is not only clothes, but embodied identities in question here.

Last, the idea of the ‘person who looks like me’ within this extract is made possible through what is in its own right a discourse of identification / representation. Using Macleod’s conceptualisation of a discourse consisting of a subject and object action or association, (2002; seen also in Parker, 1992), this representation discourse sees D describing how magazine readers will establish a relationship between their own identities (“me”), and the appearances of bodies seen in the imaginary realm of the magazine. In other words, D’s use of the magazine identification / representation discourse is significant because it asks not why the (body) images of magazines are all so similar and singular, but instead why can her readers not see someone “like *me*”. This ownership of a body’s image extends the dualistically constructed relationship between woman and image discussed at the outset of the magazine text analysis (Chapter 5) in this thesis; it is also evident in Extracts 16 and 17, presented next.

Misrepresentation and the ‘authentic’ body: “This is (not) my body”

Extracts 16 and 17 are taken from my interview with A, both referring to the same practice (Extract 17 being a reprisal of her point in Extract 16) of celebrity magazine ‘confessions’ of images of their ‘real’ bodies (Redmond, 2008). In this discussion, A has been informing me about an increased (nonspecific) “awareness” in the media having prompted some magazines to talk in more positive ways about bodies. To be particular, the ‘not my body’ statements she refers to below reference the repeated practice by a range of celebrities of making available through media release photographs of their unretouched bodies, so that they might be compared to highly circulated copies of the photo-altered version of that particular image. In the case of actress Jessica Alba she refers to below, the retouched version of the images first appeared as a Campari brand advertising calendar³. Some of these ‘real body’ image releases (like the Jessica Alba one) are accompanied by media interviews and invariably, intense public discussion about the differences between the images and the role of photo alteration in the media.

These extracts from the early stages of A's interview give a sense of the very fragmented way in which some of the interviews would open – giving me the impression that some interviewees had so much they wanted to tell me about that many ideas might be addressed interchangeably. The vagueness in the extracts I believe also illustrates both the extent to which A just expected me to be familiar with the practices she referred to and, by the same token, the way in which such celebrity confessions have perhaps become an identifiably common and widespread practice to A:

Extract 16

A: I think there's people who have come out, like celebrities worldwide, like, y'know, people like Britney, and I think Sarah um, I think ah what's-a-name, I think like Jessica Alba did last year and they came out, after their campaigns had run and said, "this is not my body", y'know, "this is my body, and this is what they did to it", and then of course people take notice.

[later on in the interview, in reference to the above:]

Extract 17

A: Well she came out and yeah, lots of people and um obviously they have high profiles, they're coming out and they're saying this kind of stuff which is great, and then I think a lot of people go oh, so is every magazine doing that? [i.e. retouching images].

Like the image-in-identity statement of Extract 15 ("where is the person who looks like me?"), in these extracts A describes a related sense of representation identification: "this is my body", "this is not my body". The interchange which A describes here is intense: drawing upon and against discourses of reality as wholly available via an image, of natural beauty and the "truth" (see Chapter 4; cf. Coleman, 2009). These body confessions and statements of ownership also imply a sense of injury in the 'coming out' confessions of the celebrities, not unlike the injuries described in Judith Butler's (1997) writing about (verbal) 'hate speech': "this is my body, and this is what they did to it". The exposure of these celebrity grievances in a public forum are, for A, what has generated public attention around the 'production' processes involved in magazine images, and what has provided the mandate for public understanding around the seriousness of these acts of imaged 'hate speech' for women's understandings of their bodies (seen also in Extract 18: "I don't feel like we have the right to change who women are").

Following Madigan's (2003) reformulation of 'injurious speech acts', the nature of the injury sustained in the 'not my body' images perhaps is best understood as one of delegitimation. In this, a magazine's decision to alter a body's image, and by extension the representation of a celebrity's identity can be read as a statement about the social unacceptability of those bodies, made via an exercise of cultural power (Foucault, 1979). In turn, the act of 'coming out' then can be read as a reclamation – an act of resistance against (certain) media constructions of their identity, a new negotiation in a "high profile" space over what unretouched bodies can mean (Raby, 2005). Notably, the very possibility of A's "and this is what they did to it" statement and the way in which these actions have captured A's attention is realisable because these celebrity bodies were imaged in the first place, and because these celebrities have a voice to speak with in the media. Bodies which are simply not represented (rather than misrepresented) do not have this opportunity. Similarly, it would be difficult for non-celebrity women to reject the retouching of their bodies in this way. As such these non-celebrity bodies in magazines do not stand to represent an individual ("this is *my* body"), but instead indicate an unspecified fantasy personhood, belonging to the 'target market' reader as opposed to the model whose body was photographed.

A's use of the phrase 'coming out' is perhaps more commonly identified with 'coming out' discourses of non-heterosexualities. In terms of sexuality, 'coming out' discourses have been described in research literature as involving a regulated configuration of the bodies, spaces and identities which are involved in the 'coming out' act (McLean, 2008; Rasmussen, 2004). For example, coming out discourses of sexuality are strongly dualistic – celebrating 'coming out' as a liberatory, therapeutic and empowering experience, while on the other hand 'choosing' not to come out is conversely a cowardly state of being, crossed through with denial and shame, and a failure to educate others through example (Rasmussen, 2004). Additionally, 'coming out' in sexuality has also been described as a discourse about an 'authentic' self, questioned for the way it fixes subjectivity in time, and its implication that 'coming out' will always be a straightforward and singular speech act, as opposed to an on-going negotiation between the person who comes out and those who read their embodied subjectivities (Rust, 1993). Finally, 'coming out' as a sexuality discourse in practice may

work alongside other discourses of, for example, 'sexuality as natural' to suggest that the 'coming out' speech act in itself is also a natural, a-cultural undertaking.

Comparably, A's version of 'coming out' could also be read as a morally and individually situated discourse of celebration intended to educate others ("people take notice"), who perhaps too experience denial and shame from their 'closeted' bodies. The revelations of the 'authentic self' in the sexuality 'coming out' discourses also resonate with the "this is not my body" / "this is my body" pieces of A's extracts. So too does the idea that through the image and confession, the claim about what a celebrity's body really 'is' involves fixing that body in time, leaving aside the idea that the construction of any imaged body will also involve a culturally embedded audience. Last, A's description of unretouched celebrity images in embodied 'coming outs' are also like the sexuality 'coming outs' for the way it is assumed that because the body is 'natural', the spoken confession of the 'truth' around this body is too a valuable natural act.

On the other side of all the "attention" paid to the "coming out" of celebrities and the rejections of misrepresentation, Extracts 16-17 infer a deep valuing of body authenticity, and a public interest in celebrity bodies and confessions of their 'truth' (Howells, 2011; Redmond, 2008). This value also appears throughout Extract 18 below, where C continues the conversation about photo alteration in her publication.

Photo alteration and representation: "But it might be their real skin tone in real life"

Virtually all the magazine staff I interviewed spoke about having in place in their workplaces some kind of specific imaging guidelines around the use of digital alteration of bodies – some more detailed and formally instituted than others. Using these as a basis, interviewees often were able to articulate what they saw to be some very clear progress / change around this issue for the women's magazine genre. In Extract 18, C tells me about some of the practices in place at her own publication, and about why she believes they take this approach. As in Extracts 16-17, Extract 18 provides yet another example from a wide range of extracts about 'photo alteration'. Perhaps what is most interesting about some of the 'photo alteration' extracts (including Extract 18) is the range of meaning and purposes they afford to the act of 'photoshopping' imaged bodies:

Extract 18

C: Well, we are not photoshopping anymore, unless it's like something, like in this issue the only thing we photoshopped in our fashion was the girls legs which were really really blue cos it was freezing, that's the only thing we did and then [captioned the image saying] this is what we did and why, um, we wouldn't we won't, we won't be using photoshop in any way to transform anyone's body shape or colour, um, and if we do receive an image which is already retouched for example this one, we buy in a lot from the US that come retouched, we will point it out, like,

R: Gosh that's interesting, cos photoshop has been so very controversial,

C: Yeah, well we, we're not even gonna take out the moles or freckles or tattoos or anything, we're just, we're leaving people as they are, cos we don't feel that, I don't feel like we have the right to change who women are or we have the right to say who's beautiful and who's not

R: So, just to ask again from a different point of view, photoshop, when you change what someone looks like, it's changing what you're saying about beauty then?

C: Yes, it's saying natural is not beautiful. I mean, to a point we do need to touch up images just to make them print quality, like we need to sometimes alter the lighting because, say a photographer took a shot and a cloud came over, it's a really beautiful shot but, it's too dark, so we'll lighten it, which will change a person's skin tone from the photo, but it might be their real skin tone in real life, like yeah.

Symbolically, the power which C affords to the act of photoshopping a body is significant. If her comments about photo alteration were to be read through, for example, the psychoanalytic theory of three realms of existence (see Chapter 2; Grosz, 1990; Lacan, 1998; Parker, 2005), the seemingly straightforward 'physical' act of recolouring an image in C's account burgeons with layered representative and symbolic abilities: it changes "who women are", "it's [i.e. photoshopping is] *saying* that natural is not beautiful" (emphasis added). Certain and specific acts like changing someone's body shape (but not others which make an image 'print quality') are taken as a commentary on women's bodies – more than just 'not telling the truth', photo alteration is problematic because it enables a reading of the unacceptability of unretouched bodies "it's saying natural is not beautiful".

Conversely, this account from C then also assumes that when magazines *refuse* to alter images, it is indeed "reality" which is being represented (Oriez, 2009). In turn, the magazine itself becomes what Whitehead and Kurz (2008) term the "innocent media bystander", such as to say that if it is 'truth' which is being conveyed, then media employees are able to figuratively exonerate themselves from the implications of the content shown, and become the (journalistically) 'good' magazine discussed in the previous chapter. The difficulty from

a post-structuralist research frame with this account though is precisely the claim that bodies *can* be shown in a 'natural', pre-cultural state - instead, their 'naturalness' is signified by other representative visual cues such as the body being unclothed (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of these undressed, natural bodies). A related and additional feminist concern with the emphasis on 'true' and 'natural' representations of un-photoshopped beautiful bodies is that difficult and ideal messages about gender and bodies can still be conveyed by the "truth" – for example, the visual scrutinies which revolved around the undressed and unretouched images of Jennifer Hawkins and her model body (Chapter 4), or even recent media coverage documenting the wardrobe choices as opposed to the political interests of Hilary Clinton as she prepares for the 2012 American Presidential election.

Interestingly, C states that she feels she does not "have the right to make" commentaries about whose bodies "are beautiful and [whose are] not" – despite being herself a woman with a body, whose intention is to change / expand the definition of beauty (as she tells me elsewhere in her interview). Her politics are located in the acceptability / unacceptability of *other* women's bodies and symbolic interventions into *other* women's imaged *identities*. As an example of this, I want to examine in more detail some of the claims C makes in Extract 18 about photoshop and "skin tone". These include:

"the only thing we photoshopped in our fashion was the girls legs which were really really blue cos it was freezing",

"we won't be using photoshop in any way to transform anyone's body shape or colour",

"we're leaving people as they are",

"to a point we do need to touch up images just to make them print quality"

and [if] "it's too dark, [...] we'll lighten it, which will change a person's skin tone from the photo, but it might be their real skin tone in real life".

When C speaks about freezing models having blue legs, the retouching of the image she refers to raises questions around the ethical treatment of the models who were photographed: "the girls' legs which were really really blue cos it was freezing". In contrast to C's articulated 'rights' perspective ("I don't feel like we have the right"), in this instance 'the magazine' (i.e. herself, as the magazine's employee) has made a decision to erase

elements of *experience* and *environment* because they are inconvenient to the schematics this fashion image was directed to signify (Machin, 2004). Practically, magazine fashion shoots are often undertaken months in advance of the season in which the magazine issue is released, and professional digital work on the environment of a photograph means that a setting for the photo shoot needs only then to be approximated, saving production time and cost. However this aside, C's claim that her magazine does not change skin colour, alongside her example of an instance where they did just this, could suggest an alternative reading of 'skin tone' and the use of photoshop. To explain, skin 'colour' here is more than just the literal chromatic hue which appears on the page. Instead, the 'truth' of colour here has been displaced into the realm of representation (Grosz, 1990), where its conceptualisation as figuring *identity* has been prioritised as 'real': "which will change a person's skin tone from the photo, but it might be their real skin tone in real life". In other words, the figuring and representing of the model's communicated identity takes precedence over her embodied evidence of experience – as if, for whatever reason, an experienced body would be less "natural", or less "real" (see also, Extract 21). C's construction of what "reality" means to identity here is what has made photo alteration a permissible intervention, justifying a particular limited use of airbrushing (Huang, 2001; Oriez, 2009).

Interestingly, the overall conceptualisation of "real" as 'natural' and 'authentic' is not the only meaning of 'real' available in these interview texts, and seems to have been reserved for the details and components of a body as they appear captured within an image ("real skin tone", "moles or freckles or tattoos"). When instead "real" is inferred on a whole body, such as it is in the "real girl" of the next extract, "real" then refers to an un-aspirational embodied identity, with "cellulite and all", uncreative and "average", the counterpart "everyday" to a magazine's escapist fantasy. In the next section, G discursively grapples with this "real girl" Other.

'Telling the truth' about bodies: "Why don't you put a real girl on the cover?"

At first glance, the next extracts can be understood within both the images theme discussed throughout this chapter, but also at the same time they show well the "legitimizing limits" strategy of the constructing of the "good magazine" from the previous chapter. What is

different about Extracts 19 and 20, is that in this case the limits applied to the use of images as positive body messages are not just constructed as material sales margins or readership support (although she does invoke these: “from a business perspective”, “because it’s not gonna sell”). In addition, G now also defends the practices of her publication, and even of the genre as a whole, through secondary defence of “fantasy” body images and what she believes such images are for:

Extract 19

G: I mean, ah, there’s always criticism about, why don’t you put a real girl on the cover, why don’t you do that kind of stuff, but, from a business perspective, a real girl is never gonna sell a magazine,

R: Right.

G: Ah people, people, readers might say oh, we want a, you know, we’d love to buy the magazine if it was Joe Blogs on the cover, but in reality, and this, or you know if it was not airbrushed it was completely untouched, [text removed], but in reality, there, you still do buy magazines for that escapist element, you still do buy them for that aspirational feeling, and no one, you might say that you wanna see someone, you know cellulite and all on the cover but you actually don’t, you actually still do want that really kind of fantasy element and that’s why people are still buying magazines, so from a business perspective it doesn’t make sense to put someone who no one’s heard of on the cover, or who, who doesn’t have some sort of, I want to be like her aspect, because it’s not gonna sell, and no matter how many times people say I wanna see the whole, you know the whole magazine unairbrushed, or un, retouched free, I think that would be amazing, that would be so fantastic if we could do that,

R: Yeah.

G: But, it’s not gonna sell, I don’t think people would pick up a magazine, with um, you know, with um, with a, a, you know with a, Joe Average on the cover.

Extract 20

G: I think there’s an element of truth now coming through magazines and I think the, the sort of um, I really really really like that we’re sort of exposing the fact that, all the kind of computer trickery that does go into making magazines, you know models just don’t wake up looking like this they have to have three hours of hair and make-up they have to be put in the most flattering clothes that can be sourced from all over the world with amazing lighting and an incredible photographer, I really like that all that’s being exposed, and so um for the future I think I would just like, but you know but at the same time, I was saying before, it is a fantasy magazine, it is, it is um, it’s not, there’s parts of it, depending on what magazine you buy, there’s parts of it like a fashion shoot that’s meant to be, um, very out of this world, it’s not meant to represent day to day life, and I don’t want to lose that element completely, I think that would be a travesty to lose that creativity and and and stuff, that doesn’t mean that you can’t use a size sixteen girl in, in your photo-shoot, by all means go for it.

As mentioned earlier, within the content of each of these two extracts, it is possible to read G's talk as underwritten by one of the discourses discussed in the previous chapter: that of the (journalistically) 'good' magazine which sets out to tell the "truth" about "real girls" and their bodies. In this instance however, the construction of the 'good' and 'truthful' magazine is evoked and resisted – overtaken by "fantasy", "aspiration", "creativity" and "fashion" as an 'escape' from the "day to day" of "reality". In her endorsement of these competing magazine values, G not only legitimates the limits of magazine 'truth telling' (as per Chapter 9). Additionally, she also draws upon various cultural discourses articulating a range of possible meanings or functions for magazine images, each of which work to serve the purpose of the argument she makes (Huang, 2001; Winick, 1996).

For example, Western culture has throughout its history placed a premium on the "truth" told by the visual – from 'eyewitness' accounts to the idea of the 'visionary', seeing has been strongly implicated within discursive constructions of 'reality' (Jutel, 2005). Until recently, photographic images had been especially valued for their visual documentary function (Wheeler & Gleason, 1995). However, and as G explains above, new digital and bodily technologies alongside the destabilising effects of post-modern thinking have compromised this truth value of the photograph (Mirzoeff, 1998; "all the kind of computer trickery", "you know models just don't wake up looking like this"). In this, G starts out her argument from the same premise as A or C – making the point that magazine images currently may not be telling 'the truth' about or representing accurately the "reality" of bodies (Extracts 16, 17 and 18). However, where A and C construct the opposite of "reality" as an injurious statement – a lie ("not my body") or a violation of a woman's 'right' to understand herself as 'beautiful' – G instead constructs 'truth' against 'fantasy', and explains the possible aspirational and creative appeal of this kind of imaged fiction for her readers.

G's emphasis on the role of 'fantasy' in a magazine runs through Extracts 19 and 20 as a variable, continuous construct; from "aspirational" "creativity" right through to being "very out of this world" and "not meant to represent everyday life" at all. Within this, the possible positions available to G's imagined reader are highly convoluted. Following this reading, they must be astute enough to know the difference between these desired 'aspirational' and 'not meant to represent everyday life' fantasies; yet do not have the

expertise to know that their requests for “Joe Average” cover images are not actually what they really do want to see (Milkie, 2002). Moreover, these constructed readers are, for one reason or another, in need of fantasy and escapism. In being “real” and “average”, readers are in need of something to aspire to, and the fantasies which G talks about represent the (ideal) reader’s desires (to transcend class, the ‘everyday’, the way in which they “wake up” to being every morning; Ouellette, 1999; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). At the same time G’s version of the reader, ironically being best represented by the “real girl”, inevitably becomes the secondary ‘other’ herself which allows for her fantasies of improvement. As with the construction of the ‘good magazine’, ultimately the reader here is discursively moved around to support the idea of fantasy, while at the same time, remaining quite segregated from it (c.f. McRobbie’s (1996) work about the reader as a ‘space of projection’ for magazines, who is articulated in multiple, constantly changing and contradictory ways to suit a wide range of purposes).

G’s claims about the “element of truth now coming through magazines”, and “exposing the fact that, all the kind of computer [and other] trickery that does go into making magazines” seem to suggest that in the past, women’s magazines have avoided ‘truth’ and rather than expose, had set out to conceal the details of the work involved in ‘producing’ ideal women’s bodies. However, following the reinvention of *Cosmopolitan* magazine as a publication marketed to young single women in the late 1960s, one of the very clear features of the magazine was a deliberate and open disclosure of ‘body trickery’. For example, Ouellette writes that in the early versions of the magazine “even the *Cosmopolitan* cover girl was exposed as a ‘fake’, her breasts made to appear more alluring with masking tape and Vaseline” (1999, p. 366). Similarly, it was not uncommon for Helen Gurley Brown (the editor at the time) to candidly discuss the ‘fakeness’ of her own body, and how she achieved its look. The purpose of doing this all, was so that the new *Cosmopolitan* reader might also be able to herself participate in this ‘trickery’, knowing full well how such a body ‘image’ was created, in order to attract and secure male attention. Quite contrary to the face value of G’s claims, arguably, it is upon this early history of exposed trickery in magazines that her own and other versions of contemporary commercial women’s magazine have grown.

The comparison between the desirability of deliberate ‘trickery’ in the 1960s *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and the constructions of the ‘real’ by its current day counterparts are particularly illuminating. If nothing else, G’s talk of the “element of truth *now* coming through” lends weight to her self-positioning as a ‘good’ employee of a magazine title constructed as new and current. Moreover, her references to ‘exposure’ of the truth curiously resonate with the exposed ‘real’ bodies of women in media attempts to image the *body love* message (see Chapter 5). But perhaps most notable here is the relative absence of G from her own account of ‘fantasy’ bodies, compared with the open revelations of the body of Helen Gurley Brown in the *Cosmopolitan* context. This absence seems perhaps particularly marked when given literature about a theorised contemporary intensification of magazine professionals’ identification with their readers (Gough-Yates, 2003; see also Chapter 9). Such a lack of connection between the magazine employees’ construction of their professional selves and the possibility that they might be ‘real girls’ too, characterised much of the discussion in my interviews with few exceptions – Extract 21 below, was one of these.

Aesthetic versus ethic: “Like for example if I was going to appear in....”

Extract 21 reprises many of the key constructions seen throughout the other extracts of this chapter; for example, constructions of reality, the legitimate limits to acceptable photo retouching, the good magazine, the good reader and the expertise of the producer. In the extract, D tells me about the kinds of changes to images made by her magazine in the process of ‘airbrushing’ and relates how an understanding of the fantasy of magazine bodies informs her own (educated) approach to such images as ‘inspiration’:

Extract 21

D I’ve got a friend who said to me one time, I don’t read magazines because they make me depressed, and I was like oh my god, that’s so bizarre, like I read magazines and get inspired, but she reads them and get depressed because she doesn’t actually realise the, you know that those images actually aren’t realistic that is actually not what that model looks like, like if you saw the before and after of that then you’d be like whoa, that’s you know a completely different image and we don’t do that like, you know we would never, we would never change the shape of someone’s body, we would never like, we do things like we would whiten the eyes and we would whiten teeth, to brighten the image so that it’s print quality, and if someone’s got a big pimple on the end of their nose, we would take that off, cos it’s not permanent, so anything that is on someone’s body that is not permanent then we will take it off, like if she’s got a bruise, the model’s got a bruise, then we’ll airbrush the bruise out, and, um, but if there’s a scar, like if for example I was gonna appear in [magazine name] in a bikini, I’ve got an appendix scar, and they wouldn’t, we wouldn’t airbrush that out,

R: You wouldn't take that out.

D: And, my moles, wouldn't get airbrushed out, and i think there are, there's magazines that would get rid of that like say there was a picture and the model had a, a, a mole on her face and they wanted clear skin, they'd just get rid of it, and, I think a lot of people don't realise that there is a lot of retouching that goes on in magazines so, the images that they're seeing aren't realistic, but unless you're actually educated in that, like you, we all know that because we work, work, work here, yeah.

Like Extracts 1-5 of the previous chapter, the opening of Extract 21 can be read through a media effects discourse, as a statement of how 'influential' media can be. Nonetheless, D explains that media audience responses are not singular, juxtaposing the "bizarre" experience of her friend who "gets depressed" from looking at magazines, and her own more desirable experience of being "inspired" by magazine content. In doing so, D's self-construction is somewhat contradictory: from one perspective, she steps into the position of the 'ideal reader', who experiences the desired response to the fantasy images of magazines. However, through her claim that her friend "just doesn't realise" (also later "a lot of people don't realise"), D explains that the very reason she is able to take up this desirable 'inspired' response is through her expertise as the experienced magazine producer. She 'knows' that these images are intended as fantasies *because* of her work-based familiarity with images: "actually educated in that" "we all know that because we work...here". In turn, through reminding me of this, D is also able to reinstate again her position of the 'good' and 'informed' magazine employee, by pointing out the skill involved in image work ("like if you saw the before and after of that you'd be like whoa"), and by taking up an ethical producer position in her apparent refusal to reproduce the excessive air-brushing conditions which inspired her friend's feelings of depression. As a whole, through dominating both the positions of ideal producer and consumer, the difficult response of D's friend is by comparison marginalised as a misunderstanding of what magazines are intended to be for. This particular positioning of D can be contrasted with that of C in Extract 5 of the previous chapter, who herself takes responsibility for the difficult responses of readers to magazine images: "we need to change that now, it's our fault, we need to do something about it".

As mentioned earlier, Extract 21 is fairly unique in that it is one of the very few times throughout the interviews that one of the magazine staff made any reference to the notion that she too, as speaker, could be thought of as part of the group 'women', who inhabit

their own bodies and are, through these bodies, addressed by the magazines they produce (“like for example if I was going to appear in...”). However, as the exception, Extract 21 perhaps only further serves to illustrate that in their speech, magazine staff sought to separate themselves as ‘educated’ expert of images from their readers who may never fully “realise” what they want to see in a magazine, or understand the intention behind magazine practices. By comparison, D’s brief cataloguing of her own body features feels almost detached when compared to the ‘depression’ / ‘inspiration’ responses she describes for readers, and her ethical adamance around never changing what someone ‘really’ looks like.

In her short moment of featuring herself as imaginary magazine model, D draws a clear line of difference between her bruises and her moles or scars, the “shape of someone’s body” compared to a “big pimple on the end of [someone’s] nose”, and, the things she would ‘never change’ as opposed to the comparably trivial ‘getting rid of’ of things which are ‘not permanent’: “so anything that is on someone’s body that is not permanent then we will take it off”. She criticises ‘other’ magazines who would interfere with the ‘permanent’, saying that “those [resulting] images actually aren’t realistic, that is actually not what that model looks like”, also that in doing so, those other magazines are producing “a completely different image and we don’t do that”. In distancing herself from those ‘other’ magazines, again D is able to functionally re-establish her position as the employee and producer of a ‘good magazine. At the same time, her construction here of the “not permanent” can be read against discourses of ideal femininity as timeless, captured and predictable – excluding the living, changing body from any possibility of being aesthetically ‘inspiring’ (Coleman, 2009; Railton & Watson, 2005). Moreover, “not permanent” appears to be a label applied to individual features of the body which stand alone to be ‘gotten rid of’ or remain, in a detached and fragmented manner.

Relocating this permanent / not permanent distinction within one of my earlier arguments in this chapter – that (mis)representation in the context of these interviews is more about the illustration of identity as opposed to the actual physical qualities of the ‘real’ – the ‘permanent’ / ‘not permanent’ divide has some interesting implications. Namely, that the ‘permanent’ features of a body are what matters to magazine identities, and that it is the removal of such ‘permanent’ features which can make a photograph “unrealistic”, “a

completely different image". In equating 'reality' (via identity) with permanence, the practices which D describes at her magazine are made possible by a meta-discourse of stable, singular personhood – a discourse which in turn has been subject to deep interrogation in critical psychology at least since the 1970s (Henriques et al, 1998; Hollway, 1989). This critical work questioned why identity in psychology had been conceptualised as a continuous and unitary set of traits, pointing to the fluidity of post-modern experience and building an alternative concept of changing and contingent *subjectivities* made out of contexts, culture and performance (Gavey, 2002; Marecek, 2002). Similar questions could also be directed towards D's valuing of the 'permanent' body in image; namely, how her rejection of the temporary and experiential features when accounting for a body as 'reality' might interface with the characterisation and fetishisation of the "real girl" within the *body love* message.

Reflection and Conclusion

For at least the last 10 years, various individuals at different magazine titles have been 'working towards' imaging a wider range of less-made-over / less-worked-over bodies. This process has, as evidenced in various moments throughout the magazine staff interviews (see for example Extracts 19 and 20), been more of a long progressing movement than a straightforward 'change' in the face of a considerable amount of justified, although not necessarily justifiable (Press, 2011), tension and resistance around concrete concerns like maintaining profit margins and cover sales (Freedman, 2009; Milkie, 2002). However, within the issue of images, there is a sense of a further less tangible theme of anxiety about change readable amongst the extracts, such as in concessions like G's "by all means" endorsement of the "size sixteen", in C's (and D's) "massive yellow pimple" argument, or in B's account of complaints from size 6 readers who are "real girls" too. The carefully managed welcoming of 'real women' onto the pages of magazines to communicate positive messages about bodies, is constructed almost as a threat to the maintenance of aesthetic fantasies of beauty and the moral conservation of individualist health (Brown, 2005; Tischner & Malson, 2010).

Drawing all of these threads together, a sense of them can be made through theoretical work about body images in women's magazines – namely, that such media images are caricatures, over-determinations of symbolic meaning intended to evoke a reaction in the reader (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003). Given this, what would the woman who loved her body too much then look like, using an extension of the visual cues which have previously been used in magazines to indicate this idea? Perhaps, this woman would spill off the page, unaware or uncaring about exposing an excess of uncontrollable, oversized flesh – the bigger she was, the more “real” she could be. Perhaps she would be blemished or disfigured; perhaps she would show evidence of her transient experiences in the cold or her bruised and lived-in skin. Certainly, this woman would convey an excess inappropriate to magazine femininity, coming across as out of control, even as monstrous (Ussher, 2006) in the pictorial language media audiences are familiar with. I imagine it would be very difficult for magazines to think of this caricature, over-desiring woman as “print quality”.

The resistant anxiety and containment around such a representation of the ‘woman who loves herself too much’ goes beyond the genre of women's magazines, right to the core of the cultural construction and containment of ‘woman’ as social category – what space she might be allowed, for example, or what impressions within her world she might be permitted to provoke (Malson, 1997). In a way, this gendering of her excesses is ironic – supposedly she rejects one form of (scrutinised, highly controlled) femininity only to be too much of a woman in another way, caught in a double bind of inescapable gender roles (Sered & Norton-Hawk, 2011). It is my opinion that the anxiety, discomfort and illogical irony etched around this figure of the unlimited woman who ‘loves’ herself represents a potentially powerful possibility for destabilisation in future feminist engagement.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the ways in which magazine interviewees placed images and representation at the centre of communicating a *body love* message in their publication. Their negotiations of how the representations of bodies in media might correspond with ‘reality’, with the bodies of their readers, and with their own ability to think

of themselves as part of a 'good magazine', draw upon a wide range of discursive constructions, legitimations and absences. Notably, the magazine staff's discursive work is grounded in a number of implicit but hegemonic approaches to (female) gender and identity, where bodies (as images and imaginary) play a defined and finite role (Durham, 2011). In particular, and through their discussions of Photoshop and misrepresentations, the gravity the interviewees allowed images in determining "who women are" is momentous, allowing some key insights as to why magazines communicate the *body love* message as they do.

Chapter 11:

Synthesis: The (Im)possibilities of 'Body Love'

This chapter draws together the theoretical developments and analyses presented thus far across my research chapters in an attempt to make sense of what the commentary and critique extended therein offers as a thesis. It begins with a summary of the criticisms made across the analytical chapters of magazine *body love* messages, organised by discussions around what positive body messages have been seen to limit, facilitate, and failed to challenge. The next section then asks what some of the consequences of these critiques may be for 'readers' when set into some of the broader cultural contexts of young women's lives. A brief section about the limitations of this thesis precedes a final section entitled 'Solutions?' which addresses some of the implications raised by *body love* messages as conceptualised by my thesis.

Summary: Analytical critiques of 'loving your body'

From the outset, the goal of this thesis has been to explore the content, nature and location of 'new' *love your body* messages in young women's magazines. Motivated by feminist investments in the articulation of positive messages of embodiment (Murray, 2012), the purpose of the first study was to evaluate from this feminist perspective the kinds of embodied subjectivities (re)created and made available to young women by *body love* messages in magazines. The second study in my thesis then investigated the production of positive body messages in magazines from the perspective of editorial staff. Theoretically, if 'old' messages about women's bodies in magazines had been the product of a problematic commercial entanglement with the advertising and beauty industries (Tebbel, 2000; Wolf, 1991), the current research sought to ask what, if anything, is different about the ideologies and intentions which drive the 'new' body messages.

Despite some initial optimism on my own behalf, this thesis has covered some fairly substantial critiques of the *love your body* message, particularly throughout the text analysis chapters. Taken together and placed against feminist concerns about how 'old' ideal

representations of women's bodies were portrayed in magazines, the *limiting* readings that *love your body* messages make available of women's bodies could be seen as cause for serious concern. To summarise, this thesis has discussed the ways in which magazine *body love* messages can be seen to restrict the meanings of what it is to have a 'normal', 'real' or 'natural' body, then going on to undermine such bodies as the less fashionable but more inhabitable 'other' to the 'model body' (see also Milkie, 2002). Through their representations / definitions of diversity, *body love* messages also leave substantial groups of women outside of the discursive possibility of enjoying their bodies – aged and disabled bodies in particular continue to fit within feminist definitions of symbolic erasure (Heiss, 2011). Similarly, the heterosexual context put forward for the practice and validation of *body love* practices renders the possible 'relationships' non-heterosexual women might have with their bodies questionably inauthentic and without purpose. In addition, this thesis has also discussed the way in which magazine *body love* messages separate women from their bodies, reduce bodies to images, and then demonstrate that even the most aesthetically acceptable women's bodies are fundamentally difficult to love.

Alongside this, magazine *body love* messages also manage to *enable* the idea that women's body problems are somewhat trivial, as easily fixed as a straightforward change of mind (Lynch, 2011) – and in doing so diminish and individualise what can sometimes be severely debilitating and frustrating experiences of women's difficult embodiment. This, coupled with an unreserved appeal to neo-liberal discourses of personal responsibility (Hinnant, 2009; Walkerdine, 2004) forecloses on just about any possibility of magazine *love your body* messages ever conceptualising the construction of women's body difficulties as a cultural problem with potential collective solutions. Along these same lines, and under the guise of taking up positive feminist messages about women's bodies, it could be said that media bound versions of *body love* allow for an appropriation and depoliticisation of feminist messages by emptying them of their attention to gender biased power and in its place, investing *body love* with commercially charged interests (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Murray, 2012). Instead, both 'studies' of this thesis found women's body difficulties were often defined and limited to a very specific set of uncomplicated problems around representation (like the over-use of photo retouching), with readily remediative opportunities for response.

Even more problematic, these ‘content-lite’ claims to activism and ‘progress’ seem to allow magazines to position themselves as progressive and ‘good’, then placing the onus back onto the reader to respond ‘correctly’ and support ‘the magazine’ for its positive work (Gill, 2012).

Finally, the analytical chapters have also raised critique around magazine *body love* messages in their apparent *failure to disrupt or challenge* established discursive and institutional structures previously identified as scaffolding women’s difficult experiences of their bodies, and the mandate of the media to represent women’s bodies in problematic ways. For example, there does not appear to be any evidence of change in the corporate financial structures of magazines, to the contrary, the magazine employees interviewed for this thesis openly spoke about managing tensions between commercial viability and communicating positive messages about the body (see also D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2011). Given this, perhaps it is unsurprising that the text study of this thesis questioned the way in which *body love* messages were seen to limit the meaning of ‘love’ to evidentially consumerist practices which commodify the body. Equally, *body love* messages were also questioned in my analyses for their repeated failure to make any sustainable or political objection to contemporary discourses of objectification and visual knowledge around women’s bodies. To the contrary, this thesis raises the possibility that perhaps the mediated *body love* messages of magazines encourage *intensified* scrutiny of women’s bodies, with love in this context defined as the in-depth and detailed knowledge of every flaw, freckle and dimple of the visible body, as Other.

All told, with all of these concerns about *body love* laid out together, the picture put forward above is one of deep-set and troubling unease. Yet, I tentatively still retain some reserved optimism about the media as a location for positive body messages for a number of reasons. As pointed out in previous chapters, *body love* messages for better or worse do represent (at face value) a departure from what has gone ‘before’, and at the very least, an attempt at good intentions and reparation when compared to the ‘old’ magazine body messages. However justified or framed, *love your body* messages have provided a return to the possibility of imaging a greater diversity of bodies than had been imaginable in magazines for some time now – regardless of the limitations of this diversity, it is today even less of an

option to speak outright of total representational erasure and identical ‘cookie cutter’ images of women. Placing this all in the context of the extremely conservative “evolution before revolution” approach to change described of magazines (Freedman, 2009, Thornham, 2007) – it still seems possible to describe *love your body* messages as a work in progress with some potential yet.

Given this promise of possible further change yet to come, weighing in on the listed critiques above becomes a far more difficult task to gauge – are successive approximations towards ‘better’ body messages adequate enough for now? How much hope can be invested in the idea that changes are still ‘in progress’ when the magazine staff whom I interviewed were insistent on the idea that *body love* as a concept had both reached a financial and figurative limit, at least on their behalf? (see Extracts 13-14, Chapter 9). Turning to the research literature, in 2002 following her own interviews with magazine staff asking about girls’ demands for an increase in the diversity of bodies in magazines, Milkie concluded:

“[S]ympathies among editors may be an avenue for future social changes in girls’ magazines (see McRobbie, 1991, 1997). Indeed, while this study provides a somewhat bleak picture in which girls critique is ultimately contained and the narrow images reproduced in the culture industry, it is only a snapshot at one point in time. Thus, my study may underestimate more subtle or slower changes in images. Indeed, perhaps there is a substantial lag between the cracks in the dominant discourse caused by girls’ resistance and editors who share in it and the changes that may later come to fruition”. (Milkie, 2002, p. 855-856).

Ten years later, it is difficult to know how to respond to this commentary. On the one hand, *body love* messages appear to be far more established, and talk of changing media representations of women’s bodies has not been forgotten. On the other hand, a decade of ‘progress’ involving multiple changes to magazine staff, incredible technological advances in the area of photographic retouching and a myriad of positive body initiatives (see later in this chapter) – seems to have only taken *body love* as a concept so far. The same limitations and containment of critiques discussed in Milkie’s (2002) study still apply, and so if indeed it is possible to describe *body love* as a work still in progress, it is also possible to question what exactly it is, which has been painstakingly holding this “progress” back.

In the quotation above, Milkie references the work of Angela McRobbie (1991, 1997), as a hinge point upon which to base her estimation of “future social changes in girls’ magazines” (2002, p. 855). More recently, McRobbie herself has reflected upon those same past works, in the context of a journal article about post-feminist media and consumer culture:

“I am willing to portray myself here as a key offender in rushing too quickly to welcome the ways in which the young women’s magazine sector took on board a range of issues which had been of key importance to a previous generation of feminist scholars and activities. The failure to interrogate the conditions upon which such an embracing of seeming female freedoms was predicated by media organisations meant that the relations of power underpinning and overseeing such a move remained worryingly invisible.” (McRobbie, 2008, p. 535).

Although the analytic text of her article addresses the femininities portrayed in the ‘Sex and the City’ television series, when McRobbie discusses the ‘conditions’ upon which celebratory femininities are made contingent, and the address of young women as narcissistic, insecure and individualised ‘girls’, she could equally have also been talking about the *love your body* analytical texts of this thesis (2008). Her argument is that there is an “invidious insurgent patriarchalism which is hidden beneath the celebrations of female freedoms” (p 539), and that current research analyses of post-feminist texts often understate power in favour of accounts of feminine pleasures and agency (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Lazar, 2009). Given the long list of conditions and limitations around *body love* messages listed in the opening to this chapter, it could certainly be said that there is more to *body love* than the celebration and ‘newness’ discourses which can be read of these messages on a decontextualized and surface level.

This is not to say that the ‘hope’ and ‘concern’ stories discussed here are necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, the post-structuralist approach taken in this research would understand any binary between ‘endorsement’ and ‘condemnation’ of *body love* messages as an artefact of argument, rather than as automatically opposing positions. What does matter instead though, is how these discourses of celebration and reservation are able to explain the content and production of *body love* messages, and crucially, the interests they take up on behalf of young women in doing so. So where *does body love* and the possible responses to it leave young women after all? And what other meanings / implications do the conditions placed around magazine versions of ‘loving the body’ take on, when applied to a wider social context of young women’s lives?

Where does this leave young women?

One of the statistics which I have repeatedly come across in both academic and media texts over the years of undertaking my research, is that roughly 80% of young women do not, or cannot feel good about their bodies (for example, in Etcoff, Orbach, Scott & D'Agostino, 2004; MissRepresentation, 2012; NOW Foundation, 2011; Tebbel, 2000; Tyrer & Burns, 2008; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). All else aside, these statistics can and have been used as endorsements for feminist academic arguments against body dissatisfaction being restricted to the domain of abnormality and eating disorder, but also, to justify virtually any practice (feminist or otherwise) which seeks or claims to rectify the statistic. Encapsulated within these numbers is the majority of a whole generation of young women who, for whatever reason, have grown into bodies culturally written over by shame, anxiety and difficult experiences. What the presentation of such statistics sometimes fails to attend to though, is the wider social *context* in which young women's bodies become so very difficult to love. Certainly, a consideration of magazines as a part of that context has never been far from the research presented in my thesis. In this section, I would like to explicitly return to address the discursive environment of magazine readers in a slightly broader sense to ask: where do magazine *body love* messages leave young women, in relation to the contexts of a) popular understandings about the 'obesity epidemic', b) the current economic recession, c) practices of photo-retouching as a cultural phenomenon, and d) contemporary post-feminist and hetero-normative femininities.

Large bodies and the 'obesity epidemic'.

Recurring throughout the analytical work of this thesis, the 'real woman' or 'real girl' continually appeared in image, text and speech as emblematic of the *love your body* message. These real bodies "come in all shapes and sizes" (Brown, 2005) – or at least, (Australasian) dress sizes six to sixteen – and where they appear, represent a significant departure from the stereotypical slender and idea(l) bodies which would normally be expected of the magazine genre (Groez, Levine & Murnen, 2002). In this alone, the 'real girl' makes a notable contribution to the normalisation of a greater diversity of women's bodies in magazines, and challenges the overwhelming monopoly underweight bodies have on acceptable media femininities (Young, 2005). For the most part however, this 'real girl' is

maintained successfully with little challenge to some of the other problematic discourses in place around women's bodies. Ultimately, despite the positives of 'diversity' in representation, the magazines' incarnation of the 'real girl' also works to sustain cultural ideas about the immorality of obesity, and to continue to condemn larger bodies as a socially unacceptable state of being.

For example, the term 'real' (and its alternate of the 'true' or 'natural' self) also dominates in highly circulated contemporary narratives of women's weight-loss; that the 'real bodies' and 'real selves' of overweight people can be found *beneath* the folds of flesh and fat (Kryölä, 2005; Wykes & Gunter, 2005). As such, obese bodies can still be understood as not yet 'real' but awaiting transformation, and so systematically excluded from the positive meanings that are tentatively being attempted around the 'real girl' through *body love* discourse (Brown, 2005). As another example, my analyses also considered the extent to which neo-liberal discourses about the value of producing 'real, natural' bodies have contributed to the articulation and possibility of *body love* messages, through a rejection of 'old' underweight body aesthetics as 'unhealthy' (Kryölä, 2005; Whitehead & Kurz, 2005). As the counterpoint of the underweight body, the caricatured spectre of the obese woman who is too large or too 'real' threatens the legitimacy of *body love* discourses which claim to endorse *health* above all else. The possibility of being seen to be in any way 'pro-obesity' by the endorsement of even slightly larger bodies then, is something for *body love* texts to avoid at all costs, when obese bodies have been so extremely over-determined in popular discourse as unhealthy, injurious and harmful (Gingras, 2005; Hinnant, 2009; Hood, 2005; Wilson, 2005).

Even where *body love* discourses do engage in the celebration of voluptuous 'woman bodies', the limitations placed around these bodies can be highly specific and allocate problematic meanings to other kinds of bodies. For a start, media discourses endorsing busty, curvy bodies typically do so through constructions of heterosexual or maternal femininity – favouring large breasts and hips but not large waistlines, and purposing these bodies as always, already sexual (Anijar, 2005; Manheim, 2000; Railton & Watson, 2005). Contrary to typical feminist messages about acceptance of all kinds of bodies, at the same time such messages also depreciate the femininity of smaller (flatter, or athletic) bodies.

Nor do magazine messages of body celebration challenge the social marginalisation around 'fat' itself, neatly sidestepping some of the most vicious cultural meanings which allow for the stigmatisation of large bodies (Young, 2005). As a case in point, Chapters 5 and 6 suggested that *body love* as figured within the media is above all else, a visually evidential practice of a worked on and 'taken-care-of' body. Given deeply engrained social discourses about the flesh of larger (women's) bodies having been 'let go' and produced by an immoral degree of inattention to the body, overweight bodies fundamentally are pre-excluded, contravening current configurations of what it means to *love your body* (Brown, 2005).

The recession and 'recessionista' as a contemporary subjectivity

The opening to this thesis also drew attention to the current global economic recession as part of the temporal context of the 'new' *body love* messages. In my introduction, the emphasis was placed upon the possible impacts of the recession on magazine business but of course, a changing economic climate has also had implications for magazine readers as citizens of society at a time of increasing fiscal restraint. In relation to this, some commentators have (perhaps optimistically) hypothesized that the ever increasing pressure of Western 'vanity' might take a backseat during this time, having been superseded by other financial priorities, calling into sight a possible end to extreme cultural regulations around appearance (in Clifton, 2009). However, this does not appear to have come about, and instead the research literature is documenting an aggressive (re)mainstreaming of commercial beauty culture (Tasker & Negra, 2007), grounded in post-feminist discourses of self-enhancement and individual pleasure / achievement. Locating *body love* messages within this economic climate, the way in which they have re-imagined women's body technologies from relatively elective self-transformation into necessary self-indulgence and self-care can be read as a re-prioritisation of *body love* practices as vital self-investment, more needed now than ever before (Lazar, 2011). On the other side of this coin, using 'real' women to model product uses and self-care technologies in commercial media could also be seen as a promotion which seeks to normalise certain embodied beauty practices as everyday activities, as opposed to tasks and expenses only undertaken by those who can afford the time and cost to do so (Gill, 2006).

The discourses of self-investment through which these commercial inducements operate have a range of implications for the femininities offered to young women who are hailed by *body love* messages. For example, the continual recourse to discourses of ‘care of the self’ in *love your body* messages, subtitled by discourses of care of the *feminine* self, prompt a reading of women’s bodies as in *need* of care to maintain their femininity (Chrisler, 2008; Ussher, 2006). Consequently, little challenge is made here to ‘old’ magazine constructions of ‘pale and frail’ femininity (Redmond, 2003; Wykes & Gunter, 2005), or of women’s bodies as less substantial or established, and so starting out as needing commercially scaffolded ‘love’ to become viable and inhabitable. As a second example, consumer discourses which intersect with *body love* messages about being ‘worth it’ also maintain a status quo of normative femininity. By framing female indulgence and self-invested fantasies for the body within post-feminist commodity practices (Lazar, 2009a; 2011), the consequence of these discourses may be a limitation of the possibility of imagining transgressive and alternative female embodied desires (Thornham, 2007). Equally, by framing rituals of femininity as simultaneously comforting, known and ‘safe’, but also innocuously escapist and indulgent at a time of economic uncertainty (McRobbie, 2008), *body love* messages also maintain both commodified and normative femininities as endorsed and practicable modes of subjectivity.

Take my picture: what about digital alteration?

Questions about women’s images appear as a central topic throughout this thesis, and in particular, the use or non-use of digital alteration has been a repeated theme. As I suggested in the previous chapter, my contention is that digital alteration has likely become so important to the *body love* issue because of the way in which retouching can so readily imagine a different and ideal version of a photographed body. By comparison then, the rejection of retouching seems to have become a statement in its own right about what is physically possible of the flesh of ‘real women’s’ bodies, and a refusal of the body ideals against which ‘natural’ bodies cannot measure up. The analyses of this thesis also raised a discussion of the relative and fragile meanings of ‘truth’ when it comes to photography and retouching (Wheeler & Gleason, 1995; Winick, 1996) – and contested that part of the ‘problem’ with images of women’s bodies are precisely the current cultural ‘truths’ which

are available about them (Pollock, 1977). With little dispute of contemporary 'knowledge' about women's problematic embodiment, how much 'truth' is told by *body love* messages and unretouched images through such knowledge may not really matter at all (Thornham, 2007). Along these same lines, Elphick (2010) asks whether *body love* is "missing the point" in its proliferation of unaltered images. Using Maguire (2010) as reference, she argues that unretouched images can still be exercises in visual objectification. Like this thesis, she points out that the emphasis placed on "learning to love your [true] appearance" still perpetuates the idea "that what you look like really, really matters" (n.p), failing to challenge the cultural notion of women's bodies as natural subjects of an objectifying gaze.

On the other side of this argument, Chapter 10 also saw some magazine employees defending the use of photo airbrushing via arguments about aesthetic 'fantasy', inspiration and creativity (Huang, 2001). However, in the context of magazine media, I have yet to find any example or report of photo alteration being used in magazine publications in abstract or 'artistic' ways (perhaps the closest example of this can be found in the article "the Photoshop test", discussed in Chapter 5, where women 'readers' had to identify their 'real body' out of a digitally resized line up). If this were the case, the altered bodies which are found in commercial media could be expected to be heterogeneous and different to each other. Instead, placing the magazine staff's claims to 'fantasy' in the context of common practices of photo-retouching, digital image technologies are more often used in a far more singular way to 'improve' photographs and bodies; Sarbin refers to this as the "relentless homogenizing of the female body" (2005). The erasure of pieces of women's bodies and the retelling of their colours, configurations and shapes *must* be understood as approximations towards the same uniformly *unimaginative*, hegemonically ideal body. Equally, if indeed it is 'creativity' that guides the use of digital retouching, it is critical to interrogate *whose* 'fantasy' it is that constructs a social context where certain bodies (women's bodies, older bodies, larger bodies and ethnic bodies for example) are more readily the object of digital interventions than others.

Also complicating the issue of photo retouching in magazines are the fast changing accessibilities and technologies becoming available around digital alteration of images (Winick, 1996). For example, perhaps five or ten years ago, retouching was for the most

part the domain of commercial media. Today, these technologies are more widely used and perhaps better understood by non-magazine industry users, through websites such as <http://www.lookbetteronline.com>, but also including direct use by young women themselves. For example, when *Glamour* magazine surveyed their readers about their opinions around the use of Photoshop, 23% of young women respondents aged 25-29 and 41% of those aged 18-24 replied that they had used similar programmes themselves to alter the appearance of their own images, particularly those posted to social media websites. Overall, about two thirds of their reader respondents indicated they were comfortable with *some* use of digital alteration in media (Leive, 2012; Ogilvie, 2012). While the survey reported that perhaps this use meant young women were more open to endorsing some use of digital alteration in the content pages of *Glamour* magazine (see also Oriez, 2009), on the other hand, other replies also suggested that the young women's own use of digital alteration was different to the use of photo alteration by magazines. This was because in the case of the former, young women were able to trace, know and control the degree and nature of the retouching undertaken – they had not been alienated from the creative process of altering their own image (Bissell, 2006; Huang, 2001).

Young women's bodies

“But the most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all, is the one you can have with yourself. And if you find someone to love the you *you* love, well, that's just fabulous”. (van Patten & Patrick King, 2004).

The third text analysis chapter of this thesis (Chapter 7) discussed how *love your body* discourses inevitably spoke about a gendered body, and *body love* as best taking place within visual context of heterosexual femininity. Like the quotation taken from the television series “Sex and the City” above, magazine messages about self-love acted to purpose *body love* practices with an indirect goal of finding ‘someone’, simultaneously making heterosexual romantic love an impossibility for the woman who cannot prove that she loves herself first. This particular condition of ‘loving your body’, placed alongside a cultural context where (hetero)sex is a “must-have” (Orbach, 2009) and young women's subjectivities and bodies are called into being through discourses which hail them as already-sexual gendered subjects, has far-reaching implications.

For example, in this hetero-context *body love* becomes just another part of the self transformation and ‘technologies of sexual entrepreneurship’ required of young women to authenticate their now (contingently) available sexual citizenship, as they reach an age where they are no longer ‘young girls’ with morally precocious or perverse sexualities (Evans, Riley & Shankar, 2010; Gill, 2009b; Harvey & Gill, 2011). This all of course is notwithstanding the discursively regulatory binaries of ‘good’ and ‘depraved’ women available within culture with which to make sense of young women’s sexual practice (Hollway, 1984). Even putting sexualities aside, *body love* is still framed within magazine content as a practice undertaken through gendered contingencies of subjectivity. In gendering both the loved and difficult to love body, both of these ‘relationships’ with the body are practiced as femininities, and young women are called upon to know their bodies as gendered, before and above anything else.

Limitations of this thesis

Necessarily, a thesis is bound in parameters of time, space, location and scope. It cannot address or be everything to every situation, redress every absence, nor transgress every possibility. My methodology chapter (3) has already discussed the reflexive and epistemological directions taken throughout analyses and the writing of this thesis. These elements of limitation have so far been considered productive rather than restrictive in the planning and undertaking of my research. In this section however, I return to address two specific decisions which were made about the research design, and reflect with the benefit of hindsight about their implications for this thesis.

The first of these relates to the confidentiality agreement undertaken with the magazine staff interviewees. Enshrined in psychological codes of best practice and ethical conduct, offering degrees of anonymity to participants has been a feature of psychological research throughout its contemporary history (American Psychological Society, 2002; New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002). In conceptualising my research, the value of ‘protecting’ the interview data and participants’ identities was not considered against any alternative option – openly, I admit that no other course of action ever occurred to me as anything but a

complete ethical violation at the time. However, Tilley and Woodthorpe (2011) write that the very concept of ‘ethical’ practices of anonymity / confidentiality may not always be consistent with qualitative research goals – acting to ‘dislodge’ data from the context in which it is produced, and resulting in participants ‘losing ownership’ of their own words (see also, Snyder, 2002). In addition to these concerns, in my research a large number of the interview excerpts which were used to build the analysis were rendered unusable as extracts in this thesis, because they contained information about specific magazine content, which in turn would have identified the publication the speaker worked for. This inability to link production to content necessitated an arbitrary divide between the text and interview studies of my research – disabling what could have been some very powerful arguments made between the content of a text, and what was being said about it. At this point, I have been left with a question of ‘whose interests’ does the ‘protection’ of participants’ identities serve? And moreover, a concern that from the outset, as a researcher I had excluded any possibility of participants speaking on behalf of themselves when they spoke about the considerable efforts some of them had gone to, to ‘change’ the ways in which magazines talk about women’s bodies.

Conversely, I do know that the confidentiality agreement offered to participants did *enable* the participation of a more diverse range of participants (I was told many times during the recruitment process, that only the editor was able to officially speak on behalf of a magazine title). The confidentiality agreement perhaps also could have had an impact on what interviewees felt they were able to say (see for example, Extract 11 in Chapter 9).

Altogether though, I see it as a limitation of the design of this research that confidentiality was taken for granted rather than questioned. Future research would do well to consider the purpose and potential function of confidentiality in research design.

Secondly, the decision to not undertake a reader study was carefully considered in the rationale for this thesis; it was made theoretically on the basis of an interest in addressing the contingency and conditionality with which *body love* messages might offer women their bodies, within a tradition of feminist research concerned with the kinds of discursive messages made available through the popular media (Thornham, 2007). However, ultimately the exclusion of readers was a decision in favour of the undertaking magazine

employee interviews, made against constraints of time and space. Information about how *body love* messages are received will be pivotal to making sense of their effectiveness, and future research should strongly consider reader studies in this area.

For example, readership studies in this area could be particularly useful when placed against the *claims* to diversity in representation implied within magazine constructions of *body love*. I would argue that the kind of ‘diversity’ represented in such texts is likely to be very different from the diversity of women who ‘actually’ read these magazines – a discrepancy that without ‘the reader’, cannot be more than speculative in this thesis. As another example, the introduction to this thesis addressed a body of work which described *how* readers read magazines (such as Hermes, 1995; Winship, 1987; Ytre-Arne, 2011). These theories have radically called into question reader responses to the identities ‘on offer’ in magazine pages. By the same token, a reader study in relation to *body love* messages could have much to contribute with regards to what changing magazine messages might mean for young women’s engagement with the genre.

Finally, the reader throughout this thesis has been a hypothetical construct, but additionally existed in the interview study as a ‘space of projection’, used to underwrite the varied roles the magazine staff took up in their talk (McRobbie, 1997). Notably, the interviewees in the producer study would often take on the ‘voice’ of the reader, to tell me what ‘she’ had to say (for example, see Extract 1, Chapter 9 “where is the person who looks like me?”). In light of these analysis outcomes, reader studies which return to young women their own voices seem all the more important. Moreover, I would argue that without the ‘real’ reader, the ‘projected’ reader seemed to quite easily make way for constructions of an ‘ideal’ reader in the interview study – a rather ironic reproduction given that presumably one of the purposes of *body love* content is to move away from ideal constructions of women and femininity.

‘Solutions?’

Constrain and regulate: What are the limits of the ‘body love’ project?

In the introduction to this thesis, I presented *body love* messages in the media as a growing project over the last 10 years or so, gaining momentum and expanding in scope. At the time of first conceptualising my thesis, the Dove “Campaign for Real Beauty” had huge currency as a ‘new’ topic in popular media and the Australian Voluntary Industry Code of Media Conduct on Body Image was still in development. Since then, over the last few years and alongside my research, I have collected a formidable number of media clippings and web pieces about the ‘changes’ being made around the representation of women’s bodies in magazines and media. The self-reflexive nature of media reporting upon its own activities, and the style in which news media ‘omnisciently’ reports upon other kinds of media is fascinating in its own right, as is the circular and recycled wax-and-wane feeling of taking women’s bodies as topic of media interest. But more so, the *content* of these collected pieces and the events they relate tell a story of perhaps unprecedented media initiatives since the conceptualisation of this thesis, the following are a few examples of this:

New Israeli law bans underweight models in adverts: suggests that new legislation in Israel may be a world first, requiring commercial and catwalk models to produce medical certificates which state that they are not malnourished. (<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG9154920/New-Israeli-law-bans-underweight-models-in-adverts.html>).

Vogue says no more underage models: discusses Vogue magazine’s new commitment to not hiring any model under the age of 16 for their photo shoots. (<http://jezebel.com/5907361/vogue-says-no-more-underaged-models>).

L'Oréal's Julia Roberts and Christy Turlington ad campaigns banned: for being ‘overly airbrushed’ and ‘misleading consumers’, by the Australian Advertising Standards Authority. (http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/jul/27/loreal-julia-roberts-ad-banned?CMP=twtd_fd).

Like the *body love* messages discussed in this thesis, these announcements have invariably followed a distinctive pattern: where the ‘problem’ of representing women’s bodies is limited to a specific and resolvable issue. The overwhelming regulation theme of these reported initiatives is clear: “no more underage models”, and a ‘ban’ on underweight and airbrushed bodies. These restrictions from one perspective suggest a serious rethinking on

behalf of media and governmental agencies about how women should appear in the media. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is my opinion that it is important not to minimise the gravity of these developments in a genre characterised by extreme conservatism when it comes to changing practices, but also to take care to avoid overstating their possible effectiveness too (for more information about this, see earlier sections of this chapter; Lynch, 2011; Milkie, 2002; McRobbie, 2008).

On balance, there are certainly a number of limitations to the 'constrain and regulate' approach when used as a strategy in isolation, in terms of thinking about changing challenging media representations of women's bodies. For a start, in each of the articles listed above, it is not the media as a system but rather the bodies of specific women which are made culprit and maligned. Instead of asking how underweight, malnourished bodies came to be so fashionable for example, the new Israeli legislation has ensured that the women who have cultivated these bodies are being put out of work. Similarly, instead of investigating how 'underage' models have come to be able to represent adult bodies in magazine fashion spreads, *Vogue* magazine's 'banning' of models under the age of sixteen perhaps represents a rejection of the chance to explore why ageing has become so abject in that same context. Finally, the censorship of specific advertising images of Julia Roberts and Christy Turlington was justified above through a discourse of consumer rights to adequate product information – not on the basis of symbolic violence through the advertisements' erasure of age, colour or aesthetic labour.

In the face of continuing concerns that ideal and retouched bodies still continue to appear alongside 'real' women and positive narratives about women's bodies, one response to the current series of regulations is that they have failed to be effective. Even Mia Freedman (the former *Cosmopolitan* magazine editor, who chaired the Australian Body Image Advisory Board) has suggested that current codes of conduct and media commitments to reduce the use of retouching are alone not enough – and specific but broad legislation is required to insist upon the mandatory disclosure of photo alterations and the compulsory regulation of the kinds of bodies which are imaged in media (Freedman, 2011). However, as this conclusion has shown so far, there is apparently more to the way that magazines image bodies than just a series of flawed practices which need to be eliminated, and showing more

diverse, accurate and 'real' bodies needs to be accompanied by a complimentary shift in the meanings which are made available and offered to young women, of their bodies.

Should we be talking about bodies at all?

So far in this chapter, my underlying thematic question of 'what should magazine messages about bodies be like' has rested upon one fundamental assumption: magazines should and will continue to discuss women's bodies as a part of their routine subject matter. Of course, as F pointed out to me below when I directed this question to her in our interview, this is not the only possible option:

F: Well I would love to see us get completely away from talking about bodies, cos I think they've kind of talked them to death, and I mean what else can we talk about cos it's always, we always talk about how to improve them, [text omitted] but I, I still think that why don't we look at careers for young women, you know, things like, where we're falling down in society, where we need to, you know so more sort of issues, I guess it's because they're not as entertaining to talk about that kind of thing, but I think when, my thing was we waste too much time on this trivial stuff, and really, you know, there's not a lot you can do, you know you can try and eat well, try and stay fit, or but you know, I, I also think people should be able to do what they want.

F: So I, I think it would be nice to have a magazine, you, that's why I was saying, just just really doesn't talk about it, or maybe does it in a really roundabout way, and and looks at women's stories [instead].

F's response here was quite unlike that of any of the other interview participants when asked this question, and perhaps expectedly given my personal interest in bodies had me thinking that for media to stop talking about women's bodies altogether would be both disappointing and a missed opportunity. This is not to say that I disagree with the entire premise of her argument – for example, I would not argue against her point that that bodies are over-texted and over-determined in women's magazines ('talked them to death'), and many feminist authors share an interest in women's stories and women's lives ('looks at women's stories [instead]') (Brayton, 1997; Waller, 2005).

But I would like to argue in favour here, of my personal belief that magazine messages about bodies *could* be different, and something other than problematic. I have a sense that fashion, for example, could be eclectic and 'fun', although the task of making it so would need to include a reclamation of the terms of enjoyable femininities from post-feminist, commercially laden discourses (Lazar, 2011; Orbach, 2009). Moreover, the terms of enjoying this body would need to be stated as such that pleasure and love were not

constantly sought after commodity states of emotion, but rather, possibilities in a range of experiences, which appreciated and respected unhappiness or pain for example, as legitimate, rather than immoral or born out of a lack of personal management (Ussher, 2010). Certainly, I would like to imagine that one day, the discursive basis for women being able to accept and feel comfortable in their own bodies was not purposed by or made contingent upon a quest to 'find' or 'keep' a male partner, (Gill, 2009b).

It seems important that rather than placing increasing regulation and anxiety around the stories about bodies that women's media can legitimately tell (see the above section about 'constrain and regulate'), that instead perhaps the ways that bodies are understood in media need to be expanded. Different stories could be told such that bodies are no longer 'just' images but also experiences – where the places women inhabit through these bodies, what bodies do, how bodies interrelate and what this all means would be of just as much interest as what a body looks like in a single, contrived moment (Coleman, 2009). I would suggest that a productive step forward for media messages about bodies would be to talk less about instruction and management, and more about production, discussion, involvement and how women's bodies are *embodied* and experienced (Durham, 2011).

Crucially, at the core of my own desire to see these kinds of 'different' body messages in magazines is that if indeed magazines and media did stop talking about bodies altogether, then there will have been no change or challenge to the discourses about women's bodies that the media have made available and (re)produced in the past. A second concern would be that an avoidance of women's bodies as a cultural topic would be premised in continuing cultural anxiety about women's bodies, as illustrated by G when she told me about ("pre"-*body love*) attempts by young women's magazines to reduce their body content:

G: [It would] be a couple of years old now, they, sort of a reverse where, you will probably know this, where they kind of, everything to do with body kind of got wiped out of magazines, not, not necessarily [magazine name] but most magazines, stopped doing diets, stopped doing any kind of focus on the body, it kind of became like *oh no, too hard basket, we're gonna get in trouble* for saying anything about the body at all, and now it's kind of come back in, in a, and the messages are being, are very very different the second time around. [Emphasis added].

Finally, in as much as *body love* as a concept could be criticised for being a response to silence critics as opposed to a response concerned about women's difficult experiences of

the body, a total avoidance of the body undertaken by magazines could certainly be understood as a response in the former category. Avoiding bodies would dualistically separate women from a key aspect of experience, addressing them as incorporeal minds and partial people. Contemporary magazines have been called into account for the biased way in which they value some aspects of women's experience but not others – arguably, leaving the body out of the picture would do little to redress this imbalance.

What would Susie Orbach do? : What role is there for feminism here?

These almost ideal principles I present above for what I imagine magazine body messages could be like, admittedly are perhaps some way off the present capabilities of magazine media and speak to a probably as yet impossible discursive world. Practically, it is difficult to envisage the demanding process of transformations contemporary media would need to undergo, in order to make such a shift in the way magazines image and discourse the body even thinkable. Whether *body love* messages could be seen as part of a process like this, I am still unsure. In this section I would like to raise the more pragmatic question of what role there is for feminism in relation to current magazine *body love* messages, keeping in mind past feminist messages of body acceptance and the current domination of media discourses in constructing contemporary femininities.

From the outset of the research presented in my thesis, one of the less conventional and 'unofficial' questions which I have used to guide my own evaluation of magazine *body love* messages has been, "what would Susie Orbach do?". By this, what I had meant was what should or would positive, commercially engaged media messages about women's bodies look like, if, given the chance, feminists had been invited to create a politically grounded 'answer' to the 'body image' problems of magazines. For me, 'Susie Orbach' has figured to guide this slightly unorthodox question, as a metaphoric, representational character through her authorship of "Fat is a Feminist Issue" – the "feminist issue" lying for her, not in a mantra of the acceptability of the bodies of women, but in the possibilities of activism through both criticism and engagement with cultural and media messages (see Hood, 2005; Orbach, 1978; 2005)

Fortunately for me, very early on in my literature search I was presented with a 'reply' to my question. As detailed in my introduction, I discovered that Susie Orbach herself, through involvement in the 'Dove' 'Campaign for Real Beauty', (alongside Nancy Etcoff; Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Murray, 2012) had been involved in doing exactly what I had speculated about: feminists playing an active role in attempting the production of positive media body messages. My thoughts about the appropriation and post-feminist 'addressing and taking into account' of feminist concerns as a feature of popular *body love* messages have been significantly complicated by this participation (Lazar, 2009; McRobbie, 2009). These tensions between feminist contributions to and feminist critiques of (sometimes the same) *body love* messages illustrate that there is no one clear or straightforward approach to be taken here. Nonetheless, there are a number of points that should be taken into consideration when formulating a feminist evaluation and response to media attempts at positive body messages.

First, feminist work has undergone significant developments since the 'damaging distortions' model of media body messages and images (Thornham, 2007). For the most part, these changes have been spurred not so much by a changing reading of media content itself (although theories about ironic tone and post-feminist styles of usurping feminist messages have been part of this). Instead, much of this reconceptualization of 'damaging' media has come about through reader studies which have reformulated theories about young women's responses to media, and asked questions about how their context, desires, enjoyment, 'agency' and experiences might contribute to how they make sense of what they see. However, Gill (2012) argues that one of the difficulties with these models which place so much emphasis on 'media reading', is that they can displace the responsibility for de-problematizing media messages onto young women and their reading of media – rather than challenging the power, sexism, racism and classism which infuses media messages about the body and continues to warrant a conceptualisation of such representations as 'damaging'.

What Gill's contribution to the 'media influence' debate offers when transposed onto evaluations of *body love* messages, is a reminder that making analyses of media more sophisticated than the 'damaging distortions' critique should not automatically involve an

acceptance of the idea that media constructions of women and their bodies are totally innocuous. As an example, I would argue that the work presented around imaging 'true' and 'real' bodies in this thesis illustrates that images do not have to be distorting to be potentially injurious (Tuchman, 1979). Moreover, through promoting messages which encourage young women to feel good about their bodies, perhaps there is a risk that *body love* messages may, as they stand, be consoling and diffusing the anger with which young women might respond to other 'damaging' or problematic media representations of their bodies, and through this enact a facilitation of continuing aesthetic misogyny against women's bodies as a legitimate media practice. Altogether, it is important for feminist analyses of media to keep an eye toward *both* theorisations of young women's responses *and* deconstructive work with media representations when evaluating the valence of media messages, especially those which claim to celebrate women and promote positive representations.

Second, this thesis actively sought out the commentary of magazine contributors, disabling a straightforward story of the media as a monolithic entity with a coherent agenda promoting a singular message about women's bodies (Ytre-Arne, 2011). As with the 'damaging distortions' observation above though, taking an interest in the magazine staff's experiences and opinions as women themselves should not necessarily mean that there is no place left for feminism to talk about patriarchal media or top-down power when discussing media production. My reading of the ambiguity and negotiations magazine employees engage in when producing and describing *body love* messages in their magazines is of course, one part of the story about how *love your body* messages have become problematic. However, there are much greater powers and processes at stake in the production of magazine content, and ones which (as far as I can tell) far more directly and straightforwardly could be seen to profit from women's body dissatisfaction. For example, D'Enbeau and Buzzanell (2011) point out that magazine employees caught between tensions of viability and ideology in their publication must acquiesce to pressures of viability in order to survive. Arguably, 'blaming' the women producers of magazines without an investigation of conditions they produce within would be too simplistic a response, especially when, as B pointed out, there are other magazines (and organisations and

individuals) “out there” “that don’t really give a damn about the body love message, at all” (Chapter 9, Extract 10; also, Press, 2011). Conversely, in order to include feminist and ideological messages in magazines, the problem is that such messages must currently either be transformed or transposed where they might be seen to compete with commercial models of business and advertising in order to be included.

Given all this, perhaps the question now is not why magazine writers are producing difficult and contradictory messages about women’s bodies, but rather how and why organisations and processes of media culture make positive feminist messages about women’s bodies so unviable. According to the women I interviewed, perhaps the next place to look is towards “the advertisers” (and to a lesser extent, modelling agencies and fashion houses), and the restrictions they are able to place upon magazine content. However, historically, Gough-Yates’s work has documented that during the 1960s-1990s, most changes in magazines were actually driven by advertiser demand, with magazines grudgingly accommodating the new ideas advertisers envisaged about changing women’s identities and consumer citizenship (2003; see also Patterson, 2005). Either way, it is my concern that continuing to pass blame and assign responsibility could obscure or delimit other discussions of what exactly is achieved, offered and contributed by the process and outcome of discourses of the production of *body love* magazine content.

Third, also relevant to evaluating positive body messages in magazines are questions about consumer-led versions of feminisms, and in particular, whether the infusion of *body love* messages with commercialism is essentially a problem in and of itself. From one perspective, this thesis has criticised the limitations that a commercial approach produces for the meanings of ‘love’ and enjoyment of the body. Certainly, feminist questions about reader engagement and pleasure become slightly more complicated when the nature of that pleasure is pre-constructed within the discourses which make a text comprehensible. However, given the reasonable degree of success with which magazines are able to connect with young women (see the introduction chapter to this thesis) at a time when feminist messages may be struggling to find a platform from which to be heard, it seems impetuous to reject media attempts at addressing feminist concerns about the representations of women’s bodies outright.

Last, but not least, if indeed *body love* can be seen as a reparatory response to difficult body messages ‘gone before’ [sic], then perhaps part of the problem with conceptualising what *body love* messages should look like lies in the self-referential and self-auditing circularity of the current system whereby ‘the media’ attempt to rectify their own ‘problems’. Aside from the obvious lack of accountability this produces, my other concern about this practice relates to the missing history and ideological grounding of positive body messages. Being produced in a fast paced month-to-month environment with high staff turn-over, often little time or attention is available to invest in understanding or recording the history of positive body practices in magazines. A very clear example of this recently came when Dolly Magazine (Aust) reinstated (after a 10 year hiatus) their ‘model search’, aimed at young women aged between 13 and 18 years old¹. Although originally cancelled by the editor at the time because of clear concerns about the message it offered to young women about the importance of appearance, it could be argued the new model search’s language around ‘inspirational’ bodies and young women as ‘role models’ (“Are you the next Miranda Kerr?”) does not entirely address the reasons why the original model search was set aside in the first place (Tankard-Reist, 2012).

In this broad media context, the potential future role I see for feminism when it comes to engaging with the media is twofold. In my opinion, it is absolutely crucial that feminists continue to audit and challenge ‘positive’ body messages, as messages which can locate their origins in feminist histories. Protecting women-centred interests as the primary driving force behind the communication of body acceptance initiatives in the face of the commercial and sales imperatives which can distort the concept of what it means to *love your body* is critical. There may also be a role for feminism here in providing and preserving an understanding of the ideological development and histories of magazines, as a gendered genre and a part of women’s history. On the other side of this coin, this does not necessarily mean that concerns about commercialism should exclude feminist engagement with the media altogether (Braun, 2011). Contrarily, I also strongly contest that feminist opinions, supported by their own histories of theory and experience in addressing issues of women’s embodiment, are in a unique position to offer both the critique and advice needed

to rewrite the *body love* message, working collaboratively and cautiously alongside media in order to do so.

References

- ACP Media (2011). *Cleo Media Kit, 2011*. Retrieved December, 2011 from <http://www.acpmedia.co.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=VVDh2rDDumM%3d&tabid=319&mid=1126>
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (pp. 121-176). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- American Psychological Society (2002). *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code Of Conduct*. Available online: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>
- Amy-Chinn, D. (2006). This is just for me(n): How the regulation of post-feminist lingerie advertising perpetuates woman as object. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6, 155-175.
- Anijar, K. (2005). Kirstie gets fat. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 257-260.
- Aronson, P. (2003). Feminists or “post feminists”: Young women’s attitudes toward feminism and gender relations. *Gender and Society*, 17(6), 903-922.
- Arvidsson, A. (2005). Brands: A critical perspective. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 5(2), 235-258.
- Ballaster, R., Beetham, M., Frazer, E. & Hebron, S. (1991). *Women’s worlds: Ideology, Femininity and Women’s Magazines*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ballentine, L. W. & Ogle, J. P. (2005). The making and unmaking of body problems in *Seventeen Magazine*. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 33(4), 281-307.
- Banard, M. (2009). ‘You could take this topic and get a fistfight going’: Communicating about feminism in interviews. *Discourse and Communication*, 3(4), 427-447.
- Bartels, A. & Zeki, S. (2000). The neural basis of romantic love. *NeuroReport*, 11(17), 3829-3834.
- Barthes, R. (1969). The death of the author. *Aspen*, 5-6(3), n.p. (Richard Howard, trans.). Available online at <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html>

- Bartky, S.L. (1990). *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Basson, R. (2005). Women's sexual dysfunction: Revised and expanded definitions. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 172(10), 1327-1333.
- Bayer, B. M. & Malone, K. R. (1996). Feminism, psychology and matters of the body. *Theory and Psychology*, 6(4), 667-692.
- Belknap, P., & Leonard, W. M. (1991). A conceptual replication and extension of Erving Goffman's study of gender advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 25(3), 103-118.
- Bell, E. (2008). From bad girl to mad girl: British female celebrity, reality products and the pathologisation of pop feminism. *Genders OnLine Journal*, 48. Retrieved from http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_bell.html
- Benwell, B. (2004). Ironic discourse: Evasive masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines. *Men and Masculinities*, 7(1), 3-21.
- Ben-Tovim, D. I., Walker, M. K., Murray, H. & Chin, G. (2006). Body size estimates: Body image or body attitude measures? *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 9(1), 57-67.
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin Books.
- Bissell, K. L. (2006). Skinny like you: Visual literacy, digital manipulation and young women's drive to be thin. *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education*, 6(1), 1-14.
- Blood, S. K. (2005). *Body Work: The Social Construction of Women's Body Image*. New York: Routledge.
- Blum, V. (2007). Objects of love: I want a famous face and the illusions of star culture. *Configurations*, 15(1), 33-53.
- Bordo, S. (2000). *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

- Bordo, S. (2003). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1993).
- Bosson, J., Pinel, E. & Thompspon, J. (2008). The affective consequences of minimising women's body image concerns. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32, 257-266.
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective (1976). *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A book for and by women* (2nd ed.). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective (2008). *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Retrieved February 26, 2010 from <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/>
- Braun, V. (2005). Just a Nip and a Tuck? The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery. *Feminism and Psychology*, 15(3), 345-350.
- Braun, V. (2000). Conceptualising the body. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(4), 511-518.
- Braun, V. (in press, 2011). Petting a snake? Reflections on feminist critique, media engagement and 'making a difference'. *Feminism and Psychology*.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Brayton, J. (1997). *What makes feminist research feminist? The structure of feminist research within the social sciences*. Retrieved from <http://www.unb.ca/PAR-L/win/feminmethod.htm>.
- Brook, H. (2008). Feed your face. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 22(1), 141-157.
- Brown, S. (2005). An obscure middle ground: Size acceptance narratives and photographs of "real women". *Feminist Media Studies*, 5, 246-249.
- Bryant, J. & Schofield, T. (2007). Feminine sexual subjectivities: Bodies, agency and life history. *Sexualities*, 10(3), 321-340.
- Budgeon, S. (2003). Identity as an embodied event. *Body and Society*, 9(1), 35-55.

- Burns, M. (2006). Bodies that speak: Examining the dialogues in research interactions. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 3-18.
- Burns, M. Tyrer J. & EDEN (2009). Feminisms in practice: Challenges and opportunities for an eating issues community agency. In H. Malson and M. Burns (Eds.), *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Dis/Orders* (pp.221-232). London and New York: Psychology Press.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Burr, V. (1998) *Gender and Social Psychology*. London: Routledge
- Burt, M. R. (1991). Rape myths and acquaintance rape. In A. Parrot & L. Bechhover (Eds.), *Acquaintance Rape: The Hidden Crime* (pp.26-40). New York: Wiley.
- Busselle, R. & Bilandzic, H. (2008). Fictionality and perceived realism in experiencing stories: A model of narrative comprehension and engagement. *Communications Theory*, 18(2), 255-280.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Cavell, M. (2006). *Becoming a Subject: Reflections in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chang, J-S. (2000). Agony-resolution pathways: How women perceive American men in Cosmopolitan's agony (advice) column. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 8(3), 285-308.
- Chernin, K. (1983). *Womansize: The Tyranny of Slenderness*. London: The Women's Press.
- Chesler, P. (2005). *The Death of Feminism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

- Chin-Evans, P. (2003). "If only I were thin like her, maybe I could be happy like her": The self-implications of associating a thin female ideal with life success. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 27(3), 209-214.
- Chrisler, J. C. (2008). 2007 presidential address: Fear of losing control: Power, perfectionism and the psychology of women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32(1), 1-12.
- Clay, D., Vignoles, V.L. & Dittmar, H. (2005). Body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls: Testing the influence of socio-cultural factors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15, 451-477.
- Clifton, J. (2009). Bonfire of the Vanities. *New Zealand Listener*, 218(3601), May 16-22 2009. Obtained online on the 7th July 2009.
- Coffey, J. (2011). *"Inhabiting my flesh": Exploring body work and gender through frameworks of embodiment and 'becoming'*. Retrieved October 2011 from <http://www.tasa.org.au/uploads/2011/01/coffey-julia.pdf>.
- Coleman, R. (2008). The becoming of bodies: Girls, media effects and body image. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(2), 163-179.
- Coleman, R. (2009). *The Becoming of Bodies: Girls, images, experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cooke, K. (1996). *Real Gorgeous: The Truth About Beauty and Body*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Craig, R. S. (1992). The effect of television day part on gender portrayals in television commercials: A content analysis. *Sex Roles*, 26(5-6), 197-211.
- Cunningham A. & Haley, E. (2000). A look inside the world of advertising free publishing: A case study of Ms. Magazine. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 22(2), 17-30.

- Currie, D. (2001). Dear Abby: Advice pages as a site for the operation of power. *Feminist Theory*, 2(3), 259-281.
- Cusumano, D.L. & Thompson, J.K. (2001). Media influence and body image in 8-11-year-old boys and girls: A preliminary report on the multidimensional media influence scale. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 29, 37-44.
- Czerniawski, A. M. (2012). Disciplining corpulence: The case of plus-size fashion models. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 41(2), 127-153.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1972). *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Deephouse, D. L. (1999). To be different or to be the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic balance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20, 147-166.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H. R. Lane, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1977).
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). London: Athlone Press. (Original work published 1987).
- D'Enbeau, S. & Buzzanell, P. M. (2011). Selling (out) feminism: Sustainability of ideology – viability tensions in a competitive marketplace. *Communication Monographs*, 78(1), 27-52.
- De Visser, R. O., Smith, J. A. & McDonnell, E. J. (2009). 'That's not masculine' : Masculine capital and health-related behaviour. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(7), 1047–1058.
- Dixey, R. (1998). Healthy eating in schools, overweight and 'eating disorders': Are they connected? *Educational Review*, 50(1), 29-35.
- Durham, M. G. (2011). Body matters: Resuscitating the corporeal in a new media environment. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1), 53-60.

- Durkin, S. J. & Paxton, S. J. (2002). Predictors of vulnerability to reduced body image satisfaction and psychological wellbeing in response to exposure to idealised female media images in adolescent girls. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 53(5), 995-1005.
- Dwyer, A. (2006). *Teaching Girls a Lesson: The Fashion Model as Pedagogue*. (unpublished doctoral thesis). Queensland: Queensland University of Technology.
- Eggins, S. & Iedema, R. (1997). Difference without diversity: The semantics of women's magazines. In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Gender and Discourse* (pp. 165-196). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Eisenberg, E. (1984). Ambiguity as strategy in organisational communication. *Communication Monographs*, 51, 227-242.
- Ellis, K. (2008). *National Media and Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image: Media Release, 5 December 2008*. Retrieved January 2009 from <http://kateellis.com.au/newsroom/91/>
- Elphick, N. (2010). *Healthy You: Is Body Love Missing The Point?* Retrieved from <http://www.cleo.com.au/Is-body-love-missing-the-point.htm>
- Engeln-Maddox, R. (2006). Buying a beauty standard or dreaming of a new life? Expectations associated with media ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 258-266.
- Etcoff, N., Orbach, S., Scott, J. & D'Agostino, H. (2004). *The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report: Findings of the Global Study on Women, Beauty and Well-Being*. Available online at: http://www.clubofamsterdam.com/contentarticles/52%20Beauty/dove_white_paper_final.pdf
- Evans, A., Riley, S. & Shankar, A. (2010). Technologies of sexiness: Theorising young women's engagement in the sexualisation of culture. *Feminism and Psychology*, 20(1), 114-131.
- Fabrianesi, B., Jones, S. & Reid, A. (2008). Are adolescent girls' magazines providing age-appropriate role-models? *Health Education*, 108(6), 437-449.

- Fairclough, K. (2008). Fame is a losing game: Celebrity gossip blogging, bitch culture and postfeminism. *Genders OnLine Journal*, 48. Retrieved from http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_fairclough.html
- Fallon, A. E. & Rosin, P. (1985). Sex differences in perceptions of ideal body shape. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 94(1), 102-105.
- Farrell, A. E. (1994). A social experiment in publishing: *Ms Magazine*, 1972-1989. *Human Relations*, 47(6), 707-730.
- Farvid, P. & Braun, V. (2006). "Most of us guys are raring to go, anytime, anyplace, anywhere": Male and female sexuality in *Cleo* and *Cosmo*. *Sex Roles*, 55, 295-310.
- Featherstone, M. (2006). Body image / body without image. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23, 233-236.
- Ferreday, D. (2008). "Showing the girl": The new Burlesque. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 47-65.
- Fine, M. (1988). Sexuality, schooling and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(1), 29-53.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230.
- Fiske, J. (2003). Understanding popular culture. In W. Brooker and D. Jermyn (Eds.), *The Audience Studies Reader* (pp.112-116). London: Routledge.
- Foss, K. A. & Foss, S. K. (1994). Personal experience as evidence in feminist scholarship. *Western Journal of Communication*, 58(1), 39-43.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). London: Tavistock. (Original work published 1968).
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (A. M. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Allen Lane, Penguin. (Original work published 1975 as *Surveiller et Punir*, Gallimard, Paris).

- Foucault, M. (1979b). What is an author? *Screen*, 20(1), 13-34. (D. F. Bouchard, Trans.). (Original work published 1969 in *Bulletin de la Societe Francaise de Philosophie*, LXV(3), 73-104).
- Foucault, M. (1984). *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. (R. Hurley, Trans.). Harmondsworth: Penguin. (Original work published 1978 as *Histoire de la Sexualite*, New York: Pantheon).
- Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the Self', in L.H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 16–49). Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Franiuk, R., Cohen, D. & Pomerantz, E. M. (2002). Implicit theories of relationships: Implications for relationship satisfaction and longevity. *Personal Relationships*, 9, 345-367.
- Fredrick, D. A., Fessler, D. M. T. & Haselton, M.G. (2005). Do representations of male muscularity differ in men's and women's magazines? *Body Image*, 2(1), 81-86.
- Freedman, M. (2009). *Mama Mia: A Memoir of Mistakes, Magazines and Motherhood*. Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Freedman, M. (2011). *Should Disclosure of Retouching Be Mandatory? Voluntary Code of Conduct: Why I Was Wrong*. Retrieved from <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/should-disclosure-of-re-touching-be-mandatory-not-voluntary/>
- Freud, S. (1914). On Narcissism. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, 67-102. Available online at <http://files.meetup.com/1447096/Freud-On%20Narcissism.doc>
- Freud, S. (1999). *The interpretation of dreams*. (J. Crick, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published in 1933).
- Frost, E. (2005). Theorising the young woman in the body. *Body and Society*, 11(1), 63-85.

- Gadsden, G. Y. (2000). The male voice in women's magazines. *Gender Issues*, 18(2), 49-57.
- Gatens, M. (1996). *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. London: Routledge.
- Gavey, N. (1989). Feminist post-structuralism and discourse analysis: Contributions to feminist psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13(4), 459-479.
- Gavey, N. (2002). To and beyond the discursive constitution of subjectivity. *Feminism and Psychology*, 12(4), 432-438.
- Gavey, N. (2005). *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*. East Sussex: Routledge.
- Gavey, N. (2011). Feminist post-structuralism and discourse analysis revisited. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1), 183-188.
- Gavey, N. (2012). Beyond "empowerment?": Sexuality in a sexist world. *Sex Roles*, 66(11-12), 718-724.
- Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *The American Psychologist*, 40(3), 266-275 .
- Gergen , K. J. (2009). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Gergen, M. (1995). Postmodern, post-Cartesian positionings on the subject of psychology. *Theory and Psychology*, 5(3), 361-368.
- Gill, R. (2000). Justifying injustice: Broadcasters' accounts of inequality in radio. In C. Mitchell (Ed.), *Women and Radio: Airing Differences* (pp. 137-151). Routledge, London.
- Gill, R. (2006). *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2007a). Critical respect: The difficulties and dilemmas of agency and 'choice' for feminism: A reply to Duits and van Zoonen. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14(1), 69-80.

- Gill, R. (2007b). Post-feminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10, 147–66.
- Gill, R. (2008a). Body talk: Negotiating body image and masculinity. In S. Riley, M. Burns, H. Frith, S Wiggins & P. Markula (Eds.), *Critical Bodies: Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management*. (pp. 101-116). Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gill, R. (2008b). Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity*, 25, 432-455.
- Gill, R. (2008c). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18, 35-60.
- Gill, R. (2009a). Beyond the sexualisation of culture thesis: An intersectional analysis of “six-packs”, “midriffs” and “hot lesbians” in advertising. *Sexualities*, 12(2), 137-160.
- Gill, R. (2009b). Mediated intimacy and postfeminism: A discourse analytic examination of sex and relationships advice in a women’s magazine. *Discourse and Communication*, 3(4), 345-369.
- Gill, R. (2009c). Supersexualise me! Advertising, (post)feminism and "the midriffs". In F. Attwood (Ed.), *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualisation of Western Culture* (pp. 93-110). London: I.B. Tauris.
- Gill, R. (2011). Sexism reloaded, or, it’s time to get angry again. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1), 61-71.
- Gill, R. (2012). Media, empowerment and the ‘sexualisation of culture’ debates. *Sex Roles*, 66, 736-745.
- Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (Eds.). (2011). *New Femininities: Postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Gillies, V., Harden, A., Johnson, K., Reavey, P., Strange, V. & Willig, C. (2005). Painting pictures of embodied experience: The use of non-verbal data production for the study of embodiment. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, 199-212.
- Gingras, J. (2005). The defeat of imagination: Repressive codes governing our media. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 255-257.
- Giovanelli, D. & Ostertag, S. (2009). Controlling the body: Media representations, body size and self-discipline. In E. Rothblum & Solovay, S. *The Fat Studies Reader* (pp. 289-298). New York: New York University Press.
- Goddard, K. (2000). "Looks maketh the man": The female gaze and the construction of masculinity. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 9(1), 23-39.
- Goffman, E. (1976). *Gender and Advertising*. London: MacMillan Press.
- Gough-Yates, A. (2003). *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, markets and readerships*. London: Routledge.
- Grabe, S., Ward, L. M & Hyde, J.S. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 460-476.
- Groez, L. M., Levine, M.P. & Murnen, S. K. (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: a meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 31, 1-16.
- Grosz, E. (1987). Notes towards a corporeal feminism. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 2(5), 1-16.
- Grosz, E. (1990). *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Guy, A. & Banim, M. (2000). Personal collections: Women's clothing use and identity. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 9(3), 313-327.

- Hall, S. (2009). Encoding / decoding. In M. G. Durham & Kellner, D. M. (Eds.), *Media and Cultural Studies, Keywords: Revised Edition*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Halliwell, E. & Dittmar, H. (2004). Does size matter? The impact of model's body size on women's body focussed anxiety and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 104-122.
- Hallstein, D. L. O. (2011). She gives birth, she's wearing a bikini: Mobilizing the postpregnant celebrity mom body to manage the post-second wave crisis in femininity. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 34, 111-138.
- Harrison, K. & Cantor, J. (1997). The relationship between media consumption and eating disorders. *Journal of Communication*, 47(1), 40-67.
- Harvey, L. & Gill, R. (2011). Spicing it up: Sexual entrepreneurs and The Sex Inspectors. In Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (Eds.), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (pp. 52-67). London: Palgrave.
- Hasinoff, A. A., (2010). It's socio-biology hon!: Genetic determinism in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9, 267-283.
- Hearst Corporation (2011). *Cosmo Media Kit*. Retrieved December 2011 from www.cosmomediakit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=360478&category_code=circ&category_id=27808
- Heiss, S. N. (2011). Locating the bodies of women and disability in definitions of beauty: An analysis of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 31(1). Retrieved from <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1367/1497>
- Henriques, J. (1984). Social psychology and the politics of racism. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn and V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp. 60-90). London: Methuen.
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn C. & Walkerdine, V. (1998). *Changing the Subject*. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

- Hepworth, J. (1991). *A Post-structuralist Analysis of the Late 19th century Medical Discovery of Anorexia Nervosa and Contemporary Discourses on Anorexia Nervosa used by Health Care Workers*. (unpublished doctoral thesis). Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- Hermes, J. (1995). *Reading women's magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94(3), 319-340.
- Hildebrand, J. (2009). Fat-bottomed girls you make the rockin' world go round. *The Punch*, Retrieved December, 2009 from <http://www.thepunch.com.au/articles/fat-bottomed-girls->
- Hinnant, A. L. (2006). *Mass-Mediated Health Reporting: An Investigation into the Production of Magazine Health Content* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University.
- Hinnant, A. (2009). The cancer on your coffee table: A discourse analysis of the health content in women's magazines. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9(3), 317-333.
- Hirschman, E. G, & Thompson, C. J. (1997). Why media matter: Toward a richer understanding of consumers' relationship with advertising and mass media. *Journal of Advertising*, 36(1), 43-60.
- Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn and V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp. 227-263). London: Methuen.
- Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science*. London: Sage.
- Hollway, W. (1991). The psychologisation of feminism or the feminization of psychology? *Feminism and Psychology*, 1(1), 29-37,
- Hood, C. (2005). The body is the message. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 238-241.

- Howells, R. (2011). Heroes, saints and celebrities: The photograph as holy relic. *Celebrity Studies*, 2(2), 112-130.
- Howson, A. (2005). *Embodying Gender*. London: Sage Publications.
- Huang, E. S. (2001). Reader's perception of digital alteration in photojournalism. *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, 3(3), 147-182.
- Inmate goes to court over seized magazine. (2010, December 13). *Dominion Post*, Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/4452679/Inmate-goes-to-court-over-seized-magazine>.
- Jackson, P., Stevenson, N. & Brooks, K. (2001). Making sense of men's magazines. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Jackson, S. (2004). Measuring up to Barbie? Young women negotiating representations of femininity in heterosexual relationships. In A. Potts, N. Gavey & A. Weatherall (Eds.) *Sex and the Body* (pp. 107-124). Palmerston North: Dunmore.
- Jackson, S. (2005a). 'Dear Girlfriend...'. Constructions of sexual health problems and sexual identities in letters to a teenage magazine. *Sexualities*, 8(3), 282-305.
- Jackson, S. (2005b). 'I'm 15 and desperate for sex': Doing and undoing desire in letters to a teenage magazine. *Feminism and Psychology*, 15(3), 295-313.
- Jansson, A. (2002). The mediatisation of consumption: Towards an analytical framework of image culture. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2(1), 5-31.
- Johnston, J. & Taylor, J. (2008). Feminist consumerism and fat activists: A comparative study of grassroots activism and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 33(4), 941-966.
- Jutel, A. (2001). Does size really matter? Weight and values in public health. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 44(2), 283-96.

- Jutel, A. (2005). Weighing health: The moral burden of obesity. *Social Semiotics*, 15(2), 113-125.
- Kaplan, E. & Cole, L. (2003). "I want to read stuff on boys": White, Latina, and Black girls reading Seventeen magazine and encountering adolescence. *Adolescence*, 38, 149–159.
- Kaplan, H. S. (1969). Hypoactive sexual desire. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 3(1), 3-9.
- Karseth, B. & Nerland, M. (2007). Building professionalism in a knowledge society: Examining discourses of knowledge in four professional associations. *Journal of Education and Work*, 20(4), 335-355.
- Kates, S. & Shaw-Garlock, G. (1999). The ever-entangling web: A study of ideologies and discourses in advertising to women. *Journal of Advertising*, 28(2), 33-49.
- Keller, J. (2010). "I'm not a feminist... I love men": Rethinking Lady Gaga's postfeminist rhetoric and its potential for social change. *In Media Res*, Retrieved from <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2010/08/01/im-not-feminist-i-love-men-rethinking-lady-gaga-s-postfeminist-rhetoric-and-its-potential>
- Keller, J. (2011). Feminist editors and the new girl glossies: Fashionable feminism or just another sexist rag? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34, 1-12.
- Kessler, S. J. & McKenna W. (1978). Chapter 3: Biology and Gender. In *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (pp. 42-80). Chicago: the University of Chicago Press
- Kim, J. L. & Ward, M. (2004). Pleasure reading: Associations between young women's sexual attitudes and their reading of contemporary women's magazines. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28, 48-58.
- Kitzinger, C., Wilkinson, S. & Perkins, R. (1992). Theorising heterosexuality. *Feminism and Psychology*, 2, 293-324.

- Klein, R. D. (1983). How to do what we want to do: Thoughts about feminist methodology. In G. Bowles and R. D Klein (Eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies*, (pp. 88-104). London, Routledge.
- Knee, C. R., Patrick, H., Vietor, N. A. & Neighbours, C. (2004). Implicit theories of relationships: Moderators of the link between conflict and commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(5), 617-628.
- Komisaruk, B. R. & Whipple, B. (1998). Love as sensory stimulation: Physiological consequences of its deprivation and expression. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 23(8), 927-944.
- Kryölä, K. (2005). The fat gendered body in/as a closet. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(1), 99-102.
- Lacan, J. (1977). *Ecrits: A selection*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Tavistock.
- Lacan, J. (1998). On feminine sexuality, the limits of love and knowledge *Encore, 1972–1973: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*. (B. Fink, Trans.). New York: Norton.
- Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist critical discourse analysis: Articulating a feminist discourse practice. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141-164.
- Lazar, M. M. (2009). Communicating (post)feminisms in discourse. *Discourse and Communication*, 3(4), 339-344.
- Lazar, M. M. (2009a). Entitled to consume: Post-feminist femininity and a culture of post-critique. *Discourse and Communication*, 3(4), 371-400.
- Lazar, M. M. (2011). The right to be beautiful: Postfeminist identity and consumer beauty advertising. In R. Gill and C. Scharff (Eds.). *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (pp. 37-51). Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lazarus, M. & Wunderlich, R. (Directors). (1979). *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women* [Film]. United States: Cambridge Documentary Films.

- Leitch, S. & Motion, J. (2007). Retooling the corporate brand: A Foucauldian perspective on normalisation and differentiation. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 71-80.
- Leive, C. (2012). *You Tell Us: How Should Glamour Handle Retouching?* Retrieved from <http://www.glamour.com/health-fitness/blogs/vitamin-g/2012/02/you-tell-us-how-should-glamour.html>
- LeMasurier, M. (2010). Reading the flesh: Popular feminism, the second wave and Cleo's male centrefold. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(2), 215-229.
- Levy, A. (2005). *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press.
- Locke, T. (2004). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Lumby, C. (2011). Past the post in feminist media studies. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1), 95-100.
- Lynch, M. (2011). Blogging for beauty? A critical analysis of Operation Beautiful. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34, 582-592.
- Machin, D. (2004). Building the world's visual language: the increasing global importance of image banks in corporate media. *Visual Communication*, 3(3), 316-336.
- Machin, D. & Thornborrow, J. (2003). Branding and discourse: The case of Cosmopolitan. *Discourse and Society*, 14(4), 453-471.
- Machin, D. & Thornborrow, J. (2006). Lifestyle and the depoliticisation of agency: Sex as power in women's magazines. *Social Semiotics*, 16(1), 173-188.
- Machin, D. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). Language style and lifestyle: The case of a global magazine. *Media, Culture and Society*, 27(4), 577-600.
- Macleod, C. (2002). Deconstructive discourse analysis: Extending the methodological Conversation. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 32(1), 17-25.

- MacNeill, K. (2010). When subject becomes object: Nakedness, art, and the public sphere. *Media International Australia*, 135, 82-93.
- Madigan, S. (2003). Counterviewing injurious speech acts: Destabilising eight conversational habits of highly effective problems. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 1, 43-59.
- Maguire, E. (2010). *Your Skirt's Too Short: Sex, Power, and Choice*. Melbourne: Text Publishing Company.
- Maguire, P. (1987). *Doing participatory research: A feminist approach*. Amherst: The Centre for International Education, University of Massachusetts.
- Malson, H. (1997). *The Thin Woman: Feminism, Post-Structuralism, and the Social Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa*. London: Routledge.
- Malson, H., Halliwell, E., Tischner, I. & Rudolfsdottir, A. (2011). Post-feminist advertising laid bare: Young women's talk about the sexually agentic woman of 'midriff' advertising. *Feminism and Psychology*, 21(1), 74-99.
- Malson, H. & Swann, C. (2003). Re-producing 'woman's' body: reflections on the (dis)place(ments) of 'reproduction' for (post)modern women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(3), 191-201.
- Manheim, C. (2000). *Wake Up, I'm Fat!* Portland, Oregon: Broadway Books.
- Marecek, J. (2002). A reappraisal of Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. *Feminism and Psychology*, 12(4), 423-426.
- Marsh, H. W. (1999). Cognitive discrepancy models: Actual, ideal, future and potential self-perspectives of body image. *Social Cognition*, 17(1), 46-75.
- Massoni, K. (2008). Bringing up "baby": The birth and early development of "Seventeen" magazine (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, United States). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/4029>

- Masters, W. H. & Johnson, V. (1966). *Human Sexual Response*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Matthews Covering, K. (1995). The bleeding body: Adolescents talk about menstruation. In S. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.). *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 10-31). London: Sage Publications.
- May, T. (2005). *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCracken, E. (1993). *Decoding Women's Magazines: from Mademoiselle to Ms.* London: Macmillan.
- McKinley, N. M. (1998). Gender differences in undergraduates' body esteem: The mediating effect of objectified body consciousness and actual/ideal weight discrepancy. *Sex Roles*, 39(1/2), 113-123.
- McLean, K. (2008). 'Coming out, again': Boundaries, identities and spaces of belonging. *Australian Geographer*, 39(3), 303-313.
- McMahon, K. (1990). The Cosmopolitan ideology and the management of desire. *Journal of Sex Research*, 27(3), 381-386.
- McNay, L. (1992). *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- McNay, L. (2004). Situated intersubjectivity. In B.L. Marshall & A. Witz (Eds.). *Engendering the Social: Feminist encounters with sociological theory* (pp. 171-186). Maidenhead, Open University Press.
- McRobbie, A. (1991). *Feminism and Youth Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- McRobbie, A. (1996). More! New sexualities in girls and women's magazines. In J. Curran, D. Morley and V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Cultural Studies and Communications*, (pp. 172-194). London: Arnold.

- McRobbie, A. (1997). More! New sexualities in girls and women's magazines. In A. McRobbie, *Back to Reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies*, (pp. 190-209). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- McRobbie, A. (1999). Bridging the gap: Feminism, fashion and consumption. In A. McRobbie, *The Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music*, (pp. 31-45). London: Routledge.
- McRobbie, A. (2004). Post-feminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 4(3), 255-264.
- McRobbie, A. (2007). *Illegible Rage: Reflections on young women's post feminist disorders*. Transcript of Lecture given at the London School of Economics, January 25, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/events/2007/20061204t1746z001.htm>
- McRobbie, A. (2008). Young women and consumer culture: An intervention. *Cultural Studies*, 22(5), 531-550.
- McRobbie, A. (2009). *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, culture and social change*. London: Sage Publications.
- Meehan, E.R. & Riordan, E. (2002). *Sex and Money: Feminism and the Political Economy in the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Menard, D. & Kleinplatz, P. (2008). Twenty-one moves guaranteed to make his thighs go up in flames: depictions of "great sex" in popular magazines. *Sexuality & Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 12(1), 1-20.
- Mikkola, M. (2011). Feminist perspectives on sex and gender. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/>
- Milkie, M. (2002). Contested images of femininity: An analysis of cultural gatekeepers struggles with the "Real Girl" critique. *Gender and Society*, 16(6), 839-859.

- Mirzoeff, N. (1998). What is visual culture? In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.). *The Visual Culture Reader* (pp. 3-13). London: Routledge.
- MissRepresentation. (2012). *The Keep It Real Toolkit*. Retrieved from <http://issuu.com/missrepresentation/docs/keepitrealtoolkit>
- Molina, P. S. (2009). Critical analysis of discourse and of the media: Challenges and shortcomings. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 6(3), 185-198.
- Moore, S. E. H. (2010). Is the healthy body gendered? Towards a feminist critique of the new paradigm of health. *Body and Society*, 16(2), 95-118.
- Moretti, M. M. & Higgins, E. T. (1988). Relating self-discrepancy to self-esteem: The contribution of discrepancy beyond actual-self ratings. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 26, 108-123.
- Motschenbacher, H. (2009). Speaking the gendered body: The performative construction of commercial masculinities and femininities via body-part vocabulary. *Language in Society*, 38(1), 1-22.
- Mouffe, C. (1979). Hegemony and ideology in Gramsci. In C. Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (pp. 168-204). London: Routledge.
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment-persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18, 407-425.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6-18. Retrieved in reproduction from <http://imlportfolio.usc.edu/ctcs505/mulveyVisualPleasureNarrativeCinema.pdf>
- Munoz, J. E. (1999) *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

- Murphy, R. & Jackson, S. (2010, November). *"How I Learnt to Love My Body": Confessional body narratives in magazine texts*. Presented at the I International Conference: The Landscapes of the Self, Universidade de Evora, Portugal.
- Murphy, R. & Jackson, S. (2011). Bodies-as-image? The body made visible in magazine love your body content. *Women's Studies Journal*, 25(1), 17-30.
- Murray, D. P. (2012). Branding 'real' social change in Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty. *Feminist Media Studies*, forthcoming.
- Murray, S. (2005). Doing politics or selling out? Living the fat body. *Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary journal*, 34(3-4), 265-277.
- Newman, C. (2007). Reader letters to women's health magazines: Inscribing the 'will to health'. *Feminist Media Studies*, 7(2), 155-170.
- New Zealand Psychological Society (2002). *The Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Available online: http://www.psychology.org.nz/Code_of_Ethics.
- NOW Foundation (2011). *National Organization for Women Foundation's Love Your Body Campaign Web page*. Retrieved from <http://loveyourbody.nowfoundation.org/>
- Ogilvie, J. P. (2012). *Glamour* pledges to use less photoshopping. Retrieved from online magazine *The Gloss*, 9 February 2012, from <http://thegloss.com/fashion/glamour-pledges-to-use-less-photoshopping-107/>
- Orange, D. M. (1996). A philosophical enquiry into the concept of desire in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*, 13, 122-129
- Orbach, S. (1978). *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. London: Hamlyn Press.
- Orbach, S. (1986). *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age*. London: Penguin.
- Orbach, S. (1987). *Fat is a Feminist Issue II*. New York: Berkeley.

- Orbach, S. (2002). *On eating: Change your eating, change your life*. London, UK: Penguin Books.
- Orbach, S. (2005). Fat is an advertising issue. *Campaign*, 17 June, Retrieved 18 May 2009 from <http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/news/search/481078/Fat-advertising-issue/>
- Orbach, S. (2006). How can we have a body?: Desires and corporeality. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 7(1), 89-111.
- Orbach, S. (2008). Chinks in the merged attachment: Generational bequests to young girls. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 9(3), 215-232.
- Orbach, S. (2009). *Bodies*. London: Profile Books.
- Oriez, R. J. (2009). *Do readers believe what they see?: Reader acceptance of digital manipulation* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Missouri – Columbia, United States.
- Ouellette, L. (1999). Inventing the Cosmo Girl: Class identity and girl-style American dreams. *Media, Culture and Society*, 21, 359-383.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse Dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (2005). Lacanian discourse analysis in psychology: Seven theoretical elements. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(2), 163-182.
- Parker, I. (2010). Psychosocial studies: Lacanian discourse analysis negotiating interview text. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, 15(2), 156-172.
- Pattee, A. (2009). When in doubt, choose "B": Encoding teenage girls' magazine quizzes. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9(2), 193-207.
- Patterson, L. S. (2005). Why are all the fat brides smiling?: Body image and the American bridal industry. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 243-246.

- Peterson, A. H. (2012). That teenage feeling: Twilight, fantasy and feminist readers. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(1), 51-67.
- Petola, P., Milkie, M. A. & Presser, S. (2004). The “feminist” mystique: Feminist identity in three generations of women. *Gender and Society*, 18(1), 122-144.
- Pini, M. (2004). Technologies of the self. In J. Roche, S. Tucker, R. Thomson and R. Flynn (Eds.). *Youth in Society* (2nd ed.) (pp. 160–167). London: Sage Publications.
- Pollock, G. (1977). What’s wrong with images of women? *Screen Education*, 24, 25-34.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage Publications.
- Potts, A. (2001). The man with two brains: Hegemonic masculine subjectivity and the discursive construction of the unreasonable penis-self. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 10(2), 145-156.
- Potts, A. (2004). Deleuze on Viagra: (Or, what can a ‘Viagra-body’ do?). *Body and Society*, 10(1), 17-36.
- Press, A. (2011). Feminism and media in the post-feminist era: What to make of the “feminist” in feminist media studies. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1), 107-113.
- Probyn, E. (2008). Silences behind the mantra: Critiquing feminist fat. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(3), 401-404.
- Projansky, S. (2007). Mass magazine cover girls: Some reflections on postfeminist girls and postfeminism’s daughters. In Y. Tasker and D. Negra (Eds.). *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (pp. 40-72). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Raby, R. (2005). What is resistance? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(2), 151-171.
- Radway, J. (1984). *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

- Railton, D. & Watson, P. (2005). Naughty girls and red blooded women: Representations of female heterosexuality in music video. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(1), 51-63.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1992a). Love and the politics of heterosexuality. *Feminism and Psychology*, 2(3), 444-447.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1992b). What can you do with a man? Feminism and the critical appraisal of masculinity. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15(3), 339-350.
- Rasmussen, M. L. (2004). The problem of coming out. *Theory Into Practice: Special Edition: Sexual Identities and Schooling*. 43(2), 144-150.
- Reavey, P. (1997). 'What do you do for a living then?': The political ramifications of research interests within everyday interpersonal contexts. *Feminism and Psychology*, 7(4), 553-558.
- Redmond, S. (2003). Thin white women in advertising: Deathly corporeality. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 3(2), 170-190.
- Redmond, S. (2008). Pieces of me: Celebrity confessional carnality. *Social Semiotics*, 18(2), 149-161.
- Rice, C. (2009). How big girls become fat girls: The cultural production of problem eating and physical inactivity. In H. Malson & M. Burns (Eds.). *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Dis/Orders* (pp. 97-110). London and New York: Psychology Press.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs*, 5(4), 631-660.
- Ringrose, J. & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Regulating the abject: The tv makeover as a site of neo-liberal reinvention towards bourgeois femininity. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(3), 227-246.
- Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279-297.

- Riordan, E. (2002). Intersections and new directions: On feminism and political economy. In E. R. Meehan & E. Riordan (Eds.). *Sex and Money: Feminism and the Political Economy in the Media* (pp. 3-15). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roy, S. (2008). Taking charge of your health: Discourses of responsibility in English-Canadian women's magazines. *Sociology of Health and Fitness*, 30(3), 463-477.
- Rubin, G. (1975). The traffic in women: Notes on the 'political economy' of sex. In R. Reiter (Ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (pp.157-210). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Rudolfsdottir, A. & Jolliffe, R. (2008). 'I don't think people really talk about it that much': Young women discuss feminism. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(2), 268-274
- Rust, P.C. (1993). "Coming out" in the age of social constructionism: Sexual identity formation among lesbian and bisexual women. *Gender and Society*, 7(1), 50-77.
- Ryan, C. (2005) Struggling to survive: a study of editorial decision-making strategies at MAMM magazine. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 19(3), 353-376.
- Sarbin, D. (2005). The short, happy life of plus-size women's magazines. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 241-243.
- Scanlon, J. (2009). Sensationalist literature or expert advice? Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* in its publishing context. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9(1), 1-15.
- Segal, L. (2008). After Judith Butler: Identities, who needs them? *Subjectivities*, 25, 381-394.
- Sered, S. & Norton-Hawk, M. (2011). Gender overdetermination and resistance: The case of criminalised women. *Feminist Theory*, 12(3), 317-333.

- Shanahan, A. (2010, February 20). Raunch culture drowns us all in a sea of sleaze. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/raunch-culture-drowns-us-all-in-a-sea-of-sleaze/story-fn562txd-1225833112141>
- Sherif, C. (1979). Bias in psychology. In J. A. Sherman & E. T. Beck (Eds.), *The prism of sex: Essays in the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 93-133). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Shildrick, M. (1997). *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)Ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Singhal, A. & Rogers, E. M. (2002). A theoretical agenda for entertainment-education. *Communications Theory*, 12(2), 117-135.
- Slater, A., Tiggemann, M., Firth, B. & Hawkins, K. (2012). Reality check: An experimental investigation of the addition of warning labels to fashion magazine images on women's mood and body dissatisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 31(2), 105-122.
- Snyder, L. (2002). Confidentiality and anonymity: Promises and practices. In W. C. van der Hoonaard (Ed.), *Ethical Issues for Qualitative Researchers* (pp. 70-78). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Stainton-Rogers, W. & Stainton-Rogers, R. (2001). *The Psychology of Gender and Sexuality: An Introduction*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Stephens, N. (2007). Collecting data from elites and ultra-elites: Telephone and face-to-face interviews with macroeconomists. *Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 203-216.
- Stoller, R. J. (1968). *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*. New York: Science House.
- Strauman, T. J., Vookles, J., Berenstein, V. Chaiken, S. & Higgins, E. T. (1991). Self discrepancies and vulnerability to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(6), 946-956.

- Tankard-Reist, M. (2012). *Dolly brings back its model search. Why?*. Retrieved from <http://www.mamamia.com.au/parenting/are-model-contests-for-13-year-olds-a-good-idea/>
- Tasker, Y. & Negra, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Tebbel, C. (2000). *The Body Snatchers: How the Media Shape Women*. Sydney: Finch Publishing.
- Thompson, M. J. (2000). Gender in magazine advertising: Skin sells best. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), 178-181.
- Thornham, S. (2007). *Women, Feminism and Media*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tiefer, L. (1995). *Sex Is Not a Natural Act & Other Essays*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Tilley, L. & Woodthorpe, K. (2011). Is it the end for anonymity as we know it? *Qualitative Research*, 11(2), 197-212.
- Tiggeman, M. & McGill, B. (2004). The role of social comparison in the effect of magazine advertisements on women's mood and body dissatisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 23-44.
- Tischner, I. & Malson, H. (2008). Exploring the politics of women's (in)visible 'large' bodies. *Feminism and Psychology*, 18(2) 260-267.
- Tischner, I. & Malson, H. (2010). You can't be supersized? Exploring femininities, body size and control within the obesity terrain. In Rich, E., Monaghan, L. & Aphramor, L. (Eds.). *Debating Obesity: Critical Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tolman, D. (2005). *Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk About Sexuality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Toye, M. (2010). Towards a poethics of love: Poststructuralist feminist ethics and literary creation. *Feminist Theory*, 11(1), 39-55.
- Tuchman, G. (1979). Women's depiction by the mass media. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 4(3), 528-542.
- Tucker, I. (2010). The potentiality of bodies. *Theory and Psychology*, 20(4), 511-527.
- Turangi-Joseph, A. (1998). *Tyranny of appearances: body image, dieting and eating attitudes among Maori and Pakeha students*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Turner, G. (2010). *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*. London: Sage Publications.
- Tyler, I. (2005). 'Who put the "Me" in feminism?': The sexual politics of narcissism. *Feminist Theory*, 6(1), 25-44
- Tyrer, J. & Burns, M. (2008). Special Events – Love Your Body Day. Retrieved 20 October, 2008 from http://www.eden.org.nz/eden_love_your_body.html
- Unilever (2007). *The Dove Self-Esteem Fund*. Retrieved 19 October, 2008 from <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/dsef07/t5.aspx?id=7315>
- Unger, R. K. (1993). I. The personal is political: Feminists construct psychology. *Feminism and Psychology*, 3(2), 211-218.
- Unger, R. (2011). Through the looking glass once more. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1), 180-182.
- Ussher, J.M. (2006). *Managing the Monstrous Feminine: Regulating the Reproductive Body*. London: Routledge.
- Ussher, J. (2010). Are we medicalising women's misery? A critical review of women's higher rates of reported depression. *Feminism and Psychology*, 20(1), 9-35.

- Ussher, J. M. (2011). *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience*. London: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T. (1993). Principles of discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249-283.
- Van Patten, T. (Director) & Patrick King, M. (Writer) (2004). An American girl in Paris: Part deux. *Sex and the City* [television series]. United States: Darren Star Productions / HBO Original programming.
- Verplanken, B. & Velsvik, R. (2008). Habitual negative body image thinking as a psychological risk factor for adolescents. *Body Image*, 5(2), 133-140.
- Vigorito, A.J. & Curry, T. J. (1998). Marketing masculinity: Gender identity and popular magazines. *Sex Roles*, 39(1-2), 135-152.
- Walkerdine, V. (1991). *Schoolgirl Fictions*. London: Verso Books.
- Walkerdine, V. (2004). 'Neoliberalism, Femininity and Choice'. ESRC Research Seminar Series: New Femininities. Retrieved 10 February 2010 from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/newFemininities/walkerdine.pdf>
- Waller, A. A. (2005, October). Work in progress - feminist research methodologies: Why, what and how. Paper presented at the 35th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference, Indianapolis, United States. Retrieved from <http://www.fie-conference.org/fie2005/papers/1588.pdf>
- Walsh, M. (2004). Twenty years since 'A critique of the sex / gender distinction': A conversation with Moira Gatens. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 19(44), 213-244.
- Weatherall, A. (2002). *Gender, Language and Discourse*. East Sussex: Routledge.
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.
- Weinberg, M. S. & Williams, C. J. (2010). Bare bodies: Nudity, gender and the looking glass body. *Sociological Forum*, 25(1), 47-67.

- Weisstein, N. (1968/1993). Featured reprint: Psychology constructs the female; or, the fantasy life of the male psychologist (with some attention to the fantasies of his friends, the male biologist and the male anthropologist). *Feminism and Psychology*, 3(2), 195-210.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- Westbrook, D., Kennerley, H. & Kirk, J. (2007). *An Introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy: Skills and Applications*. London: Sage Publications.
- Wetherell, M. (1995). Romantic discourse and feminist analysis: Interrogating investment, power and desire. In S. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.). *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 128-144). London: Sage Publications.
- Wetherell, M. (1999). Beyond binaries. *Theory and Psychology*, 9(3), 399-406.
- Wheeler, T. & Gleason, T. (1995). Photography OR photofiction: An ethical protocol for the digital age. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 2(1), 8-12.
- Whitehead, K. & Kurz, T. (2008). Saints, sinners and standards of femininity: Discursive constructions of Anorexia Nervosa and obesity in women's magazines. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(4), 345-358.
- Widdicombe, S. (1995). Identity, politics and talk: A case for the mundane and the everyday. In S. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.). *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 106-127). London: Sage Publications.
- Wilkinson, S. (1988). The role of reflexivity in feminist psychology. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(5), 493-502.
- Wilkinson, S. (1991). Feminism and psychology: From critique to reconstruction. *Feminism and Psychology*, 1(1), 5-18.
- Wilkinson, S. & Kitzinger, C. (1995). *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Sage Publications.

- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Willig, C. (2000). A discourse-dynamic approach to the study of subjectivity in health psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, 10(4), 547-570.
- Willott, S. (1998). An outsider within: A feminist doing research with men. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin & A. Phoenix (Eds.) *Standpoints and Differences: Essays in the Practice of Feminist Psychology* (pp. 174-190). London: Sage Publications.
- Wilson, N. (2005). Vilifying former fatties: Media representations of weight loss surgery. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 252-255.
- Winick, R. (1996). Intellectual property, defamation and the digital alteration of visual images. *Columbia VLA Journal of Law and the Arts*, 21, 143-197.
- Winship, J. (1987). *Inside Women's Magazines*. New York: Pandora.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: Vintage.
- Wykes, M. & Gunter, B. (2005). *The Media and Body Image: If Looks Could Kill*. London: Sage Publications.
- Young, M. (2005). One size fits all: disrupting the consumerised, pathologised, fat female form. *Feminist Media Studies*, 5(2), 249-252.
- Ytre-Arne, B. (2011). Women's magazines and their readers: The relationship between textual features and practices of reading. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(2), 213-228.
- Zeki, S. (2007). The neurobiology of love. *FEBS Letters*, 581(14), 2575-2579.
- Zhavi, D. (2001). Beyond empathy: Phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8(5-7), 151-167.

Endnotes

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. I use *body love* and *love your body* interchangeably in this dissertation (as do the magazines), although (as will be discussed in the first text analysis chapter), the ‘your’, whether included or implied, is significant.
2. Hereafter, magazines followed by (Austr) indicate an Australian edition, followed by (NZ) indicates a New Zealand produced edition.
3. “Readerships”, “distribution” and “sales” figures represent the estimated number of regular readers (i.e. how many people say they read a magazine in survey), the number of copies distributed, and the number of copies actually sold respectively. These three figures all give an indication of the popularity of a title, but can be widely discrepant within any one title. Sales figures, for example, may only be a quarter or a fifth of an estimated readership; and not all copies are distributed by sale as advertiser sponsorship may enable a large number of free copies to be made available. This figure too does not reflect the increasing availability of magazine content online.
4. Or as Gill (2011) put it, more theory is needed about how what’s “out there” gets “in here”.
5. <http://fatso.com/>
<http://healthateverysizeblog.org/>
6. I am unsure as to whether it would be most appropriate to discuss the use of irony in post-modern magazines or women’s poverty here. I decided that this example was best to sit alone and allow my reader to make their own interpretations.
7. <http://www.3news.co.nz/Pressure-to-reveal-Photoshop-work-in-magazines/tabid/418/articleID/234764/Default.aspx>

Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

1. Of course, it can also be reasonably assumed that the interviewees had a stake and interest too in the accounts they produced through these interviews.

2. During the time this project was being conceptualised, I undertook a series of three 'stakeholder' interviews, with professionals who work and research within a feminist psychology framework and with an interest in women and their bodies. These interviews were conducted to gain further information in addition to the literature review regarding what is important in this field and what kind of research would be useful at the present time. I took from these interviews 4 key messages. First, of their current concern about public health policy and women's bodies in New Zealand. Second, their perspective on the role the media takes in creating knowledge about women's bodies in contemporary culture. Third, the importance of conducting research which is not just methodically, but methodologically ethical. Last, about the divergence of critical feminist and mainstream approaches to the body in psychology.

Chapter 5: Bodies-As-Images and Bodies-In-Images

1. This paper was presented at the I International Conference: The Landscapes of the Self, Universidade de Evora, Portugal, and discussed the use of autobiographical reader and celebrity narratives within *body love* messages.
2. An earlier version of this analysis appeared in the New Zealand Women's Studies Journal, (Murphy & Jackson, 2011).

Chapter 6: Discoursing 'Body Love'

1. Aside from 'erase', some other Photoshop tools are called "bloat", "enhance", "clone stamp", and "healing brush".

Chapter 7: The 'Male Observer' in Magazine 'Body Love' Discourse

1. Of course, in this quote Rich was discussing the possibility of women loving and being loved "by *other women* in mutuality and integrity" (italics added). However, I believe I retain her meaning in saying that these portrayals of emotionless

heterosexual relationships do not make available a model for mutuality and integrity in *any* kind of relationship.

Chapter 9: Constructing the 'Good Magazine': Discourses About Production

1. These discourses are known in the research literature via studies of readers and their opinions. However, the up-taking and response to these discourses by magazine professionals means that readers are not the 'end of the line' with magazines, thus reinforcing my argument against implicit linear and one way thinking when it comes to conceptualising relationships between reader, producer and publication.
2. It was certainly more than just B (in Extract 7) who referred to Lindsay Lohan as someone who they would not put on the cover of their magazine, because she was too 'trashy'. However:

Extract 9

F: They, they're much more irreverent about it and less likely to, you know there's still that stuff though about well Lindsay Lohan was a loser

R: Oh

F: And you know and I just can't help but think, poor Lindsay, you know, I wish you know I could gather her up and you know

R: I'm in two minds about Lindsay myself (laughs)

F: Yeah, well I just think, what a waste, you know

R: It is

F: What a talented girl you know,

R: Well that's it, that's it,

F: Well if you've seen her, she's such a good actress

R: That's exactly it

F: And she's kind of lost cos her mother's been with fruitcake and who's kind of looking after her?

3. I use 'advice' in the sense of selling information within magazine copy, rather than in the more specific sense of magazine advice or agony aunt pages.
4. A good example of this is that Cleo and Cosmopolitan magazines in Australia are both owned by the same parent publishing company: ACP Magazines (<http://www.acp.com.au/magazines.htm>). Despite having similar readerships and scope, the two titles encourage differentiation and seek to compete with each other. The strategy of owning similar brands is not unique to magazines, and happens across many large corporate operated industries (Freedman, 2009).

Chapter 10: Constructing Images in the Production of 'Body Love' Messages

1. <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/i-am-in-love-with-this-photo/>;
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2009/sep/05/model-lizzie-miller-photo-reaction>
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2009/sep/05/model-lizzie-miller-photo-reaction>; <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-04/lizzie-miller/1416972>
3. <http://jezebel.com/5104042/photoshop-of-horrors>;
http://socialitelifelife.com/jessica_alba_latest_photoshop_victim-12-2008

Chapter 11: Synthesis: The (Im)possibilities of 'Body Love'

1. <http://dolly.ninemsn.com.au/the-original-dolly-model-search-2012>

Appendix A: Data Selection Process Flow Chart.

Research preparation: selecting the topic, general medium for investigation, background reading of magazines and literature etc.

Restrict magazines by publication type – choose monthly “glossy” publications with wide readerships over other kinds of publications. Set aside weekly “gossip” magazines targeted at women aged 20-50 as of special interest and containing content which may be relevant – identified one or two articles which may be appropriate to use for comparative purposes.

Restrict magazines by target market – decide to use Cosmopolitan and Cleo magazines, targeted at young women approx. 18-35yrs old, i.e., born from around 1980s onward. Possibility of using one or two articles from younger women’s magazines as case studies to support data from investigation with Cosmopolitan / Cleo, or to highlight differences in qualities of messages – identified two “Dolly” (Austr) and “Girlfriend” (NZ) issues with relevant articles, put these aside for later with weekly magazine examples.

All Cosmo / Cleo magazines from Oct 08 - July 09 and selected issues available from either magazine second-hand dated 2004-8.

Identify all articles and content which

- a) encourage love / acceptance / harmony / care for body OR
- b) discourage major body modification / unacceptance of body

Read and take inventory of all these articles, (noting article titles, number of identified articles per issue etc). Decided to keep some statistics on these issues (i.e. to show a general change in volume over time), and keep note of identified articles so that I could if needed return later to note if there appeared to be any major difference between earlier articles and those used in the thematic and discourse analysis (Table 1). Then reduced whole data set to 10 consecutive issues each of Cosmopolitan / Cleo magazine dated October 2008- July 2009, plus the two “love your body” editions of Cosmopolitan magazine, (May 2006 and 2007).

Create an inventory of all articles appearing in Cleo Body / Activist or Cosmo Body love sections in the magazines and note the general overall themes of these articles. Then, exclude from data set any articles from these sections which focussed primarily on diet, exercise, or did not well fit the (a) and (b) criteria but for that they were labelled by the magazines as “body love” sections (Cosmopolitan Magazine) or “everything you need to be happy and healthy [within your body]”, and to “love the way you look” (Cleo Magazine). Further tighten the criteria for the data set by choosing 40-50 articles which best exemplify the messages of the (a) and (b) criteria, and excluding all others.

Appendix B: Table of Magazine Issues with Examples of 'Body Love' Content Articles.

Magazine title	Issue	Number of 'body love' themed articles identified	Example of article title
Cosmopolitan (Austr)	July 09	14	"Botox berries: better than a needle in the face"
	June 09	14	"Diet wars at work"
	May 09	13	"Cosmo body love: amazing new body revelation"
	Apr 09	14	"Embracing Simple beauty (advertorial)"
	Mar 09	8	"Cosmo body love: your body's ideal 24 hours"
	Feb 09	21	"Why men like us love girls like you"
	Jan 09	10	"Cosmo body love: eat yourself fitter!"
	Dec 08	8	"Cosmo body love: too paranoid to order the panna cotta?"
	Nov 08	6	"For my birthday, I want you to be 55kg"
	Oct 08	11	"Cosmo body love: does size matter?"
	Aug 08	5	"Cosmo body love: 23 ways to fake your weight"
	Nov 07	6	"Cosmo body love: time to wake up to a new body"
	Oct 07	3	"Girls queuing up for cosmetic surgery on credit"
	July 07	3	"Jessica Alba: you've got a gorgeous body, now own it!"
	June 07	4	"The advice I'd give to my daughter"
	May 07	18	("your amazing body issue") "Tyra's weight tirade"
	Mar 07	3	"Should there be a licence to model?"
	Jan 07	1	"Anatomy class with Katherine Heigl"
	May 06	8	("body love issue") "What would it take for you to feel beautiful?"
	Apr 06	3	"What I learnt from being a competitive anorexic"
	Jan 06	3	"Um, didn't you just have a baby? – too thin too fast"
	Nov 05	10	"How to beat the 'I hate my body blues' "
	Sept 05	2	"Body wise: your big fat questions about fat"
	Aug 05	2	"How to live your happiest life"
	Mar 05	3	"Celebrity diet denial is making me feel real fat"
	Feb 05	5	"The boob job epidemic"
	Jan 05	2	"Stop the diet insanity!"
	Feb 04	1	"Food and body workbook: What's your food personality?"
	Mar 03	4	"Guys tell: when the woman you love loathes her body"
Cleo Magazine (NZ)	July 09	10	"Is there a formula for hotness?"
	June 09	15	"Cleo body: pretty on the inside"
	May 09	11	"What men really want"
	Apr 09	10	"Cleo body: 8 health rules you should break"
(Cleo "Body" section introduced)	Mar 09	11	"Cleo body: diet industry vs dietician"
	Feb 09	5	"Stop being so damn perfect"
	Jan 09	2	"Flat and happy"
	Dec 08	6	"7 secrets the weightloss industry will never tell you"
(Cleo "Activist" section introduced)	Nov 08	9	"How I learnt to love my body"
	Oct 08	5	"In praise of quirky beauty"
	Dec 07	2	"The 3 month 'best body' bikini makeover"
	Aug 07	3	"Life coach: your happy weight contract" (Australian ed.?)
	Jan 07	1	"The diet myth that's making you fat"
	Mar 06	3	"Break up surgery – he dumped me so I got new lips"
	Dec 05	2	"Am I fat? How to tell if it's actually true or in your head"
	Aug 05	1	"Is someone else making you fat?"
	July 05	1	"Cleo's suck the cellulite right out of your thighs makeover"
	Apr 05	1	"The lazy girls guide to losing weight and getting fit"
	Feb 05	2	"20 no-diet ways to lose weight"
	Mar 04	1	"When your friends influence the way you eat"

Appendix C: Interview Participant Information Letter

Information Sheet: “Love Your Body” Messages in Young Women’s Magazines.

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Rewa Murphy and this research forms part of my PhD studies at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand. Dr. Sue Jackson is my Primary Supervisor for this study. This research has been approved by the University’s ethics committee.

What is the purpose of this research?

Research suggests the important part that media may play as a resource for young women’s self-understandings and identities. Historically, young women’s body difficulties have been widely attributed to media, although recent moves by magazine staff to counter these problems tell a different side of this story. Therefore, these interviews are interested in how those who produce “love your body” magazine messages describe what is at stake in encouraging young women to have positive body attitudes, and their perspectives on what “loving your body” is all about.

What is involved if you agree to participate?

Your contribution to this study would involve participating in a face-to-face interview. In this, we would discuss a number of topics relating to the role of magazines in promoting positive body messages. For example, questions may include “Why is it important, in your own opinion, that young women develop positive body attitudes?” or “In light of all the ‘love your body’ content now in magazines, how would you respond to continuing claims that magazines are responsible for contemporary young women’s body difficulties?” Depending on your availability, this interview would take us around an hour to complete. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure I have an accurate record of what you have said. If you change your mind at any point during the interview you are free to end our discussion and withdraw from the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- I will keep your consent form and a transcription of our interview for at least five years after the study has finished, (this is to comply with the guidelines and timeframes set out by academic journals who might publish the research). After transcription, the initial recording will be destroyed.
- You will never be named in my research project write up or in any other presentation or publication. When I transcribe our discussion any identifying information will be replaced with generic terms (e.g. “Magazine 1”, “Participant A”), and the transcription will be stored in a secure location.
- This anonymous transcription may be shared with other competent researchers.

What happens to the information that you provide?

The anonymous information you provide may be used for one or more of the following purposes:

- It may form part of an academic journal publication or conference presentation.
- It will form part of a PhD research thesis that will be submitted for assessment.
- It may form part of a summary of the project as a whole distributed to community agencies working with young women around body image. The purpose of this is to ensure that the information you provide makes it to places where it would be most useful and effective.

If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact either:

Rewa Murphy

PhD Candidate

Email: *contact information removed*

Dr. Sue Jackson

Senior Lecturer

Email: *contact information removed*

Appendix D: Interview Consent Form

Statement of consent

I have read the information about this research and any questions I wanted to ask have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time, without penalty, prior to the end of my participation.

I understand that our interview will be audio-recorded, that these recordings will be transcribed, and then destroyed. I also understand that a copy of the transcription must be kept securely for at least 5 years after this project is completed, before it is also destroyed.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(if agreeing to participate in this study):

Please send me a summary of the final report when you have finished the study (please circle):

Yes

No

My email address for this is

Appendix E: Structured Plan for Magazine Staff Interviews

1. Introductions

- Recap project in brief
- Confidentiality
- Any questions? and Consent forms

2. Magazine professionals and readership

- Role and position at magazine
- Perceptions of readership & relationship with readers
- Functions of magazine for readership
- Influences on magazine content

3. Love Your Body messages and magazines

- Evolution, context and influences
- Meanings of Love Your Body
- Who this message is targeted at?
- Projected outcomes of Love Your Body messages

4. Criticism of Magazine representations of women and their bodies

- Magazine staff understanding of this criticism
- Changes as a result of these criticisms
- How would you respond to continuing criticism?

5. Wider Society

- Compare to non-magazine Love Your Body messages
- Who / What else could help to promote Love Your Body messages

6. Conclusion

- Any final questions
- Close interview