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Squatting for Sisterhood?

An investigation into representations of the female body in women's magazines, with specific focus on *Women's Health* and their monthly cover girl.

Lucy Alexandra Chaplin

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Abstract

Mediatized female embodiment has constituted a large part of feminist critique for decades, yet it is an area of research that remains unequivocally uncertain due to the varying interpretations put forward by scholars. Within this area of research, women's magazines are considered central in shaping perception towards the body and the self. This research will investigate female body representations in women's magazines and how they are received by a 21st century readership. More specifically, this research will explore how these representations are constructed through health and fitness discourses in *Women's Health* magazine. Launched in 2005, *Women's Health* is still a relatively new addition to the women's magazine genre, yet its continued popularity reveals its significance in contemporary constructions of womanhood. Using a combination of content and reception analysis, this study illustrates the extent to which *Women's Health* promote idealised body types, the frustration experienced by focus group participants towards the cover girl as well as the impact of health and fitness discourses on a female readership.

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1. Introduction

The representation of female bodies has been a site of contest and complexity within feminist research for decades, particularly in the context of women's magazines, which adapt in response to cultural changes in society. In recent years, the health and fitness industry has grown exponentially (Andreasson and Johansson, 2014: 91), becoming part of everyday culture and conversation. From the rising number of affordable gyms to online YouTube fitness tutorials, the display and consumption of gym-honed bodies is ubiquitous.

Market research conducted in the last year has revealed that whilst the circulation of many women's magazines has declined, one publication has prevailed. In contrast to its competitors, *Women's Health* is increasing its sales year on year, or as Mayhew (2017: no pagination) otherwise refers to it, continues to 'buck the trend'. This research is indicative that despite the decline of many women's magazines, due to the popularity of digital media (Tobitt, 2018: no pagination), women and girls are more interested in health and fitness than other areas of popular culture.

The success of *Women's Health* appears to coincide with the continued popularity of gym culture, which offers academic space to reflect on the representation of female bodies in the context of health and fitness, in attempt to bridge the gap with previous research on fashion magazines. This study will be conducted in light of the feminist insistence that 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970: 76), which points to the deeply socialised issue of female embodiment. However, the rising circulation figures of *Women's Health* suggest that the female body is a commodity, implying that consumerism is inextricably linked to the representation of female bodies. In addition, these figures support Gauntlett's (2002: 187)

position that women's magazines are fundamental in 'the social construction of womanhood'. However, newer publications have received less academic interest which reinforces the necessity of this research.

In attempt to address the discernible shift in circulation figures of women's magazines, this research will examine how *Women's Health* engages with its readership through visual and textual discourse related to health and fitness. More importantly, this discourse will be analysed in order to determine the way in which it represents the female body through the use of the cover girl. Although, research questions into representations of the female body cannot be fully understood without an awareness of how these representations are received by a female audience.

Contrary to Winship's (1987: 13) perception that women aspire to recreate 'the cover girl look', Hermes (1995: 5) identifies readers of magazines as 'producers of meaning', which demonstrates the inconsistencies of previous research. The way in which such conflicts are tackled will be discussed in Chapter Three, combining content analysis alongside focus groups, to gain a complex level of understanding as to how female embodiment in *Women's Health* is constructed and received. Previous studies of women's magazines will therefore be incorporated as the basis for examining female body representations in *Women's Health*, to decipher whether or not the physical attributes of the cover girl remain fixed in a 21st century context. Additionally, this study should also contribute towards future research into women's magazines, as well as feminist studies, the latter of which will be achieved through gaining an insight into how female bodies in *Women's Health* are received by a female audience.

1.1 Research Objectives

Main Objective: to investigate representations of the female body in women's magazines, with specific focus on *Women's Health* and their monthly cover girl.

1. How do *Women's Health* employ textual and visual discourse on the front cover to represent the female body?
2. How significant is the concept of health in these representations?
3. How are female bodies on the front cover of *Women's Health* received by a female audience in comparison to other women's magazines?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The female body: beauty without brains?

In contemporary UK society, the issue of gender inequality prevails, despite advancements across a range of equality registers. We are frequently exposed to female bodies in the media that are objectified in terms of their appearance, rather than exploring the intellect and capabilities behind the image. As argued by Van Zoonen (1994: 67) 'gender is probably the social resource used most by advertisers', due to the signifying power of gender and the continued circulation of gendered stereotypes. Gender inequalities are reproduced by the media and can be recognised in one medium in particular; women's magazines. Earlier feminist critiques argued that in media and cultural studies, 'scholarship on magazines has occupied a less central and prestigious place' (McRobbie, 1997: 192), an issue which still resonates two decades later. More importantly, this demonstrates how the media, especially magazines, continue to overlook the issues surrounding gender inequality and how women and girls are represented. In applying Van Zoonen's (1994) conceptualisation of gender representation to 21st century advertising, men's bodies are arguably consumed in the same way as women. However, media images still tend to focus on capturing a certain female body type, positioned as desirable and decorative, with the male body being objectified less frequently. Similarly, Sheldon (2002: 14) argues that women have been 'reduced to little more than bodies'. As a result, media representations of women are often extremely limited, failing to correspond to the reality of women's bodies, lives and aspirations.

Further research into the study of women's magazines reveals that the majority of critics were women, which was expected and they often expressed their frustration towards women's magazines. The prevalence of female critics in this field of research presents more challenges

in terms of separating their personal feelings towards women's magazines and as feminists from their academic perspective. However, a key aspect of feminist politics and research is the insistence that 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970: 76), which was coined to illustrate the relationship between personal experience and larger social structures. Additionally, Letherby (2003: 7) discusses how female critics struggle to separate personal feelings from their research which can often lead to 'accusations of un-academic indulgence'. On reflection, Letherby's (2003) observation implies that personal experience is perhaps a deterrent towards how feminist research is conducted surrounding female body representations. Conversely, without this emotional connection, feminism would perhaps be less understood and supported as a social and political movement.

A related issue is that media representations of the female body are unproblematically used without acknowledgement of their potential contribution to broader issues of social inequality. In the context of this research, emotional indulgences have inspired this study in wanting to establish how the female body is represented in a contemporary example of popular culture; health and fitness. As observed by Andreasson and Johansson (2014: 91), 'fitness gyms and private health clubs are a huge global business', with the ideal body being perceived as achievable through a good fitness regime at relatively little expense. This evidence suggests that due to the global accessibility and popularity of gym culture, it is becoming more mediatised, based on its profitability as a global enterprise. More importantly, this evidence suggests that gym culture is contributing towards the ongoing fixation towards the female body and physical appearance. This reinforces issues surrounding gender inequality and the need for more coverage on feminist politics.

2.2 The transformation of women's magazines and the 21st century female

In contemporary popular culture, the cover girl image has remained a prominent feature of women's magazines, with such images having a profoundly negative impact on the women and girls who consume these magazines. Media representations of the female body convey the idea that in order to achieve success, women must aspire to reproduce the cover girl image themselves. Consequently, their aspirations beyond improving their physical appearance are reduced and become less significant. Ferguson (1983: 59) refers to this as 'an alternative power structure within female society', within which a hierarchy is established based on gendered physical attributes. Historically, gender-differentiated subjectivity has been a prominent theme in feminist theory, yet Brooks (2002: 20) maintains that 'women's sense of self is seen to be located in the particularity of the female body'. This indicates that women remain unrecognised for their intellectual capacities, whereas men are measured for qualities beyond their physical attributes. Almost two decades after Brooks' research, there have been some changes towards how women are perceived in the media, which is reflected in the diversification of women's magazines. Indeed, this genre of print media has expanded beyond curating the perfect housewife and now offers women a moment of indulgence across a wider selection of topics including fashion and beauty, music, celebrity culture and health and fitness.

In recognising that there has been a shift in the content included in women's magazines, Gauntlett (2002: 247) discerns that 'the traditional view of a woman as a housewife or low status worker has been kick-boxed out of the picture by the feisty, successful "girl power" icons'. This distancing from tradition occurred as a result of the birth of second-wave feminism during the 1990s, a turning point in feminist theory which 'marks a moment of feminist reflexivity' (McRobbie, 2004: 4-5). This period brought about 'the wider circulation of feminist

values across the landscape of popular culture' (McRobbie, 2004: 5), highlighting the fundamental role played by women's magazines in reproducing feminist values and shaping public perception. Prior to second-wave feminism, the significance of the housewife in women's magazines can be traced back to the 1950s. This persona was created following the end of the Second World War when women's magazines used the concept of femininity to celebrate 'the return to family life and the virtue of the housewife' (Gill, 2007: 184), encouraging women to abandon their war-time roles outside of the home. This shows how femininity and gendered roles are influenced by particular moments in time, especially through the discourse of women's magazines which adapts in accordance with social change.

Having identified that women's magazines adjust their content to reflect moments in time, Gill (2007: 184) observes that 'since the early 1990s there have been a number of discernible shifts' including 'the dramatic sexualization of the body' as well as 'a focus on work outside as well as inside the home'. Although positive progress has been made towards women being encouraged to pursue a career, the sexualisation of the female body in magazines is deeply worrying as society is becoming more and more consumed by their appearance. The sexualised and glamorous portrayal of the cover girl across a wide selection of magazines reflects the primacy of idealised body types in contemporary society. In addition, Gill (2007: 184) highlights 'the increasing adoption of feminist registers or discourses across magazines, with a stress upon being in control and pleasing yourself.' In the context of women's health and fitness, these feminist discourses have contributed in shifting concerns away from family health with responsibility as a mother and care-giver towards putting personal health as a priority. This can be seen in the growing popularity of magazines such as *Women's Health* despite the decline in sales of other women's publications (Mayhew, 2017: no pagination),

revealing that the 21st century female consumer is more invested in health and fitness than other areas of popular culture, therefore forming the foundation for this research.

According to Tuchman (1978: 3), magazines play a pivotal role in society by facilitating social change, which in light of the global success of the health and fitness industry offers some explanation as to why *Women's Health* has experienced an increase in sales. Tuchman (1978) also argues that magazines help readers to adapt to change by providing them with familiar memories of the past whilst transitioning into the future, making the transformation process less daunting. This demonstrates the potential of magazines to adapt and produce diverse content which is representative of social change. In support of this statement, Gough-Yates (2002: 1) discusses how magazines targeted new female readerships in the 1980s, due to the development of gender roles at the time. This was reflected in fashion trends and popular television shows such as *Dynasty* which showcased power dressing, a discourse which emerged in the 1980s and can be defined as 'self-presentation ostensibly concerned with female empowerment' (Entwistle, 2000: 225). Power dressing was initiated by women in the workplace who used their style of dressing to signify their status as career women, a trend which has continued into the 21st century.

Conversely, the continued exposure of slender bodies on the front covers of women's magazines demonstrates the lack of diversity in women's magazines despite their potential to adapt. Tuchman (1978: 93) also adds that, 'women's magazines pick specific target groups for their audience and then design their magazines to attract those readers', which indicates that female readers are drawn to their preferred magazine based on its design and content. However, this could also be due to generational preferences given that long-standing publications such as *Cosmopolitan* create content aimed at young professional women

(Gough-Yates, 2002: 110). More specifically, Ferguson (1983: 99) considers the significance of the front cover, with its function being to differentiate, to identify and to sell. Identification is central in terms of the magazine's identity and in appealing to the reader who chooses to identify with the cover girl image. From this, the impact of the cover girl image needs to be examined, as Ferguson's (1983) research indicates that the cover girl resonates with a readership without being indicative of the inside content.

2.3 The significance of the cover girl

Despite the diversification of women's magazines, a hierarchy of female physical attributes has prevailed due to the visual discourse on the front cover, which encourages women to recreate 'the cover girl look' (Winship, 1987: 13). This hierarchy suggests that the cover girl image impacts how women perceive themselves, and how they are perceived by society. Over three decades later, Winship's point is still pertinent to the discussion on female embodiment, as the cover girl still exists across all women's magazines, regardless of their genre. More importantly, in looking more closely at the physical attributes of the 21st century cover girl, it seems that Hermes' (1995: 9) observation that women's magazines are 'overwhelmingly heterosexual in orientation and predominantly white in colour' is still significant. Considering how society is constantly adapting in response to shifting trends, fashions and cultural diversity, the primacy of the white female body is resilient across time in women's magazines. In addition, white teeth, long hair and slender frames also constitute the cover girl look (Kitch, 2001: 99 & 133). As a result, this default to the stereotypical cover girl brings into question issues of culture, as well as gender. Additionally, it is important to consider the relationship between representation and consumerism to achieve the idealised cover girl look, as women are encouraged to buy the accompanying products advertised. To elucidate this point further, the reader is consciously or subconsciously persuaded into buying

into other commodities that promise this idealised image of what constitutes feminine beauty (Kaur et al, 2013: 70).

A contrary position is put forward by Hermes (1995: 5), who considers readers of magazines as 'producers of meaning', rather than susceptible to the dialogue of idealised body image and products which promote self-improvement. It would therefore be narrow-minded to assume that women and girls who read magazines automatically purchase products to improve their appearance. Given the diverse content included in women's magazines, it is likely that a female readership is interested in topics beyond their physical appearance. Although Hermes offers a positive assessment on women and their capabilities beyond their physical attributes, this could be extended in terms their ability to evaluate information and take a position of agreement or disagreement. It therefore appears that previous research (Winship 1987; Kitch 2001; Gough-Yates 2002) has failed to recognise female agency and the potential to critically engage with the magazine's content.

According to Evans et al. (2002: 2), cover girl images form part of a 'deeply socialized' expectation that encourages women to be in a continuous process of physical self-improvement. The hierarchy of the female body can therefore be considered a social problem which is reproduced through media representations. Indeed, the socialisation of the idealised body combined with the theme of self-improvement in women's magazines allows companies to exploit the role of the media by exposing our flaws and providing us with products that claim to fix them. This level of consumer exploitation is most evident in weekly gossip magazines, for instance the use of heuristic devices such as the arrows and circling of flaws on the cover page. This level of invasive and critical journalism may appear to be directed at the celebrity under scrutiny, however it impacts a much wider audience, in a similar fashion to

the idealised cover girl image. Front covers are far more complex than consuming a beautiful model. The texts that accompany these images provoke self-reflection and entice readers into buying products so they continue with Evans' (2002) process of self-improvement.

Conversely, the arrows and circling arguably speak to the precarity of attaining the cover girl ideal, particularly as the 'ideal' body always has to be worked at and is unrealistic. These punitive representations serve as a reassuring reminder that the cover girl look is unachievable and an ongoing process, even for celebrities who have better access to resources to improve their physical appearance than the average female reader.

Furthermore, Evans et al. (2002: 13) state that 'our bodies serve many purposes' and that we must recognise the ambiguity of bodies to perform a variety of functions in relation to personal experiences. The female body has the potential to perform a multitude of tasks including motherhood, creative arts, exercise and vocational work all of which are carried out regardless of aesthetics. To build on this argument, women should not be measured based on their appearance as presented in magazines, which demonstrates how society and the media still have a long way to go in accepting all bodies. However, bodily ambiguity 'is not necessarily a position which is socially welcome' (Evans et al., 2002: 13) thus facilitating the ongoing commodification of the female body, as readers strive to achieve an idealised and unrealistic physique.

In recent years, there has been a slight shift in the types of cover girls used in women's magazines, but there is still, arguably, much room for improvement. For example, *Vogue* introduced Ashley Graham as its first plus-size cover model in February 2017 (Chabbott, 2017: no pagination) to promote body inclusivity. However, since then, *Vogue* has done very little to uphold this and has returned to using models of the slim, white and feminine body

'ideal'. This reinforces Ferguson's (1983) alternative power structure regarding the female body, communicating that women are allowed to be who they want, but if they look a certain way they will ensue more success. Similarly, health and fitness magazines use cover girls with sculpted bodies designed to motivate their readers into achieving a similar physique through reading the magazine and buying the recommended products. Moreover, they present their audience with a narrow discourse that a healthy body consists of toned limbs and a glowing tan. Furthermore, Anderson (2017: no pagination) stresses that 'Young people – especially women – are risking their health in pursuit of a tanned skin that they associate with celebrity, beauty and wellbeing'. This leads us to question why women's magazines insist on promoting tanned skin given the well-documented risks associated with skin cancer. It therefore appears that feminine body ideals are perceived as more marketable than promoting good health. In contrast, women's health and fitness magazines can also be viewed as a health discourse which offer their readership healthcare and fitness recommendations without promoting health-related products. This indicates that this genre of women's magazine is not always driven by consumerism and can perhaps be considered a popular instruction manual containing information which women can incorporate into their own version of a healthy lifestyle.

In light of the regular dismissal of bodily ambiguity made by women's magazines, it is now worth reflecting on how these ambiguities are perceived amongst a 21st century female readership. Contrary to Evans' (2002) notion that bodily ambiguity is not socially welcome, society are more accepting and aware of bodily difference with movements such as *Fat Acceptance* being supported by scientists (Hayden, 2015: no pagination). Additionally, the growth of social media platforms to publicise these movements has engaged an online audience, ensuring they are recognised globally. To illustrate the significance of social media

in promoting body inclusivity, Starr (1999: 11) argues that 'both men and women want to be perceived as attractive', yet our perception of what is attractive has diversified considerably since the end of the 20th century with the success of online body image campaigns such as *'#InShapeMyShape'* which was created by *Women's Health* to 'challenge the narrative that there's one type of healthy body shape' (Hopkinson, 2018: no pagination). Furthermore, being attractive is not exclusively associated with the possession of certain physical qualities; it extends to our intellect and personalities, which contribute to our individuality. In contrast, magazine covers do not tend to concentrate on attributes beyond physical appearance, due to the relationship between magazines and the advertising industry which evolves around selling products. Moreover, modern women still want to be perceived as attractive, given its importance in social exchange and its 'ability to attract potential mates' (Muñoz-Reyes et al., 2015: 1).

Due to such pressures surrounding physical attraction, women are still competing on an uneven societal playing field, which will, arguably, continue based on the cultural content of women's magazines, particularly in terms of the way in which front covers are presented. According to Gough-Yates (2002: 77), women's magazines have previously 'failed to appeal to professional women' who demand more diverse, serious content separate from home-making and physical appearance. However, Gough-Yates' work is slightly outdated and women's magazines have considerably diversified their content, with *Vogue* including a career section alongside a range of 'serious' topics associated with politics and culture. Although, this diversification of topics is not publicised on the front covers which continue to put emphasis on the perfect body. Falk (1994: 169) highlights the market value of the body based on 'the positive register of representation' between attractive images and experiences, which is discernible in *Vogue* due to its typical cover girl. Similarly, *Women's Health* use

female celebrities with athletic and toned physiques on the front cover rather than a culturally diverse range of body types. We must therefore question if women are still motivated by idealised bodies, despite the transformation of gender roles in both personal and professional spheres.

2.4 A female readership: consumption, impact and expectation

21st century technology has provided us with extensive ways of consuming information, which has arguably had a positive impact towards the transformation of gender roles. However, despite the positive impact of information technology, women still purchase printed copies of their favourite magazine. This preference of consumption is due to the 'relaxation, reward and ritual' associated with reading a print magazine which cannot be replaced by digitised formats, due to the connection women make between computers and work (Ytre-Arne, 2011a: 219). From a phenomenological perspective, Ytre-Arne (2011b: 467) states that readers prefer print magazines due to 'the ways in which magazines are experienced as physical and aesthetic objects'. This relates to pleasure experienced by women based on the visibility and ownership associated with purchasing a magazine. This encompasses other cultural practices including sharing and collecting, which suggests that magazine consumption can be both an individual and sociable experience, and women can also use magazines to signify their identity.

It follows that Ytre-Arne (2011b: 467) discusses how women's magazines 'still constitute a substantial cultural and economic industry worldwide', leading us to recognise a link between aesthetics and economic production. This includes images displayed on the front cover which in the case of women's magazines, is often dictated by the cover girl. In other words, the female consumer is drawn to certain aesthetic features of both the magazine and the model,

which could contribute towards self-perception and identification based on appearance. To develop this argument, Winkler et al. (1994: 221) state that the 'exceedingly pleasing' pictorial layouts of magazines entice and encourage their readers to pursue similar body ideals. These ideals often relate to pleasing a man or to help secure the 'dream' man, suggesting that women are portrayed as desirable objects and subservient to men. This reveals that female body ideals are reproduced by magazines but are influenced by the male gaze. It also infers that women's magazines encourage physical self-improvement rather than intellect or other non-physical attributes.

In recognising the influence of the male gaze, which McCracken (1992: 14) refers to as 'an implicit man who approves of and defines the feminine ideal', the cover girl image continues to enhance power relations between the sexes and is reflective of a deeply socialised problem. McCracken (1992: 20) identifies this influence on the cover girl image through facial expression, make-up, clothing and the pose employed, as well as the use of camera angles, lighting and colour. In applying McCracken's findings to *Women's Health* front covers, it is less certain whether or not the poses employed by the cover girl are constructed to meet the expectations of a female readership or satisfy the male gaze. This area of uncertainty requires further research in order to determine whether or not *Women's Health* reproduces gender inequalities through promoting female sexual desirability or communicates a body positive discourse to its female readership.

In contrast, Hermes (1995: 32) states that reading women's magazines is an 'in-between activity' and 'does not require much attention'. This implies that women do not fully absorb the information they are presented with. In addition, the pleasure associated with visual images in magazines, particularly on the front covers offer a less threatening way of accessing

information. On further reflection, magazines are inexpensive and an easy way for women to relax and escape from their everyday lives, meaning they would not feel subjected by self-improvement discourse. However, Wolf (1991: 74) describes the voice of the magazine as 'an invisible female authority figure to admire and obey', which suggests that magazines have more impact on their readership than providing a means to relax. More specifically, it suggests that magazines have a subtle policing function which relates to Foucault's (1980: 151) notion that power is exercised through discourse.

In the context of women's magazines, this discourse is often structured around transformation of the physical self. Bordo (1993: 165-166) refers to the body as 'a powerful symbolic form' and similarly to Foucault (1980), she considers it 'a practical, direct locus of social control' through which women have become docile and vulnerable whilst exhibiting feelings 'of never being good enough'. Bordo (1993: 169) also stresses how discourse about the body encourages women to 'aspire to a coercive, standardized ideal' which erases racial and class differences often through visual imagery. Having identified the current popularity of *Women's Health* (Mayhew, 2017), Bordo's observations become more pertinent considering the emphasis this particular magazine has on improving physical appearance. Furthermore, Bordo's (1993) 'standardized ideal' needs to be examined against cover images featured in recent issues of *Women's Health* to determine whether or not her research still remains relevant to current representations of the female body and the extent to which they impact the reader.

These insights are contradictory and confuse our understanding of how women's magazines are consumed, particularly in relation to the reception of body images. Furthermore, having acknowledged the fundamental role played by social media in 21st century discourse on the

body, it would be unrealistic to assume that women rely entirely on magazines as their main source of information. As a result, Wolf's (1991) observation on the authoritative standing of women's magazines is weakened due to the emergence of new media platforms which do not follow the same model. Similarly, Wolf also underestimates the ability of women to decide the extent to which they engage with magazine content. Although, she does state that women's magazines are 'one of the most powerful agents for changing women's roles' (1991: 64), which needs to be examined more closely in line with women and their values in the 21st century. From these previous studies, we can deduce that women's magazines are a site of considerable contestation and tension. Moreover, the prominence of more dated studies on this topic also indicates that our perception of women's magazines is perhaps limited and needs revisiting.

More recent studies have suggested that 'the media play an important contributory role in women and girls' body image concerns' (Tiggemann, 2014: 12), which indicates that regardless of the diversification of the media women are still portrayed as decorative objects. Moving forward, women's magazines should be using their authority (Wolf, 1991) to tackle these concerns and promote women of all body types and backgrounds to be more representative of society. In contrast, we must equally question how much impact women's magazines have, as Hermes (1995: 45) states that the text included 'does not need to apply directly to one's personal circumstances to be of interest'. However, despite alluding to the less damaging nature of textual discourse, Hermes fails to consider the impact of the visual and from this we can ascertain that readers are affected more directly by the images in magazines.

Having identified self-improvement as a central discourse in women's magazines, Rebecca Coleman (2008: 173) reminds us that the reader is aware of the visual editing involved. In accepting that these images are often airbrushed and therefore unattainable, it is worth developing Coleman's idea further and determining how women feel about and relate to airbrushed images. In recognising the absence of authenticity, we should be questioning why women endeavour to achieve these impossible ideals. More importantly, Coleman has focused her research on bodies displayed in fashion and beauty magazines, in the same way as many other scholars who have concentrated on the 'fashionable body' (Szekely, 1988: 197). There appears to be a gap in studies on women's magazines outside of the realm of fashion and beauty, which presents an opportunity to explore other types of magazines more closely. It soon became obvious that there were limited studies on health and fitness magazines, particularly for women. Following the launch of *Women's Health* in 2005 and the continued growth of the health and fitness industry, the adoption of this lifestyle is popular in contemporary society and influential towards reading choices. In light of this observation, we must decipher whether or not women are still invested in magazines that concentrate on the body and whether or not *Women's Health* really differs from its fashion and beauty competitors in promoting a fit and healthy body.

3. Methodology

3.1 A mixed approach: content analysis and reception analysis

In deciding on appropriate research methods to complement my research question, I drew on previous studies relating to women's magazines in order to determine which methodological approaches would be most suitable. It soon became apparent that there was a clear distinction between the research methods employed, often focusing on discourse analysis or reception analysis. However, in examining previous works, Ytre-Arne (2011a: 213) has argued that 'there can be substantial differences between the interpretations made by audiences and the interpretations made by researchers', thus indicating that previous research approaches have been flawed due to the disparity in interpretations between the audience and researcher. This confirmed that my research question required a combination of both personal interpretation and audience participation, to prevent my findings from being restricted by one method and to reduce the impact of research bias.

Having established that *Women's Health* would be the primary focus of my research, some level of content analysis was required of both its textual and visual discourse. As defined by Neuendorf (2002: 1), content analysis is 'the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics' and permitted a methodical study of *Women's Health*. In accordance with time restrictions, I decided to focus on the front cover of the magazine and the sample size consisted of twelve copies published between June 2017 and June 2018. The texts were analysed both qualitatively and then quantitatively, the latter was used to identify recurrent themes communicated by *Women's Health*. However, due to the visual impact of front covers in attracting an audience, qualitative visual discourse analysis was also conducted. As highlighted by Bignell (2002: 14), 'the whole of our social world is pervaded by messages

which contain visual as well as linguistic signs, or which are exclusively visual'. This was pertinent in the context of *Women's Health* due to their persistent use of the cover girl. It therefore became clear that understanding the way in which visual discourse was employed was essential to my research. Furthermore, qualitative analysis was fundamental throughout my research as it 'goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1283), which enhanced my understanding of mediated female embodiment.

Despite the prevalence of discourse analysis in this study, representations of the female body surpass women's magazines and are part of everyday conversation, due to 'the explosion of social media' and our constant exposure to idealised body types (Bozsik and Bennett, 2018: no pagination). In response to this remark and to avoid Ytre-Arne's (2011a) issues of research bias or investigative flaws, I combined content analysis with reception analysis and conducted focus groups with female participants of all ages, the reasoning for which will be discussed more closely in the next section. Prior to the focus groups, I sampled a selection of women's magazines which would then be used to prompt participants in the discussion. This was carried out in light of Hermes' (1995: 10) observation which reveals how the interaction between texts and readers is fundamental in producing meaning.

Given that my research involved visual representations of the female body, I anticipated that providing copies of *Women's Health* and other women's magazines would generate a deeper level of interest amongst participants and a more thought-provoking discussion. The inclusion of magazines was a profound success in this part of the research process, as participants were able to draw from specific examples on the front covers and also react naturally in response to the media in front of them. In addition, this element of stimulation also meant that

I was not involved in the discussion and was not required to ask questions or manipulate the direction of conversation. Rather, the participants were comfortable leading the discussion and the inclusion of magazines prevented the conversation from becoming stagnant.

3.2 Qualitative content analysis

Given that the aim of this research was to examine the way in which *Women's Health* represents the female body on its front cover in comparison to other women's magazines, an analysis of the magazine's visual and textual discourse was necessary. The method most suitable to carry out this form of research was qualitative content analysis, as it facilitates the interpretation of meaning (Schreier, 2012: 5) which is appropriate in investigating media representations of the body. Despite the issues of trustworthiness surrounding qualitative content analysis (Elo et al., 2014: 2), which imply it is perhaps an unreliable methodological approach, this form of analysis enabled a richer examination of the text and images employed beyond their numeric value. According to Mayring (2000: no pagination), qualitative content analysis can be defined as:

‘an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification’.

From this definition, it became apparent as to why I should apply qualitative research methods to this study and the importance of creating a systematic codebook to analyse the data. The codebooks were important in organising data without compromising the quality of information extracted. To ensure this area of research was carried out systematically, the following steps were taken:

1. Determining the sample size of *Women's Health* magazines to be analysed
2. Deciding on an appropriate time frame within which to sample *Women's Health* issues
3. Creating separate codebooks for visual and textual discourse
4. Establishing the variables within each codebook
5. Recording the occurrence of variables across the sample
6. Interpreting the results

As the front cover of *Women's Health* incorporates both visual and textual discourse, separate codebooks were created with a distinct list of variables to avoid confusion. This research method enabled me to be thorough and the list of variables supported the process of collecting data. Furthermore, as discussed by Van Zoonen (1994: 69), qualitative content analysis also allowed me to read between the lines and acquire a deeper level of meaning. Conversely, limitations still prevailed due to the framework of the research (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006: 154), which meant that not all elements of the magazine were analysed, notably the inside content which consisted of articles and advertisements. This approach also depends on a certain degree of subjectivity and interpretation, which would most likely change depending on the researcher. Another difficulty arose in applying the codes to the sample (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 184), particularly with variables relating to body type and makeup application, which were dependent on my opinion as the researcher. In order to try and minimise the impact of subjectivity in my research, I aimed to create a list of variables that held universal meaning and offered little room for varying interpretation. Despite the disadvantages of this method, it was fundamental in assessing how *Women's Health* represents the female body and I could cross-compare the data with information obtained from the focus groups.

3.2.1 Converting qualitative into quantitative data

Having addressed the richness of qualitative content analysis, this approach also presented some difficulties in terms of analysing textual discourse in manageable chunks across the twelve front covers of *Women's Health*. It soon became apparent that it would be hard to draw comparisons between the front covers easily due to the amount of qualitative data collected and the length of straplines featured on *Women's Health*. To facilitate better overall understanding of the data collected and to show patterns in the language used, I converted the information collected from qualitative textual discourse analysis into quantitative data. This form of analysis is outlined as follows:

‘the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption’ (Riffe et al., 2005: 25).

In relation to my own research, this method of assigning numeric values was necessary to interpret the frequency of messages communicated by *Women's Health* according to their category. Whilst the numerical value held resonance without additional interpretation, it equally provoked further reflection towards language choices employed, their possibility to have multiple meanings as well as their potential impact on a female readership. To ensure this process of converting data from qualitative into quantitative followed Riffe et al's (2005) systematic approach, the following steps were taken:

1. Creating a table to display the frequency of strapline categories per issue of *Women's Health*, including a total value taken across all twelve issues
2. Counting the number of straplines per category per issue and then filling in the table (including the total) accordingly
3. Converting the data collected based on total figures into a pie chart using Microsoft Excel software to clearly display the findings
4. Interpreting the results across the table and pie chart taking into consideration both the total number of frequencies and the frequencies per issue

The use of a pie chart in quantifying textual discourse was deliberate as a heuristic device to make comparative analysis of the data without compromising on its qualitative value. It enabled me to combine both the richness of the language as well as its frequency to decipher the way in which *Women's Health* interacts with its readership and represents the female body. The table was also particularly useful in showing overall trends across the twelve issues, as well as more dominant themes depending on the time of year and the type of issue on sale. For instance, the 'Transform Issue' published in January 2018 had especially high frequencies of 'Motivational language' and 'Improving physical appearance', the extent to which will be discussed in the findings section.

3.3 Conducting focus groups: selecting participants and structuring the discussion

From the outset, the appeal of using focus groups was based on their value in encouraging participant interaction in a group setting and therefore providing a depth of understanding (Krueger and Casey, 2009: 7). However, as highlighted by Moriarty Daley (2013: 1043), focus groups are limited by the way in which participants are selected, as well as the influences of peers and the moderator on research findings. As a result, I intended on eliminating these

limitations where possible in order to induce more natural responses from the participants and reduce the possibility of research bias. Firstly, despite Schwartz et al.'s (2010: 225) concerns regarding self-selection limiting findings, I felt that it was important my focus group had a genuine interest in health and fitness due to the specificity of *Women's Health* as a magazine and the growth of the health and fitness industry in the 21st century (Andreasson and Johansson, 2014). By already having an interest in the subject, it seemed more likely that participants would have more to offer in the discussion and enhance the quality of my findings. As my research focused on women's magazines, it was necessary to select female participants only as they are the intended audience of this particular medium.

To further reduce the potential of research bias, I ensured that participants involved in the focus groups were not close friends or relatives and instead were selected through a mutual connection. As a member of a gym I decided to speak to a personal trainer about my research ideas. Following our conversation, she agreed to put me in touch with other gym members who were willing to take part in the focus groups. This form of selection presented some limitations, due to the fact that some of the participants knew each other from the gym and may have expressed themselves differently due to peer influence (Britto et al., 2010: 1475). However, they didn't know me personally and were therefore unaware of my research motivations, meaning their input was more authentic. In contrast to Britto et al (2010), I found that by using participants who were familiar with one another the conversation was more open, flowed better and made the experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Furthermore, Krueger and Casey (2009: 5) emphasise that focus groups should be carried out in a 'permissive, non-threatening environment', therefore I decided to conduct the focus groups at my house in a relaxed setting to reduce any potential hesitations. Prior to the focus groups taking place, I provided participants with an information sheet about the research

project to eliminate any uncertainties, as well as consent forms which they were required to sign in advance of recording.

Having previously mentioned that magazines were included as prompts for the focus groups, these were introduced for five minutes at the start of the discussion to give the participants the opportunity to reflect on how *Women's Health* represented the female body in comparison to other women's magazines. This was done prior to recording and participants also had the opportunity to ask any questions, both of which contributed in making the focus group discussions more comfortable and fluid. Participants were only required to look at the front covers, in the same way that I only used front covers for the content analysis. In selecting the magazines for the ethnographic part of my research, a problem arose in that *Women's Health* is published monthly, whereas the majority of other women's magazines are published weekly or fortnightly, meaning that it would be harder to draw comparisons across an identical publication timeline.

Due to this issue of incompatible publication dates, I decided to use four editions of *Women's Health* spanning from January 2018 – May 2018, alongside four copies of other women's magazines (*Woman*, *New!*, *Closer* and *heat*), taken from the same publication week (13th – 19th January 2018). The decision to use this particular week in January was deliberate, as during this time people are taking up new year's resolutions which for many often evolve around improving their body and going to the gym (Russell, 2015: no pagination). These lifestyle changes are often mirrored in the media, most notably magazines which encourage women to alter their lifestyle and invest in transformative products. These magazines all focused their front covers on image overhaul, with both positive and negative representations offering up different areas of discussion. Moreover, these magazines all appeal to different

female audiences with regards to age, social class and reading interests, meaning that participants were familiar with at least one of the copies included in the sample.

The use of different women's magazines was also important due to the variation in ages used for the focus groups. Given that body image is not restricted to a particular age group, I wanted to gain perspective from a wide range of participants starting from women in their late teens through to those in their sixties. Whilst it soon emerged that body image was a more obvious concern for younger participants, this didn't prevent older females from contributing to the conversation. Furthermore, without their opinion, my findings would have been very limited and less representative of an overall female audience. Although I was insistent on using women of all ages, I decided to keep the age demographics separate to ensure that the conversation between participants was comfortable and not influenced due to fears of offending others based on language choice. I therefore divided my focus groups as follows (with each group containing three to four participants):

Group A: ages 18-28

Group B: ages 29-40

Group C: ages 41+

Additionally, Stewart and Shamdasani (2015: 109) state that 'restricting the age range of participants in any particular group is likely to increase the cohesion of the group and to facilitate discussion' which was evident in my own research and added richness to my findings. This richness was reflected in the ease of conversation between participants and in the minimal number of silences. The grouping of ages meant that I was also able to make direct comparisons between them by drawing on elements of Hermes' (1995: 25) 'interpretative repertoires', which revealed how significant *Women's Health* is in informing

young women and influencing their perception about their own bodies. In contrast, older participants were less bothered by these representations, considering them unrealistic and unhelpful as will be discussed in my findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Textual and Visual Discourse Analysis of *Women's Health*

From the outset, qualitative content analysis of *Women's Health* magazines was required due to the number of previous studies which had incorporated this research approach (Winship 1987; Hermes 1995; Gough-Yates 2002; Coleman 2008) and their inability to reach a uniform decision on women's magazines. In addition, the appeal of this research method was its potential to consider *Women's Health* within its 'context of communication' (Mayring, 2000), thus facilitating the acquisition of a complex level of meaning and recognition of textual connotations. Moreover, the recurrent use of the cover girl in *Women's Health* played a pivotal role in this research, therefore qualitative visual discourse analysis of the magazine was also required in order to decipher how the female body was represented.

Due to time restrictions, analysis was carried out exclusively on the front covers of *Women's Health*, looking at both textual and visual discourse. The twelve issues used for content analysis were published between June 2017 and June 2018. Figure 1 below (Hearst UK, 2018: no pagination) is a collection of digitised images of the front covers extracted from *Women's Health's* online subscription page, for which their Creative Director has given verbal consent to use them on the basis that this project is not in receipt of financial payment or being published externally.



Figure 1: Digitised versions of Women's Health front covers

From top left to bottom right: June 2017, July 2017, August 2017, September 2017, October 2017, November 2017, December 2017, January/February 2018, March 2018, April 2018, May 2018, June 2018.

Following qualitative textual discourse analysis, brief quantitative analysis was conducted so that it was easier to draw comparisons, show common trends and enhance the qualitative results. The table below (Table 1) displays the way in which the qualitative categories were converted and summarised into quantitative data. This was achieved through counting the number of qualitative references per category across all twelve issues and then adding them all together to determine the total number of references per category.

Category	Number of qualitative references												
	Jun 17	Jul 17	Aug 17	Sep 17	Oct 17	Nov 17	Dec 17	Jan 18	Mar 18	Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18	Total
Weight loss	1	0	2	1	0	3	2	4	3	0	1	0	17
Motivational language	2	2	4	1	2	2	4	4	3	2	1	1	28
Diet and nutrition	1	2	2	2	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	27
Male influence/ presence	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Improving physical appearance	5	5	3	4	3	3	4	8	3	3	3	3	47
Improving strength and fitness	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	16
Improving mental health/ general well-being	1	3	3	3	2	2	6	3	3	2	2	3	33
Exercise and physical activity	1	2	2	1	2	4	1	5	2	2	2	3	27
Celebrity influence	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	0	2	20
References to sex and relationships	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	10
References to beauty	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	0	11

Table 1: Quantitative textual discourse analysis of *Women's Health* front covers

Without reducing the importance of the qualitative data collected, this table revealed the extent to which 'Improving physical appearance' lexis dominates the front covers of *Women's Health*, particularly in the June 2017, July 2017 and January/February 2018 issues. This most likely imitates social and seasonal changes which influence how we perceive our bodies, given that June and July are warmer, summer months which are often used to take trips abroad and update our holiday wardrobes. This also entails conforming to social pressures to obtain a summer body which is reflected in the strapline 'Love your body this summer' for the July 2017 issue. This suggests that women should endeavour to transform their body for the summer to feel socially accepted and less inferior. As for the January/February 2018 issue,

which was labelled 'The Transform Issue', this front cover featured eight straplines for 'Improving physical appearance'. On reflection, this relates to the idea of carrying out positive changes by making New Year's resolutions, which often involve improving one's physical appearance through weight loss and exercise following an indulgent festive period (Russell, 2015).

Although the data collected in this table was useful for making comparisons between issues, the total number of references per category was more significant in relation to the research question. These total figures were converted into a pie chart (Figure 2) which can be viewed below:

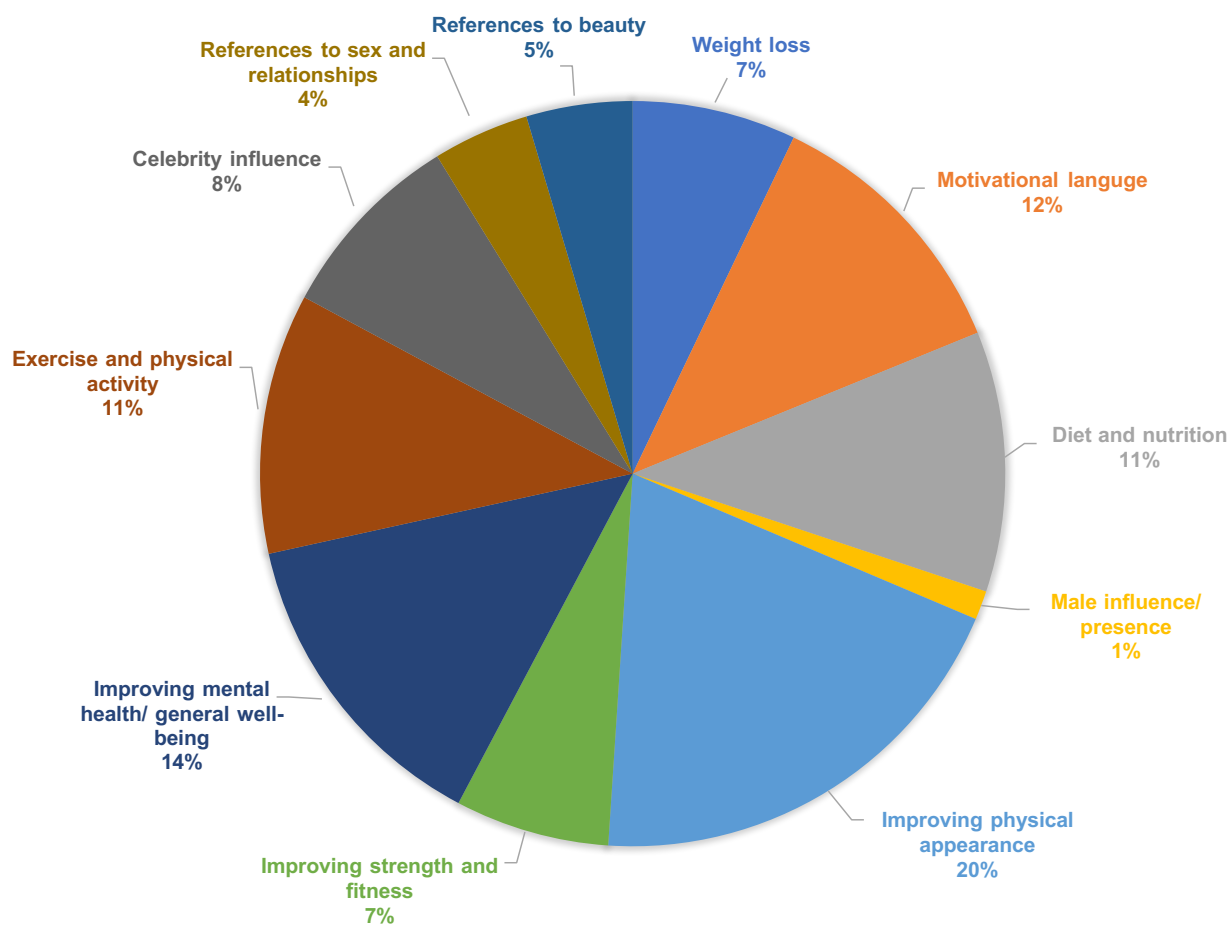


Figure 2: Total quantitative textual discourse analysis of *Women's Health* front covers

In viewing the findings in this particular format, it was easier to make comparative use of the data and it soon became apparent that 'Improving physical appearance' was the most referenced category for textual discourse, constituting twenty percent of the straplines on the front covers. The second highest category featured was 'Improving mental health/ general well-being'. This category made up fourteen percent of the overall references and was a welcome yet unexpected result. From this observation, whilst *Women's Health* focuses primarily on physical appearance, it is encouraging to see that they also frequently discuss mental health and well-being, considering that one in four people in the UK are affected by a mental illness (Kirk and Scott, 2017: no pagination). Moreover, it indicates that *Women's Health* are not entirely invested in objectifying female bodies and are using their platform to discuss health concerns experienced by women, inciting important conversations amongst their readers.

Contrary to Sheldon's (2002: 14) assertion that women have been 'reduced to little more than bodies' as previously noted, *Women's Health* illustrates the capacities of women beyond their physical appearance and underlines the importance of strong mental health. Additionally, the category 'Exercise and physical activity' comprises eleven percent of the front cover straplines, which again, implies that *Women's Health* promotes a more positive message in terms of women being physically capable to perform tasks which are not determined by their physical appearance. However, having previously stressed that qualitative analysis was needed in this part of the research process, these results show the limitations of quantitative analysis, as the figures displayed in the table and pie chart do not account for specific lexical choices or the use of visual discourse on the front cover including photographs and colours. In light of this observation, it is now worth investigating the qualitative textual and visual discourse more closely.

4.1.1 Qualitative textual discourse analysis

In conducting qualitative textual discourse across the twelve issues of *Women's Health*, a table was created to record qualitative data, whilst simultaneously organising it into prominent themes. Table 2 below was the template used for all twelve issues and facilitated a consistent, structured research process without compromising on the quality of information collected. All of the completed tables for discourse analysis can be viewed in the Appendices section under Appendix 1.

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	
Motivational language	
Diet and nutrition	
Male influence/ presence	
Improving physical appearance	
Improving strength and fitness	
Improving mental health/ general well-being	
Exercise and physical activity	
Celebrity influence	
References to sex and relationships	
References to beauty	

Table 2: Template for qualitative textual discourse analysis

Having already highlighted the dominance of discourse surrounding 'Improving physical appearance', this must now be considered in terms of its qualitative value. Given the prevalence of this particular discourse in the January/ February 2018 issue of the magazine, further analysis of the straplines is required to fully understand their meaning. Firstly, this issue is specifically referred to as 'The Transform Issue' which had several connotations other than 'Improving physical appearance' and was also categorised in 'Motivational language' and 'Improving strength and fitness'. From this observation, it became apparent that *Women's Health* employed language which held a multitude of meanings and therefore made them less

accountable for promoting a specific physical appearance. Moreover, the same issue includes the strapline 'Sculpt killer abs' which aside from 'Improving physical appearance' was also categorised as 'Motivational language', 'Improving strength and fitness' and 'Exercise and physical activity'. To some extent, this was encouraging as it revealed that the magazine contained information that would instruct women looking to improve their exercise routine or lifestyle choices without focusing on physical appearance. Furthermore, there was no textual discourse to suggest that *Women's Health* was explicitly advertising products on the front cover to improve physical appearance. However, it was equally concerning that this use of interpretative discourse was potentially an editorial ploy to shift attention away from the repetitive features of the cover girl, as will be discussed in the next part of the findings.

Following further examination of *Women's Health* issues, it was apparent that all of the language choices were positive and there wasn't any negative language used to refer to the body, otherwise known as body-shaming. Whilst positive and negative language was not included in the coding, this observation was significant and in contrast to other women's magazines (as will be mentioned in the focus groups section), was most encouraging. From this perspective, *Women's Health* uses positive and motivational language to represent the female body which indicates that it differs from other women's magazines. Furthermore, the majority of this language was centred around goal setting which was best portrayed in 'The Mind Issue', which was sold in December 2017. Straplines included 'Beat winter bloat', 'Fight festive anxiety' and 'Get great guns' which incorporates a diverse range of health and lifestyle choices including mental health, diet and exercise.

Similarly, issues published in June 2017, July 2017, August 2017, October 2017 and November 2017 all featured the tagline 'It's Good to Be You', suggesting that *Women's*

Health has previously encouraged its readers to accept themselves and not conform to standardised beauty ideals. This choice of language also implies that there has been a shift in contemporary society in terms of what interests and motivates women, which is perhaps more reflective of a social demand rather than a change in how *Women's Health* wants to represent the female body. Given the objective of magazines is to sell copies to generate profit, it is also more likely that *Women's Health* have adopted an all-encompassing body positive persona on their front covers in order to reach sales targets.

Despite these potential underlying concerns surrounding textual discourse on the front cover, 'The Mind Issue' requires further analysis in relation to Kirk and Scott's (2017) statement regarding the rise of mental health problems in the UK. This particular issue included the most straplines for 'Improving mental-health/ general well-being' and in contrast to typical *Women's Health* issues featured articles from both everyday women and celebrities for example:

'23 women share their empowering stories'

'Mollie King: I've learnt to be proud of my body'.

The magazine usually concentrates on women who have received some level of celebrity status or online following due to their physiques, therefore it was reassuring to see *Women's Health* uniting women from all backgrounds to share their experiences with mental health. Moreover, the celebrities featured on the front cover are usually represented as flawless with unattainable attributes, whereas this issue demonstrates that even celebrities who have access to the best resources can still have insecurities. From this perspective, 'The Mind Issue' provides a more authentic and normal representation of the female body, rather than encouraging women and girls to have unrealistic aspirations. In addition, the theme of the mind is consistent and rather than using 'Diet and nutrition' straplines to inform readers on how they can modify their diet to enhance their appearance, the use of 'Stress-busting super

herbs' is directed towards good mental health. Indeed, the language used in this issue demonstrates the capacity of the female body and its complexities rather than presenting it as a decorative object.

In contrast, this particular issue also contains the strapline 'Strong, hot & sexy: 127 healthy hacks to keep you on track until 2018' which as previously mentioned, holds multiple meanings and could be applied to several categories including 'Motivational language' and 'Improving strength and fitness'. Whilst these categories follow the overall positive nature of this front cover, the strapline is more strongly suited to 'Improving physical appearance', which overshadows the significance of the straplines promoting strong mental health and reaffirms *Women's Health's* role in objectifying the female body. Without the use of 'hot & sexy' this strapline would have been in keeping with the theme of the issue and supportive of mental health. However, these words relate back to physical appearance and additionally we are led to question who women are expected to look 'hot' and 'sexy' for, as these adjectives are not usually associated with the concept of health.

Furthermore, it is interesting that the words 'hot' and 'sexy' are lexically conjoined with 'keeping on track', as it implies that to 'keep on track' in a good health context is synonymous with 'being' or performing 'hotness' via the presentation of the 'fit' and healthy body. Similar lexical choices were made in 'The Transform Issue' in January/February 2018 with the strapline '156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today', which again implies that 'feeling amazing' is synonymous with looking 'hot'. Both of these straplines are indicative of a male presence or influence towards female body representation in *Women's Health*. This will be discussed in more detail alongside the extent to which cover models invite and reproduce the male gaze in the visual discourse analysis section.

The final area of textual discourse analysis that is pertinent to this research is associated with 'Diet and nutrition'. In the context of 'health', diet and nutrition is of vast importance for all women regardless of their age. Food fuels our bodies and provides us with the energy we need to perform across all areas of our lives such as studying, working and exercising. In light of this observation, *Women's Health* has the potential to engage with women of all ages and write articles based on an array of lifestyles associated with 'Diet and nutrition'. As quantitative analysis revealed this category holds eleven percent of the total front cover references, it is a popular topic and this category was expected to offer the most lexically diverse content. Whilst the qualitative data supported this expectation to a certain extent, it was disappointing that 'Diet and nutrition' often coincided with 'Improving physical appearance', for instance the June 2017 issue included the strapline 'The ultimate anti-cellulite diet: beat dimples for good!'. This particular choice of wording implies that having cellulite is wrong and is something that women should seek to remove or prevent. As a result, *Women's Health* appear to suggest that women without cellulite are superior and therefore limits the way the female body is represented.

Similarly, in 'The Nutrition Issue' (October 2017), the strapline 'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing' connotes that food and exercise should be carried out in order to achieve certain aesthetics. This strapline was particularly disappointing for an issue dedicated to nutrition, as once again the focus was placed on physical appearance rather than overall health. Conversely, 'The Mind Issue' from December 2017 included the strapline 'Stress-busting super herbs' which promoted good mental health as previously mentioned. The September 2017 issue also featured the strapline 'Eat chocolate, boost brain power #winning', which had no connotations regarding physical appearance and focused on fuelling

the body to improve ‘brain power’. Although this type of lexis appears less frequently, it demonstrates that *Women’s Health* occasionally communicates messages about women’s bodies which are not related to their aesthetic make-up. However, this observation will now be questioned in line with visual discourse analysis of the cover girl.

4.1.2 Qualitative visual discourse analysis

Due to the prevalence of the cover girl on *Women’s Health publications*, it was imperative that this feature of the magazine was qualitatively analysed in accordance with the textual discourse. The table below indicates the way in which the cover girl image was analysed, mainly through physical attributes:

Category	Description
Hair colour	
Hair length	
Hair style	
Ethnicity	
Body type	
Makeup	
Tattoos	
Piercings	
Manicure	
Self-touching	
Composition of pose	
Cleavage	
Tanned/ glowing complexion	
Amount of naked body on display	
Outfit	
Age of model	
Awareness of photo taken	
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	

Table 3: Template for qualitative visual discourse analysis of the cover girl

This part of the research process was based on personal interpretation of the images, with the exception of the 'Age of model' category which required additional research to determine the correct information. As a result, this method presented some difficulties in terms of qualifying body type and make-up application (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005), however this was anticipated and was minimised by creating a list of variables that for the most part had little room for varying interpretation.

In collecting the data, the lack of ethnic diversity represented on the front covers was immediately discernible. With the exception of Maya Jama, the mixed-race cover girl used for the April 2018 issue, all of the models were white with tanned complexions, and were either blonde or brunette. In realising the absence of so many ethnicities, it became worryingly evident that *Women's Health* is more invested in maintaining the primacy of the white female body, thus revealing that Hermes' (1995) observation concerning the domination of whiteness in magazines has prevailed for more than two decades. Interestingly, after deciding to carry out analysis of the fonts and background colours on the front cover, following the table below (Table 4), it was significant that the front cover featuring a mixed-raced model was dubbed 'The British Issue'.

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	
Subtitle font colour(s)	
Background colour	
Highlight and circling colour	

Table 4: Template for qualitative textual discourse analysis of the fonts and background

In contrast to the other issues examined, the background colour was light blue and incorporated other patriotic colours such as red, royal blue and white which are most

commonly associated with the British flag. The highlight and circling font colours also differed from typical issues and were white rather than yellow. Clearly, this particular issue was intentionally formatted differently from the others and was indicative that using a cover girl from an ethnic minority was also intentional. It could be argued that in using a mixed-race model, *Women's Health* are setting a good example for other women's magazines to follow and becoming more representative of women in contemporary society. However, it seems more likely that this was an editorial strategy to promote British diversity within a special issue. To elucidate on this point, if *Women's Health* were really invested in being more inclusive of all ethnicities, there would have been more than one front cover to demonstrate this across the twelve issues analysed.

Another difference with this particular issue was the cover girl's tattoo on her left hip. In contrast to the other issues, this was the only front cover to feature a cover girl with visible tattoos. This supports the argument that this issue was focused on being more diverse and inclusive, rather than adopt the characteristic flawless, Western-looking cover model.

However, it is apparent that Maya Jama is very much Westernised, as she has the same long hair styled in soft waves like all of the other cover models and has a similar amount of naked body on display in wearing a sporty two piece which covers her breasts and lower bikini area. It follows that all of the cover girls are wearing makeup which has been applied naturally to create a flawless complexion with some heavier application around the eyes using darker colours and in some cases, false eyelash application (March 2018, April 2018). This illusion of perfection is further enhanced through the absence of visible imperfections with the exception of two issues (January/February 2018, April 2018) where the cover girls have faint scars on their navels, presumably from a piercing. There were no signs of stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tones or bruising on any of the cover girls.

From these observations, *Women's Health* portrays the female body as visibly perfect, which relates to Coleman's (2008) notion regarding the reader's awareness of visual editing in magazines. It appears that *Women's Health* represents 'good health' through a physically flawless fit and healthy body which does not differ significantly from Szekely's (1988) 'fashionable body'. As readers, we can recognise that a person does not have to possess the same aesthetic qualities as the cover girls on *Women's Health* in order to be in good health, as well as the visual editing involved in capturing the image on the front cover, which implies that the images used are not representative of the models themselves. Consequently, *Women's Health* reduces the concept of 'good health' to a set of aesthetic ideals which can be understood as unrealistic and unattainable. This concept was explored more intricately throughout all three of the focus groups and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

In comparison to textual discourse, visual discourse reduced the female body entirely to physical appearance and this was evident in the composition of poses exhibited by the cover girls. All of the models were aware of the photo being taken, staring directly at the camera with an open-mouthed smile, except for the March 2018 issue where the cover girl had a tight-lipped smile. This composition of the mouth revealed straight, white teeth which again reinforces *Women's Health's* focus on aesthetic ideals. All of the poses involved self-touching of the hips or thigh with the hand, rather than action shots of physical activity, food preparation or other health-related topics covered by the magazine. Whilst not all of the models wore outfits to reveal their cleavages, they all wore the minimal amount of clothing which was often the equivalent to wearing underwear to display their best features including their stomach, legs and bottom.

On reflection, this style of posing on the front cover supported by the minimal amount of clothing is explicitly inviting the male gaze through sexualisation of the female body rather than appealing to its intended female audience. This reinforces the significance of straplines including the words 'hot' and 'sexy' and therefore implies that *Women's Health* reproduces male fantasies, instructing women on how to achieve a certain image rather than good health. Many of the cover girls also appeared to have had spray tans based on their glowing complexions and application of shellac polish, which adds to the decorative nature of the image rather than being representative of health. Contrary to textual discourse, visual discourse analysis has shown that *Women's Health* is more invested in 'looking your best' rather than 'feeling your best'.

Having previously mentioned that additional research was conducted to determine the ages of the cover girls, however an educative guess placed the models between early twenties to early thirties. With the exception of one model, who was aged forty-five, this estimation was correct. The model outside of this age range was used for 'The Naked Issue' in September 2017 and would have easily been mistaken for a woman in her early thirties. In addition, the inclusion of the strapline 'The Naked Issue featuring Sofia Vergara fierce at 45' suggests that readers would be surprised by the model's age due to her youthful looks. This is the only issue that reveals the models age, which indicates that cover models on *Women's Health* are typically much younger. We must therefore question how representative *Women's Health* are of all women, something which was better understood following the focus groups.

4.2 Focus Groups

Throughout the research process a lot of time has been dedicated revisiting the recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, making notes on common expressions and shared

opinions towards *Women's Health*. In allowing this time to analyse the focus groups, the similarities and differences between the demographics were easier to recognise, facilitating a better understanding as to how *Women's Health* represent the female body. Despite initial concerns that it would be difficult to conduct a focus group without asking questions, the inclusion of magazines meant that the conversation was fluid and remained relevant to the research question. In interpreting the transcripts, elements of Hermes' (1995) 'repertoire analysis' were incorporated, in order to identify frequent utterances and make comparative use of the data. However, due to the specificity of this research question and its related themes (as discussed in Chapter 2), a thematic approach was adopted to ensure that findings were relevant and presented clearly.

The themes within which findings from the focus groups will be discussed are as follows:

1. Progress vs perfection
2. Changing discourses in contemporary women's magazines
3. Aspiration
4. Expectation and disappointment

4.2.1 Progress vs perfection

In analysing the transcripts, the word 'perfect' was frequently used when referring to the cover girl images on *Women's Health*, for example:

HS: '*Women's Health* is showing [...] the perfect goddess everyone should aim to be like'

HT: 'it's all posed and perfect'

SN: 'Perfect teeth perfect skin – perfect everything'.

The use of the word perfect was employed critically by the participants and Focus Groups A (aged 18-28) and C (aged 41+) were particularly disconnected with the magazine, preferring the front covers of other women's magazines which they deemed more appealing and realistic in representing the female body. Moreover, all of the focus groups recognised the visual editing involved in photographing the cover girls for *Women's Health* (HS: 'They're obviously very airbrushed...'), to create a flawless look. This supports Coleman's (2008) observation that readers are aware of how magazines edit their images to create idealised female body representations. More worryingly however, is that Coleman's research focused on fashion and beauty magazines, whereas *Women's Health* is a health and fitness magazine, which therefore demonstrates how the idealised female body has transcended from one genre of women's magazine into another. Consequently, we can deduce that standardised beauty ideals remain fixed regardless of the genre of magazine, indicating that *Women's Health* represents the female body in a way which promotes a certain body type rather than good health.

In contrast to the limitations surrounding the cover girl, Focus Group B (aged 28-40) spent a lot of time discussing the positive aspects of the front cover straplines associated with diet, exercise and mental health. Whilst they acknowledged that a lot of the articles appeared to be about physical appearance, they equally recognised that this was done in a positive way rather than negatively (HT: 'it hasn't got all those horrible words on it – they do use positive language'). It is also worth mentioning that these three participants were all in their early thirties which is indicative of the magazine's readership; young professionals and supports Tuchman's (1978) insight regarding magazines and their target groups. This was also reflected in the price of the magazine, as at £3.99 younger participants in Focus Group A felt that it was too expensive:

SC: 'I'd probably buy the trash one because it's cheaper and it's probably juicier'.

Despite concerns over the price, something which was also expressed by Focus Group C (RG: 'Yeah don't even bother – I've just seen the price of it as well'), Focus Group B's conversation implied that *Women's Health* encourages dialogue amongst women about topics other than physical appearance. This suggests that the magazine is making progress in terms of representation, rather than promoting physical perfection. However, this perspective is limited to a specific age range and the overall consensus was that *Women's Health* employed visual and textual discourse to promote a 'perfect' body which is unattainable for the everyday woman.

4.2.2 Changing discourses in contemporary women's magazines

As outlined in Chapter 2, the assessment of Bordo's (1993) 'standardized ideal' against discourse utilised by *Women's Health* was essential, in order to determine if this notion is still relevant in the context of health and fitness. All of the focus groups identified the contrast in discourse register from the weekly magazines to *Women's Health*, considering the latter textually more positive despite the unrealistic tendencies of its cover girl. To illustrate this contrast, women's weeklies are referred to as follows:

AS: 'these ones [...] are all about shaming people for the wrong reasons'

BW: 'that's almost like body-shaming'

Similarly, all of the focus groups recognised the significance of *Women's Health* including straplines on mental health, such as:

SD: 'I think there's still so much stigma with mental health and it's good to see a magazine that [...] I guess is pretty popular is talking about it because I still think that we don't talk about mental health enough'.

This inclusion of articles related to mental health was perceived as highly important by participants, due to its current prevalence in society, especially by Focus Group C who had experienced work-related stress at a later stage in their career. Focus Group A participants suggested that this area of conversation could be increased, as *Women's Health* still linked this topic back to physical appearance:

BW: 'it says stressed skin solutions – and it's like well you're stressed so why don't you do stress relieving techniques rather than skin care'.

Although *Women's Health* has made positive changes surrounding the avoidance of 'body-shaming' language and inclusion of mental health, indicating a change in the way women's magazines represent the female body; the focus is still primarily on physical appearance and self-improvement. Furthermore, participants noted that a lot of the content in *Women's Health* can be accessed online (SC: 'you can just Google it'), which reveals the extent to which the internet and social media inform women and girls in contemporary society.

In relation to Bordo's (1993) 'standardized ideal', which mentions the removal of racial and class differences, the issue of race was at the forefront of participant conversation:

HS: 'I know this is just a big thing at the moment – but there's no – everyone's white aren't they'.

This particular topic provoked an uncomfortable discussion as participants recognised the lack of ethnic diversity of cover girls on *Women's Health* and the celebrities featured in the weekly magazines. This demonstrated how female bodies, particularly in an idealistic sense

in *Women's Health*, are still perceived as white, therefore reinforcing Hermes' (1995) notion regarding the dominance of 'whiteness' in magazines. In addition, Focus Group A also noticed a class issue between *Women's Health* and the other magazines, for instance:

SC: 'I also think it's a class issue – like I think kind of upper class people would probably go for *Women's Health* – and the trash magazines are more – working class'.

This is indicative that *Women's Health* promotes idealised body types amongst a more affluent readership, implying that physical appearance is connected to social status.

Conversely, participants discussed how *Women's Health* represent women as independent in comparison to the weekly magazines for example:

SC: 'I feel like – they're not – well across the trash ones – women aren't classed as independent'

HS: 'There's no mention of men in these though is there' (looking back at *Women's Health*).

More specifically, the focus groups all noticed how weekly magazines had straplines such as:

'my man makes me confident' (*Closer*)

'Lauren unveils new chin job as she prepares for Joey's release' (*New!*).

Whilst participants agreed that *Women's Health* did not explicitly mention male influence, they identified its appeal to the male gaze through its cover girl images:

SD: 'I guess men would look at *Women's Health* [...] because of the way the cover girl looks'.

From this, it seems that *Women's Health* employs visual discourse to implicitly appeal to the male gaze in comparison to the explicit discourse featured in the weekly magazines.

4.2.3 Aspiration

Having previously discussed how magazines encourage women to 'recreate the cover girl look' (Winship, 1987), this notion needed to be explored in a focus group setting. Whilst Focus Groups B and C were not really interested in having the same physical appearance as the cover girls on *Women's Health*, younger participants (Focus Group A) spent a lot of time discussing body image in the context of health and fitness. The youngest participant even stated that she would want to look like the cover girls, however she was aware that this was unrealistic:

BW: 'I mean I think I'd like to look like a *Women's Health* model – but I think it's unrealistic for my body type'.

On reflection, although it was reassuring that younger participants were aware of the impossible task in emulating the cover girl image, it was concerning that they wanted to look like them regardless. As a result, *Women's Health* should be held accountable for promoting unattainable body ideals to impressionable members of society, which is demonstrative in the following statement:

SC: 'I don't really need to buy something that's going to make me feel crap about myself'.

From this observation, it seems that the discourse used on the front cover of *Women's Health* does not inspire younger women and girls to pursue a healthier lifestyle by purchasing the magazine. In contrast, they expressed concern that buying the magazine would make them feel bad about themselves, which seems contradictory for a magazine supposedly promoting good health. Moreover, this focus group were the most aware of the relationship between consumerism and magazines, predicting that the cover girl was an advertisement to buy products featured inside the publication:

BW: 'they're literally promoting something for more money – and it's not going to benefit me – it's just another advertisement – cos they know how - to persuade you'

Focus Group A also expressed their aspiration to see more diversity on *Women's Health*:

BW: 'I'd like to see a bit more diversity – ranging from [...] erm all different body shapes sizes – tattoos – hair colours – lumps and bumps'.

They identified this diversity in the weekly magazines (*Woman*, *Closer*, *New!* and *heat*) and criticised *Women's Health* for using the same body type in each issue:

SC: 'they all just kind of look like dolls'

BW: 'Yeah like Barbie'.

We are reminded of Kitch's (2001) view that white teeth, slender frames and long hair constitute the cover girl look. However, participants do not appear to be motivated by such body images and would rather see more culturally diverse representations. Indeed, this is indicative of the culturally restrictive tendencies of women's magazines, of which *Women's Health* are reproducing in the context of health and fitness.

4.2.4 Expectation and disappointment

Whilst Focus Group B expressed some interest in reading *Women's Health* due to its positive language in comparison to the weekly magazines, the overall consensus was that *Women's Health* was not representative of real women and was not aimed at a wide female audience. In particular, Focus Group C communicated their frustration towards the magazine, due to its focus on body image for example:

RG: 'it's all about body [...] I'm disappointed with *Women's Health* if I'm honest'

All three of the participants in this focus group openly stated that they would not buy this magazine, as they did not feel it was directed towards their age group and their lives which consist of motherhood, careers and housework. However, given the encompassing nature of the title, they felt that the magazine could be more instructional towards older women and their health issues such as the menopause.

However, despite their frustrations, they mocked the magazine and its limiting representations of the female body, for instance:

AS: 'it should have a thing on like a speed restriction about you – look – over thirties don't pick it up'.

Such humour continued, as they reinvented the way in which the straplines could fit with their own lifestyles for example linking 'sweat-proof makeup' (May 2018) with the older woman and the menopause. In contrast, they deemed the weekly magazines more realistic through the presentation of 'normal' women despite the negative language used such as 'smug' in *heat* magazine, admitting that they would purchase weekly publications rather than *Women's Health*.

Focus Group A shared similar opinions to C, despite being considerably younger and at different stages in their lives. Having already addressed their preference for the weekly magazines and disappointment at the lack of diversity in *Women's Health*, these participants also criticised the publication's narrow framework within which they promote a healthy lifestyle, for example:

SC: 'I know it's called *Women's Health* for a reason – but it is all literally weight training I guess that they promote – like there's no sport or there's no like other way to be happy'.

From this statement, it was encouraging to observe that age did not change the way in which *Women's Health* was interpreted, rather there was a universal understanding that its representations of the female body were limiting and unrealistic, despite social diversity and acceptance.

As for Focus Group B, who were less critical of the magazine, they still recognised the problematic nature of the cover girl. They were more disappointed by the language choices used in weekly magazines, which they referred to as 'absolute trash' (HS) and anticipated that the content inside *Women's Health* would facilitate healthier lifestyle choices rather than quick fixes. In contrast to the other two focus groups, Group B were more motivated by textual discourse than visual, meaning that they were able to look beyond the limiting framework of the cover girl and consider the straplines within the context of their own lives.

5. Conclusion

This research project has been engaging and challenging throughout. From the beginning, I had a profound interest in the research area, however experienced some hesitancies due to previous studies focusing primarily on fashion and beauty magazines. However, these hesitancies were eliminated following thorough content analysis of *Women's Health* and having such enthusiastic participants in the focus groups. Whilst previous studies have concentrated on fashion and beauty magazines, the resulting feminist critiques inspired the basis of this study. The main objective was to determine if female body representations are fixed across different examples of women's magazines or if they adapt in accordance with new waves of popular culture and social change.

In conducting discourse analysis of the front covers of *Women's Health*, there was an overwhelming amount of textual discourse which encouraged women to improve their physical appearance for supposedly health-related reasons. However, in considering this discourse qualitatively, the use of the words 'hot' and 'sexy' indicated that this magazine is still very much seeking the approval of McCracken's (1992: 14) 'implicit man', rather than inspiring women and girls to pursue a healthier lifestyle. Furthermore, analysis of the cover girl images revealed that the models were photographed in provocative positions involving self-touching and minimal amounts of clothing. Indeed, this positioning of the female body was explicitly inviting the male gaze rather than appealing to the intended readership.

In adopting Krueger and Casey's (2009: 5) 'permissive, non-threatening environment' for the focus groups, the conversation between participants was articulate and enhanced the richness of the research. The relaxed environment provoked a high level of self-reflexivity amongst participants, all of whom were unable to relate to the cover girls on *Women's Health*,

deeming them unrealistic and overly sexualised. The participants unknowingly shared similar views to feminist critiques regarding the appearance of the cover girls, highlighting the lack of ethnic diversity, matching hairstyles and slim physiques (Hermes 1995; Kitch 2001) as well as the airbrushing involved in creating the image (Coleman, 2008).

In contrast, participants were able to resonate more closely with the images of women's bodies in the weekly magazines, perceiving them to be more 'normal', despite the negative language used otherwise known as 'body-shaming'. Whilst Focus Group B expressed some interest in the straplines on *Women's Health* concerning diet, exercise and mental health, most participants explicitly said that they would not purchase the magazine. This was due to *Women's Health's* promotion of idealistic bodies rather than overall health. This revealed that the cover girl image remains fixed across different genres of women's magazines.

In criticising the magazine and forming their own judgements, the participants exemplified Hermes' (1995: 5) notion as 'producers of meaning' as previously noted in Chapter 2.

Contrary to previous research (Wolf 1991; Bordo 1993), this is indicative that women and girls are able to interpret women's magazines based on their own judgements, rather than accept the messages communicated on the front cover without questioning them. This suggests a shift in how society perceives body image as not all women aspire to look like the cover girl, which women's magazines need to acknowledge moving forward. Similarly, scholars should also recognise this social change in future research.

As this research has established, women's magazines continue to be a site of contestation and complexity, with *Women's Health* bearing both positive and negative connotations in its representation of the female body. The framework of health and fitness offers some useful

lifestyle information, in particular towards mental health, yet the focus remains on physical appearance which is less important amongst 21st century readers. Women's magazines should aim to move away from dated representations of idealised bodies and embrace bodily differences more visibly. Magazines will continue to develop in response to social change, however their content and cover girl need to be at the forefront of this development, something which must equally be considered in future research. Throughout this study explanations have been put forward to demonstrate the ways in which female bodies are represented, providing a modern insight on previous research. In the future, it is anticipated that this area of research will occupy a more central and prestigious space, contrary to McRobbie's (1997) assertions.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Qualitative textual and visual discourse analysis of *Women's Health* front covers

June 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'How to score a six-pack in 15 mins: get a flat tum in time for summer'
Motivational language	'The ultimate anti-cellulite diet: beat dimples for good!' 'It's Good to Be You'
Diet and nutrition	'The ultimate anti-cellulite diet: beat dimples for good!'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'The ultimate anti-cellulite diet: beat dimples for good!' 'Sculpt your glutes: three easy moves for a killer bum' 'Fashion: new gym kit that boosts your butt' 'Beauty reboot: make-up with skincare benefits' 'How to score a six-pack in 15 mins: get a flat tum in time for summer'
Improving strength and fitness	'WH Investigates: can you trust what your PT is telling you?'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'The one health secret that'll change your life'
Exercise and physical activity	'Sculpt your glutes: three easy moves for a killer bum'
Celebrity influence	'The butt issue starring Insta sensation Jen Selter'
References to sex and relationships	None
References to beauty	'Beauty reboot: make-up with skincare benefits'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Dark brown
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Obvious eye makeup and lipstick
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	No – natural nails
Self-touching	No
Composition of pose	Decorative with emphasis on her lower body physique Open-mouthed smile Appears to be leaning against a wall
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area Thighs/bottom more exposed
Outfit	Backless grey one piece – more fashion focused than sportswear
Age of model	23
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Bright pink
Subtitle font colour(s)	Purple, bright pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

July 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	None
Motivational language	'It's Good to Be You' 'Love your body this summer #inshapemyshape'
Diet and nutrition	'We test the 16:8 eating plan for you' 'Health alert: the no. 1 supplement you need now'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Your ultimate swimwear guide' 'Louise Thompson How I Built My Body' 'Get her abs in 10 moves' '69 look good, feel good shortcuts' 'Toned, fit & fierce: total body tone-up in 25 minutes'
Improving strength and fitness	'Toned, fit & fierce: total body tone-up in 25 minutes'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Love your body this summer #inshapemyshape' '69 look good, feel good shortcuts' 'Health alert: the no. 1 supplement you need now'
Exercise and physical activity	'Get her abs in 10 moves' 'Toned, fit & fierce: total body tone-up in 25 minutes'
Celebrity influence	'Louise Thompson How I Built My Body' 'Get her abs in 10 moves'
References to sex and relationships	'The radical new secret to relationship success'
References to beauty	None

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Light brown
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Obvious eye make up and lip gloss
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Yes – light coloured application of nail polish
Self-touching	Yes – brushing of right thigh with right hand
Composition of pose	Fixed pose emphasis on her abdominal area Open-mouthed smile Tilted right thigh
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Yellow bikini – high-cut bottoms with rounded top
Age of model	27
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Orange
Subtitle font colour(s)	Red, orange and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

August 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'The get-lean gut secret you need to know' 'Total body tone-up'
Motivational language	'It's Good to Be You' 'Drink smarter: kick the bad habit that all healthy girls have' '72 ways to feel amazing this summer' 'Strong mind: reclaim your confidence for good'
Diet and nutrition	'Drink smarter: kick the bad habit that all healthy girls have' 'The get-lean gut secret you need to know'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'How the Insta-star sculpts those curves' 'The get-lean gut secret you need to know' 'Total body tone-up'
Improving strength and fitness	None
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Sleep better. The simple tricks for blissful ZZZs' '72 ways to feel amazing this summer' 'Strong mind: reclaim your confidence for good'
Exercise and physical activity	'Total body tone-up' 'One piece of kit five simple moves'
Celebrity influence	'The influencer issue: meet Sarah Kohan' 'How the Insta-star sculpts those curves'
References to sex and relationships	'Inside sexuality's last taboo'
References to beauty	None

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Blonde
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Obvious eye makeup and lip gloss
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	No – fingers not photographed
Self-touching	Yes – fingers at both sides of her hips interlocked with bikini bottoms
Composition of pose	Fixed pose emphasis on her 'curvy' figure Open-mouthed smile Left leg crossed over right leg
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	White fashion bikini – low-cut top with hipster style bottoms
Age of model	23
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Yellow
Subtitle font colour(s)	White, black and yellow
Background colour	Blue
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

September 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'Strong, fit and lean: 15 workout moves you've never tried'
Motivational language	'Do worry, be happy'
Diet and nutrition	'Feed your bones! The eating plan to future-proof your body' 'Eat chocolate, boost brain power #winning'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Feed your bones! The eating plan to future-proof your body' 'Strong, fit and lean: 15 workout moves you've never tried' '47 style buys to ace your commute' 'The great a*se or face debate: How to beat ageing's ultimate conundrum'
Improving strength and fitness	'Strong, fit and lean: 15 workout moves you've never tried'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Eat chocolate, boost brain power #winning' '47 style buys to ace your commute' 'Do worry, be happy: why fretting is good for you'
Exercise and physical activity	'Strong, fit and lean: 15 workout moves you've never tried'
Celebrity influence	'The Naked Issue featuring Sofia Vergara fierce at 45' 'Plus 9 UK stars bare all'
References to sex and relationships	'Better Sex: Coming second? Take control of your orgasm'
References to beauty	None

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Brunette
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build
Makeup	Dark eye makeup and lipstick
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Yes – application of nude nail polish
Self-touching	Yes – sat down and touching shoulders and feet with both hands
Composition of pose	Fixed pose and sat down whilst concealing her naked body Open-mouthed smile Right leg crossed over left leg
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Everything – model appears to be completely naked but conceals her breasts and lower bikini area through composition of pose
Outfit	None
Age of model	45
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Coral pink
Subtitle font colour(s)	Turquoise, coral pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

October 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	None
Motivational language	'Conquer your fear of failure' 'It's Good to Be You'
Diet and nutrition	'28 award-winning health foods revealed' 'The Nutrition Issue' 'WH Investigates: is your protein shake habit pointless?' 'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Athleisure special: 75 looks to buy now' 'How to get thick & glossy hair – and keep it!' 'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing'
Improving strength and fitness	'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Conquer your fear of failure' 'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing'
Exercise and physical activity	'Kayla Itsines creates an exclusive upper body workout just for you' 'Let's glow! 102 fitness & food hacks to look & feel amazing'
Celebrity influence	'Kayla Itsines creates an exclusive upper body workout just for you' 'Deliciously Ella: Hello, Abs! Who knew?!'
References to sex and relationships	'Too fit to have sex?'
References to beauty	'How to get thick & glossy hair – and keep it!'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Dark brown
Hair length	Mid-length
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Natural colours applied with darker eye makeup
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Yes – application of natural shellac polish
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her left thigh with left hand and right hip with right hand
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with titled left arm and thigh Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Red sports bra and hipster style grey briefs
Age of model	26
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Bright pink
Subtitle font colour(s)	Sky blue, bright pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

November 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'The fat-burning diet everyone's talking about' 'Total body shred: six workouts to smash your goals' 'WH investigates: can one sweat session torch calories 24/7?'
Motivational language	'It's Good to Be You' 'Total body shred: six workouts to smash your goals'
Diet and nutrition	'Kilner instinct: meal prep sorted' 'The fat-burning diet everyone's talking about' 'Amp up your nutrition: five new (super) food combos' 'Michelle Keegan: I love training and cocktails... It's about balance'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'The fat-burning diet everyone's talking about' 'Total body shred: six workouts to smash your goals' 'WH investigates: can one sweat session torch calories 24/7?'
Improving strength and fitness	'Total body shred: six workouts to smash your goals' 'Core control: overhaul your abs routine with just one move'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Mind games: the therapy proven to make you healthier' 'Michelle Keegan: I love training and cocktails... It's about balance'
Exercise and physical activity	'six workouts to smash your goals' 'Core control: overhaul your abs routine with just one move' 'WH investigates: can one sweat session torch calories 24/7?' 'Michelle Keegan: I love training and cocktails... It's about balance'
Celebrity influence	'Michelle Keegan: I love training and cocktails... It's about balance'
References to sex and relationships	None
References to beauty	'37 global beauty essentials'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Dark brown
Hair length	Shoulder-length (short)
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Natural colours applied with darker eye makeup
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Yes – application of red shellac polish
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her left thigh with left hand and right hip with right arm
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted right thigh and hands placed at both sides Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Blue sports bra and hipster style black briefs
Age of model	30
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Bright pink
Subtitle font colour(s)	Navy blue, bright pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

December 2017

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'Beat winter bloat' 'Torch fat fast'
Motivational language	'Beat winter bloat' 'Fight festive anxiety' 'Get great guns' 'Strong, hot & sexy: 127 healthy hacks to keep you on track until 2018'
Diet and nutrition	'Jasmine Hemsley exclusive recipes' 'Stress-busting super herbs'
Male influence/ presence	'Strong, hot & sexy: 127 healthy hacks to keep you on track until 2018'
Improving physical appearance	'Beat winter bloat' 'Get great guns' 'Gym to bar braids: whatever your hair type... sorted!' 'Strong, hot & sexy: 127 healthy hacks to keep you on track until 2018'
Improving strength and fitness	'Fit in 28 days! Your simple day-by-day plan' 'Strong, hot & sexy: 127 healthy hacks to keep you on track until 2018'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Fight festive anxiety' 'The Mind Issue' 'Mental health laid bare' '23 women share their empowering stories' 'Stress-busting super herbs' 'Mollie King: I've learnt to be proud of my body'
Exercise and physical activity	'Six top-to-toe workouts'
Celebrity influence	'Jasmine Hemsley exclusive recipes' 'Mollie King: I've learnt to be proud of my body'
References to sex and relationships	'Crazy in love: when romance becomes an addiction'
References to beauty	'WH beauty awards winners revealed'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Blonde
Hair length	Mid length
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Obvious eye makeup and lip gloss
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	No – natural nails
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her left thigh with left hand and right hip with right arm
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted right hip and hands placed at both sides Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Plum coloured sports bra and hipster style black briefs
Age of model	30
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Plum
Subtitle font colour(s)	Plum, bright pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Bright pink

January/ February 2018

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'Get lean in 2018' 'Shed kilos' 'Strip fat' 'Best weight-loss advice ever. Fact.'
Motivational language	'The transform issue' 'Get lean in 2018' 'Sculpt killer abs' 'Outsmart your inner quitter'
Diet and nutrition	'New year, new superfoods' 'Joe Wicks Exclusive! Moves & meals from the body coach'
Male influence/ presence	'Joe Wicks Exclusive! Moves & meals from the body coach' '156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today'
Improving physical appearance	'The transform issue' 'Gemma Atkinson: The workout and mindset that built my body' 'Sculpt killer abs: not a crunch in sight' 'Get lean in 2018' '156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today' 'Shed kilos' 'Build muscle' 'Strip fat'
Improving strength and fitness	'The transform issue' 'Build muscle' 'Sculpt killer abs'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Gemma Atkinson: The workout and mindset that built my body' 'Strong mind: Outsmart your inner quitter' '156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today'
Exercise and physical activity	'Joe Wicks Exclusive! Moves & meals from the body coach' 'Gemma Atkinson: The workout and mindset that built my body' 'Not a crunch in sight' 'Build muscle' 'Sculpt killer abs'
Celebrity influence	'Joe Wicks Exclusive! Moves & meals from the body coach'

	'Gemma Atkinson: The workout and mindset that built my body' '3 WH staffers, 3 celeb trainers, shock results'
References to sex and relationships	None
References to beauty	'24/7 glow: Beauty rules to transform your skin' '156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Blonde
Hair length	Mid length
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Athletic
Makeup	Natural but with heavier eye makeup
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No but appears to have previously had pierced navel
Manicure	Yes – acrylic application; black polish
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her left thigh with left hand
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted right hip and hands placed at both sides Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Navy blue and black sports bra with zip and hipster style navy blue briefs
Age of model	33
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	Yes – scar where navel had previously been pierced

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Orange
Subtitle font colour(s)	Orange, navy blue and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

March 2018

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'WH Investigates: Can vinegar shots offset weight gain?' 'Bloat begone: 7-day flat tum eating plan' 'Full body sculpt: new workouts to tone every inch'
Motivational language	'Alice Liveing: Let me change the way you train' 'How to think happy' 'Bloat begone: 7-day flat tum eating plan'
Diet and nutrition	'WH Investigates: Can vinegar shots offset weight gain?' 'Are food cravings fake?'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Full body sculpt: new workouts to tone every inch' 'Bloat begone: 7-day flat tum eating plan' '41 game-changing beauty tips'
Improving strength and fitness	'Alice Liveing: Let me change the way you train'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Freak in the bed? Your ultimate good sleep guide' 'Fertility crisis: what every fit woman should know' 'How to think happy'
Exercise and physical activity	'new workouts to tone every inch' 'Alice Liveing: Let me change the way you train'
Celebrity influence	'Alice Liveing: Let me change the way you train'
References to sex and relationships	'Freak in the bed? Your ultimate good sleep guide'
References to beauty	'41 game-changing beauty tips'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Blonde
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Athletic
Makeup	Dark eyeshadow and false eyelash application
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Yes – application of natural shellac polish
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her left hip with left hand and right thigh with right hand
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted right thigh and hands placed at both sides Tight lipped smile
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Low cut black sports bra with net effect and hipster style white briefs
Age of model	25
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Bright pink
Subtitle font colour(s)	Turquoise, bright pink and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

April 2018

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	None
Motivational language	'Smash your body goals' 'Willpower engaged: The secret to self-control'
Diet and nutrition	'No whey! The vegan's guide to building muscle' 'Nutrient cycling: the most effective eating plan ever?'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'11 stressed-skin solutions' 'Smash your body goals' 'How Alicia Vikander built her Tomb Raider body'
Improving strength and fitness	'No whey! The vegan's guide to building muscle'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'WH investigates" The biggest health scandal to hit UK women' 'Maya Jama: keeping it real in life, love and the gym'
Exercise and physical activity	'Harder. Faster. Stronger Why we're all falling for crossfit' 'Maya Jama: keeping it real in life, love and the gym'
Celebrity influence	'How Alicia Vikander built her Tomb Raider body' 'Maya Jama: keeping it real in life, love and the gym'
References to sex and relationships	None
References to beauty	'11 stressed-skin solutions'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Dark brown
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	Mixed race
Body type	Slim
Makeup	Natural lipstick and false eyelash application
Tattoos	Yes – script on left hip
Piercings	No – but scar to suggest previously pierced navel
Manicure	No – natural nails
Self-touching	Yes – brushing her right thigh with right hand
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted left hip and hands placed at both sides Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	No
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Red high-neck sports bra and white bikini style bottoms
Age of model	23
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	Yes – scar where navel had previously been pierced

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Red and royal blue
Subtitle font colour(s)	Red, royal blue, black and white
Background colour	Light blue
Highlight and circling colour	White

May 2018

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	'12 minute workouts = maximum calorie burn'
Motivational language	'Fit & fierce'
Diet and nutrition	'Fall back in love with carbs today' '23 light easy eats'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Sweat-proof makeup that works' 'Down there skincare... it's a thing' 'All about nails'
Improving strength and fitness	'12-minute workouts = maximum calorie burn' 'Fit & fierce'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'186 genius wellness shortcuts' 'Strong mind: WTF is self-care anyway?'
Exercise and physical activity	'12 minute workouts = maximum calorie burn' 'Fit & fierce'
Celebrity influence	None
References to sex and relationships	'Down there skincare... it's a thing' 'Death of dating: are you all swiped out?'
References to beauty	'Sweat-proof makeup that works' 'Down there skincare... it's a thing' 'All about nails'

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Blonde
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves and backcombed
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build/ athletic
Makeup	Natural application
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Fingers are not pictured
Self-touching	Yes – propping up her left arm and grabbing necklace
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted left hip/ thigh Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts, stomach and lower bikini area
Outfit	Long-sleeved sport style one piece in blue and white stripes Zip undone to reveal cleavage
Age of model	28
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Orange
Subtitle font colour(s)	Orange, light blue and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

June 2018

Textual analysis

Category	Strapline
Weight loss	None
Motivational language	'Millie Mackintosh talks love, fitness & fighting back'
Diet and nutrition	'How food labels lie: plus tools to decode them' 'Eat up! Fresh summer recipes'
Male influence/ presence	None
Improving physical appearance	'Sun's out, guns out: Alice Liveing on sculpting amazing arms' 'Tone every zone' 'The one exercise that guarantees fast results'
Improving strength and fitness	'Fit in 28 days! Your simple day-by-day plan'
Improving mental health/ general well-being	'Burn while you earn: how to build a wellness empire' 'Millie Mackintosh talks love, fitness & fighting back' 'Social anxiety nearly ruined my career'
Exercise and physical activity	'Millie Mackintosh talks love, fitness & fighting back' 'Fit in 28 days! Your simple day-by-day plan' 'The one exercise that guarantees fast results'
Celebrity influence	'Millie Mackintosh talks love, fitness & fighting back' 'Sun's out, guns out: Alice Liveing on sculpting amazing arms'
References to sex and relationships	'The sex chat all women need to hear' 'Millie Mackintosh talks love, fitness & fighting back'
References to beauty	None

Visual analysis: cover girl image

Category	Description
Hair colour	Light brown
Hair length	Long
Hair style	Soft waves
Ethnicity	White
Body type	Slim build
Makeup	Heavier eye makeup, lip gloss and bronzed cheeks
Tattoos	No
Piercings	No
Manicure	Shellac polish application – natural colour
Self-touching	Yes – brushing of thighs with both hands
Composition of pose	Fixed pose with tilted right hip/ thigh Open-mouthed smile
Cleavage	Yes
Tanned/ glowing complexion	Yes
Amount of naked body on display	Full body except breasts and lower bikini area
Outfit	Yellow bikini – low-cut top and high-rise bottoms
Age of model	28
Awareness of photo taken	Yes – looking directly at camera
Visible imperfections (including stretch marks, cellulite, blemishes, uneven skin tone, scars, bruising)	No

Visual analysis: fonts and background

Category	Description
Title font colour(s)	Dark orange
Subtitle font colour(s)	Dark orange, light orange and black
Background colour	White
Highlight and circling colour	Yellow

Appendix 2: Transcripts of focus groups

NB: These are extracts from the original transcripts. Full transcripts are available on request.

Transcript A

Focus Group A

Date of Focus Group: 02/08/2018

Length of Focus Group: 00:45:30

Location:

Information about Focus Group participants

Participant 1

Age: 23

Relationship Status: In a relationship

Occupation: Student/ hospitality worker

Participant 2

Age: 20

Relationship Status: Single

Occupation: Genius administrator

Participant 3

Age: 19

Relationship Status: In a relationship

Occupation: Student/ Genius administrator

Participant 4

Age: 20

Relationship Status: Single

Occupation: Customer Account Associate

SC – Participant 1

| | - Indicates overlapping of speech

ET – Participant 2

- - Indicates a pause of one second

BW – Participant 3

[...] - Indicates a longer pause

AH – Participant 4

() - Indicates an action by participant

*** - Indicates use of participants name

SC: Okay – erm - well for a start [...] all the *Women's Health* ones look ridiculously skinny and they're not actually what normal women probably look like

ET: It's all photo shopped and airbrushed as well in the *Women's Health* ones

BW: It's built to look the same [...] every woman looks the same – same pose – pretty much the same outfit - different colour

AH: They're all the same age range aren't they as well [...] there's no like – older people

ET: Yeah it's all like late twenties – thirties probably

(long pause for all participants as they each look at a copy of *Women's Health*)

BW: And there's only one black woman [...] erm [...] I feel like these *Women's Health* ones are ultra-positive like smash your body goals like as if this would be every person's goal to look this way

SC: Or just assume that they'd want to – I guess

BW: Yeah – like this is what you should be aiming at full stop [...] whereas the other one (points to *Closer* magazine) it's more [...] kind of talking about personal lives and stuff like that and almost a little bit shaming them but at the same time [...]

AH: It's more realistic

BW: Yeah [...] and again the first page in *heat* is holiday goals (gestures to *heat* magazine) – again – a skinny blonde woman – what I think *Women's Health* would class as the perfect figure

SC: But then again that's probably what they think is the perfect figure in *Women's Health* [...] but on this magazine (points to Davina in *Woman*) she's got a six pack like she's got a six pack but they're saying that's bad and that's good (points between *Woman* and *Women's Health*)

ET: I feel like when it's on a *Closer* or *Woman* or *New!* magazine if it's a celebrity with a six pack then they've gone too far but if it's on *Women's Health* then you're supposed to look like that so it's like contradicting how women should be when it shouldn't be contradicting anything if that makes sense

BW: Erm [...] I feel like (flicks through pages of *heat* magazine) the *heat* magazine is all about finding love and these women having to find love rather than

SC: | Looking a certain way |

BW: Yeah although [...] it's like they have to put this effort in to find love

ET: | Or being in an actual relationship |

BW: Rather than doing things for yourself

ET: Yeah and in erm this *New!* one Michelle Keegan's husband Mark is doing a fitness plan for her like why can't she do it herself or – if she felt that way why wouldn't she get a personal trainer like it's as if her husband's taking over her life in a fitness sort of way

BW: Yeah

ET: Making her be ashamed of how she looks I guess rather than being like you don't need to go the gym – you can just get a personal trainer to do it

SC: She doesn't look very happy in that picture

ET: No she doesn't at all – I mean on the front there's a bit about body battles and stuff and a bit of Michelle Keegan and Kerry Katona

(long pause as all participants look further at the magazines)

BW: So [...] erm [...]

SC: *Women's Health* are very like strong-minded – like strong-minded with what the fuck is self-care anyway and then there's strong mind on everything – well strong mind on two of them

ET: Yeah

BW: And willpower – stressed skin solutions

ET: I feel like *Women's Health* just tries to make women feel better about themselves

BW: Yeah I think it's like promoting a healthy lifestyle throughout but then always linking it back to your appearance – yeah so like health includes mental health – and it says stressed skin solutions – and it's like well you're stressed so why don't you do stress relieving techniques rather than skin care

ET: | Yeah | and it's like 156 ways to look hot and feel amazing today

BW: I mean I think I'd like to look like a *Women's Health* model – but I think it's unrealistic for my body type because I'm so muscly on the bottom

ET: | Yeah definitely |

AH: It's like different body shapes as well like not everyone's got their body shapes

SC: Yeah you probably wanna look like them because it's what they tell you you have to look like

BW: Well this is the thing it's promoted everywhere

ET: It's like you need to look like this but not everyone's gonna be a five foot eight – blonde person who looks exactly like that (points to *Women's Health*)

BW: | Mmmm... |

SC: I mean if you really worked hard for it you could really do it like she's a personal trainer (points to *Women's Health* magazine) – and where is she - she's a personal trainer (points to another *Women's Health* magazine) – that's her life pretty much

ET: | Yeah |

BW: If it's on [...] like *Women's Health* then every single magazine has the same model – the same figure and just compared to another trashy magazine that's almost like body-shaming being like - these people used to look like this but now they don't (laughs)

SC: | Yeah |

ET: But I guess just think how strict a diet these models probably have to be on as well to actually stay like that

SC: And they'll have a team of people behind them – like they're not actually like that – if I had my hair and makeup done by a professional I'd look pretty good

ET: | Yeah | They're so posey on it as well

– I know that like – it's not like where the other magazines like *heat* or *Closer* or *Woman* they're all natural celebrities with how they actually look

AH: | It's not natural is it |

SC: But they all have to have plastic surgery – like Kerry Katona's has diet jabs – Lauren Goodger has had lipo and a chin job I think – where is it (looks for magazine in pile) [...] she's had a chin job in one of them – oh yeah here we we go – but why does she need a chin job and that's also for a man

ET: Yeah

SC: Then that's probably for a man (points to *Women's Health* magazine) and erm [...] I'd say that's probably how the average man would want them to look like – but no one has said that [...] I don't know – I don't think it's natural

ET: Yeah if it was a natural one then it would look a bit more appealing to – like most people but I feel that because of how posey it is – maybe a lot of the average man or whatever might just have this thing of this is what I want my next girlfriend or wife to look like and it's just not gonna happen

SC: No it makes you feel a bit crappy about yourself

ET: Yeah

BW: One of the quotes on *Women's Health* is keeping it real in life love and in the gym [...] I just think why have you highlighted love – it's like you need a relationship to be *Women's Health*

ET: Yeah I think with *Women's Health* as positive as it is a lot of it is saying you know – go to the gym and do this – but not a lot of people feel comfortable going to the gym

SC: And it would take a lot to look like that as well – like you wouldn't just be able to do it I don't think

ET: | Yeah | you couldn't just go for a day and end up like someone on *Women's Health*

AH: I think some people go as well because they expect to look like that straight away – you’ve got to work – like you said really hard to look like that or anywhere near like that really

ET: Yeah

SC: And they all just kind of look like dolls

BW: Yeah like Barbie

SC: Yeah and these ones (points to *Closer*, *New!* and *Heat*) they like show all the bumps and imperfections of the bodies but on this one (points to *Women’s Health*) there’s absolutely nothing – like there’s no dodgy piercings or tattoos or anything

BW: And then on – on the one I’ve got – the one with the only black woman on she’s got that tattoo – just like hidden down the side of her leg – and that’s literally the only one it’s on

SC: | Oh yeah |

ET: But it’s like if she wasn’t wearing a bikini that would be hidden – it’s not like a full physical tattoo – if that makes sense

BW: And then [...]

SC: | Like that could even be bigger and that might just be photo shopped out – we don’t know |

BW: And in the nicest way like if she was – white – like would it have been an issue – because we’ve got three – three out of four don’t have tattoos and then the only one is a black woman

SC: | Because none of the other ones |

ET: | There’s none on the others |

SC: Three out of four are all blonde – same kind of hair – the same [...]

BW: | the same sweeping | motion of windswept – at the same time

ET: They’ve all got either blue or – green eyes

AH: They’re all wearing blue as well

ET: Yeah – they’re all wearing something blue

BW: Even with with what we’d call the minority one (gestures to *Women’s Health*) – her hair’s straight [...] and windswept

SC: | Windswept | and it’s flowing all over one shoulder – which all of them are – all over one shoulder

ET: Yeah all over one shoulder

SC: Like it’s not realistic – if you go out in the real world you don’t look like that

BW: | It’s not a thing |

ET: But then when you look at say *Closer* or those magazines – when you see like a picture of Kerry Katona – she’s there with her hair held back – bandana on – wearing jogging bottoms and a pink top

SC: Or like none of the pictures in these magazines are particularly attractive – like they’re not flattering

ET: No

SC: And they all kind of promote [...] I don’t know if they all do – but some of them promote all these surgeries and that’s not exactly health

ET: Yeah – like on the *New!* one it says two of the girls from *Geordie Shore* are having more surgery in 2018 – so it’s as if they need to get more surgery to get more attention from whoever

SC: To become a bigger star

ET: Yeah and it’s like the photo of Chloe her lips just look like – just massive

BW: Erm in the *heat* magazine that I’ve got – in like – the fitness section – or the beauty section – I’ve got a blonde woman – windswept hair – abs – and it says beauty heroes

ET: It's like a running theme

BW: (laughs) So yeah it's literally like this is what you need to erm - like aim for – if you don't look like this then you're not beautiful

SC: | Yeah | I think - as well -
the outfits in *Women's Health* are just – I mean no one goes to the gym in a bikini – like why are they not in gym clothes

ET: | No |

BW: Unless you look like that (laughs)

SC: Like – it's like a – it's like a sports top and then knickers

ET: Literally

SC: That is literally – well apart from this one (points to *Women's Health* magazine) who's got - a swimming costume on but realistically (gestures to cleavage area) like she's got it way pulled down

BW: Yeah

AH: It's not even summat you'd wear at a beach either is it

SC: It looks like she's trying to be something off *Baywatch*

AH: Yeah

ET: Yeah it looks like she's trying to be Pamela Anderson (laughs)

BW: I think that's what puts women off going to the gym and I think as well like doing it in public

ET: Yeah and being comfortable say for example sitting round a pool in a bikini – like if you look at *Women's Health* and think I need to look like that in a bikini and you don't – and you're going on holiday – and then you're just going to feel - rubbish

SC: | And these are all in the airport before you go on holiday so you're faced with it at the airport even until the point that you get on the plane

ET: | Yeah | and it's then when you go – when you go on holiday and you're sitting on the beach and you see people like this and you're just thinking oh why don't I look like that and then you think when you get back right I need to diet – but I think it just makes you think well I'm not comfortable in my own body or my skin when you look at that – but realistically – it doesn't really matter what you look like

SC: | Mmm |

AH: As long as you're happy – that's the main thing

ET: Yeah

BW: Erm [...] although I think *Women's Health* are like super positive – I don't think I'd buy it

SC: I wouldn't buy it

ET: | I don't think I would |

AH: | No |

ET: I mean I think for like – some of them are like four quid – it's – stuff that you can – it tells you a lot of gym techniques and stuff

SC: You can just Google it

ET: But yeah

SC: | You can just ask someone – if you just go to the gym with a friend and that – like – it's easier

ET: | Yeah |

AH: You sort of learn by yourself don't you and you can ask people at the gym and stuff like that

SC: Cos they don't explain it a lot – like I'd maybe buy it for the recipes but then again you can just Google it

ET: Yeah

BW: Mmm

SC: Like I don't really need to buy something that's going to make me feel crap about myself

BW: I feel like if I looked at the - recipes - and I looked at - what they're promoting so like - the - help your stressed skin - I'd just think it's for money - like they're literally promoting something for more money - and it's not going to benefit me - it's just another advertisement - cos they know how - to persuade you

ET: | Cos when you | actually look inside although it shows you like all these different - so like hair products and stuff like that but it's in more of a selling point then - and then like it's why would you have a perfume ad inside of a *Women's Health* magazine - and stuff like that

BW: | Mmm | And like you don't see any - well I've not seen any real stories - real women - like changing themselves through this - this magazine

SC: [...] This one (points to *Women's Health*) has 186 genius wellness shortcuts like who has time to A - read it and B - do it like you're not gonna sit - like it doesn't say anything about it - it could be nothing

BW: | They're not gonna even work |

ET: | Yeah |

AH: So you're gonna buy that and read that and [...]

SW: | Eat an apple a day for some stupid reason about [...]

AH: It's like things you're probably already know like [...] and they don't even put the page on there as well that it will make you want to buy it or read that

BW: | Or flick through it yeah | But then when you look at - like Closer and Heat which - I suppose is about real life and real stories - you look through them like I'm engaged to a 90-year-old - and stuff like that

SC: A 90-year-old chandelier - not even a 90 year old person (starts laughing)

BW: Oh yeah (laughs)

SC: I don't know I would probably - if I had to choose which one to buy I'd probably buy the trash one because it's cheaper and it's probably juicier - even though it's probably all lies anyway so I don't really know

ET: | Yeah |

BW: But it's like - I think I'd buy it (gestures to *heat* magazine) cos you've got celebs being normal people

ET: And themselves as well

BW: Yeah and it almost puts you at comfort cos you see celebrities who in different magazines look stunning - or the ideal body shape to how they actually naturally look

ET: | Yeah |

SC: Mmm

AH: Like just living a normal life like everyone else does

BW: Yeah

(long pause as participants pass round different magazine covers)

SC: I'd probably - you know what as contradictory as it is to this magazine (holding *Woman* magazine) I'd probably find Davina McCall the most inspiring one - even though they're saying she's gone too far - she's an older lady - she's probably the oldest one that's really into fitness - probably the oldest one out of all these magazines on the front - and she's done really well for herself - and she's got a ripped body - so she's the only one - I don't find any of the plastic surgery inspiring - I think that puts me off

BW: | Yeah |

ET: | Yeah she has | I think the *Women's Health* ones puts me off cos it's just like no one looks like that in real life – you don't go to a gym – stand with a hand on a hip and some air blown into your face full thing of makeup – you're just not gonna look like that unless you're on an actual photo shoot

SC: And this doesn't exactly inspire me to get plastic surgery (points to other magazines) – I don't think I ever would anyway – but - it doesn't make me look at it – like why would I look at Lauren Goodger wherever she is and think – yeah why would I want to look like that – her lips looks ridiculous

ET: | There you go (points to *Closer* magazine) | Yeah

BW: I quite like this *Closer* magazine though cos literally across the bottom although it's a lot smaller in comparison to all the – like plastic surgery – erm it says naked confessions and I love my baby curves and [...] erm I worry less now I'm a mum and stuff like that

ET: Like genuine people feeling actually confident in their bodies

BW: But then slap bang in the middle you've got Vicky saying my man makes me confident

ET: Yeah which [...]

SC: | But why do they have to be naked |

BW: That's true

SC: Why can't they just have clothes on – like why do they have to be naked to like make their man – or to like to make her fiancé – why does he only have to like her when she's naked that's basically what's that's saying

AH: Why aren't there more natural photos they've got a full face of makeup stuff like that as well

SC: Yeah windswept – over one shoulder – over one shoulder

ET: Yeah

AH: It looks like they're trying

BW: And like – where's the baby for the mum one

ET: What for Ferne

SC: For Ferne yeah

AH: Yeah

BW: I love my baby curves

SC: And again where's the baby

ET: It's as if they've just done it like – for publicity as well more than anything – cos as you're saying – they've got a full thing of makeup on – again they're posing but [...]

SC: | I guarantee they'll have

something to promote inside like they'll have a – I don't know a TV programme or like a book or something

BW: | Yeah |

ET: Yeah that's usually the case

SC: And like – I know for a fact that she's really big on Instagram this Alice Liveing person – like I follow her on Instagram – and she'll just be talking about Instagram in that so that's probably all she's doing is promoting herself

ET: Yeah

SC: She's got loads of tele stuff coming out (points at *Women's Health* magazine) so they're actually probably not even talking about health really – for most of the interview [...] (points to *heat* magazine) it says on this one here that they're smug but they don't look smug they just look happy

ET: They look happy in themselves they don't really care

SC: Like she's – they've all got like – what I'd call - normal bodies – like everyday bodies that everyday women have or why are they smug – does that mean that if I walked down the beach in my bikini I'd be smug

AH: If 'owt though I feel like that erm women on the *Women's Health* look more smug cos they're trying harder in the pictures and stuff whereas [...]

SC: | And they know they've got a good body |

ET: Like their natural weight – no makeup on

SC: Butterflies in her hair

ET: Yeah – nothing erm [...]

AH: Probably just on holiday with the family just doing like a normal thing

ET: Actually having a nice time and not worrying about how they look or anything – just being their natural selves

AH: | Yeah |

ET: It's like even on the front of *heat* magazine it says join *heat's* fit club – and you get twenty percent off gym wear so even on the cover it's saying that – if you want to join a fitness club you get twenty percent off gym wear where really – if you wanna join a gym or anything that shouldn't even really matter

SC: Mmm

BW: In a health magazine – so *Women's Health* and it's all about – like – going to the gym – harder faster stronger and being a stronger person and – I think fitness in itself is a really big thing – but then when you open it – it's just makeup – and it's like it's gone from fitness – and [...] to then – oh well if you contour your cheeks you can get that – defined face instead of – this is the right way to do it if you're this body type – if you're this body type and this body type you can work like this this and this

ET: | To then telling you how you should look | It's like on one of them it's got perfume samples and like who's gonna wear perfume to the gym – when you're just gonna sweat it off anyway (laughs)

AH: | Yeah exactly you don't care | Exactly you don't care about that

BW: Well I think [...] it doesn't promote - women going to the gym and getting sweaty

ET: Exactly and that's the reality of it you're saying that this is you need to look like this on the cover – but we're not actually gonna help you inside – we're just gonna promote a load of things and get more money from you from this magazine

BW: | Yeah | And that – I think that's why women are nervous to go to the gym because you go and you sweat and you get red in the face and [...]

ET: | Yeah |

AH: It's like on the *Women's Health* (looking inside *Women's Health*) there's like a lady doing exercise but she's completely flawless there's no sweat or anything like that she's just [...]

ET: Posing for a photo

AH: | It's not realistic |

SC: But diet – the language that they use for this one on the trash one (looking at *Woman*) it's like guilt-free diet where you can eat chocolate and drink wine everyday so it's literally just assuming that the people who are reading it do that

ET: Drink wine and eat chocolate

SC: Everyday

BW: Yeah

SC: Whereas the *Women's Health* – fall back in love with carbs – so they're implying that – people like - don't really – they kind of maybe a bit more self-conscious about shit like that

ET: Yeah

Transcript B

Focus Group B

Date of Focus Group: 01/08/2018

Length of Focus Group: 00:45:26

Location:

Information about Focus Group participants

Participant 1

Age: 30

Relationship Status: Engaged

Occupation: Faculty Strategic Business Partner

Participant 2

Age: 31

Relationship Status: Married

Occupation: Practice Manager

Participant 3

Age: 30

Relationship Status: In a relationship

Occupation: Farmer

HS – Participant 1

| | - Indicates overlapping of speech

HT – Participant 2

- - Indicates a pause of one second

SD – Participant 3

[...] - Indicates a longer pause

() - Indicates an action by participant

*** - Indicates use of participants name

HS – Right so I – I think, these are *Women's Health* – there's a massive focus on actually – erm – weight loss, and obviously *Women's Health* should be kind of covering other things. It does do that, but lots of things around erm [...] being slimmer, carbs, sculpt killer abs, but there are different bits – you know, there's something about wellness, but it does - even though it says *Women's Health* and there are articles – or it suggests that there are articles that incorporate other things - it does seem to be driving towards lea, fitness – erm - and then the cover girls are all - I'd say of a similar body type - they're all very slim – erm and obviously very fit and [...] very fresh faced so there's a big focus on like quite healthy natural looking – but – I think they've had a lot of makeup on to look fresh faced

SD: | Get lean |

HT: Yeah and they're in certain outfits rather than just being in their normal clothes

SD: [...] Yeah they've also all got long hair as well that was the first thing I noticed there's not really any variation in - what the hairstyles are like they've all got this kind of long – wavy hair and they're all blonde except one person who's got darker brown hair

HS: | Yeah |

HT: They look like they could be the same person if I saw that on a coffee table I wouldn't notice the difference between the two of them ones (points to two copies of *Women's Health*)

HS: But I think they're driving at – I would imagine men (laughs) would want to pick that up – the [...] the – female – that doesn't make me want to read the magazine seeing the female person like that (points at *Women's Health* magazine)

HT: (laughs)

SD: No it's a bit intimidating isn't it

HT: Yeah [...] like I didn't even look at the photo I looked at the other stuff – like now you've said that some of the other stuff is quite good so like willpower the secret to self-control (gestures to magazine) and some of the stuff is like quite appealing [...] about trying to be healthy

HS: Yeah but – the biggest bit is – all I see is that (gestures to cover girl) and then I like look a bit around (waves hands in air)

SD: Yeah the cover girl is definitely at the focus of everything

HT: | Yeah |

HS: [...] and then – they're all really – well they look really young [...] don't they – there's no one over – I mean she might be a bit older (points to *Women's Health* magazine) but [...]

SD: The rest of them look like they're in their twenties don't they

HS: And if that's *Women's Health* then that's actually trying to attract an audience about health then that's quite off-putting and like she's a swimsuit model – they all could be – they're all – is that – is the magazine suggesting that that's the perfection of health (laughs)

HT: I guess – but in comparison to the other ones (gestures to *Woman*, *Closer*, *Heat* and *New!*) this seems a million miles better – it seems more focused on health than these (points to magazines again) which is about taunting people and picking people up on the wrong types of things – 'cos on this one – poor Davina (points to *Woman*) – where's it gone – so this one they're bullying Davina for being gaunt and she's gone too far – which is fair enough in that photo – it looks like she has gone too far in my opinion – but then on this one (points to *Closer* magazine) she's obviously going through a hard time so why pick up on that – when things obviously aren't great in her personal life – then rag her all over their glossy

SD: I guess the awareness of the photo as well though - like with the *Women's Health* models they are all obviously aware that the photo's being taken – it's obviously taken a lot of preparation to get the perfect photo whereas they've just used any old thing for Davina and tried to find the worst possible kind of paparazzi shot of her – where they can criticise her more

HS: I mean – this – the real life [...] (struggles for words) but it's not – it's going too far the other way – this is – the *Women's Health* is showing like the perfect goddess everyone should aim to be like that – and these ones are showing you know here's someone who's like fat and podgy (points to *Heat*) coming over the swimsuit and what are the – I don't know what they're trying to say

HT: (laughs)

SD: There's no kind of normal girl is there – it's either one way or the other and they can't just show – what kind of normalness is or - there's no real sense of [...] a diverse perspective either - with the pictures – like *Women's Health* is all one way and then the gossip magazines are all very much the other

HS: | No |

HT: Everyone knows that Kerry Katona she'll have lost two stone but probably in three weeks' time she'll have put two stone back on won't she – like that's a fact – I don't look at that and feel inspired like what did she do – I want to do that – I think well she's lost two stone – and she'll be putting two stone back on in a matter of weeks – months - hours

HS: (laughs)

SD: (laughs)

HS: And is this magazine trying to say that if you read this you'll look like that (points to *Women's Health*) – cos this I think puts off so many body types – because actually you can still be slim but be way bigger than these girls are can't you

SD: Yeah they're all one certain body type and – you know they might be athletic and they might have worked very hard for that particular figure but it's not – it's not representative of what all women look like – at all

HS: And they're not – I think – they're not – I don't necessarily think they're sporty either – it's be nice – like you said – it'd be nice to see different body types

HT: Or someone with a body type like that because they'd played sport

HS: Yeah – or – cos these just – they're all models really aren't they I imagine – I know she's an actress but

HT: Yeah I don't really know who they are – but at least they're not kind of being chastised for the way they do look – cos like I said earlier if – it's all posed and perfect – like I imagine you could get in a position that doesn't make them look that well – like I imagine if there's a paparazzi shot of Gemma Atkinson not looking – as she does there [...] and she's obviously done all that Strictly stuff hasn't she – so she's probably just done that from dancing every single day over and over again and she probably didn't look like that six months ago

SD: Yeah I guess we don't actually get shown all the work that goes in behind the scenes for the Women's Health front covers and you know – it might be seen as being healthy here but they might have done some unhealthy things to achieve that look for that cover photo that they wouldn't usually do – erm and I guess whilst the women in the other magazines are kind of – perceived as more normal even though they're shown negatively – it's kind of more relatable I guess – in a way – even though they're not shown in a particularly good light

HS: Yeah – like if you look at some of these (points to *Women's Health*) full body sculpt so that's about looking better – can vinegar shots offset weight gain – whatever that – that's about looking better – 41 game-changing beauty tips that's about looking better

HT: | No but that's a question mark isn't it |

HS: | No but it's all about looking better | now you get stuff how to think happy - so that's more about wellness but all the rest [...]

HT: It's weight loss rather than wellbeing isn't it

SD: And I think that's where they're going wrong they're saying health is about losing weight and looking better and it is actually good to see there is a small bit on kind of – mental health but – I don't know if it's still very representative of what everything health is

HT: This one though (points to *Woman*) – jean genius – says styles to suit all shapes – so they are saying not just all but one – so that is a positive for the trash magazine – isn't it

HS: (laughs)

SD: (laughs)

HS: This is for [...] elder women isn't it – I think (points to *Woman*)

SD: *Woman* yeah I think so and I guess it is good that they've been more inclusive of shape size because it's - something that everyone can pick up and read rather than just one type of woman and think yeah I could get those jeans it's kind of more inclusive

HT: And that's good cos she looks more normal (points to model in *Woman*) on that one

HS: | Yeah but she's a normal looking lady but she's talking about weight loss |

HT: No but – you're only perceiving that – it says ditch the scales so she doesn't even know if she's losing weight

HS: [...] if this is all about again (laughs) – if this is all about being slim, she's gone too slim, diet, losing weight on the scales, jeans (laughs) to fit you – so everything on there's about losing weight as well

HT: (laughs)

SD: Yeah there's no other topics is there at all – which I don't know – *Woman* is obviously for an older magazine I don't normally read it myself but I imagine women of that age would like to see something else rather than what they can do to lose weight or staying slim or whatever it may be

HS: And there's no – I know this is just a big thing at the moment – but there's no – everyone's white aren't they

SD: Yeah that's true actually

HT: Apart from that one (points to *Women's Health* magazine) from *Women's Health*

HS: Yeah

SD: It's quite interesting though with that one because is that the copy where it's the UK issue – and if they're trying to promote a more diverse UK or – whatever but she is the only model that looks different from the other three *Women's Health* that we've looked at [...] it is all just white people on the front covers really – even men that are on the gossip magazines like *Heat* and *Closer* it's white kind of celebs or reality stars or whatever they are

T: And then like on this *Closer* like none of them are real people – she's erm from erm – they're all from reality TV aren't they – they're not really anyone in particular – they're all just randoms that go to the extremes

SD: Yeah I guess this one here it's got like Michelle Keegan in who's an actress (gestures to *New!* magazine) – but it's saying here it's to do with a fitness masterplan that her husband's done for her which again it's a women's magazine so I don't understand really why there's any kind of interest on what her husband's doing or why that would be important why is it her husband that's doing that fitness plan for her in the first place – like why is it needed to get her Hollywood ready – like I think she looks pretty good already as it is

HS: Well there's lots about men pushing – Joe's guide to smashing it (looking at *Women's Health*) as the body coach and Ang's new man revealed (looking at *heat*) and Ant looking rough with Ant's wife looking even rougher (awkwardly laughs)

SD: Yeah I don't understand why they use the pictures that they do on magazines like there's nothing – there's nothing positive to put on the front covers and although *Women's Health* is kind of unrealistic to look at even though they're nice photos – it's still not really nice to look at these one either cos they're not particularly flattering like this one of Josie that's in *New!* and it's kind of the same one on *Closer* as well – both of them are negative of her and not particularly nice photos

HS: Yeah well are they encouraging people to buy this and feel better about themselves because these people are all rich and famous but they all have really bad problems

SD: I guess that's true really like it allows us to think oh well these people are celebrities and they don't look great so I guess it's alright if we don't

HT: And *Closer's* line is where celebs meet real people but that – you know – I'm engaged to a 90 year old chandelier isn't normal life is it – like when you read that that's not celebs meeting real life it's just mental [...] and then this one where desperate Lauren's had top to toe lipo (points to *Closer* magazine) like it is desperate behaviour and actually we should be worried about her mental health which is all related to the health issue – cos actually she looks awful – she looks like she's gone through hell probably for absolutely no reason whatsoever because she looked attractive beforehand – but yeah – worth talking about

SD: (laughs)

HS: (laughs) But all the language is bad I think – desperate – divorced – drama – beaten – abuse horror – agony – horrendous language that they're using isn't it – it's like do we really wanna read that

HT: Now looking at it I don't know why anyone would have bought this magazine to read – I don't understand

SD: No – I feel like we've said that maybe sometimes when we see like more natural photos of celebrities not looking great we feel better that they're not these perfect untouchable people but reading that language and erm – it isn't – I wouldn't want to read it either because I wouldn't talk about someone like that in real life – I don't see why I'd want to read about it – it's interesting though how it talks about cosmetic surgery in *Closer* yet in *Women's Health* there isn't the mention of surgery which I guess is a positive for *Women's Health* maybe

HT: And it hasn't got all those horrible words on it – they do use positive language – you said it was all about weight loss (looks at HS) but actually it's talked about in a positive way so if you wanted to lose weight it is very much positive whereas if you picked this up you'd think my god (laughs) – my life is better

HS: Yeah (laughs) well like there's strong mind – 24/7 glow – it is more positive isn't it

HT: Willpower engaged – keeping it real in life love and in the gym

HS: And there's stuff like fertility crisis – so there is a bit of like [...] scaremongering

SD: [...] I don't know I think it is all positive which is better and I guess if you know you are wanting to make changes with how you look or how you feel then you need to be motivated by what you're reading – I don't know if it's thinly veiled and it's actually – I don't know – it is still all the focus on physical appearance and if they're trying to hide that with nice words but they're still saying that you need to look this way to – to be healthy

HT: I think that what you read on the front here (looking at *Women's Health*) does make you want to read certain bits – like stressed skin solutions – I would definitely want to read that whereas I don't look at anything on there (points to *Closer*) and think I want to read that – so that's a positive that there's stuff here that you'd want to look at – even if you don't take it all in – there's stuff in here

HS: And about doing stuff for yourself isn't there – there's stuff about making yourself better by reading this (looking at *Women's Health*)

HT: And it's realistic as well - cos like that's an honest phrase – like WTF is self-care anyway (laughs) like that is – they are kind of poking fun at themselves for something they'd put and you'd be like what the hell is that

SD: Yeah that's true

HS: But I'd say if you were over 35 – is that going to draw you in - seeing everyone really young

HT: Well I don't think you would read it if you were over 35

HS: But then you've got to read this haven't you (points to *Woman*) – it's horrendous (laughs) – so you go from young slim women to then horrendous awful pictures of Davina – diet – diet eat chocolate and drink wine everyday

HT: So that's like a negative message isn't it – because someone could just read that on the surface and think great that's my new diet plan

HS: (laughs)

SD: I feel like *Woman* in this case as well just assumes that women of that age that would read it would actually just be all about a diet and how they look and they don't have anything else more important to think about which I think is quite limiting and restrictive – and I don't think that's what older women concentrate on necessarily

HS: Yeah [...] and the wine – eating chocolate and drinking wine well that's never healthy is it – saying you can eat chocolate and drink wine and lose weight – that doesn't feel healthy – or why would you want to do that – just live off chocolate and wine

HT: | And still lose weight though |

HS: That's just made the assumption that older women just eat chocolate and drink wine – what about the ones that are fit and like doing healthy stuff (laughs)

HT: They all literally just do the same story though don't they *Closer* and *New!* with poor Lauren again – unveils – unveils – it sounds like it's something to be proud of – like ta-da a new chin job – I've never even heard of a chin job before – like seriously

SD: (laughs)

HT: And what's worse in *New!* magazine is cos it's for Joey – I don't know if Joey's her boyfriend or whatever but that's awful

HS: (laughs)

SD: Yeah I'd like to think that if I was going to make a decision as serious as that it would be for my own benefit rather than a man's benefit – but then again the magazine might have just said that for effect you don't know but

HT: And release – where is he – in prison – that's the other worrying thing

SD: | Yeah I think he is actually |

HT: Jesus Christ

HS: What is this though (holds *heat* magazine) – what does this mean – more smug stars inside – well why are they smug [...] that's just really rude isn't it

SD: I don't know is it about the fact they've been more relaxed about how they look on the beach – or I don't really know

HS: Smug is such a negative word though – smug

SD: Is it saying that they're wrong to look like that and they should be thinking about what they look like or – I don't really know

HT: Well what is the point of having these on the front here what is it actually saying

HS: Yeah that's true

SD: Nothing I think it's just an excuse to get kind of more – bodies to pack out on the front and nothing much else really by the looks of it – but I think this is the problem with a lot of women's magazines – they're just sort of a lot of nothingness really and they don't actually tell you anything – they might have a couple of negative headlines but it's just all the same on the inside really

HS: Well this is interesting because it's talking about showing bump pics inside (looking at *Heat*) but she's not pregnant on the photo is she

HT: | Oh God | (laughs)

HS: So obviously this is like drawing someone in to see someone's bump – but then maybe *Women's Health* should have someone pregnant on the front one time and someone who's BME and you know – all sorts of things they could do – I don't think *Heat*'s trying to be positive by including that but at least they're alluding that women get pregnant (laughs)

SD: I guess anything to do with the Kardashians can sell

HS: Yeah

HT: But – it's a negative because that's not normal behaviour is it – or is it – what does it matter that her sisters won't be in the delivery room is that normal – why are they even reporting on that

SD: I don't really understand why that's even a headline on the front of the magazine – like you know it would be a bit different if Khloe had had the baby but it's just talking about what she's planning on doing – I don't see why anyone would have any interest in reading that at all

HS: Well the men are actually portrayed quite negatively aren't they – cos that's about – he's in prison as well isn't he (points to *New!* magazine) – that Arthur

HT: | Ferne's thing on an acid attack | I don't even know why you'd want to put someone that's capable of doing an acid attack on a women's

magazine in the first place – like he should be rotting in jail where we can't see him – why would you want him on the front of there

HS: So that guy's in prison

HT: | Yep Joey |

HS: Joey's in prison Arthur's in prison – this guy's saying he'll do anything when he's had a couple of drinks erm – obviously we know Ant's in a bit of a pickle – so all the males [...] that Joe Wicks is alright isn't he – they're not trying to show men in a positive light either are they

SD: No and they're on about in *Heat* there about Liam Payne and Cheryl are on the verge of breaking up – so yeah you are right – it's negative about the men as well as the women [...] I guess the only positive thing really is that the Celebrity Big Brother star Jonny they've put on a topless photo of him and they've called him a hunk – I dunno I guess he's kind of objectified a little bit but he'll probably have been paid to do it so I'm sure he doesn't mind too much

HT: But that's bad because he's got a shot where he's looking at his best whereas all the other people are papped in the worst possible looking thing

SD: | Yeah that's true |

HT: So the man looks good but everyone else looks like an idiot

SD: Yeah I'd say that Darcy Bussell on this *Woman* magazine – I'd say she looks pretty nice in that photo but then I guess that's to do with how she stays slim and ooh you could look as good as Darcy if you do this

HS: | Yeah (laughs) |

SD: And then I don't know who this woman is down here that's apparently ditched the scales but she looks really happy and she's smiling and she looks what I'd consider a more normal woman – she's not someone that's too thin or anything – she's someone that people can relate to

HT: And on this one (gestures to *Heat*) all of the people have had plastic surgery – so Khloe Kardashian, Cheryl she looks awful she's had that much done – whoever this is – oh Angie – people who have been called smug – who look the most natural have not had any plastic surgery

SD: Yeah but I think it's interesting cos a lot of the people who have had surgery still look really unhappy in these photos – whereas the ones that they've caught on the beach looking smug or whatever they're saying they actually look really relaxed and happy and whatever their body type is it's nice to see them photograph people like that because it doesn't really happen in gossip magazines

HT: Yeah

HS: But how much skin is on show on some of these as well – like that's all – and particularly *Women's Health* you know – like why do they need to be in their underwear? And she's got everything out (gestures back to all magazines) – Kerry's got her stomach out – Jonny's naked – these Vicky Imogen and Ferne are naked there aren't they?

SD: Yeah that's really unusual actually but I think with *Women's Health* – it's like going back to the physical appearance again they're all in these skimpy outfits and it's saying again *Women's Health* is about looking good and having a certain physique means that you have better health which just isn't true at all

HT: And then you don't have to be naked to be making a confession as well

SD: | Or love your body | No I don't understand that either
- and then underneath Vicky it says my man makes me feel more confident

HT: | Confident |

SD: Why can't you feel confident without your man?

HT: And that makes me want to vom – because it's awful isn't it – and then I worry less now I'm a mum

HS: There's no mention of men in these though is there (looking back at *Women's Health*) I can't see anything – there's something about dating there

SD: But it's not saying men specifically is it – it's just about an app

HS: There's lots about this Alice Liveing (looking at *Women's Health*) – let me change the way you train - there's nothing to say you have to look better for men but I think they're objectifying women on the cover

SD: Yeah I guess men would look at *Women's Health* more than they would the other gossip magazines because of the way the cover girl looks – but then the language doesn't suggest any male influence as such I don't think

HT: Yeah but that doesn't almost match with what they're saying on the side does it

HS: [...] I do think the mind stuff – the brief mention of the mind stuff is a positive

SD: I agree I think there's still so much stigma with mental health and it's good to see a magazine that [...] I guess is pretty popular is talking about it because I still think that we don't talk about mental health enough [...] whereas they are

HT: And this is about mind as well so willpower engaged is the secret to self-control – cos that's a mental part of it as well isn't it – so it's not just saying do this diet but dealing with the other part as well

SD: Yeah it's good that it's not just like mentioned as a one off feature and kind of there is a bit of a recurrence with mental health

HT: Yeah and I feel like it's talking about losing weight in a good way – not just that Kerry (looking back at *New!* magazine) losing two stone which she'll have done with diet jabs – what's a diet jab

SD: | I have no idea|

HT: That's concerning – people will start thinking what's a diet jab I'll look online it'll be really expensive so what else can I do to do that whereas this talks about like nutrients - vegan – on that one get lean so about shedding kilos but building muscle and getting rid of fat which is a positive way isn't it – rather than a jab

SD: Yeah I feel that it's good that there's not really a focus on celebrities either in *Women's Health* it's more just about how you can achieve whatever you might want to achieve rather than saying well this celebrity has had surgery or this celebrity has had some silly jab like it's saying how you can maybe put a positive routine into your lifestyle and kind of follow it out to – to see improvements or whatever you might want to - to change

HS: But then they've got normal people on here – they've got that lady that looks alright in *Woman* – and Ant's wife isn't famous is she – but they've made him look bad but they've made her look ten times worse

HT: Yeah – definitely

HS: Which just doesn't feel very fair cos she's not choosing to be in the spotlight is she – and then that (clears throat and points to chandelier story in *Closer*)

SD: |I don't even understand why that's in there |

HT: And with the heading of real life – because that's not [...] normal is it

SD: No but I find that quite random though because literally the rest of the magazine underneath is about bodies - like what people look like whether it's through surgery or diet jabs or whatever else in *Closer* that they're promoting then there's just that random chandelier story at the top like it just doesn't quite match the – promoting on the front cover

HT: Yeah and when I read that I think she's nuts she's absolutely mental and actually that's drawing a negative thing to mental health because is there something seriously wrong with her – is she lonely – is she not being looked after – in the way that she should be – so it's actually negative for that as well

HS: (laughs) I'm never going to look at chandeliers (laughs) the same way

Transcript C

Focus Group C

Date of Focus Group: 04/08/2018

Length of Focus Group: 00:46:46

Location:

Information about Focus Group participants

Participant 1

Age: 53

Relationship Status: Married

Occupation: Office Manager

Participant 2

Age: 61

Relationship Status: Married

Occupation: Administration Officer

Participant 3

Age: 43

Relationship Status: Engaged

Occupation: Administration Assistant

AS – Participant 1		- Indicates overlapping of speech
RG – Participant 2	-	- Indicates a pause of one second
SN – Participant 3	[...]	- Indicates a longer pause
	()	- Indicates an action by participant
	***	- Indicates use of participants name

AS: Let's just spread them out so we can have a look and look at all the different images yeah

RG: | Yeah | So which is the (grabs *Women's Health*)– so January you would expect to – focus on getting the body for the year wouldn't you

AS: Which it does doesn't it

RG: Get lean in 2018

AS: They've put here shed kilos and build muscle – and stripping fat – you hear a lot about this now don't you – strip fat – erm eating lean

SN: | Stripping fat | It's clean eating isn't it

AS: Yeah and shredding – is it called shredding

SN: Yeah shredding and building it back up

AS: And getting rid of weight – and so like in the past there used to be more emphasis on being slim but curvy and now it's all about being muscular and [...]

SN: And lean

RG: Sculpt killer abs

AG: Yeah – and that girl to me looks like boy shaped

SN: | Yeah |

RG: Yeah she's very boyish in figure – especially down the hip area

AS: | Yeah |

SN: She's an actress is Gemma Atkinson and she was on – yeah – and she was on *Strictly Come Dancing* last year and – she – that's what she's into fitness in a big way – yeah – so that's her – natural body shape

AS: | Oh is she | | Right |

RG: | Is she | But that headline there – the transform issue – for January – that's like saying change [...]

SN: Change cos you're not good enough as you are that sort of thing

RG: Yeah yeah

AS: yeah it is

SN: Aspire to this to better this and [...]

AS: But I don't think she - this girl's got as nice a figure as her (gestures between two *Women's Health* magazines) - see she's got the hips – but she's got the curve and the shape hasn't she and her legs are shaped nice

RG: | A bit more shape |

SN: | Yeah |

RG: Certainly on that one – where it's a bit more provocative – with the zip down - showing her cleavage [...] why do they need to do that

SN: | Why do they have to show that |

AS: And jewellery and stuff – that – that to me is like a calendar girl – like you'd see in men's garages [...] 'int it

SN: | Men's garages |

RG: Yes it is

AS: A bit eighties as well

RG: It's a bit glamour model isn't it

AS: Yeah it is a bit *Charlie's Angels* [...] and so – from January – they're wanting people to look like that

SN: | A bit *Charlie's Angels* | Do you know it's funny because this woman here on the main one that we're saying looking a bit provocative (holding *Women's Health*) I'm looking and they call her Natalie Rosier and she's a swimsuit model

AS: Aaaah - right

RG: So why are you using swimsuit models on the *Women's Health*

SN: Exactly cos that's not a true representation – of a normal

AS: Well none of them are are they

RG: No

SN: No – that's the problem

AS: None of them are they clearly all do an awful lot of work on trying to look like this

RG: I mean it's to do with health – but yet – it's all to do with your body

AS: Yeah

RG: There's more to health than – body image isn't there

SN: Mmm

AS: Yeah there is and you know as we've talked about in the past *** - being skinny doesn't necessarily mean being healthy

SN: Or happy

AS: No – it doesn't because you can stay skinny by just eating like - a couple of cakes a day – and not eating anything else [...] but that doesn't mean that you're healthy does it

SN: | Anything else | | Exactly |

Or fit for that matter – you know – just because a person is small in size it doesn't necessarily mean that they're a fitter and healthier person

AS: No – but the overall look though – they do – they look good don't they and that's what is selling the magazine – isn't it

RG: The other thing as well – it's all body image on the front – but yet there's just some very small [...] headings to do with health like fertility and then there was another one I just saw somewhere on another one about – I don't know where was it – was it to do with

AS: Is it on there

SN: Well there's something on there about this health scandal in the UK

RG: | But the fact that it's called *Women's Health* but actually – the first impression is that it's to do with women's image |

AS: Image and appearance

RG: And then all the smaller headings just mention a bit of health

AS: Yeah – the other thing as well that strikes me is – not all slim – erm fit people are beautiful but it's the image isn't it they've picked really pretty girls

RG: | Have you noticed all of them have got long flowing locks |

AS: Flowing hair pretty girls

SN: Ultimately they want to sell the magazine don't they

AS: Buy the magazine and stick to these and you'll look like that

SN: | And you'll look like that |

AS: Absolutely [...] yeah

SN: Exactly

RG: Now you've three blondes – there's actually only one issue that has a bit of erm ethnicity about it

SN: | Ethnicity | Exactly yeah

AS: Yeah and she's a brunette yeah so

RG: | But predominantly long blonde flowing locks |

SN: There's three – there's three women that more or less look the same [...] same colouring – same hair – same – colour eyes even – perfect teeth (laughs)

RG: | Yeah |

AS: So they're playing to [...] and what men like – blonde [...] athletic – curvy – curvy some of them but that [...] yeah – blonde attractive girl

RG: | The model image |

SN: | And what women might want to aspire to |

| Fit-looking |

RG: This particular cover – for January – the word transform is on two headings there – why do they think that people need to transform themselves

AS: Yeah

SN: Maybe they're trying to [...]

RG: | You know why do people want to change – the way they look all the time

SN: Because maybe it's things like this that make women in particular feel that as they – they're not good enough – in order to be considered beautiful if you like – you've got to look like any one of these models

AS: And to be accepted

RG: It's all about body image isn't it

AS: You've got to look like that – yeah

SN: Yeah

RG: The clothes they're wearing as well – why do they have to show so much body

SN: So much skin yeah

RG: You know – you don't walk about in normal life in gym kit do you
AS: No – no
SN: Well realistically who actually goes to a gym and exercises like wearing that
RG: | Why is *Women's Health* all to do with
the gym |
AS: Yeah
SN: Yeah
RG: You know – there's more to women's health than going to the gym
AS: | They're definitely playing to erm the male
eye as well aren't they and what females think males want to see from their women |
SN: | Yeah |
AS: How girls should look
SN: I know – I know we're talking about these magazines here but I subscribe to a – erm a
women's running magazine and what they use on their front cover I think is more realistic
because they actually use normal women that are going out there running and they've had
different shape sized women on the front cover of the magazine – and I mean larger women
and – and smaller women
AS: No – cos these aren't your ordinary women off the street - they're all either models or
presenters or in television of [...] well like yeah
RG: | They're not | Well like you said that girl there
[...]
AS: | Well she's a presenter isn't she Maya Jama |
RG: | And she's an actress | (points to *Women's Health*)
AS: She's a presenter
RG: So they're not using – women off the street
SN: Exactly
AS: No
SN: It's not a true representation is it – you know these aren't true representations
RG: No
SN: I mean alright maybe I'm – assuming but these women probably have a lot of time on
their hands and this is their career how they look – is their career isn't it – it's in their best
interest to look as good [...]
AS: | It is yes | They've got to invest
in how they look
SN: Exactly – it's time and money – and not every woman has that
RG: It's giving people the impression that *Women's Health* is all about body image and going
to the gym and working out – and not necessarily about eating healthily – having a good work
life balance – you know – people going to work every day and coming home looking after a
family – doing the housework – you know there's no mention there of if you do your hoovering
and your dusting and your polishing you actually burn so many calories
AS: | Mental health | | Yeah |
SN: | Exactly | (laughs) I
mean does it actually make people happy – you know to put that kind of pressure of
themselves to – these kind of do put pressure on you don't they as an individual
AS: | And it's hard work | to keep that
up – we all know that when we have a bit of a spurt at trying to get fit – it's hard work 'int it to
keep it up all the time – you've literally got to go to the gym every day to look like that
SN: | Mmm | Yes

AS: And your ordinary woman on the street who is busy like us running around trying to look after a family keep a house and – erm – you haven't got time for – to to be in the gym – to look like that have you

SN: Yeah

AS: But it doesn't – you know – it's all about – to say it's *Women's Health* – none of these (gestures to *Women's Health* magazines) – I don't think many of these headings talk about – well [...] for me – menopause

SN: | Menopause |

RG: | Women's health | | menopause | going through all the struggles – mental health issues – that's all to do with women's health

SN: | fertility |

AS: It is yeah

RG: I mean at work – we have so many people now with stress anxiety mental health issues

SN: | Yeah |

AS: Yeah we do – and it seems to be very little on it

RG: Well there's that heading there (points to *Women's Health*) – strong mind – outsmart your inner quitter

SN: | your inner quitter |

AS: Yeah

RG: And that just doesn't – it's done in black lettering – at the bottom of the cover – it just doesn't stand out and yet the ones that stand out are sculpt killer abs

AS: Yeah

SN: Yeah – smash your body goals

RG: You know – that – that to me – that [...]

SN: Fall back in love with carbs

RG: I can honestly say if I saw any of those covers on the shelves I would not refer that to my type of health

AS: They're not directed at our age are they

RG: Not our age group

AS: No definitely not aimed at our age group – these are for young people

RG: I certainly – I don't think I would buy it

SN: | I wouldn't buy it at all |

AS: Teenagers up to twenty-somethings

RG: Yeah – I certainly wouldn't be attracted by that – whereas looking at these (gestures to *Closer*, *New!*, *Woman* and *heat*) – because you look at that copy of *Woman* [...] what one is it – look at Davina McCall

AS: | Yeah | She looks absolutely dreadful doesn't she

SN: She's lost too much weight

AS: | That is not an healthy look and her face – she's so gaunt |

SN: She's lost too much body fat hasn't she

AS: But I saw some pictures of her in a magazine the other day and she just look dreadful – she's gone too far

RG: But look at that cover of *Woman* actually – you know *Woman* used to be the sort of magazine my mum would buy – my mum would not go and buy that – because every heading on that front cover – is to do with the way you look again

AS: | No | It is – the secret to staying slim – guilt-free diet – why we ditched the scales for good – gaunt Davina - styles – oh we've got one thing about jeans – to suit all shapes

RG: | Yeah | Again that's January – that's January again so it's all this
 feel guilt after Christmas
 AS: It is yeah
 SN: They're tapping into people overindulging at Christmas aren't they
 AS: Yeah
 RG: Yeah – in fact these are all January covers look – and every one is to do with the body
 AS: *New!* body battles (points to *New!* magazine)
 RG: Oh there's a man on that cover – wow – two little pictures of men (points to *heat*)
 SN: | What's he got to say | I'd do
 anything when I've had a couple (laughs)
 RG: Right (laughs)
 AS: I must admit I've got to give Kerry Katona her due – I'm quite pleased she's doing alright
 she's had a [...]
 RG: (laughs)
 SN: | But she's got health battles – she's got mental health issues |
 RG: But her body image – when you think of her – body – that's a real example of a yo-yo
 dieter – up and down and struggling – in fact she's on that cover as well look (points to
Closer)
 AS: | Yes |
 | Someone who's really struggled – she has but you know now [...] |
 SN: Same picture
 RG: Same picture
 AS: She's now finally I think – I think she's finally conquering it – I've seen her in lots of things
 and on Instagram and she's doing really really well but – she's been made to feel that that's
 not acceptable how she looks there (points to image on *Closer*) and she's got to lose weight
 RG: | Mmm | They're even referring to – to erm procedures here look
 (points to *Closer*) – they're referring to lipo – whatever on that – desperate Lauren's top to toe
 lipo so [...]
 SN: Well she's just like plastic surgery
 RG: And diet jabs – so they're talking about procedures – to help make your body [...]
 SN: | Ah |
 AS: | Well I've never
 heard of diet jabs |
 SN: I've never heard of diet jabs
 RG: Well that's what that [...]
 AS: | And she has transformed hasn't she - I thought she'd just done it with
 healthy eating |
 SN: I thought she'd just done it with exercise and like [...]
 AS: Yeah – and cutting out junk but clearly not then
 SN: Yeah – but – hang on a minute – do you believe everything that's printed – because [...]
 AG: I don't know *** because they're bringing out all sorts to stop people – people who have
 no willpower and can't diet and healthy eat they're bringing all sorts out aren't they and after
 you know – fat sucked off your tummy
 SN: Yeah liposuction
 AS: Somebody even contacted *** (referring to daughter) the other day to ask her if she
 wanted some liposuction on her tummy through Instagram through looking at - people's
 pictures on Instagram
 SN: | Oh my God |
 RG: But what can that do to somebody mentally

AS: Well – it can also be deliberate to [...]

SN: | They'll think why what's wrong with me |

RG: Because somebody who's feeling a bit low might think ooh gosh they must think I'm fat

AS: Yeah

RG: They must think and – and then you get insecure about your image don't you – and someone like *** - is thin as a rake

AS: And young and impressionable

RG: And eighteen years old

AS: Yeah – cos she said to me do you think I need to – but you know diet jabs and liposuction and stuff they're peddling it to young people aren't they as a quick fix

SN: If you're having a jab that can make you do that what exactly is it doing to your body to make it shed weight – that's quite worrying and I'd say dangerous

AS: | To your body |

Yeah it is

RG: See look at that of Pixie (points to *heat*) – is that Pixie Lott

SN: No

AS: | No it's Pixie Geldof |

SN: | Pixie Geldof |

RG: Pixie Geldof [...] but that's quite a – a natural picture – to me that's a natural image

AS: Yeah – it is that's what your average twenty something looks like 'int it

RG: Yeah – and that is good that they've actually portrayed that and they haven't actually put anything derogatory about her

AS: No – or doctored the picture or anything

RG: More smug stars inside [...]

SN: But why are they smug

RG: Because they're happy

SN: Because they're slim

AS: Mmm

RG: She's – she's curvy

AS: | But it's all about these celebs hitting the beach 'int it and so they're calling them smug because they're feeling confident enough to go – to go on the beach |

RG: But what's wrong with them looking the way they do – cos they look fab

AS: | Absolutely |

SN: So they want people to be jealous about how they look

AS: Yeah

SN: Because I'll tell you one – like you know – we've got Khloe Kardashian there (points to *heat*)

AS: Yep

SN: They are have a huge fan base don't they – and whatever they do – however small – so many people copy them don't they – so you should – I think celebrities – they have a – they can influence how people – think can't they – and how they perceive themselves

AS: | Oh yeah and they definitely do yeah |

SN: And in some ways they have a responsibility – to make sure that what they're doing is a healthy representation of – of a woman's body – you know like Kim Kardashian she's always – she's always in the news regarding her behind and everything – but I like that because her behind isn't – it doesn't conform does it [...] it's a larger [...] but – but other things that she does [...]

AS: | No | But she's always been slated out of the sister's for being too big hasn't she (points to *Closer*) Khloe [...]

SN: | For being too big |

RG: Do you know out of those four magazines for that January one – that copy of *heat* is actually the one that is the most down to earth – because all the others obviously January refers to body battles – diets – etc – but actually the headline on that is to do with Cheryl and Liam – make or break – which is quite interesting really for a January cover – that's quite refreshing I would say – and then – you've got – this copy of *heat* is the one that's got the one's with alright they're referring them to being smug – but pictures of actual normal people – normal people [...] normal sizes rather than people

AS: | Make or break up |

SN: | Most realistic | They don't look smug I don't know why they would say that though

RG: No – but yes I don't get that more smug stars inside either

SN: No

AS: It's strange though 'int it because – you know – *Women's Health* is paramount about women's health but this is all about these ones really – are all about shaming people for the way they look so Davina's too thin – so you're either too fat or you're too thin – there's no middle ground is there – you can't win whatever you do

RG: | Yes |

SN: | Mmm mmm |

RG: Yeah yeah – desperate Lauren's top-to-toe (looking at *Closer*) – desperate – why is she desperate

AS: Cos she looks like she's had some surgery done on her neck [...]

SN: | Well in this one they're saying that she's had a – a chin job | (Looking at *New!*)

RG: Down at the bottom of this one it just refers to I love my baby curves (gestures to *Closer*) – somebody who's obviously just had a baby [...] I worry less now I'm a mum – so is it as you go to the next stage of your life you become more accepting of how you are

AS: Yeah – yeah I suppose so

RG: But why haven't they any clothes on – they're obviously all – they have haven't they – they're just covering themselves

SN: They don't need to be naked to make those kinds of statements do they

RG: It would be better if they didn't [...]

SN: Well what does that mean it sounds like a retro kind of step really for – for women's image if you like cos this is something that they probably used to do in the seventies and eighties – it's like you say at what point does that prove- or make

AS: See there on this one about Michelle erm Keegan (gestures to *New!*) – Mark her husband who's been living in LA hasn't he – Mark's fitness masterplan to get her Hollywood ready – so she wouldn't be accepted in Hollywood if she doesn't look like a certain way

SN: | There's nothing wrong with her |

AS: No you see she's a normal shaped looking girl

RG: I mean she can be on the thin side can't she

AS: But she looks quite curvy there doesn't she which I think's nice – I think she's nicer than when she's really – skinny looking but that headline again suggests that you're not acceptable unless you look a certain way – so she'll not be accepted in Hollywood until she [...] conforms and looks [...]

SN: | Mmm yeah |

RG: Until she's got that body