

**A Girl's Best Friend?**  
**Socio-Cultural Definitions of Beauty in Teenage Magazines**

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Sacha Willetts

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the young women of New Zealand who have ever felt left out of beauty's definition. May social restrictions on women dissolve so that we can appreciate and accept ourselves unconditionally.

## **Ethical Approval**

Ethics Approval (11/48) from the AUT University Ethics Committee was gained prior to commencement of the study and written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the commencement of data collection.



## Terminology

Some of the key terms used throughout this thesis require a specific understanding and therefore clarification is established below.

*Communicative Text* (Talbot, 2007): any media text that is communicating a particular message to an audience.

*Consumer Femininity* (Talbot, 1995): the way in which magazines define femininity in terms of products and consumption. In order to be accepted into femininity one must purchase products aligned with the beauty industry, for example cosmetics, hair products, skin products, perfumes.

*Discourse* (Fairclough, 1992): the structures and rules involved in the process of encoding and decoding a media text. They are bodies of knowledge and practices that shape people and recognize that meaning making is an element of the social process.

*Gendered Script* (Currie, 1999): the inclusion of strict guidelines in magazines that encourage a particular enacting of femininity.

*Genre* (Fairclough, 1992): semiotic ways of acting and interacting and the recognition that texts may draw upon a plurality of genres.

*Ideational* (Talbot, 2007): the function of language to communicate ideas.

*Ideology* (Gitlin, 2003): the sets of beliefs that underpin media texts that result in forming the base of social practice.

*Imagined Audience* (Talbot, 2007): the invention by magazine producers of a reader who holds specific attributes and interests so that writers then know how to interact with them.

*Instructional Discourse* (Brown et al., 2002): the presence of guides or 'how to' content in magazines.

*Interpersonal* (Talbot, 2007): the function of language to establish and maintain social identities and relationships.

*Hegemony* (Gitlin, 2003): the way those who rule dominant institutions establish their power over individuals they rule.

*Lolita Effect* (Durham, 2008): the effect of oversexualisation that sexual media content has on young girls.

*Mediated Quasi-Interaction* (Thompson, 1995): the creation of a social situation in which individuals are linked together by communication.

*Modality* (Hodge & Kress, 1988): the truth value of media images. Comprises of visual indicators that are perceived as indications of realism. There are different types of modality, these being naturalistic, technological/scientific, sensory, abstract.

*Negotiation* (Gitlin, 2003): the level of questioning that individuals perform when receiving media messages.

*Orders of Discourse* (Fairclough, 1992): the understanding that discourse is determined by underlying socio-cultural rules. Looks at the structure of conventionalized practices that are available to magazine producers and readers and the influence they have on encoding and decoding processes.

*Personalisation* (Fairclough, 2001): the way magazines connect themselves with a reader i.e by speaking to them directly in order to create a close, informal dialogue.

*Repertoires* (Hermes, 1995): cultural resources that individuals fall back on in order to create understanding.

*Social Comparison Theory* (Wykes & Gunter, 2005): occurs when people establish their identities through making comparisons between themselves and those with popular attributes.

*Styles* (Fairclough, 2003): the recognition that discourse features alongside specific bodily behavior in constituting particular ways of being.

*Synthetic Sisterhood* (Talbot, 2007): refers to the positive relationship created by magazine producers to their readers; the creation of a false sisterhood.

## Abstract

There are many magazine titles available in the local New Zealand market targeted at teenage girls. This study closely examines four mainstream titles, the internationally produced *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus) as well as the local *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. I begin with the proposition that such titles reflect specific discourses of beauty that includes socio-cultural ideologies relating to gender and consumerism. These beauty discourses focus on creating both a cosmetic culture (Tebbel, 2000) and a negative relationship with the body. Through reading teen magazines young women are equipped with tools they require to pursue ideological ideals of feminine beauty. Such discourses and ideologies impact on young women's understandings of what constitutes beauty and the development of their female subjectivity. Although connections to a specific culture are displayed through the inclusion of local discourses incorporated into the content of local magazines, this conflicts with the extent to which hegemonic discourses of beauty subordinate local to global discourses.

The differing standards of beauty between national and international magazines reflect conflicting messages concerning female subjectivity for young women. The emphasis on physical beauty reflects the societies from which each are produced and the varying content encourages a sense of belonging to a wider geographic community of like-minded peers.

This study sought to investigate ideological messages concerning beauty within written text and image of teen magazines. Information on how the targeted audiences interacted with the magazines was gathered carrying out four focus groups with teenage girls. Analysis of magazine data showed the four titles engaging differently with a generic beauty discourse influencing reader's experiences with the magazines. Focus group analysis showed that the broader the content included in the magazines the more connections readers had with the title. While all magazines followed generic conventions for teenage magazines, the New Zealand magazines were found to include a variety of content that was not necessarily linked with beauty or fashion.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The mainstream media, which is dominant in popular culture and society, defines beauty as a quality pertaining to the physical body and in general maintains and therefore supports a narrow representation of what constitutes beauty. Women's magazines are a media genre that have always encouraged the pursuit of beauty and have assisted in establishing specific socio-cultural ideologies surrounding beauty. Teen magazines are a related genre that works to establish these ideologies in younger women yet to reach adulthood. Teen magazines are defined as magazines aimed at female teenage readers. They usually consist of gossip, news, fashion tips and interviews and may include posters, stickers, small samples of cosmetics or other products and inserts. This study closely examines four mainstream titles, the internationally produced *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus) as well as the locally produced *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. Such titles reflect specific *discourses* of beauty that contain socio-cultural ideologies relating to gender and consumerism.

Scholars have regarded teen magazines as problematic (see Talbot, 1995; Currie, 1999; Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Durham 2008) because of their ideologically informed and therefore limited understandings of teenage girl experience. The genre provides both visual and written cues for behaviour, interests, and desirable physical attributes for young readers. The number of teen titles currently available in New Zealand suggests that internationally and nationally produced teen magazines have remained a popular media genre for young women. The different messages conveyed by the titles are of interest to this thesis as they may be confusing for young readers and thus may impact the development of their female subjectivity. In order to assess these messages and their impact it is necessary to examine both the magazines' content and the readers and their relationships to the four selected titles.

### Research Topic

Previous international research on teen magazines has focused on examining questions surrounding beauty messages in either American or British magazines and the impact on

their local audiences. Because societies and cultures are not universal but rather localised, this research may not be relevant or apply globally. In New Zealand there has been very little local research carried out on the current state of teen magazines and their impact on young Kiwi women. In particular, published works are largely lacking and only a small number of academic theses, written in recent years, exist.

The encoding of beauty messages is of particular interest to this thesis as the *discourses* communicated through written text and image encourage a specific reading of the magazines. Beauty *discourses* represented in magazine content hold a strong relationship with ideologies concerning gender and consumerism. These *discourses* are assumed to have a level of influence on young readers, impacting their personal understandings of beauty and subsequently the development of their female subjectivity.

Also of importance are the sometimes contradictory messages communicated from the range of titles available. In particular, messages may differ between local and international titles as the latter are primarily written for a national audience yet are read much more globally. Focusing this study on the local context is important due to the popularity of locally produced teen titles *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. Because New Zealand is a small country it is interesting to analyse the local messages in these magazines within the context of global culture. International titles *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus) will thus also be examined in order to provide a point of reference.

The relationship between these local and international magazines and the local and international versions of reality television series is useful for underscoring the points this thesis wishes to make about the mass media's representations of beauty for teenage girls. Magazines are not the only popular media genre to represent very specific ideals of beauty. For example, the *Next Top Model* television franchise, which began in the USA and is now produced internationally, may be seen to convey similar ideological messages concerning beauty evident in teen magazines. The series appeals to the same target audience and often features teenage girls as participants.

## Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher subjectivity affects the research process as a researcher's attitudes and beliefs may be apparent within the analysis (Iacono, Brown & Holtham, 2009). I am an outsider in the sense that I am outside the age bracket that teen magazines are aimed at. Although I have had experience with teen magazines in my teenage years, their current state was unknown to me prior to undertaking this research. That said, being outside of the target audience for teen magazines enabled me to examine the content from a different point of view. The topic was of interest to me as I held certain assumptions about the messages present in the genre and I had a desire to find out if they were correct. One of these assumptions was that young women are being encouraged to build a subjectivity that is primarily based on pursuing a fictional definition of beauty. I also assumed that these had largely negative effects on young women, increasing anxieties around the body and low self-esteem issues. Personally I find the media's representations of female beauty hugely problematic and believe women's position in society is hindered by these unrealistic expectations. Women's magazines such as *Cleo* and *Cosmopolitan* provide women with access to a limited field of interests that are predominantly of a superficial nature and include guidelines on how to please the opposite sex. My impression was that teen magazines included similarly limited content.

## Research Purpose and Objectives

Despite the presence of international research on teen magazines there is very little local commentary. This study attempts to address some of the gaps in local literature on teen magazines' representations of beauty.

In saying this, three New Zealand Master's theses written in recent years that include research on teen titles must be acknowledged. Firstly, A. M. Pyke's 2006 study focused on the discursive construction of girls' sexuality in *Dolly* (Aus) magazine. While my study only briefly engages with sexuality, this thesis was useful for providing background information on the relationship of New Zealand teenage girls to *Dolly*. Secondly, Samantha Yee-Yee Foo's 2010 thesis is the most closely related to this study, analysing the pressure to conform to both society's and the media's standards of beauty.

However, there are clear distinctions in our approaches as Foo focuses on looking at traditional and contemporary cultural beauty routines and how the diversity of these practices is overlooked by one standardised version of beauty. Her field research also utilised an older demographic, engaging with women aged 18 years and over. Thirdly, Carole Wright's 2008 thesis, while not specifically looking at teen magazines, studied role models for young girls with an emphasis on media images which was helpful in providing an insight into how young girls read these images.

As outlined above, this current research explored four major titles available to the local teenage audience: *Crème* (NZ), *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA). Firstly, a textual analysis was carried out on the beauty content of the magazines, examining *discourses* within images and the written text. Teenage girls' interaction with the magazines was also explored, which added their perspectives in an attempt to locate the magazine analysis within the decoding process. It is important to acknowledge that this study's field research includes a small sample group and therefore results may not be applicable to all young New Zealand women; they nevertheless may provide some useful generalisable points.

In order to contextualise the study, the reality television programmes *America's Next Top Model* and *New Zealand's Next Top Model* were briefly evaluated in the study's focus groups. Local viewership ratings show that the last season of *America's Next Top Model* out-rated the local version, averaging 95,000 viewers each episode while the last local version averaged only 30,600 viewers per episode. The dialogue on these television shows was used to introduce a broader discussion on *discourses* of beauty in popular media and culture and the complementary relationship between the *Next Top Model* shows and teen magazines was considered.

*Crème* and *Girlfriend* as New Zealand magazines are the most popular titles for teenage girls in New Zealand with 45,000 and 59,000 monthly readership respectively in 2011 (Roy Morgan Research, 2012). *Dolly* (Aus) is the next most popular with 29,000 monthly readership (Roy Morgan Research, 2012) while *Seventeen* (USA) is much less popular and not as readily available, with only big franchise magazine sellers importing it, thus local readership numbers were unavailable. The magazines are all very similar in

layout and content, revolving around beauty and fashion, celebrity gossip, advertising and popular culture.

This study used a combination of largely qualitative methodological tools with small-scale content analysis in order to separate out the content and beauty messages in teen magazines. This thesis focuses on providing an analysis of textual production through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and social semiotics that will aid in extracting underlying ideological messages and interpretations.

CDA encourages the examination of the wider frame through which a text is produced, providing information on the social and discursive practices involved in both production and reception. Social semiotics allows for the deconstruction of beauty images within the texts, breaking down the different layers of the image in order to reveal ideological messages concerning beauty, gender and consumerism. Qualitative methodological approaches allow researchers to explore various interpretations of texts alongside an in-depth analysis of text and *ideology*.

## **Thesis Statement**

There are many magazine titles available in the local New Zealand market targeted at teenage girls. This study closely examines four mainstream titles: the internationally produced *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus) as well as the locally produced *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. This thesis begins with the proposition that such titles reflect specific *discourses* of beauty that include socio-cultural ideologies relating to gender and consumerism. These beauty *discourses* focus on creating both a cosmetic culture (Tebbel, 2000) and a negative relationship with the body. Through reading teen magazines young women are equipped with tools they require to pursue ideological ideals of feminine beauty. Such *discourses* and ideologies impact on young women's understandings of what constitutes beauty and the development of their female subjectivity. Although connections to a specific culture are displayed through the inclusion of local *discourses* incorporated into the content of local magazines, this conflicts with the extent to which hegemonic *discourses* of beauty subordinate local to global *discourses*.



This research study has been designed to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) How are beauty *discourses* in teen magazine titles encoded for readers and what is the relationship of beauty *discourses* to ideologies of gender and consumerism?
- 2) How do beauty *discourses* encoded in the words and images of teen magazines, impact on young women's personal definitions of beauty and how might this relate to the development of their subjectivities?
- 3) To what extent do these teen magazines create and maintain connections with specific local cultures through their content and what are the implications for readers?

## **Thesis Outline**

This thesis is divided into five chapters.

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the academic literature pertaining to beauty and the media, with particular attention paid to the genre of teen magazines and the development of young women's subjectivities.

Chapter 3 presents the research process. It provides a detailed analysis of the several methodological approaches and methods employed in this study, including content analysis, CDA, social semiotics, focus groups and thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses the research findings and is divided into three themes: beauty *discourse*, development of subjectivity, and the interaction of local and international *discourses*. Each theme will concentrate on textual analysis with support from focus group findings in the discussion of sub-topics related to each theme.

Chapter 5 is the summary and conclusions chapter, providing an overview of the significant findings of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

The mass media presents women with paradoxical messages regarding being female (Douglas, 1994) and tends to create as much as reflect reality. Its relationship towards women exists to make money and also to make meaning (Kitch, 2001). The main economic structure of the mass media places limits on circulating ideologies in order to create meaning of the world around us. Gitlin (2003) explains this further by stating that “the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete” (p. 2). Teen magazines are located within this definition of mass media and play a vital role in creating and maintaining ideologies related to gender and beauty for young readers. Gough-Yates (2003) describes the wider business of women’s magazines as being heavily reliant on social and cultural processes for its effective operation, thus the magazines are often encoded with socio-cultural ideologies that encourage the development of a specific subjectivity.

Teenagers in today’s society are faced with an increasing volume of media, particularly in New Zealand, which is recognized as one of the most media-saturated countries in the world (Clark, 2008). Youth are confronted with various forms on a daily basis, including magazines. Magazines have been in circulation since the 19th century and are particularly popular amongst women both young and old. This study closely examines teenage girls’ relationship with the magazine medium. In 2005 it was found that 12 to 19 year olds in America spend approximately \$175 billion annually on magazines and that 60–80% of 15–18 year olds reported that they read magazines daily (Borzekowski & Bayer, 2005). Teen magazines were first conceived in the USA in the 1940’s, with an early publication being *Calling All Girls* (or *CAG*) which debuted in 1941 and was “primarily filled with comics . . . [but it] also contained short stories and advice on fashion, manners and beauty” (Forman-Brunnell, 2001, p. 335). While *CAG* never had a huge circulation, the introduction of *Seventeen* in September of 1944 was much more successful, with the magazine achieving a circulation of 2.5 million by 1947 (Forman-Brunnell, 2001, p. 335).

The subject of teenage girls and magazines is one that has been extensively engaged with (see Wolf, 1990; McRobbie, 1991; Talbot, 1995; Currie, 1999; Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Wykes & Gunter, 2005; Firminger, 2006; Oppliger, 2008). It is also recognised that literature surrounding girls' magazines is directly related to works on women's magazines. Given this context, this study can be described as unique as the most recent publications of *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus), *Seventeen* (USA) and *Crème* (NZ) (all of which have changed considerably over the past 5–10 years) have not been comparatively analysed from the local viewpoint of New Zealand.

This thesis aims to explore specific beauty *discourses* in both language and images. The inclusion of semiotic analysis and focus group responses in the methodological framework allowed me to investigate these aspects of the magazines in more depth. Topics that will work alongside the primary focus of beauty, for example the “New Zealandness” of the locally produced titles, are also incorporated. The *Next Top Model* reality television franchise is also briefly examined as a supporting text in thinking about specific local *discourses* in relation to beauty.

This chapter is divided into three key sections. Firstly, a close consideration of the beauty *discourses* included in teen magazines, their connection with ideologies concerning gender and consumerism, and the way the *discourses* are encoded for readers is undertaken. Secondly, the development of adolescent female subjectivity in terms of youth, the role that media plays in the lives of young women, and, more specifically, what it means to be female and how this is defined through teen magazines are discussed. Thirdly, young women and aspects of local culture are briefly looked at, because the study involves examining four titles, half of which are produced internationally and half domestically. Local and international *discourses* will be looked at in terms of their different definitions of beauty. The literature review provides a foundation from which the research questions are addressed.

## Beauty Discourses

The concept of beauty is complex and its definition is largely established by the media who ensure its meaning is constantly evolving. It exists both objectively and universally and is of significance to both males and females (Wolf, 1990). Yet the model of beauty seems unobtainable for many, as a recent study commissioned by Dove found that only 4% of thousands of women from 10 countries around the world consider themselves to be beautiful (Dove, 2012). Beauty's significance within culture and society relies on women's ability to view and evaluate themselves from the outside (Orbach, 1998). The term may have evolved over time yet there is a focus on the use of cosmetics and the attractiveness of the body. This type of content is evident in teen magazines and may have many consequences. Byerly and Ross (2006) argue that women are vulnerable to gender stereotyping across all media but "nowhere is this more obvious than in the shaping of an entirely unreal construction of passive female beauty in women's magazines" (p. 49).

### *Encoding*

The beauty *discourse* is encoded in a specific way in teen magazines and tends to address readers as a homogeneous group, primed to receive the same advice regardless of social and cultural differences. Because *discourses* are expressed through the generic conventions of a magazine by utilising familiar conventions of written language and layout, ideological messages may sometimes be overlooked. Talbot's (1995) concept of a "*synthetic sisterhood*", which was influenced by Fairclough's (2001) notion of *synthetic personalisation*, shows how these narrow ideologies are communicated to young readers. Magazines create a specific producer/audience relationship by identifying the development of an "*imagined audience*" (Talbot, 2007, p. 147) which is equipped with certain attributes and values with the intention that editors and writers then know how to interact with them. The problem with a fabricated audience is that any real readers who have similarities with this imagined reader are more likely to unconsciously take up the position it suggests (Talbot, 2007).

Social theorist John Thompson similarly developed a three-way distinction between modes of communication, one that is significant here and relates to Talbot's *imagined audience* concept. Thompson (1995) calls this mode "*mediated quasi-interaction*" which "creates a certain kind of social situation in which individuals are linked together in a process of communication and symbolic exchange" (p. 84–85). Through this type of communication a specific structured situation occurs whereby individuals produce symbolic forms for others with which they form a special, if remote, bond of friendship and loyalty. This is descriptive of the relationship between the magazine producer and the reader created through the producer locating themselves in the privileged position of "friend". They establish themselves as the cool, knowledgeable and older acquaintance that is ready to pass on skills and advice to the younger reader (Talbot, 1995).

Generic characteristics within teen magazines are pronounced. Examples include the predominance of literal instructions or step-by-step guides (Talbot, 2007). This use of a 'How To' or instruction-based *discourse* is prevalent throughout the magazines and reflects the extent to which teenagers consider them a source of information (Brown et al., 2002). Pyke (2006) found the most popular reason for reading *Dolly* was to obtain information (p. 44). This was also found to be true of Currie's research (1999) which showed that girls wanted answers to everyday problems and "useful stuff" to read (p. 152). Young women are encouraged to seek information on such topics that are deemed ideologically important to their development as a female, for example how to wear make-up or talk to boys. Kearney (2006) argues that "they are encouraged to seek out cultural texts that can help them negotiate the liminal and often troubling experiences of adolescence and, more importantly, their entrance to womanhood" (p. 137).

### *Advertising*

It is obvious that advertising is how magazines make the vast majority of their income, and Douglas (1994) and Durham (2008) concur with Wolf's (1990) statement that many industries and companies would collapse if women discontinued the pursuit of beauty. Teen magazines contain a high level of advertising material, with almost every page featuring a type of advertisement. Indeed, McCracken's (1993) case for interpreting magazines as pure advertising due to the high density of advertorial content remains salient for the current context. This situation fits with Brown, Steele and Walsh-

Childers' (2002) observations that the driving forces behind *Seventeen* magazine are profit and maintaining the status quo (p. 193). Wolf (1990) attributes the emphasis on consumerism to the desire to maintain a male-orientated culture, saying that "somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they will buy more things if they kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties'" (p. 66). Within advertisements the body is often the enemy, in need of harnessing through the acquiring of products (Frost, 2001).

In relation to this, Talbot (1995) has extensively covered the concept of *consumer femininity* common within teen magazines; this being the idea that in order to be considered feminine you must indulge in a high level of consumerism. "Consumer communities" (Talbot, 1995, p. 574) are also created, whereby admission to a specific exclusive community is achieved by purchasing a product advertised. This situation is designed for sustainability, with the underlying messages in a teen magazine grooming girls for a life of consumerism.

### *Cosmetics*

As far as teen magazines are concerned, attractiveness of the face tends to be connected with advertising cosmetics. The 21st century cosmetics industry aims to sell women an ideal image of themselves through the use of association and persuasion (Dade, 2007) and therefore cosmetics are associated with specific attributes and ideals of beauty that aim to persuade readers to conform in order to be considered beautiful. Women featured in magazines are never shown without their faces made up, thus naturalising the role of cosmetics. In an attempt to sway young women into the use of cosmetics teen magazines focus a high volume of content on the topic. For example, in 2005 Coty Cosmetics was responsible for \$19 million worth of advertising in *Seventeen* (USA) magazine (Durham, 2008). Cosmetics are promoted as having the ability to transform and therefore increase one's attractiveness. Despite cultural differences about beauty, a slim body with unblemished skin is generally accepted as the norm (Cortese, 2008). Purchasing products in order to achieve increased self-esteem and confidence is often encouraged by magazines. Advertisements for cosmetics typically "present the ideal female beauty as someone inhuman in her flawlessness" (Romaine, 1999, p. 256).

This relates to the way that the media supports a “cosmetic culture” (Tebbel, 2000, p. 40). Teen magazines exemplify aspects of an “instant extreme make-over culture” (Martin, 2007, p. 94), promoting the notion that by following the magazine’s advice you can achieve a look similar to the models and celebrities featured. Often it is implied that all areas of the face must be addressed in order to achieve an acceptable look, for example the eyes, the eyebrows, the lips, the cheeks and so on. The message that women must always be fully made up suggests that the natural face is undesirable. Even Wolf (1990) believes that cosmetics are acceptable as long as women do not feel invisible or ugly without them. However, women may not always be conscious of these negative feelings and not see their obligation to wear cosmetics as a negative notion administered by socio-cultural ideologies.

### *The Body*

Representations of the ideal body work alongside this cosmetic culture in teen magazines. Borzekowski and Bayer (2005) point out that body image “is a plastic, constantly changing concept, continuously modified by bodily growth, trauma or decline and significantly influenced by the ever changing interaction with the social environment” (p. 290). We need only look at the models used in Western media to convey the ever-changing body and beauty ideal. Art of the 1400’s to the 1700’s celebrated a body shape that would now be considered fat, yet through the ages this changed to a more voluptuous, hour-glass frame in the 19th century and a fluctuation between a desire for a fuller figure and a slender figure between the 1920’s and the 1940’s. A stronger relationship between women and body image emerged with the popularity of thin model Twiggy in the 1960’s, whose body shape gained the positive attention of both media and males (Kitch, 2001). These constant shifts in the body ideal are directed at females who are involved in “constantly adjusting one’s own image to fit time and place in an ever-changing game of images” (Winship, 1987, p. 101). Beauty and body image never remain constant for long, ensuring a steady pursuit in order to keep up.

The female body is often used widely in advertising as it holds the power to persuade and is seen as a commodity (Romaine, 1999). Images of the female body thus create a need by successfully manipulating the consumer’s desire. The female body is believed

to be so persuasive that it is generally utilised in the media a lot more than the male body regardless of targeted audience. Malkin, Wornian and Chrisler's (1999) study of men's and women's magazine covers found that 94% of the covers of women's magazines analysed showed a thin female model or celebrity in excellent shape. Furthermore, of the 69 women's magazines analysed, 78% contained some message on the front cover about bodily appearance whereas none of the 53 covers of men's magazines contained such messages (p. 651).

The male body is not displayed with the same frequency as female bodies as the magazine industry focuses on luring women into a state of anxiety by showing them examples of what they could look like with effort. Images of the male body do not have the same effect and therefore would not result in an increase of consumerism. This places men in a position of superiority as they are not connected with the ideologies surrounding beauty and appearance in the same capacity as females and therefore are uninhibited by social constraints. According to Durham (2008), this supports the theory that women are to be looked at. Further to this, Firminger (2006) also found that the representations of males in teenage girls' magazines focus on boy culture, including their hobbies, interests and opinions, rather than on how they look.

This pursuit of an ideal body is perpetuated through a set of contradictory images. Not only does the media support what Tebbel (2000) calls "starvation imagery" (p. 18), but young women are simultaneously told that big breasts are desirable and necessary in order to be considered attractive to the opposite sex. Even the separate terms body and image are conflicting as body is thought to be objective and definite whereas image is subjective (Borzekowski & Bayer, 2005). This, in itself, creates a confusing contradiction. Magazines promote a negative relationship between women and their bodies, resulting in the restriction of their social and economic status (Lont, 2006). Women are judged according to how they appear from the outside and are thus confined to their bodies. Images of women in media are often connected to beauty and it is very rare to experience a media image of a woman that is not, in any way, attempting to promote a certain ideal.

Magazines tend to represent the female body in fragments with articles and advertisements focusing on one particular aspect of the body that requires improving.



Cortese (2008) explains this as “perpetuating the notion that a woman’s body is not linked to her mind, soul and emotions” (p. 42). When women are dismembered or fragmented in this way they cease to be seen as a whole person, which results in self-alienation. The model of femininity is defined purely by appearance and is “severely contradictory, or rather, fragmentary” (Ballaster, Beetham, Fraser & Hebron, 1991, p. 12).

This concentration on the ideal body coincides with the normalisation of cosmetic surgery for females (Douglas, 1994), a claim that is supported by the research of Borzekowski & Bayer (2005) who identified a 400% increase in breast implants reported for American girls under 18 in between the years 2002 and 2003. Douglas (1994) has also observed that “cosmetic surgery is growing at a faster rate than any other medical specialty and grosses approximately \$300 million a year” (p. 266). By 2015 it is predicted that more than 55 million cosmetic procedures will take place annually in America. The cosmetic industry overall enjoys some of the biggest profits from the representation of an ideal woman, returning approximately \$20 billion annually in America alone (Cortese, 2008, p. 62). This is mainly due to the many aspects of the face and body that require enhancing, with each different feature demanding a selection of work and cosmetics. Indeed, it can be said that the beauty ideal consists of two aspects: the body and the face, which have become a primary focus in women’s magazines.

## **The Development of Female Subjectivity**

The beauty *discourses* located within teen magazines have a close relationship to ideologies concerning gender and consumerism. Often these ideologies are characterised by contradiction. While teen magazines often claim to support or reflect agendas empowering young women, the images and *discourses* used in their production objectify and sexualise women (see Wolf 1990; Currie 1999; Pyke 2006; Clark 2008). The development of girls into women takes place in an environment saturated in *discourses* of stereotyped femininity that are played out in masculine narratives (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). While girls still follow along the same cultural trajectory as boys, they do so with less involvement as girls are targeted with a feminine script, meaning they may have less involvement in their evolution into adulthood (McRobbie, 1991).

According to Talbot (2007), magazines utilise a series of different *discourses* to articulate a specific definition of what femininity is. However, the way that readers create meaning from these *discourses* is reliant on their historical and cultural backgrounds or what Hermes (1995) refers to as “*repertoires*” (p. 8). Magazines uphold cultural stereotypes of femininity that limit women’s standing in society.

Women’s magazines create and maintain a mythic world surrounding femininity. One of the first feminists to ascribe this mythic power to women’s magazines was Friedan (1963), who claimed they worked to keep women confined to their homes. The creation of this mythic world has a negative impact in that it succeeds in naturalising an ideological view of womanhood. Bignell (2002) has, however, argued that magazines do not construct a “single mythic meaning” (p. 7) for feminine identity or promote one ideological position. Instead *discourses* within a magazine are mixed and therefore offer the reader choices of how to decode the signs for themselves. He relates this to the process of *hegemony*, noting the presence of *negotiation* and arguing it is possible for individuals to criticise and reject *ideology* and the social order to which ideologies are attached. Gitlin (2003) focuses on the relationship between media and *ideology*, utilising Antonio Gramsci’s notion of *hegemony* to highlight the dynamics of coercion by those in dominance:

those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly and indirectly by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and, if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout society. (p. 10)

However, here it is important to again note Bignell’s (2002) acknowledgement that hegemonic meaning is a site of *negotiation* and those who participate in the process of *hegemony* are active in the interaction and development of meaning.

### *Youth Culture*

The adolescent years are defined by Brown et al. (2002) as being stages marked by physical, cognitive, social and psychological development. They state the years of early adolescence as being from ages 8–13 for girls and 11–15 for boys. Middle adolescence

is then 13–16 for girls and 14–17 for boys, and late adolescence becomes 16 plus for girls and 17 plus for boys (p. 2). Throughout these years adolescents are engaging in a youth culture created for them by the wider mass of society who are concerned with grooming youth into consumers above and beyond everything else, McRobbie (1991) believing that youth “play little, if any, role in shaping their own pop culture” (p. 86).

Producers of the youth market are calling upon what Osgerby (2004) calls “cool-hunters” in their attempt to track cultural tastes of the young consumer, “developing texts and products inscribed with meanings attuned as closely as possible to the attitudes, tastes and values of a lucrative and influential market segment” (p. 223). According to Comstock and Scharrer (2007), the youth market is made up of three dimensions: the primary market, the influence market, and the future market. The primary market targets youth as the primary consumer; the influence market sees youth as having an influence on spending (for example, persuading their parents to buy a product); and the future market refers to youth who are enticed to invest in a product at a later stage in life.

These different markets persistently target youth as fads and trends are popular amongst this demographic due to peer pressure and the constant desire to stay up to date. These trends are often developed through the expansion of a mass culture, with media endorsing specific interests for youth. This mass culture is therefore seen as manipulative and is identified as a largely profit-seeking industry that targets impressionable youth. Adolescence effectively becomes synonymous with the definitions that the media and mass culture create for them. Wykes and Gunter (2005) discuss this phenomenon in terms of *social comparison theory*, which maintains that people establish their own personal identity through making comparisons between themselves and those who possess popular attributes. In terms of youth, those with popular attributes are generally considered to be celebrities or people who are materially rich. The mass media portrays celebrities as people disconnected from social institutions, placing them in an elevated position within society (Gitlin, 2003). This theory can therefore be associated with teen magazines that showcase a myriad of beautiful women and celebrities, and thereby impact on body image and self-esteem.

## *Girls' Magazines*

McRobbie (1991) pointed out that there is no male equivalent to women's magazines as "male magazines tend to be based on particular leisure pursuits or hobbies, motorcycling, fishing, cars or even pornography" (p. 83). There are few, if any, teen magazines for boys that focus on how to be masculine yet teen magazines targeted at girls commonly groom readers to accept generic ideas of femininity. Ferguson (1985) attributes this to the belief that males already know everything there is to know about masculinity regardless of age. McCracken (1991) sees this as an "ideological and consumerist training of young girls" (p. 143) that primes them for women's magazines to supersede and maintain these ideologies. McRobbie (1991) goes on to identify several magazines targeted at females, beginning from a very young age and spanning right throughout womanhood, noting that the same density of magazines featuring an *instructional discourse* on how to be a man is not seen on magazine shelves. Even though this commentary was written over two decades ago it is still valid today. According to the findings of Borzekowski and Bayer (2005), women still read a very homogeneous group of magazines while men enjoy a great diversity in the magazines they read.

When comparing girls' magazines in the 1990's with those produced in the 1970's, McRobbie (1991) found that fashion and beauty features took up more space and were more frequently dispersed throughout 1990's magazines than they were in 1970's magazines (p. 174). She used four codes to organise the content of magazines, identifying ways that content can be distinguished in terms of romance, personal life, fashion and beauty or pop music (p. 92). Another change in format to teen magazines is outlined by Kearney (2006), who states that since the 1980's magazines have considerably decreased the amount of participation their readers have in the content and have "curtailed the publication of girls fiction, poetry and essays" (p. 137). This may be the case, however the development of new media sees young readers directed to websites or blogs to have their say. Borzekowski and Bayer (2005) note that "many teen magazines have companion web sites, that often serve as a communication platform and additional resource between issues" (p. 297). Magazines also now commonly publish real-life stories about readers as opposed to their personally produced short stories or poetry. Pyke (2006), for example, found that "Reality Stories" and "Embarrassing

Moments” took the third and fourth spots among most popular reasons to read *Dolly* magazine (p. 44).

### *The Gendered Script*

Even though teen magazines have been around for many years, what Currie (1999) calls a “*gendered script*” (p. 3) still persists. This script promotes a specific role for women that concentrates on promoting an interest in and pursuit of a certain physical beauty and behaving in a manner appealing to the opposite sex. It has managed to survive both the first and second waves of feminism, and liberal feminists believe that magazines are among the most important texts through which women learn to conform to patriarchal definitions of femininity (Currie, 1999). Young women become part of a process of signification through which the female body is endowed with characteristics that are culturally feminine (Currie, 1999). Femininity is stereotypically linked with the female sex but it is also a learned quality characterised by submission to beauty processes. This is reinforced through magazines, which often produce a feminine ideal favouring *gendered scripts*, such as the one identified by Frith, Shaw and Cheng (2005) whereby femininity is promoted as being attractive, unaggressive, emotional and nurturing.

### *Contradictions and Subjectivity Choices*

*Gendered scripts* are full of contradictions and paradoxes, a subject that has interested several theorists (see Ferguson, 1985; Wolf, 1990; Douglas, 1994; Durham, 2008). Magazines see women caught in a conflicting love/hate relationship with media (Douglas, 1994), with a prominent contradictory message being that perfection is out there for readers; however it is always just out of reach (Martin, 2007). Readers may be considered beautiful but only if they strive for beautification through the constant purchase and use of products. This goal, which is held up as the ideal, is virtually unattainable for many girls and subsequently young women are caught in a “web of conflicting directives” (McRobbie, 1991, p. 121).

Malkin et al. (1999) have identified ways that the covers of women’s magazines involve contradictions between texts and images placed directly next to each other. The example

they give is of a cover showing a picture of an ice cream cake with a message saying “Ice Cream Extravaganza” next to an exercise message that reads “Trim Your Thighs In 2 Weeks!” (p. 652). This kind of contradiction can also be found within the pages of teen magazines. For example, there is often a focus on achieving “natural” beauty but this can only be attained through the use of cosmetics, which negates the notion of natural. Pyke’s (2006) analysis of *Dolly* (taking into account the magazine’s wide target demographic) found that young readers are often positioned uncomfortably by text producers midway between being both knowledgeable and sexually aware but also naïve and in need of instruction.

Further to these tensions, teen magazines also construct ideologies of normality and thus also define the deviant (Matheson, 2005). The concept of normality for teenagers is important, with peer pressure and bullying common amongst the demographic. Teen magazines tend to represent a generic version of teenage girls, establishing boundaries that ascertain the difference between a normal young woman and one who stands outside the set conventions. During the teenage years girls may become fragmented and subsequently try on several different roles when attempting to shape their own subjectivity (Pipher, 1994). Thus, teen magazines’ representation of femininity holds an influential position on this development. However, instead of offering a range of choices for young readers, teen magazines usually encourage a limited subjectivity and social standing for teenage girls, often omitting any alternatives for those uninterested in the beauty *discourses*.

Maguire (2008) narrowed things even further, and argued that media representations of women are binary with only two options for young women to choose from. They can metaphorically be either a princess or a porn star, with no in-between. Coverage of women in the media is overtly sexualised, and as Hamilton (2007) stated, “many girls are so desensitized to sexual material, they have no idea of the impression they create when wearing skimpy clothes or behaving in a certain way” (p. 143). Teenage girls simply understand that the sexier they behave or dress the more attention they will receive.

## Sexuality

The emphasis on the physical in teen magazines has prompted many to claim that the media's stereotypical portrayal of women promotes the over-sexualisation of young girls. Durham (2008) refers to this as the "*Lolita Effect*", claiming that "teen magazines use 'hot' as the adjective of choice to promote everything from new workouts to fashion to movie idols" (p. 64). Terms such as "hot" and "sexy" are generally used as an adjective for what girls should work towards. The need to exert oneself to achieve sexiness implies that the status is not inherent but can be obtained through consumerism. The target age of many of the magazines suggest that girls are encouraged to take on a "sexy" or "hot" appearance without fully understanding what that means (Clark, 2008). Despite the advances of feminism it appears that the traditional *ideology* of maintaining a desirable appearance is still dominant in our society (Lont, 2006).

Information on sex and the opposite sex is a main attraction of teen magazines. A 2007 UK study confirmed that teenage girls are more likely to get sex information from magazines than any other source (Maguire, 2008). Girls are encouraged to learn how to please boys in order to get their attention, and this can be seen in articles related to flirting. As Oppliger (2008) has shown, this type of content implies that it is acceptable to use your sexuality to gain attention. This sexual content often goes unnoticed by parents who are usually responsible for buying the magazines for their daughters. Oppliger (2008) believed this is because magazines are such a classic medium and are targeted at niche markets; as a result, content appealing to the sexualisation of teenagers can be more explicit than other media forms.

In addition, imagery in both women's and teen magazines supports, presumes and participates in the representation of heterosexuality (Vanska, 2005). Fashion *discourse* thus presents female subjects as objects, who are to be looked at and who also look at themselves. Thus, the gaze located within the genre is assumed to be female and heterosexual, leaving little room for recognition of a lesbian or bisexual gaze. The general content of teen magazines also focuses on heterosexuality and, as noted above, is one of the most accessible resources for information on sexuality for teenage girls (Garner, Sterk & Adams, 1998). Given that there is no representation of homosexuality,

its absence may be seen as limiting or isolating young women with these interests (Garner et al., 1998).

## **The Interaction of Local and International Discourses**

This study involves analysis of both nationally and internationally produced texts and therefore it is important to briefly discuss the notion of a local culture and the media's role in presenting a particular image of the local to the public. While teen magazines may not necessarily focus on national identity as such, they do uphold a local specificity (which will be discussed further in Chapter 4). Literature on formations of national identity proved useful when looking at the local and global and the idea of the imagined community.

### *Media and Local Culture*

The media is thought to be a valuable source in which a particular understanding of what constitutes local culture is evident. It is "intended to communicate something about that social or collective identity we call 'culture', in order to mediate . . . across gaps of space, time, knowledge and prejudice" (Ginsburg, 2002, p. 216). In doing so the media is influenced by institutional bodies such as the government which dictate the needs of the nation to the media. Wolf (1990) has noted that for over a century women's magazines have been one of the most powerful agents for changing women's roles, particularly during the Second World War, when women's magazines dictated the role that women played within society based on what the government needed from them at the time (Winship, 1987). While the men were away fighting many women entered into the workforce, however after the war magazines helped to re-establish them into the traditionally feminine roles expected of them.

In the attempt to portray one definition of the local, certain contradictions are created as every search for identity includes differentiating oneself from what one is not. One definition of local culture is not all-inclusive and is not going to appeal to everyone. For example, Baumgardner and Richards (2010) questioned topics in an American teen magazine, and inquired whether the subjects would translate to a Kenyan girl who has



escaped her homeland and the traditions that maintain a strictly male-dominated society. Contemporary societies are becoming increasingly multi-cultural, meaning that local cultures are having to adapt. The extent of culturally specific content across different magazine titles varies and indeed it is non-existent in some. While some larger magazine titles create more culturally distinctive editions for different geographies, teen magazines in the New Zealand market are either locally established titles or international editions.

In terms of children's and youths' perceptions of local culture it has been said that their "national identifications and attitudes are related to the everyday patterns of *discourses* and practices that occur within the particular socio-historical settings in which they are living" (Barrett and Oppenheimer, 2011, p. 6). Edensor (2002) pointed out that identities are constantly evolving and becoming embedded in vast, expanding cultural networks whereby they are "becoming nationally deterritorialized, and locally and globally, even virtually, reterritorialized" (p. 27–28). The media is a striking example of this in play as nations (in particular Eastern countries) are inundated with foreign media. Print media and news video footage around the world is dominated by Western news agencies such as AP, CNN and Reuters (Machin and van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 495). The extent of globalisation is in danger of diminishing diversity (Schiller, 1971), however the fluidity of local culture allows it to constantly shift, adapting and amalgamating global aspects into itself. The key to ensuring everything does not appear homogeneous, Edensor (2002) suggested, is to avoid looking at globalisation and the nation as binary terms but rather as "two inextricably interlinked processes" (p. 29).

Moving to the local context of this thesis, Cleveland (1978) wrote on New Zealand's national identity and its link to the mass media, stating that "the mass media are an obvious vehicle for the presentation of such perceptions of national identity, though . . . they are often inhibited and restricted in this by their dependence on a high degree of overseas content" (p. 307). While Cleveland wrote this piece several decades ago, one can still find truth in his words regarding New Zealand's local culture. Because New Zealand is a reasonably small country our media is regularly dominated by content produced in foreign countries, and this is also the case in many other countries. For example, Frith et al. (2005) in their study of magazine advertising in titles from Singapore, Taiwan and America found that local magazines are not necessarily the most

popular magazines in the country. Their study specifically looked at advertisements in a range of magazines and noted the influence of globalisation, pointing out that “in a perfect world we might expect that advertisements would be created by members of a particular society and consumed by members of the same society. However, globalization alters this process” (p. 59).

What it means to be feminine and beautiful differs across cultures yet globalisation is steadily establishing one, Western ideal. Although New Zealand is a Westernised society, our definition of what beauty entails is influenced by the much larger Western cultures, such as American culture. Thus advertisements in local and international teen magazines can be analysed to gather an understanding of what constitutes beauty in different countries and cultures and how different constructions of beauty are ultimately assimilated into one universal definition.

### *Local and Global*

Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) carried out an extensive study of 44 national versions of the women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* which became the basis for several subsequent papers. They were primarily interested in the relationship between the local and the global, examining how local editions of the widely recognised title were adapted to engage local audiences. By looking at global schemas and local *discourses* across the different versions they concluded that *discourses* within women’s magazines can have “local accents”, but pointed out that these accents are only evident on the surface and have no impact on the underlying structure of the *discourse* itself, meaning that cultural difference in a deeper sense is not recognised. The authors concluded that there appeared to be a “global generic homogeneity” (p. 118), whereby formats of global media were homogeneous overall, but they also noted that the discursive construction of the magazine content was becoming increasingly localised.

Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) used the term “glocalisation” to explain the merging of the two *discourses*, in this process the local is somewhat transformed but not to the extent that it became unrecognisable. Throughout the study only two things remained constant amongst the 44 titles: the *modality* of the photography and imagery used and the presence of the generic problem-solution *discourse*. Local editorial teams tailored

their editions to reflect the values and cultures of their local audience. While the titles may use the same *discourse* schemas (for example, the problem-solution format), they are very slightly altered to include a connection with a more local audience. Global readers of *Cosmopolitan* were found to form a speech community whereby they shared an involvement with the same genres, values and lifestyles depicted by the magazine, however the local accents often correlated with local gender attitudes and practices.

### *Imagined Communities*

The nation has been defined by Shohat and Stam (2002) as “a fictive unity imposed on an aggregate of individuals” (p. 118), meaning our ideas of nation are effectively mental constructs (De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999). Anderson (1994) linked the development of a local culture to the media. He believes that the invention of print technology in the 15th and 16th centuries led to the emergence of “imagined communities” that helped in the development of a national consciousness. According to Anderson’s theory, individuals who read print gradually became aware that they belonged to a community with whom they never interacted but with whom they nonetheless formed a connection, this being the community of readers of the same media. Although there have been limitations found in Anderson’s works, with some stating his views are too reductive (see Thompson, 1994 and Edensor, 2002), his theory of an imagined community is useful to this study. Local *discourses* within the mass media can be seen to speak directly to an imagined community who hold a particular set of values, beliefs and interests. There is therefore an assumption that the local *discourses* used by the mass media would be understood by readers or viewers with consideration to their membership of an imagined community.

An imagined community is influenced by both the local and the global and depends on the mass media’s relationship and representation of both. The nation consists of local and global influences where “the local is often associated with femininity and seen as the natural basis of home and community” and the global is an implicitly masculine realm that intrudes on the local (Morley, 2000, p. 59). This is useful in explaining how the local and global relates to gender and how magazines targeted at women confine them to the local through content that is overtly feminine.

It is also important to note that any expression of identity, whether it be individual or collective, is located within “a range of overlapping contexts and socio-cultural categories” (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004, p. 46), meaning that forms of imagined communities would have already been in existence amongst various genders, geographies, ethnicities, class and so on prior to the introduction of mass media. While mass media may very well have helped in creating a sense of a wider community, socio-cultural categories had already formed various versions of local identities.

The development of mass media, and in particular print media, created a more significant connection with a much wider, homogeneous identity. In this sense teen magazines automatically connect readers to a homogeneous group of young women both nationally and internationally and are based on the assumption that all readers, regardless of locale, are interested in the same content and concerned with similar topics.

A connection to the local is constructed when a “cultural thickening” of the nation-state occurs whereby the nation makes itself visible as a consequence of citizens learning to belong to the nation (Lofgren, 2001). This establishes a sense of belonging to a particular, territorially based nation or homeland and encourages a sharing of a common set of rights, duties and traditions (Thompson, 1994). As a national culture takes shape a connection to the nation is discursively created (Hall, 1997), with *discourses* constructing meanings that influence and organise our actions and perceptions of ourselves, thus creating Shohat and Stam’s (2002) fictive state mentioned above.

## **Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in this chapter is directly significant to the current study and identifies teen magazines as worthy of analysis. The various *discourses* and voices apparent in the magazine genre comprise social and cultural ideologies that have the power to influence readers. Because teenagers can be vulnerable to persuasion the messages embedded within media texts are important. In particular, magazines’ representation of what constitutes female beauty and femininity may have significant impact on readers’ self-esteem and their personal definitions of beauty. It seems that traditional ideologies are still apparent in media targeted at youth, ensuring that traditional values and beliefs about beauty are upheld. For example, young females are

very much targeted by beauty advertising campaigns yet this is something young males escape. The differing content and standards of beauty in national and international teen magazines reflect conflicting messages concerning female subjectivity for young women. Teen magazines also place varying levels of emphasis on physical beauty, reflecting the societies in which they are produced and encouraging the development of limited subjectivities. This research aims to decode the messages being transmitted by four teen magazines – two local and two international – and to analyse the perceptions of these magazines held by young women comprising the target audience.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

This study of teen magazines utilised a hybrid methodology of textual analysis consisting of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and social semiotics. By employing methods in keeping with these frameworks, this research was able through the use of focus groups and thematic analysis to examine the media's impact on young women's definitions of beauty, the development of their subjectivity, and the local *discourses* found in the selected titles. Content analysis was also used in order to more easily identify sub-categories of data. Throughout this thesis specialised terminology is italicised to indicate that a specific understanding of the term is meant. Definitions of these terms can be found at the beginning of this thesis.

### Data Collection and Sampling

Teen magazines were collected over the period of one year (2011). Titles selected included the locally produced *Girlfriend* and *Crème*, and the internationally produced *Dolly* (Aus), *Teen Vogue* (USA), *Seventeen* (USA), *Shout* (UK), *Frankie* (Aus), *GL* (USA) and *Bliss* (UK). All of these magazines are published monthly, with the exceptions of *Frankie* and *GL* which are bi-monthly and *Shout* which is fortnightly. While all the above titles were explored initially, it was decided to concentrate on *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Crème* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA). *Crème* and *Girlfriend* are the most popular teen magazines in New Zealand with monthly readership of 45,000 and 59,000 respectively. *Dolly* has a 29,000 monthly readership (Roy Morgan Research, 2012), *Seventeen* on the other hand uses annual numbers and sells 20 million copies per year in America alone (*Seventeen* Media Kit, 2012). In New Zealand, however, *Seventeen* is not particularly popular; there are no local readership numbers available. The other five titles proved useful in establishing a general overview and gave an idea of the diversity of magazines readily available in the local market.

The use of local and international magazines was important in order to differentiate between various messages regarding beauty being communicated to young women in New Zealand. The way that different societies and cultures represent beauty is reflected through the magazine genre, which influences the local audience's definition of the term. More specifically, including both local and international titles was important and used when looking at the relationship of each magazine to its local culture.

To broaden the frame of media analysis, the four teen magazines were examined alongside the *Next Top Model* television franchises, and both the American and New Zealand versions were used to compare representations of beauty by the magazines with other mainstream mediums. Two episodes of each version were viewed in order to gauge an overview of the treatment and, more specifically, the representation of beauty. The two episodes of season 17 of *America's Next Top Model* which screened on Channel Four on 6 and 13 August 2011 at 9.30pm were selected along with encore screenings of two episodes of *New Zealand's Next Top Model* season 3 which screened on TV3 on 21 and 28 July 2012 at 1pm.

In total there were 25 magazines collected, sixteen of which were closely analysed. Four issues each of *Crème* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus), *Girlfriend* (NZ) and *Seventeen* (USA) produced between January 2011 and August 2011 were used in order to maintain consistency within the sample. Articles, images and advertisements that directly represented a specific beauty ideal and messages regarding subjectivity were analysed in depth. The written text was analysed utilising CDA whereas images were analysed using a social semiotic approach. The different approaches complemented each other well and while CDA can be used to analyse images, it was decided that social semiotics offered more of a focus on the different visual factors and composition of an ideological image or structure.

## **Content Analysis**

In order to reduce the magazine sample into a more manageable form content analysis was employed. This method has been defined as a systematic technique “for compressing [data] into fewer content categories” (Stemler, 2001). This study was primarily qualitative in nature and although content analysis is a quantitative method, it

was included to simply describe what was evident in the research data so that it could then be analysed in more depth.

Firstly, a criterion for inclusion in the study was established, followed by the setting of a unit of analysis in order to focus the examination. The inclusion of content analysis supported the study by enabling the description of the current state of teen magazines for readers of this thesis. The goal of content analysis is the accurate representation of a body of messages (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Communication studies that employ content analysis tend to utilise it purely as a descriptive method, because content analysis alone cannot serve as a basis for making statements about the effects of media on the audience (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). In this study content analysis is used as a starting point from which to conduct analysis of the data. The dominant themes and messages of the data were determined through content analysis; these prominent areas of interest were then subjected to a CDA as well as a social semiotic analysis (images only).

Specifying the boundaries of the body of content to be further analysed helped to narrow the magazines down to articles, advertisements and images that represented each title's relationship with beauty. These were then used throughout the course of this study as points of reference and analysis for each sample title. Focusing on the categories of magazine content allowed me to reveal the different meanings each magazine attached to beauty and how they communicated this to their audience.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

CDA is a methodology with a strong relationship to socio-cultural underpinnings of texts and is used in order to examine the wider frame through which a text is produced. This relates to a point made by Ballaster et al. (1991) that a researcher of women's magazines must be aware of the different meanings that will emerge from any one title or text dependent on the conditions under which it is "read".

CDA stems from critical linguistics (CL), which is a theory of language that views verbal language not only as a means of interaction but also as a phenomenon that has strong social underpinnings (Hodge & Kress, 1988). CDA eventually diverged from CL



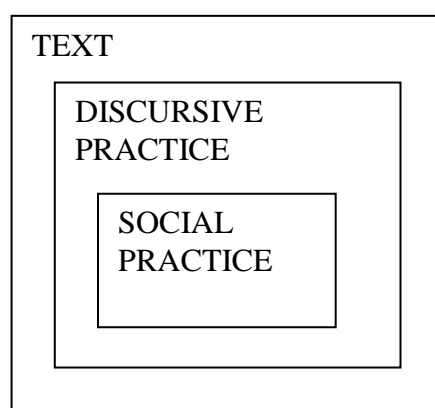
to include attention to the production and interpretation of texts. This methodology has been described as a programme that has a set of principles attached to it (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and these principles are referred to by many CDA supporters (see Talbot, 2007; Fairclough, 2010). These include understanding how language works in terms of social practice, power and *ideology*. The linguistic elements of *discourse* are also important for CDA as these features contribute to how a message may be read or interpreted.

While the term *discourse* has its foundation in general linguistics it also has a more analytical definition which places it at the constitutive centre of knowledge and society. CDA is therefore a critical approach and focuses on the structures involved in the discursive process of encoding and decoding. CDA recognises that the same *discourses* are not necessarily interacted with in production and consumption as the term is not fixed but is rather fluid and open to interpretation. *Discourse* is therefore vulnerable to interpretation and is a site of social difference and conflict that informs socio-cultural approaches (Blommaert, 2005). In terms of the specific topic of this research, CDA is useful in that it sees gendered *discourses* as limiting males and females and forming subject positions based on naturalised ideas of masculinity and femininity (Sunderland, 2004).

The distinction between *discourse* and *ideology* is an important one and each is now defined within the context of this research. *Ideology* relates to the body of ideas or set of beliefs that underpin a media text that form the basis of social rules and practices. The mass media is often a site for the distribution of *ideology* as text producers are influenced by socio-cultural and economic processes. *Discourse* itself is ideological in that it contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and domination (Fairclough, 2009) and thus ideologies are carried within media *discourses*.

This research closely follows Fairclough's and Talbot's frameworks for the use of CDA in data analysis. Their methods consist of focusing on a social problem and identifying its issues through analysis of *discourse*, *orders of discourse* and interdiscursivity, and placing emphasis on the producer-audience relationship. Talbot's (1995, 2007) works in particular contribute to the field of feminist *discourse* analysis which is of interest to this study. Fairclough (2010) is greatly concerned with employing CDA for social

change, stating that a primary focus of the approach “is on the effect of power relations and inequalities . . . and in particular on discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities” (p. 8). One of the aims of CDA is to reveal social relations of power both implicitly and explicitly within texts. The idea behind this is that in order for power to be accepted it must be seen as legitimate by society. This process of legitimising power is generally carried out through communicative systems (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Talbot (2007) has worked closely with Fairclough’s framework and like this study, has utilised it to analyse teen magazines. In particular she is interested in the concept of *discourse* as a social practice, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Layers of a Communicative Text. (Talbot, 2007).**

Figure 1 illustrates the layered understanding of a basic *communicative text*. The text is not simply an independent object but is widely influenced by both discursive and social practices within which we are located. *Discourse* is thus both “socially constitutive as well as socially shaped” (Talbot, 2007, p. 13). A text is a product of the process of text production and this process must be taken into consideration when analysing the wider frame of text. *Discourse* therefore cannot be defined independently but is created in terms of its relationships with other elements or concepts. For example, *discourse* is distinct from power yet the two may inform each other without one becoming reductive to the other (Fairclough, 2010).

Any analysis of *discourse* should also take note of what Fairclough terms “*Orders of Discourse*” (1992, p. 194). These relate to the understanding that actual *discourse* is determined by underlying socio-cultural “rules”. Fairclough adopted *Orders of Discourse* from Michel Foucault and they should be understood as looking at discursive practices in terms of networks or social institutions. Fairclough (2001) states that “*discourse* and practice are constrained not by various independent types of *discourse*

and practice, but by interdependent networks which we can call ‘orders’” (p. 24). They influence the way a text evolves both socially and culturally and consist of *genres*, *discourses* and *styles* found within “heterogeneous linguistic features” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 33). These elements represent a network of social practices that constitute the social organisation of language.

*Genres* are semiotic ways of acting and interacting and include the use of language associated with particular social activities, for example the language that is typical of a media advertisement. Genre also reflects not only the different text types but also the presence of innate expectations of genre that individuals harbour. *Discourses* take into account the social and cultural practices embedded within these *genres* and the way they inform the language used in a text. *Styles* recognizes that *discourse* also figures alongside particular ways of acting and expressing social or personal identities. *Orders of discourse* are thus able to influence a text both socially and culturally, determining both the encoding and decoding of ideological underpinnings. Fairclough (1995) states that “social and cultural changes very often manifest themselves discursively through a redrawing of boundaries within and between orders of discourse” (p. 56).

The relationship between *discourse* and text is important in CDA, with Talbot (2007) defining it as “ideological commonsense” (p. 46). *Discourse* is manifested throughout a text, producing *ideational* and *interpersonal* meanings for the audience. Here *ideational* relates to the function of language to communicate ideas whereas the *interpersonal* is the function of language to establish and maintain social identities and relationships (Talbot, 2007). The maintenance of particular social identities and relationships can be problematic as the audience are guided into what may be positions dictated largely by *ideology*. This is noticeably problematic when the media holds the power to represent the majority. Matheson (2005) refers to Foucault who believed that *discourses* drive us into subject positions when we talk, read or listen, stating “if we accept Foucault’s position . . . then the constant talk and writing about us by others are a source of those others’ power over us” (p. 61). While this statement underestimates the control of the individual over their own identity and subjectivity, the power process primarily occurs through the subconscious, meaning individuals may not necessarily understand the process as influential.

CDA was used for the textual and *discourse* analysis of the selected magazines.

*Discourses*, while also apparent in images, are often associated with written text, thus *discourse* analysis will take into account linguistic techniques that are significant to the messages being conveyed. The magazines' text was carefully examined in order to identify the ideological constituents of the text, both manifest and latent. The interaction between the written and the visual in both text and *discourse* can best be analysed with social semiotics. In magazines, images and language are just as important as each other, often working together to guide the reader towards what Hall (1997) terms "preferred readings" (p. 227), or meanings that have been ideologically encoded. Thus, analysis of magazines must include an account of meaning construction through image as well as language. Because CDA adopts a social semiotic view of language that is interested in how language is used in a social context and how we use language to create society, it would seem beneficial to include a social semiotics methodology. The two methodologies are therefore used alongside one another in this study.

## **Social Semiotics**

Social semiotics was used to analyse key images taken from the selection of teen magazines. Social semiotics sees the making of meaning as a social act and as a communicative practice. Bignell (2002) states that "all of our thought and experience, our very sense of our own identity, depends on the systems of signs already existing in society which give form and meaning to consciousness and reality" (p. 7). Media texts house these systems of signs and therefore are responsible for generating meaning and ideologies as everything ideological possesses semiotic value and points to reality as a construct built by particular social groups (Voloshinov, 1973). Semiological studies can be focused on images or visual representations as the method offers a full set of tools for dissecting an image and analysing its broader systems of meaning (Rose, 2007). Haraway (1991) discusses modern technology's influence on visibility, arguing that vision that can be manipulated produces very specific representations of social difference based on hierarchies of class, race, gender and sexuality. Manipulated visions also reject the notion that there are other ways of seeing the world as alternatives are left out.

Social semiotics is distinct from semiotics and places more of an emphasis on semiotic

acts as social acts and processes (Hodge & Kress, 1988). It also sees language as a set of resources rather than as a system and is interested in the way the communicator uses the semiotic resources available to them to communicate (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Where semiotics is concerned with connotations of signs and symbols, social semiotics is more concerned with the finer details that make up a sign, for example colours, shapes and angles.

This study will make use of *modality* as defined within the social semiotic methodology. Visual social semiotics understands visual resources as communicating three types of meaning: representational, interactive and compositional (Emme & Kirova, 2005). *Modality* is an aspect of visual organisation associated with compositional meaning. The term *modality* was used by Hodge and Kress (1988) and is taken from linguistics; it refers to truth value or how much of reality is represented in the image. This is especially important for media imagery as “visual imagery is never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges” (Rose, 2007, p. 26). *Modality* is ingrained in all semiotic acts and points to the social construction of knowledge systems. Whoever controls *modality* holds the power over representation of reality (Hodge & Kress, 1988).

Bell and Milic (2002) described *modality* as being “coded according to particular ‘orientation’ appropriate to different conventional domains of representation” (p. 211). They listed these domains are scientific, technological, abstract, naturalistic and sensory. Each domain is judged on dimensions such as colour, context, perspective, brightness and representation. All images have an aspect of naturalism to them whether this is based on high, medium or low *modality*. An image that has high naturalistic *modality* presents itself as unmediated and demonstrates a correspondence between the visual representation and the viewing of the object or person with the naked eye (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Naturalism, for instance, is represented if the pictorial dimensions are used more naturally in an image. If these dimensions are reduced the image becomes more abstract, representing a universal code rather than real people or objects. The image thus becomes low in naturalistic *modality* and high in abstract *modality*. On the other hand, if the dimensions are amplified the image becomes more than real and connotes a

representation that involves all the senses, introducing a high sensory *modality* (Bell & Milic, 2002). A scientific *modality* goes beyond the physical appearance of objects and people and relates to the use of technical speak or imagery in attempting to communicate a truth value to a viewer or reader. A technological *modality* depends on the technology of visual representation and what has been utilised in the production of the image. Determining an image's *modality* involves the use of important tools for drawing a viewer's attention to the meaning potential of semiotic aspects of an image (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Modality markers are significant to a social semiotic analysis as they help to identify the truth value of texts. Therefore markers of visual *modality*, or *modality* dimensions, were used as a methodological tool in the course of this study. Mautner (2008) defines visual modality markers as having a “guiding function for the receiver's attribution of realistic value to a representation” (p. 206). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), there are eight markers involved in analysing visual *modality*:

1. **Colour saturation**, a scale running from full colour saturation to the absence of colour; that is, to black and white.
2. **Colour differentiation**, a scale running from a maximally diversified range of colours to monochrome.
3. **Colour modulation**, a scale running from fully modulated colour, with, for example, the use of many different shades of red, to plain, unmodulated colour.
4. **Contextualization**, a scale running from the absence of background to the most fully articulated and detailed background.
5. **Representation**, a scale running from maximum abstraction to maximum representation of pictorial detail.
6. **Depth**, a scale running from the absence of depth to maximally deep perspective.
7. **Illumination**, a scale running from the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to its absence.
8. **Brightness**, a scale running from a maximum number of different degrees of brightness to just two degrees: black and white, or dark grey and lighter grey, or two brightness values of the same colour (pp. 165–167)

These modality markers provide a toolkit for visual analysis, particularly in media texts

that have an ambiguous relationship with truth and reality.

## Limitations and Criticisms

While CDA is a useful tool for this kind of study, some scholars have criticised this methodology and this may have a bearing on the data analysis. Schegloff (1998) stated that CDA needs to focus more seriously on the material rather than on aspects of production and reception and suggested that rather than CDA being an adaptation of CL, the two methods should work together to extract data that both reflects and disregards *ideology*. Widdowson (1995) agreed with this criticism and added that because it is an ideological analysis it is therefore not an analysis but rather an interpretation. The focus on an analysis of *ideology* is thought to pull the data towards criticism of socio-cultural ideals rather than providing information that presents both sides of the argument. Wodak (2006) identified ways that CDA could be used so that the data is not biased in this way, including analysing the immediate language of a text for both the intertextual (which indicates all texts are linked to other texts both past and present) and interdiscursive relationships (the linking of *discourses* in various ways). A user of CDA must also reflect on the extralinguistic (or social) level of data. All of the above aid in mitigating bias by providing an analysis of a range of factors that influence texts, not just *ideology*.

A cognitive understanding of reception – defined as the mental processing involved in interaction with texts and *discourses* (Machin & Mayr, 2012) – is also believed to be left out of CDA's methods. O'Halloran (2003) stated that there needs to be an analysis of the relationship between reader and text rather than a third party's interpretation of this relationship. While academics such as van Dijk (2001) have countered this criticism by developing a socio-cognitive framework that theorises the relationship between social systems and an individual's cognition, this research included focus groups to carry out the same process.

Another criticism has come from Billig (2003), who questioned whether CDA has been able to maintain a critical perspective since establishing itself as a mainstream resource in linguistics and *discourse* analysis. Sayer (2006) agreed, stating that within CDA there is no point in critique if it does not contribute towards the revelation of ideological

forces and result in social improvements. While the use of the term critical has come under scrutiny, with some scholars questioning whether being critical simply means attacking ideas and beliefs which we do not agree with (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Le, Le and Short (2009) argued that the term critical is of most importance because it marks CDA's difference from other academic fields.

Rogers (2004) stated that the validity of CDA research is in doubt because political and social ideologies are projected onto the data rather than being revealed through it. Le et al. (2009) responded to this claim by recognising that this can be a weakness but may also be a strength, because CDA analysts carry out field research and therefore “need to declare their own ‘social’ identities and ideologies and prepare to challenge themselves against ideological interference” (p. 10). Influenced in particular by the arguments of Le et al., Wodak (2006) and Blommaert (2005), CDA remains a useful methodology for the purposes of this research. Together with social semiotics, CDA enabled substantial and consistent data analysis.

Social semiotics also has its limitations. Hodge and Kress (1988) recognised that semiotics has limits surrounding the lack of consideration around social dimensions. It has also been criticised for its emphasis on systems and processes rather than on text production and consumption. Rather than rejecting the methodology all together, Hodge and Kress adapted the analytic practice to form social semiotics, which includes aspects lacking from traditional semiotics. However, in doing so they recognise that one cannot completely avoid semiotics' limitations that are still evident within the expanded strand of social semiotics. They argued that social semiotics may be used “for the many people in different disciplines who deal with different problems of social meaning and need ways of describing and explaining the processes and structures through which meaning is conceived” (p. 2).

### *Validity*

Qualitative research is concerned with the “validity of representation, understanding and interpretation” (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p. 273). Thus, qualitative social science research consists of two dimensions: internal validity and external validity. The former relates to the credibility of the research while the latter refers to whether the study's results would



be applicable to other groups, individuals, contexts and so on. Validity must be applied to qualitative research in order to maintain objectivity across the course of the study. Thus, it must be recognised throughout the description, interpretation, evaluation and the application of theory to data.

### *Justification*

CDA complemented this study as it enabled the researcher to examine the social frame through which a text is produced. The methodology has an established relationship with questions of *ideology* and social structures, both of which influence this study's concerns with media constructions of beauty. CDA also enabled this research to look specifically at the ideological *discourses* embedded within texts. This, together with a privileging of the close analysis of text in association with other texts (intertextuality), affords an approach that other *discourse* methodologies do not offer.

CDA can also be used in conjunction with other methodologies. As Yell (2005) has pointed out, both CDA and social semiotics have developed from Marxism and critical theory "via linguistics, semiotics and post-structuralist theory" (p. 10). CDA recognises the different aspects of a communicative event including the non-verbal and has expanded to allow for recognition of social and semiotic devices.

Hodge and Kress (1998) have established that "gender systems rest on and are part of semiotic systems and processes, without which they could not be known and sustained" (p. 97). Therefore social semiotics provides useful methods to understand how this occurs. This study of teen magazines is intrinsically connected to gender systems and social conventions and the amount of advertising and advertorial content within a magazine has significant implications for the representation of gendered ideologies. A social semiotic analysis enables this research to closely explore these implications. Indeed, McRobbie (1991) utilised semiology to make a thorough analysis of teen magazines in her book *Feminism and Youth Culture* because it has more to offer than traditional content analysis; it allows for focus on the social messages being encoded and decoded. Social semiotics is also a methodology that complements CDA as the two work closely with aspects of the social and are concerned with the set of resources used by text producers in order to convey certain socio-cultural ideologies to an audience.

## **Methodological Tool: Focus Groups**

Focus group research, while originally developed for market research, has been adapted for qualitative research purposes in social sciences and media studies to provide insight into individuals' beliefs, attitudes and personal experiences. Lunt and Livingstone (1996) explained the benefits of focus groups by stating that they “can reveal underlying cognitive or ideological premises that structure arguments” (p. 96). They are often used to establish various *discourses* and how these then impact on personal interpretations of texts, and even the construction of social identity.

Barbour (2007) located focus groups as being in-between observational fieldwork and one-to-one interviews, with a moderator taking a back seat but subtly steering discussion towards subjects of interest to the research. Nowadays focus groups are commonly used in field research for obtaining background information about a topic of interest, generating research hypotheses, stimulating new ideas and creative concepts, and observing how participants discuss the subject of interest (Stewart, Sharmdasni, & Rook, 2007). Ideally the group should more or less run itself, with the moderator “occasionally prodding, provoking, or reorienting the discussion” (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 88).

Focus groups were utilised in this research because it was felt that they would provide the study with the most honest representation of how young women interact with the magazines in the limited time available. Focus groups also provided an insight into the social experience of teenage girls reading magazines together and how they interacted as a group on topics of interest to this study such as beauty and consumerism. However, the focus groups were limited because of the small sample size and therefore may only be used as an indication of how teenage girls read the magazines.

### *Participants*

The participants for the focus groups were female teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18. They were students from two state secondary schools: Epsom Girls' Grammar

(EGGS), a single-sex school, and Thames High School (THS), which is co-educational. EGGS has approximately 2000 students enrolled while THS is much smaller, with approximately 600 students. EGGS is located in central Auckland whereas THS is the only high school in the small town of Thames, approximately 1.5 hours from Auckland. Two focus groups were carried out at each school.

Each participant completed a preliminary questionnaire prior to the focus groups being carried out. The questionnaires asked for some basic demographic information and included background questions surrounding their experiences with teen magazines; it is reproduced in Appendix I. This provided valuable background information prior to the groups being run and is a process that Reinard (2001) supports. A total of 25 young women took part from the two schools. From EGGS 16% were 14 years old, 16% were 15, 46% were 16, 15% were 17 and 7% were 18. From THS 36% were 14 years old, 46% were 15 and 18% were 16 years old. The researcher's initial interest in using two schools from different areas stemmed from the desire to be able to make comparisons between the two. However, due to the small size of the focus groups a decision was made to instead consider the samples in terms of a broad range of teenage girl perspectives.

While it was not necessary for participants to supply information about their ethnicity, a range of girls from different ethnic groups took part (New Zealand European, New Zealand Maori, Pasifika, Asian, and Indian). That said, the data collected has not been analysed with a strong focus on ethnicity as this study is most concerned with the participants as teenage girls in terms of their age rather than their ethnic grouping. Such a focus could be the subject of further research in order to consider how different backgrounds and cultures interact with the specific representation of an ideal beauty and whether young women feel their ethnicities are significant.

Each focus group consisted of four to eight participants who sat at tables in a circular formation. The researcher was positioned as a part of the circle and audio recording equipment was located in the middle. As an ice breaker participants were asked to tell the group a few details about themselves (for example, what they liked to do outside of school). From here, the researcher introduced the study and began asking questions. Although focus group literature states that the group should run itself, the researcher

expected to play a more substantial role as the participants were teenagers and thus may have needed more assistance staying on track and moving from one discussion area to another.

Focus groups are sometimes seen as simulations of social interactions, making it easier to extract useful information from participants (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). The similarity of the participants was important as Carey (1994) points out people are more likely to share information with others who are similar. This proved to be useful as the participants consisted of homogeneous groups of teenage girls discussing their experiences reading teen magazines. This facilitated a type of social dialogue between peers and the researcher, as moderator, could take a step back. In order to create a more social atmosphere several magazine titles were used as stimulus material and laid out around the room for participants to peruse and discuss.

### *Procedure*

Participants were enlisted with the help of EGGS and THS. Information regarding the study was dispersed to teachers in both schools who read out basic information to students during form class. Interested students picked up information sheets and consent or assent forms from the front office. In order to be invited to participate in the study, students must have returned signed parental consent forms as well as personal consent (for those aged 16 years and above) or assent forms (for those aged 15 years and under). The returned forms were then collected from the office and the participants communicated with through the school. In order that participants felt comfortable and secure in the study, they were given the option to pull out at any time or refuse to answer any sensitive questions. Each student signed a confidentiality agreement with the researcher prior to the focus group beginning. The privacy of the participants was thereby protected and any names used in the analysis section of this thesis are pseudonyms.

The analysis of data was carried out utilising the scissor-and-sort technique as outlined by Krueger and Casey (2000) and Stewart et al. (2007). This technique involves the physical sorting of transcript quotes into a classification system developed from the major topics and issues of the study. The material is distributed between specific topics

of interest. These were then summarised and analysed to develop distinctive themes that the discussion of the results is based around. Krueger and Casey (2000) described this approach as concretising the analysis, meaning data is well organised and manageable. Because it is a simple method the data analysis remained clear and concise.

It is a common misunderstanding that focus groups should not be used when researching sensitive topics, particularly amongst young women (Barbour, 2007). Wilkinson (2004) states that in fact “the solidarity among friends seems to decrease their discomfort with the topic” (p. 180). That said, dealing with young women and discussion of potentially sensitive topics meant that confidentiality was key. The preliminary questionnaire helped participants to become familiar with the types of questions that would be asked in the focus groups and ensured they were already thinking about the topic.

Participants were gradually introduced to the key questions through utilising of the Funnel Approach as defined by Stewart et al. (2007). This enabled the researcher to begin with broader questions in order to free-up discussion and gradually introduce the topics most relevant to the study. Following Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), a standardised approach to all focus groups was employed, using identical questions and procedures across all four. This allowed for a focus on the same topics across all groups. At the conclusion of each focus group the researcher spent a period of time noting down her initial thoughts and feelings. Barbour (2007) indicated this process is important in order to not only distinguish between voices for later transcription but also because transcription will not cover atmosphere and body language or facial expressions. She suggested recording physical features of group dynamics and one’s own impressions of the topics that most engaged participants.

The analysis of focus group data often generates debate about the balance to be given to the group or the individual in the study (Barbour, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Barbour (2007) points out that although focus group discussion sometimes arrives at a general consensus there are apparent difficulties in generalising a group view. Group interaction is important in the analysis stages as all comments made during focus groups are highly dependent upon context and responses to others’ contributions. Because the participants were young and may have experienced shyness around their peers, it was

useful to pick up on body language, such as the shake of a head, for example, which revealed there was some difference of opinion within the group. Hence, throughout the analysis process it was important to take into account non-verbal responses. This was made easier by noting down immediate observations and adding actions to transcripts.

The decision was made to focus on the group narratives and dynamics that occurred because teenage girls often read magazines in a group setting. That said, it was still important to consider individual differences that arose. Recreating this social aspect of exchange resulted in emic data being collected, that is, data that arises more spontaneously rather than participants' having time to think and write a response (Krippendorf, 2004). The "democratization" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 904) of the research process, where ideally everyone within the group is allowed an equal say, also created a relaxed and informal atmosphere that encouraged participants to respond effectively.

### *Justification*

A qualitative research approach was decided upon for the field research section of this study as it allows for non-numerical data to be collected that is useful when researching people's thoughts and feelings towards a topic. Qualitative research also allowed the researcher to be present at the collection of data and more effectively moderate and understand the discussion. The most common methods for qualitative data collection are interviewing or research questionnaires. Focus groups were chosen as they seemed the most effective means of collating data with the limited time available. Wilkinson (1999) stated focus groups were useful because they are a contextual method and reveal both social contexts and the interactions between members of the groups.

The aim of the focus groups was to gather the reading experiences of the primary target audience of teen magazines. In particular, images and definitions of beauty were discussed in order to gauge an understanding of how they affected the girls' personal definitions of the term and how they view themselves in comparison to the magazines' definitions. The preliminary questionnaires gave participants the opportunity to give any answers that they may not have wanted to share in a group environment with their peers.

### *Limitations of Focus Groups*

While focus groups were undoubtedly the ideal choice of data collection for this study, there are a number of limitations involved with running them. Because the participants were young and the research was being conducted in groups with their peers there is the possibility that the girls were not as open and honest as they may have been if answering an anonymous questionnaire.

In addition, some participants are likely to be quieter than others, and some can end up dominating the discussion. This was the case in the first focus group as one 16 year old was very outgoing and opinionated. This was handled by allowing her to say her piece and then asking others to add their thoughts or by picking up on the body language (for example the shake of a head) of other participants and asking them to elaborate.

Because focus groups had to be run on school premises and during the 60 minute lunch break, time had to be managed strictly. Fortunately, both schools were lenient on students heading to their next class a little late. Time restrictions meant that some areas of discussion could not be further developed. However, by the last group a lot of the same information was arising, therefore it was felt that sufficient data had been collected. Further to this, because the selection of participants was random, with the exception of the target age being between 14 and 18 years, and because students were volunteering their time, a consistent spread of ages could not be guaranteed. It also meant participant numbers were limited as students had to be relied on to come forward after information was given out at school.

### **Ethics**

Focus group research immediately raises questions surrounding ethics and the protection of research subjects. Informed consent is given priority in many writings on research ethics (Carey, 1994). Not only must potential participants give their permission voluntarily they must also be completely aware of the research procedure and subject. Any risks involved must be clearly communicated before informed consent is given. Because the focus groups contained both minors and legal adults participants had to

either sign a consent form or an assent form. Legal guardians were also required to sign their consent for their children to partake. Confidentiality was an important factor as participants were all students at the same school and some sensitive information was being shared. Accordingly, a confidentiality agreement was introduced at the beginning of each focus group where all present agreed to keep the group discussion to themselves. This is reproduced in Appendix C.

Moral obligation in terms of ethics does not stop with the signing of informed consent or a confidentiality agreement. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) have noted, “agreeing to comply with ethical codes as outlined in an informed consent proposal does not absolve the researcher from adhering to the underlying ethical values contained in these codes” (p. 105). As the study was researching teenage girls and beauty ideals, the researcher spoke to school counsellors at both locations and had a system of support set up for participants, should the subjects discussed have any negative effects. This involved utilising the peer support programmes already established in the schools: “EARS” at THS and “Body Image Leaders” at EGGS. Participants were encouraged to take advantage of these support groups. Questions used in the focus groups were not aimed at steering participants towards any particular answer. It is important for the validity of the study that participants answer as truthfully and personally as possible.

## **Thematic Analysis**

The analysis of the focus group data has been structured around the themes or “codes” that arose through the process of content analysis and further coding. These codes were then analysed according to Richard E. Boyatzis’ theory of thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) describes the method as a “way of seeing” (p. 1) that ultimately moves the researcher through three stages of seeing (or recognising) a significant event or quote, encoding it, and then interpreting it. Throughout these phases it is especially important that the researcher manages to stay open and flexible to pattern recognition.

Boyatzis (1998) established three ways of developing a code, two of which are deductive; the other inductive. Deductive codes are theory-driven and prior research-driven whereas the inductive codes are data-driven. He outlined two instances where there is also the need for a hybrid version of these methods. The first is when the study



concerns just one person, group or organisation, and the second is when there are multiple case studies and instances whereby the nature of the data does not lend itself to one approach. This research followed a hybrid method and employed a combination of inductive and deductive approaches and therefore utilised both theory-driven and data-driven coding. Employing a hybrid approach meant that the limitations sometimes experienced with theory-driven coding (for example, the sensitivity to projection of the researcher's personal beliefs) are lessened. The addition of data-driven coding re-focused the study on the raw data. Through the inductive process preliminary themes can be recognised by breaking down raw data into sub-samples or what is sometimes called the criterion reference. This criterion reference consists of both ends of the extremes in data, ensuring both sides of the argument are represented. The deductive process meanwhile recognises that there are theories found in literature that can be applied to the phenomenon being studied.

A theme may be found at a latent or manifest level and, according to Boyatzis (1998), can be defined as “a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 4). These preliminary themes are then returned to the raw data and rewritten in the form of codes with a label, a definition, a description of when the theme occurs, a description of exclusions from the code, and examples. Reliability is paramount to the success of a code and this can be achieved by applying established codes to another sub-sample of the data to see if the same results are gained. Inter-rater reliability refers to a code's consistency. Ideally, the same results should be achieved no matter who applies the code to the data. Reliable codes are then ready to be applied to the entire sample.

Thematic analysis can be used with a wide variety of qualitative information including focus group transcripts. The scissor-and-sort technique carried used in this study organised the raw data into a more manageable layout for both inductive and deductive code development. As Boyatzis (1998) noted, “the raw information, or data, must be in a form that allows easy, repeated review” (p. 43).

### *Limitations*

Boyatzis (1998) identified three obstacles to successfully engaging with thematic analysis as a method. Firstly, there is the matter of the researcher's personal beliefs and opinions that must not be projected onto the data. A researcher must maintain an objective stance at all times. Secondly, sampling must encompass diversity. In this case, this means that a diverse group of teenage girls must be participating in the focus groups in order to acquire a balanced set of responses. The inclusion of two schools from separate locations will aid in encompassing diversity. Lastly, the mood and style of the researcher must be checked to ensure a clear mind at the time of analysis. These are all aspects of thematic analysis that the researcher of this study endeavoured to keep in mind.

### *Justification*

Thematic analysis is a method that works well in conjunction with qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998), hence its selection for this study. The transcripts of focus groups were most suitable for coding development and this meant that the researcher could develop the codes herself rather than applying already existing codes to the data. Themes found within the sample were also able to be compared and contrasted to themes found within relevant theory-based literature and, furthermore, these themes could be found at both a latent and a manifest level, with the effect that all possible meaning could be extracted from the raw information.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has thoroughly explained the methodologies and methodological tools utilised in this study, which adopts aspects of multiple methodologies and methods in order to analyse aspects of the teen magazine genre and to draw upon insights from the readers of these magazines. In recent magazine studies textual analysis has often taken priority and therefore left out the matter of production, however the use of CDA in this study pinpoints this as it encompasses the wider industry of magazines. Image analysis

also balances the study, ensuring coverage of ideological and socio-cultural encodings. In order to support the textual analysis focus groups were enlisted as a form of field research, adding value to the study by ascertaining the opinions of readers of the magazines. The various research processes adopted here enable an extensive consideration of the multi-layered meanings produced within teen magazines.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

### Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of both the magazine analysis and the focus group research. The results are organised into three sections according to the themes extracted from the research. Each section will make use of both textual analysis and focus group findings in conducting a thorough examination of teen magazine content and its relationship to beauty.

Magazine analysis of the four key titles *Crème* (NZ), *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus) was undertaken to explore the genre of teen magazines. The magazine dataset was assessed using both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and social semiotic analysis to explore the ideological underpinnings operating within the content. The relationship between teenage girls and the magazines was explored through a small-scale focus group study in order to contextualise the textual analysis. Thematic coding and analysis took place to determine the quotes and topics arising from the focus groups that made the most significant contributions to the study.

The discussion of findings examines how a beauty *discourse* is incorporated into teen magazine titles and how it is encoded for readers. Ideologies concerning gender and consumerism established through the beauty *discourse* are also studied. The issue of local and international *discourses* within the magazines was also explored, which subsequently informed a focus group dialogue on connections with specific local cultures and implications for readers. Focus group discussion on this topic also included a dialogue on the *Next Top Model* television franchise in order to briefly consider the relationship between the two genres and their definitions of beauty.

### Content Analysis

The genre of teen magazine features a disconnected narrative structure that is non-linear, encouraging readers to glance at it and flick through it first and only then properly read

it (Hermes, 1995). Content is sectioned into areas of interest so that readers know where to turn to for different topics. There are generic topics that are associated with teen magazines ensuring readers know what to expect from them, for example there will be information on boys, fashion, cosmetics and celebrities. The genre also showcases an even spread of both images and text, including pull-out posters. The four magazines examined in this study as mass media texts follow these generic conventions of a teen magazine.

Teen magazines tend to feature several pages of beauty advice and information predominantly based on physical rather than internal beauty. The four figures below categorise the content of each magazine analysed in this study. “Beauty Content” was defined as being a part of the “Beauty” section on the magazine’s contents page. Other categories include “Advertisements”, typically featured as full-page advertising material, “Fashion” which includes all pages listed as being in the “Fashion” section of each title as well as full-page images of clothes being modelled. “Celebrity Gossip” refers to those pages in the magazines that feature updates on celebrities’ lives and current styles. The “Other” category is made up of quizzes, competitions, posters, contents pages, advice pages and letters from the editor. This study separated general articles (categorised as “Other Articles”) from body image articles in order to show how much content is directly providing young women with messages regarding body image. It should be noted here that body image articles in *Girlfriend* (NZ) and *Crème* (NZ) are often positive articles about body confidence and acceptance whereas *Seventeen* (USA) focuses more on encouraging exercise regimes and diets to obtain the body you want. This difference proved significant when it came to understanding differences between the ways in which local and international magazines represent beauty.

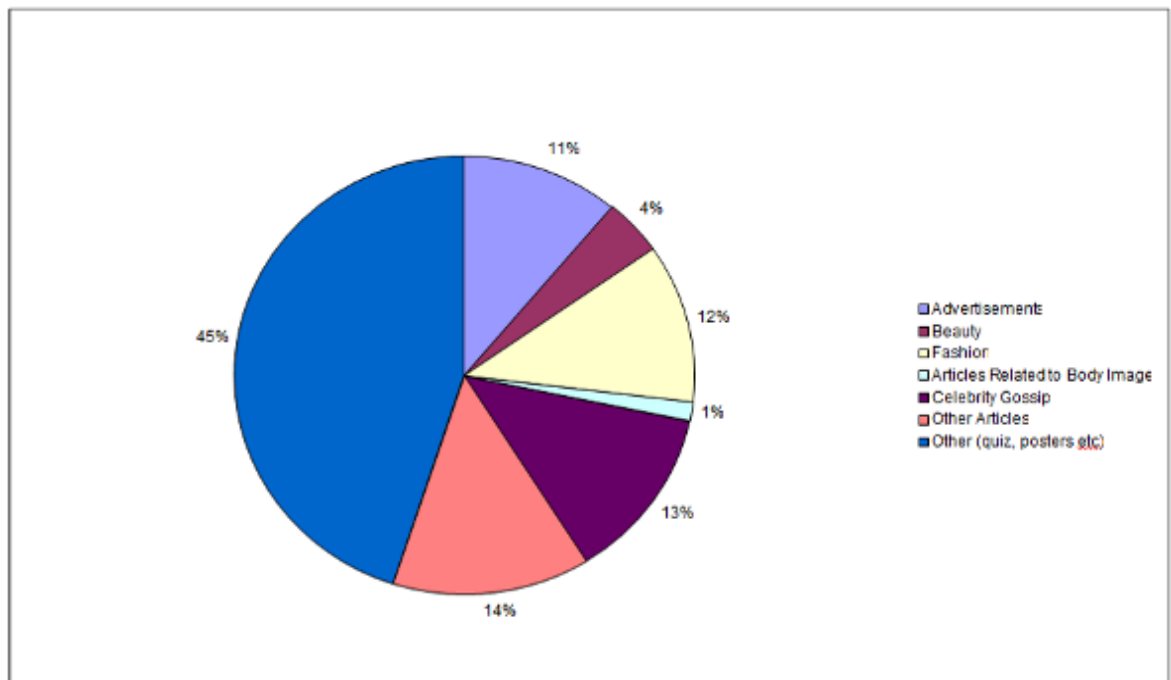


Figure 2: *Creme* (NZ) content by category (total over 4 issues in 2011)

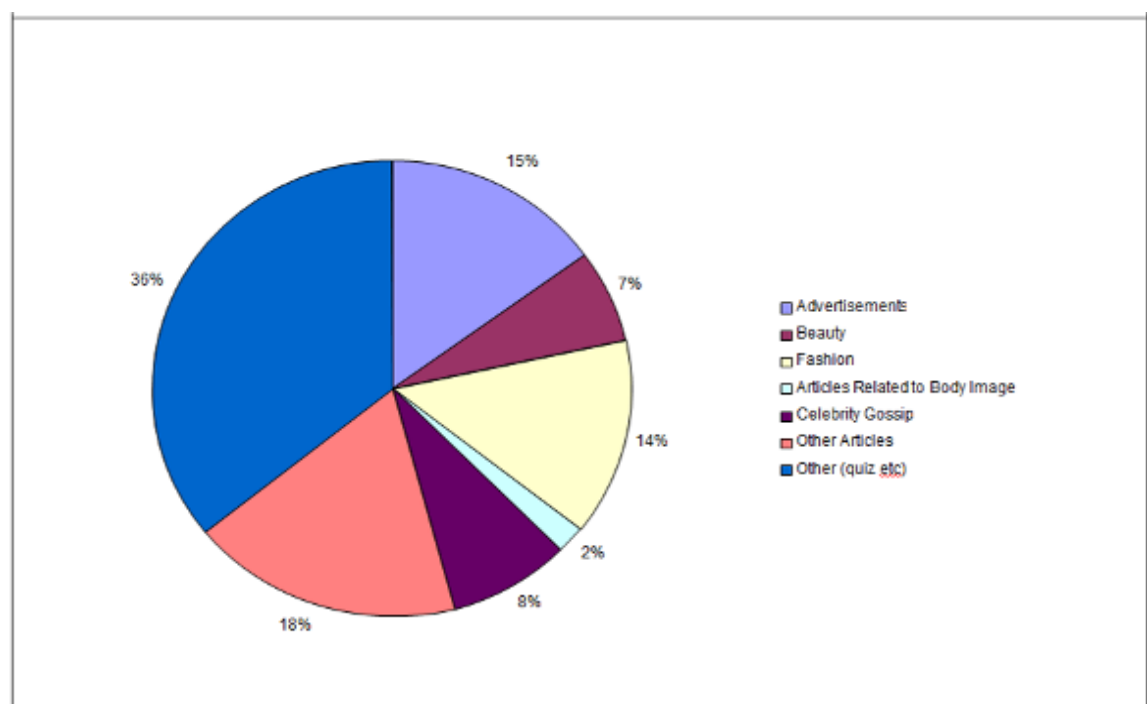


Figure 3: *Girlfriend* (NZ) content by category (total over 4 issues in 2011)

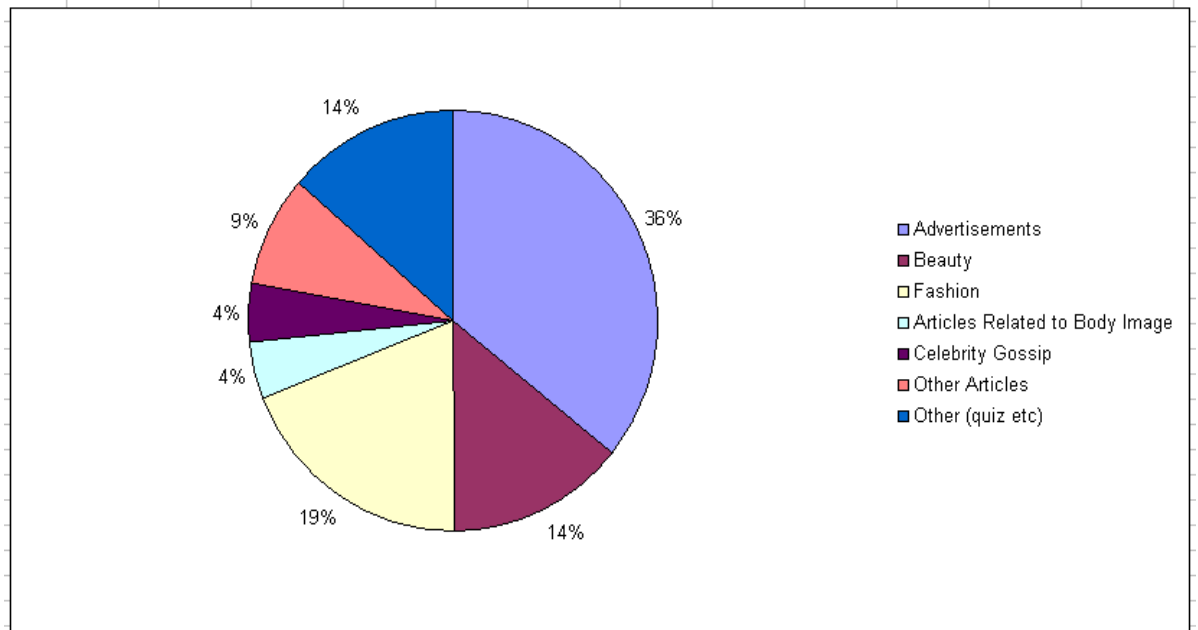


Figure 4: *Seventeen* (USA) content by category (total over 4 issues in 2011)

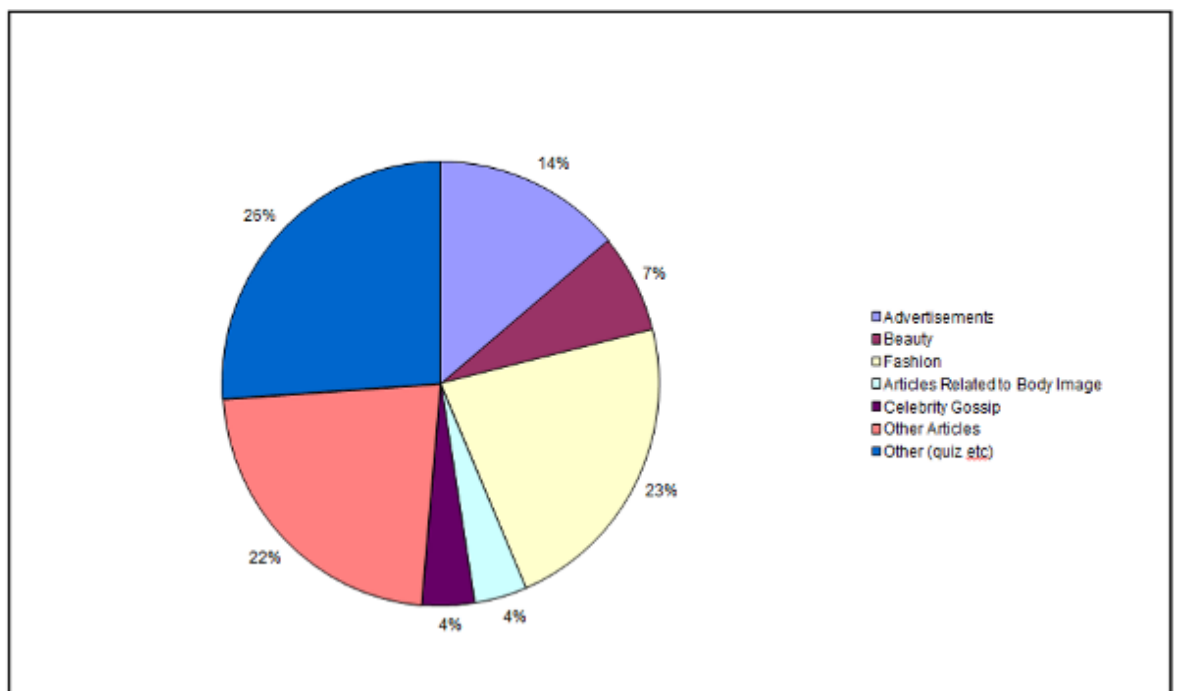


Figure 5: *Dolly* (Aus) content by category (total over 4 issues in 2011)

	Advertisements	Beauty	Fashion	Body Image Articles	Celebrity Gossip	Other Articles	Other
<i>Crème</i> (NZ)	11%	4%	12%	1%	13%	14%	45%
<i>Girlfriend</i> (NZ)	15%	7%	14%	2%	8%	18%	36%
<i>Seventeen</i> (USA)	36%	14%	19%	4%	4%	9%	14%
<i>Dolly</i> (Aus)	14%	7%	23%	4%	4%	22%	26%

**Table 1: Summary of Teen Magazine Content**

The combination of beauty, fashion and advertising (which typically relates to beauty and fashion) content encourages a specific beauty *discourse* implemented in the magazines. The beauty *discourse* itself slightly varied between the titles analysed due to the way each magazine defines the term beauty. Table 1 shows the spread of content for the different titles and gives a general overview of what can be expected in a teen magazine. Figures 2 and 3 reveal that the New Zealand produced *Crème* and *Girlfriend* have a wider variety of content than *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA), suggesting that there is a heavier beauty *discourse* in the international magazines. We can also see that *Seventeen*'s content is dispersed rather differently to the other three, with a much larger percentage of advertisements and smaller percentages for Other and Other Articles. While *Dolly*, *Crème* and *Girlfriend* share similar divisions of content, the differences between these titles stem from subtle differences within the encoding of content.

### The Encoding of Beauty Discourse

The inclusion of a beauty *discourse* within teen magazines is significant to this study. It is difficult to find a teen magazine on sale in the local market that does not engage with beauty *discourses*, whether positive or negative messages are communicated. In this section a brief outline of mass media and teen magazines' location within the wider



mainstream communication system is provided before the encoding practices in teen magazines are described in order to understand the extent to which messages regarding beauty are manifest or latent. This is followed by in-depth discussions of these practices. The use of celebrities as persuasion tools is then considered, followed by a focus on the encoding of messages related to the body. Finally, all of the above is synthesised in the Discussion sub-section with the various critical theories and the findings from the literature review.

### *Mass Media Influences*

Teen magazines are located within the wider frame of mainstream mass media which has the tendency to restrict the definition of beauty. *The New Zealand Oxford Dictionary* may define beauty as “a combination of qualities that give pleasure to the sight or other senses or to the mind” (Deverson, 2006, p. 65) but the producers of teen magazines define beauty in accordance with the mainstream media’s and therefore society’s definition of the term. The image of beauty we see in today’s media primarily focuses on the qualities that give pleasure to the sight. Teen magazines are no exception. The concept of beauty is stereotyped by the media to establish a specific and narrow representation of what it constitutes. Teen magazines are a part of the wider mass media that relies on connecting women with the physical. The domination of mainstream mass media means that teen magazines imitate its model for the representation of women, which includes such concepts as *consumer femininity* and the global development of a beauty ideal.

Teenage girls may read this genre of media specifically for entertainment, however the advice and tips they receive regarding beauty are often steering them towards a generic ideologically informed approach to beauty, for example establishing a relationship between beauty and the use of cosmetics. Thus it is more instructive to discuss the *discourse* of beauty as a generic tool rather than thinking of several, diverse *discourses* that may be apparent in the magazines. The beauty *discourse* is generalised by magazine producers to reflect a socio-cultural understanding of beauty that acts to maintain the social norm instead of introducing alternatives. The extent to which each magazine title engages with this *discourse* reveals the amount of significance they place on embodying beauty. The generic understanding of beauty takes into account how one styles oneself,

one's body shape, and the degree to which one decides to alter one's face and hair so as to oblige the media's expectations of women.

Focus group discussion with readers of teen magazines revealed the emphasis mass media has on young women's understandings of what constitutes beauty. Despite wanting to think of inner beauty, Epsom Girls' Grammar (EGGS) participants felt that society's and media's focus on physical beauty was too dominant for them to avoid. Their immediate response was to resort to a mainstream definition of beauty that they were familiar with through their interaction with media. The impact of this was that focus group participants felt that they did not fit the stereotypical mould of beauty and therefore located themselves outside of the definition of being beautiful. While Thames High School (THS) students did not specifically mention mass media's domination, participants from this school also felt left out by the mainstream definition of beauty represented in the magazines. The media's definition of the term beauty thus tended to dominate, or at the very least highly influence the young focus group participants' personal definitions of beauty. When asked what the word beauty meant to them many participants automatically thought of physical beauty and this was a sense of beauty that was in line with a stereotypical image. For example:

**Rachael** (EGGS, 15): "A good figure. Tan skin, blonde hair, blue eyes."

However, this only seemed to occur at a manifest level and it is important to note that while participants initially thought of physical appearance when confronted with the term beauty, when they reflected on it more deeply and personally a number stated that everyone is beautiful in their own way and inner beauty was more desirable than physical.

### *Encoding Process*

The majority of the magazine content analysed represents teenage girls as being obsessed with both their appearance and the opposite sex and speaks to them as a homogeneous group assuming a type of common experience, a finding supported by McRobbie (1991). Magazines often boast a wide targeted age group, for example *Crème* (NZ) is supposedly aimed at 10–17 year olds according to information given for

advertisers on the magazine's website (*Crème Magazine*, 2012) and *Seventeen* (USA) was aimed at 12–19 year olds according to their media kit (Heart Magazines International, 2012). So not only do the magazines speak to all young women the same way, these target groups also suggest that you can interact with a 10 year old female in the same way that you can with a 17 year old. Magazine titles are casting their nets wide in order to gain as many readers as possible.

The encoding of beauty messages is carried out through a specific use of written text and was often similar across all four titles, which employed the use of *synthetic sisterhood* (Talbot, 1995). The tone, or the voice the editor and writers employ to persuade readers they are being directly spoken to and to forge an imaginary relationship between producer and audience, is always informal. The writers aim to position themselves as close friends in exchange for trust and the right to impart wisdom and advice. The use of tone therefore has an influence on how the audience reads the messages. The encoding process at the production level of the text is carefully thought out to appeal as strongly as possible to teenage girls.

An example of this informal tone is exemplified in *Crème*'s (NZ) February 2011 issue. Here, the fashion editor employs a personal tone as she “speaks” directly to the reader as if she is a friend of the same age group, saying “I’m not sure if I’m being completely objective here, cos let’s face it, Ms Watson is the bomb!” (p. 39). The shortening of words such as “because” to “cos” is typical of teen magazines as the producers adopt a teenage voice in order to achieve *personalisation* with readers. Similarly, there are often lots of interrogatives, usually quickly followed by an answer. Thus the reader is directly “spoken” to, with questions such as “Fancy a new look?” (*Seventeen* (USA), June/July 2011, p. 30) and “Need a wardrobe revamp?” (*Crème* (NZ), February 2011, p. 40). Some kind of response is demanded and nearly always the reader’s answers to these are taken to be in the affirmative. *Synthetic sisterhood* aims to create a positive relationship between reader and text producer in the expectation that the encoded messages will have more of an influence.

The implications of this for readers are that they are not given a choice when asked to respond to the questions and messages being communicated. Their independent voices are silenced by the strong social development of them into beauty-conscious women as

they are given a mass of information and advice that they are supposedly seeking. Readers are thus encouraged to simply listen and absorb, and encourage to play a passive role in the development of their own subjectivities as young women.

The producers achieve *personalisation* by talking to an *imagined reader* who they have created and completely understand. The attributes assigned to the magazines' *imagined audiences* were slightly different across the four titles and resulted in varying levels of connection for readers of the individual titles. These *imagined audiences* likely play an important role in determining which magazines are established as most popular within the New Zealand context. In order for a *synthetic sisterhood* to be forged, magazines will establish an *imagined audience* in order to interact with them. *Crème* (NZ) and *Girlfriend* (NZ) give their imagined reader similar attributes and interests including fashion, beauty and celebrities but also real-life stories, creativity, friendship and positivity. *Girlfriend* also sees their audience as slightly older than *Crème*'s and therefore tends to attribute their reader with slightly older interests, such as boys. *Dolly* (Aus) mainly speaks to an Australian audience and sees their readers as having more of an interest in beauty, boys, fashion and celebrities; their audience is also interested in life advice, and articles written by a life coach are regularly included. *Seventeen* (USA), however, has an older audience and readers are attributed with limited interests that cover only beauty, fashion, boys and shopping. As Talbot (2007) has indicated, this can be problematic as any readers who have similarities to the fabricated audience may subconsciously take up the suggested position. This means magazines have the power to mould readers into stereotypical teenage girls. In *Dolly*, *Girlfriend* and *Crème* articles make up a much larger percentage than *Seventeen* (see Figures 2–5), suggesting that readers want more engaging content than just fashion and beauty advice.

Teen magazines also employ a problem-solution format whereby they offer readers solutions to problems they encounter as they mature. Much of the content includes a step-by-step guide or *instructional discourse* that readers are encouraged to follow. These guides cover how to wear make-up, how to style your hair, how to dress like a celebrity, how to talk to boys and so on. Focus group findings suggested that this *instructional discourse* is significant within the genre of teen magazines, with some participants saying that this is one of the reasons they turn to the magazines:

**Charlotte** (THS, 15): “I like to find beauty tips, like how to do make-up good and stuff.”

**Gabriel** (THS, 15): “Yeah like how to make your eyes bluer, greener or brighter.”

These students saw such attributes as positive aspects of teen magazines and tended to be accepting of the *synthetic sisterhood* offered to them, feeling that the writers are just helping them to look their best.

Students in the focus groups conducted at EGGS appeared to have different opinions on the way the magazines speak to their readers. They believed that the magazines portray teenage girls as shallow, vain and flaky. At times the extent magazine producers went to to form a *synthetic sisterhood* was amusing to readers. The shortening of words and use of abbreviations for phrases (for example LOL (laugh out loud) and OMG (Oh my God)) were made fun of by participants in EGGS focus groups when flicking through the dataset, one member stating dismissively:

**Amy** (EGGS, 16): “They think we talk like that.”

One 16-year-old explained it in the following way:

**Riana** (EGGS, 16): “The magazines try to capture teenagers but teenagers are really different these days.”

This contrast between the two schools suggest that the two groups were being spoken to in very different ways. While the same ideological messages were encoded, EGGS students seemed to overlook them due to their negative relationship with the producers. THS students may therefore have been more vulnerable to the socio-cultural messages the titles attempted to communicate.

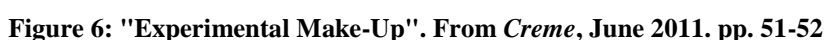
### *Fashion Pages*

Fashion pages are a way that the magazines can subtly send messages regarding beauty, the body and expectations of being female. They contribute a large proportion of the content for magazines produced internationally, with *Dolly's* (Aus) fashion pages representing a 23% share and *Seventeen's* (USA) a 19% share of total content. New Zealand magazines on the other hand have slightly less, with 14% of *Girlfriend's* content being about fashion and *Crème* having only 12%. Fashion pages are often minimalist containing little written text with a number only an A4 image of a model and small text advising the reader of what is worn and where it can be bought.

Fashion pages are often centred on a theme or colour that makes the page appealing to the eye. Any written text generally persuades the reader that the pictured items are necessary to the functioning of their lives. Imperatives and exclamations are common, for example “The \$35 dress every girl must buy” (*Dolly* (Aus) June 2011, cover). This sentence is declarative, asserting that every girl must purchase the dress. There is no consideration that some girls might not like to wear dresses, thus advancing the argument that in order to be recognised as feminine you must dress in a particular way accepted by society. There is also often a tone of urgency that plays on the desire to not miss out, for example: “Get the greatest stuff in stores right now – before it’s all gone” (*Seventeen* (USA) May 2011, p. 60).

The fear of missing out on trends and being left behind by peers is very real for teenage girls (Hamilton, 2008) and therefore the pressuring of readers to stay up to date with fashion is a feature of the magazines. McRobbie (1991) stated that fashion “is predicted upon change and modernity and the job of the fashion writer is continually to create a new language to circumscribe what is new in his or her field” (p. 102). Thus the role of the fashion pages is to attempt to keep up with the constantly evolving world of fashion in the effort to provide teens the information they need to fit in. This is exemplified by *Crème's* (NZ) monthly page titled “Trend To Try”, where the fashion editor alerts readers to new trends, for example “There’s a really great contrast in fashion at the moment” (June 2011, p. 40). The fashion editor is trusted as someone who is knowledgeable on worldwide trends and holds the power to dictate to the young masses.

Cosmetics are widely showcased in teen magazines and suggest that every facial feature requires its application. Becoming familiar with the world of cosmetics is strongly advocated as a hobby for teen magazine readers. For example, *Crème's* (NZ) June 2011 edition featured a page titled "Experimental Make-Up" (see Figure 6) that urged girls to experiment because "it's always fun to play around . . . and do something exciting and different with your make-up" (p. 52).



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(Brown et al., 2002) is therefore used to coach readers into utilising cosmetics in quite a specific way, so not only do girls feel pressure to wear make-up but there is also the fear that they will wear it incorrectly. Cosmetics increase beauty standards further for young women and create a strong social pressure to fit in by wearing them. The fact the article is featured within the section titled “The Make-Up Manual” prepares readers to receive instructions, signalled through the use of “Manual” in the title.

We can employ CDA techniques here to better understand the articulation of *genres* and *discourses* located within the *order of discourse* of the image. It is important to recognise that the language used in the above text is part of a hegemonic process and is a site of struggle or contestation. *Genre* in CDA is used in a specific manner and reflects the use of language directly associated with specific social texts. A beauty page such as the one shown in Figure 6 may sometimes represent a hybrid version of genre that has an effect on the *order of discourse* (Fairclough, 1995). Figure 6, for example, includes aspects of the advertorial, celebrity and beauty *genres* whose boundaries are deliberately blurred. Within the different *genres* many *discourses* are also present throughout the written body of the page. *Discourses* within a teen magazine intersect with each other, evolving and interacting in order to communicate specific messages to the reader. These *discourses* encourage readers to locate themselves in relation to the content. Media *discourse* is prominent and is accompanied by a strong beauty *discourse*. Media and beauty *discourse* are in turn influenced by social and cultural practices that are embedded within the hybrid genre of the text. The *discourses* are thus restricted to communicating particular ideological messages to readers through written language. These ideologies are aligning beauty with the use of cosmetics, establishing a requirement for teenage girls to be interested in them.

The above analysis of Figure 6 demonstrates the means through which a beauty *discourse* is articulated with regard to cosmetics. This is typical of teen magazines and establishes the *discourse* through the combination of written text and semiotic imagery. Such analysis provides this study with a more developed example of a gendered *discourse* that places females into particular feminine subject positions (Sunderland, 2004). The pages themselves are layered *communicative texts* informed by wider social practices evident through the encoding process.



Readers of teen magazines are often encouraged to try out new techniques and looks with make-up or to imitate a certain star's style. The application of cosmetics is portrayed as a skill that every young woman should become familiar with in order to succeed in life. The world of cosmetics features products to upgrade all aspects of the face – there are foundations, lipsticks and glosses, eye liners, eye shadows, bronzes. McRobbie (1991) states that “beautification and self-improvement . . . forms the ideal hobby for girls” (p. 107) and this is encouraged through the beauty *discourse* in teen titles. Promoting beautification as a hobby among teenagers establishes a base of cosmetic culture that is maintained throughout adulthood.

### *Celebrities*

Celebrities are a constant presence throughout every teen magazine. In order to create more of an appeal for a product or item celebrities are used consistently to increase the popularity of an item or trend. Often images of celebrities will be featured together with advertorial content that suggests clothing items and accessories similar to what a star is wearing. The majority of celebrities are, of course, considered physically attractive and their bodies are constantly a subject of media interest. They are represented as being at the pinnacle of success, beauty and talent and teenage girls are encouraged to strive to be and look like them. Mainstream celebrities such as pop stars and movie actors feature in nearly all sections of a teen magazine. There are celebrity gossip pages and posters as well as stars being used as exemplars for fashion styles, body shapes and make-up or hair design. Many advertisements placed in the magazines will also feature a celebrity. Because of their elevated position within society the inclusion of celebrities in advertisements tends to increase desirability for the product featured.

The June/July 2011 issue of *Seventeen* (USA) features an advertisement for Venus Razor promoted by singer and actress Jennifer Lopez (see Figure 7). Similarly, the July 2011 issue of *Crème* (NZ) featured an advertisement for ghd promoted by singer Katy Perry (see Figure 8). Both advertisements have very similar aspects that are analysed using CDA and social semiotics below. The analysis will dissect the advertisements to reveal messages with ideological underpinnings.



**Figure 7: "Venus Razor". From *Seventeen*, June/July 2011. pp. back cover**

The Venus Razor advertisement (Figure 7) incorporates a celebrity *discourse* through the inclusion of Lopez. Furthermore, a “quote” from the star has been used suggesting that she is speaking directly to the reader. However, it is likely that the advertising company has written it themselves. Therefore the producer is commanding and creating a sense of urgency to possess the product by saying “on your mark, get set, go”. The advertisement also engages with the *discourse* of teen magazines as guidebooks through the use of the contraction “let’s” in “let’s get your goddess showing”, implying an invisible friend who wants to help.

The word “goddess” is used five times in the advertisement and is linked to the image of Lopez who is presented as the embodiment of one. It is proposed that to look like Lopez all you need to do is buy a Venus Razor. Beauty *discourse* is evident here, suggesting that girls of the readers’ ages should be shaving their legs in order to beautify themselves. This *discourse* is also tied up with a femininity *ideology* that tells the reader it is in line with the conventions of femininity to shave your legs and socially

unacceptable to consider not doing it. Lopez consequently appears as the epitome of femininity and sexiness in the image used, wearing a very short dress, high heels and make-up.

The A4 page is unevenly balanced, with Lopez the principal figure and all the text displayed down the right-hand side of the page. Lopez fills the length of the page, with her legs prominent and further accentuated by the short dress. This would have been done purposefully to link to the product being advertised, with the high heels also working to showcase the legs. The “sparkle and shine” message is emphasised by the glitzy dress Lopez is wearing and the declaration that the use of a Venus will “leave you with legs that sparkle and shine”. Her body position is posed as if she is on stage dancing with one of her hands on her head and the other across her middle and her hip jutted out to the side as if she is moving, perhaps in the middle of a dance move. Her waist is very small, likely photoshopped considering Lopez is known for her curvaceous figure. A bright light is backlighting her in the top right-hand corner of the page, causing her body to be slightly outlined in light. Her facial expression is calculated to be “sexy” or provocative, with a seductive gaze and her mouth slightly opened (even though the microphone is above her head).

This image has low naturalistic *modality* as it is represented in high gloss with colours highly saturated. Contextually the background is subdued, making for an absence of setting. The variations in light (Lopez) and shade (background) also lower *modality*. The strongly articulated colours and glamorous shot of Lopez gives the image high sensory *modality* as alterations to the image have heightened the representation. The image of Lopez is detailed, while her outline is in soft focus. The background is dark and out of focus, allowing Lopez to be highlighted. The silver glitz of her dress is the dominant colour and the smoothness and tone of her skin is consistent. There is little depth in the image, bringing Lopez to the forefront of the page. Light and shadow is utilised as a primary visual expression as Lopez is pictured as if on stage. She is thus in the light with the audience and background in shadow. There are also areas of the page that are located in between light and shadow in keeping with tones that would be evident at a concert or performance.

The *orders of discourse* within the advertisement consist of *genres* and *discourses*. Advertising has certain genre expectations. Readers expect that a product will be

presented as an object to enhance life positively; in this example they are told that they will look better, even divine, by using the product. These expectations condition the reader to look at the advertisement in a specific way, creating an instant desire for the product. The language of the advertisement is informed by the *discourses* evident in these genre expectations. *Discourses* involved here are tied up with beauty, celebrity and advertising. These require the use of language that will create *interpersonal* meanings for the reader, that is, language that establishes and maintains social identities. In this case, the *interpersonal* meaning is related to gendering young women into the correct social position according to their sex. The call to embrace your inner goddess and thus take up your social position as a woman requires a focus on the physical and is apparently related to your legs (“Legs that get your goddess showing”). Ideological messages are in play suggesting that women should strive to look like a goddess. Readers are told that there is a goddess in all women but it is hidden (“Today is another day for your inner goddess to step out”). Ironically, the only way to let your inner goddess out is to alter your physical appearance.

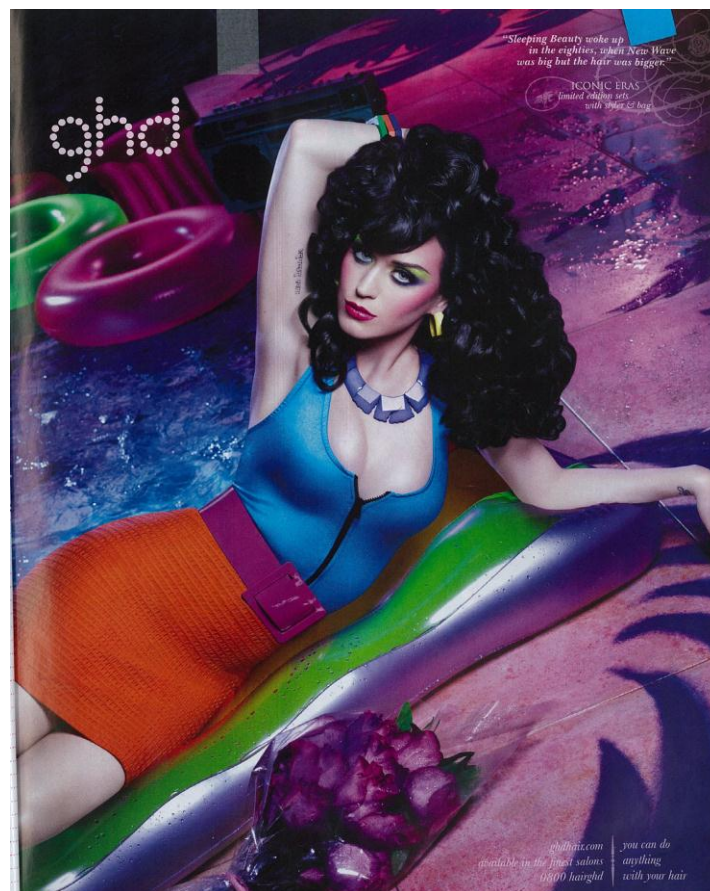


Figure 8: "ghd". From *Creme*, July 2011. pp. 27.

Although located in a locally produced magazine, the ghd advertisement (see Figure 8) is similar to that for the Venus Razor. Katy Perry is used as the celebrity to promote the product; she dominates the page; the written text is minimal and in a small font. At first glance the theme is confusing with Perry dressed in very bright colours and accessories. Her make-up is overdone and her hair is big and dominant, making it a main sign of the image – the product being advertised is a ghd hair styler. However, on a closer look and after reading the tiny text in the top right-hand corner of the page one discovers that the theme is in fact “80’s fairytale” and that what is in fact being advertised is the special edition Iconic Eras sets which are specially designed editions of ghd celebrating iconic hair eras. The text states “in the 80’s when New Wave was big”, alluding to a revolution in the music industry through the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. The advertisement takes up the literal meaning of “wave” and positions Perry poolside on a Li-Lo with splashes of water around her and pool tubes in the background. The mention of the New Wave is, of course, also directly related to Perry who herself is known for her music career.

There are quotation marks around the text in the top right-hand corner although the quote is not attributed to anyone. It is there to give readers more information about the image, and states “Sleeping Beauty woke up in the eighties, when New Wave was big but the hair was bigger.” It is implied that Perry is an 80’s version of Sleeping Beauty who has just woken up. The fact that quotation marks are used may relate to the Sleeping Beauty fairytale, suggesting this is a modern rewriting of it.

The body position of Perry, like that of Lopez in the former advertisement, is seductive. One of her arms is above her head and her chin is turned inwards. The Li-Lo she lazes on is curved so as to accentuate the curves of her body further. As previously mentioned her make-up is heavy, in keeping with the theme of the 1980’s, her lips are pursed together and she is unsmiling, looking directly at the reader. Her skin is very pale, smooth and consistent, she has been intentionally made pale through computer manipulation in order to contrast with the black, glossy hair style. Her image is placed in the middle of the page to achieve balance.

As with the Lopez advertisement this image also has low naturalistic *modality* with high sensory *modality*. The technological *modality* is high in this image due to the amount of digital altering that has been used. For example, the background setting is entirely computer-generated and has a purple hue has been added, significantly lowering the

naturalistic *modality*. Perry's sexualised pose and facial expression heighten sensory *modality*. The fact that there is very little written text assumes Perry's influence as a celebrity, with the ghd marketers having faith that simply an image of Katy Perry can sell the product.

Again the inherent genre expectations of advertising increase the likelihood that readers are already in a certain mindset when observing the page. However, compared with the Lopez advertisement, this page displays fewer features of an advertisement. For example, the product is not shown and there is little written text. Thus it loses some of the expectations usually associated with the genre. This also means that the *discourses* relied on through the advertisement are embedded mainly in the image. Such advertisements are characteristic of teen magazines and although found in different titles show an alignment with the generic teen magazine genre.

The immediate response many readers have to these advertisements is a longing to embody beauty as celebrities do. The products featured are thus glamourised and connected with femininity in a superficial way. Readers are expected to analyse themselves in comparison with Lopez and Perry and to find that there is a substantial shortfall that could be rectified through purchase of the advertised product. Ideologies concerning *consumer femininity* are thus communicated, resulting in pressure to conform to generic socio-cultural ideologies concerning women.

The presence of celebrities in teen magazines impacted focus group participants' definitions of beauty and also demonstrated the significance celebrities have in teenagers' lives. The link between advertising and celebrities was highlighted several times, with participants admitting they were more susceptible to advertisements that featured a popular star. One participant simply stated:

**Riana** (EGGS, 16): "Celebrities. If they wear it, I'll wear it."

While another noticed that:

**Shawna** (THS, 14): "It's always celebrities advertising, like not a normal person. Always a celebrity and you're like oohh I wish I had that."

An aspect of the magazines that was discussed a number of times in all focus groups was the section that concentrates on how to get a particular celebrity's "look". These pages generally picture the star wearing several outfits which are then broken down into clothing and accessories that are similar and more affordable in the local market so readers can successfully follow the celebrity's style. These pages proved popular with readers and suggest that the magazines' choices of who they feature makes a celebrity's fashion sense acceptable and desirable for teenage girls.

The domination of celebrities in teen magazines has such an impact that when asked to name people who they would describe as beautiful, participants in the focus groups stated famous people even though the question was framed "Can you think of anyone, famous or in your own life, who you consider to be beautiful?" Magazines are thus successfully aligning the word beautiful with famous faces that supplant the existing women in teenagers' lives. Names that were mentioned consistently over all four groups were Adele, Taylor Swift and Beyonce. As participants explained, these names came to mind because they are celebrities who have desirable personalities as well as being considered physically beautiful. The focus of this study may, however, have influenced their responses subconsciously as celebrities had already been discussed and thus may have still been on the minds of participants. However, one student believed she could not describe any celebrities as beautiful because:

**Sally** (EGGS, 17): "I've never seen them with my own eyes. They could be photoshopped . . . so I would say people that I know would be easier to judge."

However, the high level of celebrity *discourse* leads to a high level of enjoyment on the part of participants who liked to know all the latest celebrity gossip. The influence of famous people generally came down to girls wanting to either look or dress like them. While participants were influenced by celebrity life, some also pointed out that sometimes the magazines also showed their flaws, for example plastic surgery gone wrong. These types of articles helped the girls to see that life is not always so perfect for the famous, with one participant pointing out that these pages make you think:

**Kiri** (EGGS, 17): “Thank God I didn’t want to be like that and I’m happy how I am.”

### *The Body*

Representations of the body and messages related to body image are significant in teen magazines. In particular, *Seventeen* (USA) magazine promotes a strong relationship with the body as a part of its beauty *discourse*. Figure 9 shows the front page of a *Seventeen* makeover guide and is typical of the magazine’s content. By employing CDA techniques we can reveal the underlying messages that are imparted to the reader. The centre image is of Kelly, age 21, who we find out on the following page is one of *Seventeen*’s “reader models”. In typical weight loss fashion the page features a “before” (much smaller, grainier and un-manipulated) image and an “after” image. The after image dominates the right side of the page while the text on the left acts as anchorage, explaining to the reader what the image is in reference to and also what they can expect in the section that follows. The background of the page is plain white so that the image of Kelly stands out. The tone used is colloquial, using words like “yummy” and “super-easy”. Immediately the page suggests goals for young readers based on physical appearance, further exemplified by the statement: “Whether your goal is to rock a teeny bikini at the beach or be stronger and fitter by next school year, this super-easy plan will get you there.” Readers are thus persuaded that these types of goals are important to their age group.





Figure 9: "Total Body Confidence". From *Seventeen*, June/July 2011. pp. 73.

The most obvious word on the page is “BODY” which is a larger font than all others, instantly telling the reader what the focus of the article is. Note how it is strategically placed next to the image of Kelly. The words “TOTAL” and “CONFIDENCE” are also prominent. These three main words form the heading for the section, suggesting total body confidence can be achieved by following the guide’s five-week plan. Thus the message being sent is that achieving total body confidence is only possible through altering your current body shape, not through changing your mindset.

At the manifest level Kelly is a white, 21-year-old female; she is athletic and can afford to wear top-of-the-line branded workout clothing (the crop top and jacket are Adidas). Kelly is slightly tanned in order to link to the upcoming summer season. She is accessorised with bracelets and earrings and her pose is strong and confident. Her hands are on her hips, signifying power and self-confidence. Over the page we learn that Kelly is also tertiary-educated as she mentions her eating habits while on campus at university.

The images of Kelly reflect a naturalistic *modality* in social semiotic terms. The smaller “before” image expresses high naturalistic *modality* as the colours are in keeping with those of a 35mm camera. The main image of Kelly is also naturalistic, however the

*modality* dimensions suggest this visual representation is of low *modality*. The truth value of the image is (as always) debatable, with Kelly looking as if she is flattening her stomach by holding her breath, suggested by the straining of the neck muscles. Her facial expression is forced and her wry smile is confident. She looks directly at the camera and her face is heavily made up with cosmetics. Compared to the “before” shot her hair has been cut, styled and highlighted and is also windswept. She wears her hair loose even though it would more than likely be tied up if she was working out, which she seems . Long hair is a common signifier of energy and freedom and this is perhaps why it has been left out (Williamson, 1978).

A lot of Kelly’s body is showing while also maintaining an athletic look (i.e. very short shorts and a sports bra). The text running along the bottom of the page exclaims “Flat abs! A great butt! Amazing legs!” – urging upon readers that these are what they need for “total body confidence”. While it is obviously not mentioned there is a good chance that the image has also been digitally altered as skin tone is consistent and smooth, changing the *modality* of the shot.

The level of detail in the images of Kelly are interesting. The smaller “before” shot has very little detail, being much smaller and grainier than the “after” image. It is in soft focus so as to depreciate how she looks whereas the “after” shot is in sharp detail. The use of colour on the page is very vivid. Colours are largely saturated, making them brighter and more appealing to the eye. Because teen magazines are also printed on glossy paper the colours used are generally diverse and bright rather than dull and dark. This page is colour co-ordinated with blue, green, yellow and pink dominant. There is an absence of representation of depth on the page. The text and the primary image of Kelly are very bold and busy, with some written text overlapping the image. The naturalistic *modality* is low for the main image of Kelly and high for the “before” image. The low *modality* image sets up Kelly (and more importantly, her body) as the image of what the reader could be if they too follow *Seventeen*’s weight loss plan.

All aspects of an image low in naturalistic *modality* gel together to persuade the reader to adopt the messages the article is communicating. The point of such a *modality* in this context is to provide a differentiation between women as close to their natural state as possible and an improved, fictional version guaranteed by way of following the

producer's instructions. Low *modality* images in teen magazines are thus always the better version of oneself that is always just out of reach. Teen magazines very rarely feature high *modality* images, meaning that readers become accustomed to low *modality* and therefore may have trouble differentiating between the two.

The written text is equally important as the visual imagery in this example as the two operate in conjunction with one another to achieve stronger ideological messages. The page is the cover of a special additional health section for the issue and this would seem to indicate the health article genre. However, after a quick perusal it seems far more suitable to view the page as an example of the beauty and body image genre. Because it is located in *Seventeen*, which has a high level of beauty *discourse*, the "health" articles are ultimately intertwined with the concept of beauty. The fact that the top left-hand corner announces "Summer Makeover Guide" means it also fits within the manual genre. The reader therefore expects that they will receive guidance on making themselves over for summer, which ensures they will go into the section open to advice and ready to learn the secrets to improving their bodies.

The *discourses* involved are very much at a latent level but the ideological messages regarding the female body are clear. The ideal shape requires "Flat abs! A great butt! Amazing legs!" Messages of beauty and body image are masquerading as health and fitness tips. The social practices involved in the production of this text have made assumptions about teenage girls and body image and subsequently targeted these through the encoding process. The vulnerability of teenage girls is thus heavily exploited as the article tantalisingly dangles a recipe for fabricated perfection just in front of them.

In contrast to *Seventeen*'s representation of the body, *Dolly* (Aus) features a section titled "Body Happy", with the slogan "Get Fit. Be Healthy. Feel Great". In the June 2011 *Dolly* this section consisted of five pages with articles titled "7 Ways to fall asleep when you're wide awake" (p. 101), "The 4 moves that could save your life" (p. 102), "How to read a food label" (p. 104) and "The number one health habit you're not doing yet" (p. 105). It can be seen that these types of articles are very different to what can be found in the equivalent section of a *Seventeen* magazine. Thus the messages a *Dolly* reader receives from this section regarding their body are not about its physical beautification but rather about good health. This creates a positive association between

individuals and their bodies rather than the negative relationship encouraged by *Seventeen*. In a further contrast the June/July 2011 issue of *Seventeen* also featured a fitness section of 12 pages featuring different exercises for each day of the week to “Get Strong” (p. 76), “Get Lean” (p.78), “Get Toned” (p. 79), “Burn Fat” (p. 80) and “Get Definition” (p. 82). Adding to this, *Seventeen*’s models (some of whom are reader models which all the other titles have) are generally of a small size. For example, the May 2011 issue featured 10 pages of models in bikinis, all with a thin body shape (p. 132). As a result, readers of *Seventeen* are confronted with very limited representations of the female form. Anyone average or bigger is left out of the framework. This misrepresentation attempts to make thin body shapes the average for young women.

This same issue of *Seventeen* also has a section titled “Shop For Your Body” (p. 45), in which six different girls have different “problem areas”. This attention to different areas of the body suggests there are always aspects that can be worked on and introduces the subject of fragmentation of the body that is a feature of teen magazines. For example, Laura (age 19) has curvy thighs so readers with a similar body shape are told to buy swimsuits with a swimskirt bottom as “The swingy shape sits low on your hips so it shows off your middle – but hides the top of your thighs” (p. 45). The other five young women have respectively a flat butt, small bust, curvy butt, full bust and a curvy tummy. *Seventeen* suggests Clare (who has a curvy tummy) wears one-piece swimsuits as opposed to bikinis that show off the middle. Readers absorbing this section may feel that their choices in swimwear are very limited and feel prompted to identify their own “problem area”.

The exercise regimes suggested by *Seventeen* are also reflective of the body being fragmented, with various exercises depicted for different areas of the body. This supports the viewing of the body in pieces as opposed to a whole entity, isolating the body from both itself and the mind. The focus on the body for New Zealand and Australian magazines is more subtle, centring more on fashion rather than body shape. Covers of *Seventeen* feature taglines such as “Look Hot in a Bikini: Get flat abs and a cute butt now” (May 2011) or “Get Your Best Body Now” (June/July 2011). Whereas the other magazines in this study have “Girls’ Night In” (*Crème* (NZ), July 2011) and “Thanks for being a friend. And other thank yous to say now!” (*Girlfriend* (NZ), June 2011). *Dolly* is most similar to *Seventeen* with cover taglines such as “How to talk to

guys: Confidence included” (May 2011) and “Beauty secrets to save you \$\$\$” (January 2011).

What producers choose to put on the cover page plays an important role in attracting readers and presenting a sample of what their magazine is about. The cover model is especially important for teenagers and is always a celebrity. Second to this, an informed decision is made on the part of the magazine producer as to what written text is included to draw in teenage girls. *Seventeen* (USA) thus presents itself as primarily concerned with helping their readers achieve an ideal body. While *Dolly* (Aus) has a more varied approach to their cover slogans they generally feature a tagline concerned with beauty, fashion, boys and the cover celebrity. *Girlfriend* (NZ) and *Crème* (NZ) were found to use less image-related taglines to attract readers.

The use of thin models aggravated some focus group participants, with many admitting feelings of inadequacy when confronted with “skinny models” or celebrities advertising new clothing and styles in the magazines:

**Susan** (EGGS, 15): “They mainly show like skinny people, like overly skinny, or like still in that skinny range. It’s like they never show anyone over that. So it’s like oh well what’s the point in buying anything if you can’t fit any of the clothes.”

**Marie** (THS, 14): “Well it’s kind of if you see a really skinny girl wearing a really cool dress or something but it would never look like that on me because I’m not a size six. I’d never be a size six. Yeah that makes me feel horrible, like ‘thanks’”.

### *Discussion*

The beauty *discourse* examined above generates an understanding of a global, stereotypical concept of beauty. Rather than interacting with various *discourses* of beauty the magazines incorporate one generic beauty *discourse* that is displayed at various levels across the different titles. This beauty *discourse* is responsible for a lot of contradiction in the magazines.

Talbot has frequently discussed the place of contradiction in teen magazines (see Talbot, 1995 and Talbot, 2007). While looking your best is always a main theme, the magazines often maintain that the style achieved should appear effortless. It is always important to look your best even if you have limited time. The July 2011 issue of *Dolly* (Aus) features an article titled “The 5 Minute Face” (p. 120) that gives tips on how to apply make-up while in a hurry and on the move. The media can be seen as being schizophrenic towards women constantly changing its expectations and ideals (Douglas, 1994). Women featured in magazines are never shown without their faces made up and the way they endorse the use of cosmetics and other products is often through a process of association and persuasion (Dade, 2007). The analysed advertisements in this section incorporate this process by associating popular styles and products with celebrities of interest to the target audience. The association between products and successful and attractive stars works to persuade readers to purchase items to follow in their footsteps. Often fashion trends in particular are sold this way, with magazines showing a photo of a star and then a number of items that could be bought to replicate their style. A notable example was found in the February 2011 issue of *Crème* (NZ): “Kristen Stewart . . . Want her style? Get it here!” (p. 19). This is also an example of *social comparison theory* (Wykes & Gunter, 2005) in practice, whereby celebrities are represented as people with popular attributes that teenagers can base their own identity on. Using cosmetics endorsed by stars and basing one’s physical appearance on their style is promoted as getting you one step closer to their level of success and beauty. The fact that readers’ skin tone, bone structure or facial features are not the same as the stars is neglected.

Fashion pages ultimately suggest particular styles to young women that are stereotypically feminine (for instance, dresses and skirts) and encourage the need for readers to align themselves with traditional notions of femininity and to follow what Currie (1999) has referred to as a *gendered script*. Magazines ensure that femininity is articulated on women’s bodies through clothing and cosmetics (Talbot, 2007). The female body should thus be endowed with fashion that is defined as culturally feminine. This *gendered script* relies on women’s ability to view themselves from the outside (Orbach, 1998) and concentrates on both pursuing a specific definition of femininity physically and behaving in a manner that is stereotypical to one’s gender so as to appeal

to the opposite sex (Currie, 1999). Thus the type of femininity endorsed by teen magazines aligns with Frith et al.'s (2005) description of femininity as passive and emotional. *Seventeen* (USA) regularly represents this type of femininity. The May 2011 issue included an article on love advice, with one tip being "What you say to a guy isn't as important as \*how\* you say it. A coy smile and a knowing look makes every line seem extra flirty" (p. 143).

Representation of the body in teen magazines is evident throughout fashion pages as well as in the exercise or health advice sections. The fragmentation of the body is problematic because "when their bodies are separated into parts, women cease to be seen as whole persons" (Cortese, 2008, p. 42). Satisfaction with one's body is portrayed as impossible until all is improved on, for instance thighs, arms, butt, stomach and so on. The self-identification of "problem areas" for young women is encouraged particularly in *Seventeen* (USA), which sets high standards regarding body image and thus creates a negative relationship between young women and their bodies that will likely be present for the majority of their adult life (Lont, 2006). The body is thus reflected as being in need of harnessing and is cast in the role of an enemy for women (Frost, 2001). The negative relationship between women and their bodies ensures that they are restricted and confined to their physical appearance (Lont, 2006). Energy that could be used elsewhere is therefore expended trying to achieve a constantly evolving body image (Borzekowski & Bayer, 2005).

Teen magazine content propagates a cosmetic culture for young women (Tebbel, 2000). Here, "culture" in its original sense is somewhat transformed to be concerned with more trivial subjects such as cosmetics and physical appearance. Cosmetics are represented as being of importance to young women, illustrating an "instant extreme makeover culture" (Martin, 2007). The May 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* (NZ) asks their readers to "trust GF's beauty ed for advice on gettin' gorge" (p. 60). There is no room for cultural difference in this cosmetic culture as the universal understanding of beauty is represented as a Western woman without any flaws (Romaine, 1999).

Although the magazines are aimed at females, the content was, at times, found to be sexualised. For example, the facial expressions of both Lopez and Perry in Figures 7 and 8 above are seductive, even though the audience is female and the products they are

endorsing are aimed at women. Romaine (1999) argued that the reason the female body is used so often in advertisements, even those targeted at women themselves, is because it holds the power to persuade – unlike the male body. The representation of women in a sexual light in advertising is problematic for young readers who are thus receiving messages encoded with the objectification of women. The idea that women are to be looked at is perpetuated by the way females are exploited in advertisements (Durham, 2008). The acceptance of women in a sexualised light is also causing young girls to become desensitised to sexual content. As Hamilton (2007) has pointed out, teenagers may not fully understand the impressions they are making when dressing or behaving in a provocative manner. The high volume of advertisements that depict females as sexualised normalises this behaviour for younger girls.

Because magazines are a visual medium, readers are prompted to analyse themselves in relation to the images displayed. Visual imagery is always constructed (Rose, 2007), however the process of construction is very rarely considered by the target audience of teen magazines and furthermore is carried out so smoothly it is difficult to see to what extent an image has been altered. Many images of women's bodies in particular are digitally altered to smooth out skin tone, remove shadows or stray hairs, and to minimise certain body features. The unreal construction is created through the use of professional stylists and make-up artists as well as the digital manipulation of photographs by a team of well-trained experts.

Messages concerning beauty are transmitted through the prevalence of an *instructional discourse* steering young readers into pursuing information deemed socially important to the demographic of teenage girls (Brown et al., 2002). Issues related to looking your best are often emphasised as being the most important concerns for teenage girls and teen magazines situate themselves in the privileged position of being able to solve these issues. Currie (1999) has indicated that girls who read teen magazines are searching for answers to everyday problems and while the magazines do include health and relationships advice pages, information on cosmetics and beauty also describes these areas as everyday issues. However, while *instructional discourse* is common throughout teen magazines, Bignell (2002) has identified that magazine *discourses* are deliberately mixed, and require the reader to employ *negotiation* when decoding messages. While magazine producers may be encouraging readers to behave in a certain way through the



addition of instruction, this does not necessarily mean all readers will take note. The ideologies communicated are thus sites of struggle (Bignell, 2002).

Teen magazines' representation of women is largely dominated by the mass media. Because the titles examined follow the generic conventions of a teen magazine there is a certain expectation that social ideologies surrounding beauty will be followed. This also means that females are defined in a very different way to males. When men are portrayed in the media it is not always about their appearance; the focus is mostly on their achievements (Durham, 2008). Firminger (2006) offered an analysis of teen magazines through which she found representation of males in teenage girl magazines to be based around "boy culture" rather than appearance, that is, there was attention paid to interests and insights into how their minds work. The teen magazines analysed in this study were found to offer a hybrid of boy culture and commentary on their physical appearance. While they do concentrate on boy culture, such as their interests, males are also discussed in terms of their physical appearance, with celebrities described as "hot" or "cute". For example, the May 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* (NZ) features "Top 3 Hotties" (p. 92). Boy culture is present to an extent, with titles describing teenage boys' attitudes and interests to increase girls' knowledge so that they can interact romantically with them. The July 2011 issue of *Dolly* (Aus) lists "5 Things You Need To Know About Guys" (p. 62) in their "Guy Town" section.

## **The Development of Female Subjectivity**

The beauty *discourse* described in the previous section influences ideologies surrounding gender and consumerism. A relationship between gender and consumerism is implemented through the content of a teen magazine. This section examines areas of influence on the development of female subjectivity for readers of teen magazines.

Beauty is represented as having a strong relationship with ideologies surrounding femininity in teen magazines. Femininity is defined by social conventions identified with being female. It is not biologically determined but rather created by ideological understandings of what it means to be a woman, including behaviour and the way a woman or girl dresses and maintains herself. This relationship between media representations and femininity has been seen as problematic, with the media having a

tendency to portray an ideal femininity (Orbach, 1998). A specific media definition of femininity is responsible for creating a social understanding of the term. The physical, or more specifically the body and face and how a woman chooses to adorn and groom herself, is tied up in the relationship between beauty and femininity. To be considered beautiful requires a particular style of femininity to be achieved. For teen magazines this style is represented as conventional and “girly”, and defined by dresses, make-up and long hair. The August 2011 *Crème*, for example, suggests readers “look out for lace, ruffles and flowing skirts in lighter pastel colours” (p. 46). The magazines create a gender stereotype whereby femininity is defined by various levels of beauty and vice versa. To be feminine is to engage in a relationship with the pursuit of beauty, for example to use cosmetics, worry about what to wear, and how to present oneself to the world physically.

### *Consumer Femininity*

Consumerism is thought to play a significant role in the formation of a female into the gendered position of femininity. For instance, purchasing cosmetics advertised in a teen magazine can be identified as taking part in the *gendered script* of femininity. While content distribution shown in Figures 2–5 may show relatively small percentages for advertisements, it must be remembered that all pages on beauty and fashion can also be considered as advertorial content as these pages always suggest products and items to achieve featured looks. So while *Crème* (NZ) may only have 11% of advertisements, it could also be said to actually have 27% of advertising content with the inclusion of the beauty and fashion pages. The same applies for *Girlfriend* (NZ), whose 15% advertisement content becomes 36% when such pages are included. The international magazines see an even larger shift if we carry out this calculation, with *Dolly* (Aus) going from 14% to 44% and *Seventeen* (USA) going from 36% to 67%. This relationship between gender and consumerism establishes specific ideologies about what being female entails.

*Consumer femininity* promotes the idea that being a woman is bound up in working on the physical and ultimately defines womanhood through consumerism (Talbot, 2007). In more specific terms, in teen magazines *consumer femininity* is tailored to define teenage femininity. Teenage girls should thus be concerned with keeping their make-up bags stocked as well as creating a wardrobe of “cute” dresses and heels. These magazines

promote a stereotypically feminine presence that is in line with society's representations and expectations of women (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). The magazine analysis revealed that the magazine producers expect teenage girls to be passionate about shopping and therefore tailor a substantial amount of their content to this generalised characteristic. The attention given to consumerism within the magazines establishes consumer communities that readers must make sure they belong to (Talbot, 1995). The communities are open to all readers and generally are focused on achieving physical beauty through consumption of products.

The concept of *consumer femininity* represents the connection between gender ideologies and consumerism ideologies. The relationship between ideologies concerning fashion and beauty is more apparent in the New Zealand magazines, which feature one fashion and beauty section as opposed to separating the two out. *Crème's* (NZ) section is titled "The Look Book", two articles of which are dedicated to beauty (titled "Beauty Babe") and make-up (the "Make-Up Manual") respectively. "Beauty Babe" typically showcases body lotions, perfumes, facial cleansers and moisturisers as well as hair styles and products, whereas the "Make Up Manual" provides tips and products to achieve a specific look. Products mentioned on these pages are generally outside of a reasonable price range for teenage girls, for example Napoleon Perdis Blush Patrol \$66 (July 2011, p. 52), L'Oreal foundation \$41.99 (August 2011, p. 61) and Elizabeth Arden eye shadow \$43 (June 2011, p. 52). This type of cosmetic advertorial therefore creates a tension for readers. While advice that goes along with the article speaks to an *imagined audience*, the products suggested are aimed at an older demographic who have more access to funds. This may create a desire in readers to be older so that they can fully engage with the magazine and the products or brands featured, as suggested by Hamilton (2007).

The majority of focus group participants were aware of the function of advertising and many valuable comments were made. When asked what beauty meant to them, nearly all related the term to make-up or cosmetics. The process of *consumer femininity* was viewed slightly differently by EGGS participants as they felt that advertising defines beauty as products rather than specifically femininity being defined by products. These readers therefore recognised that the magazines do not define beauty as a natural entity – beauty is rather created and is purely physical. While all focus group participants

across both schools recognised a high volume of advertising they tended to view advertorial content as a valuable aspect of the magazines that showcased what is new and popular in the beauty and fashion industries. However, the majority of participants said that while they always saw items they would like to buy, due to lack of funds they very rarely ever went out and bought them. Normality was also referred to, in terms of it being influenced by advertising. One student pointed out that teenagers start out “normal”, meaning uninfluenced, but when reading a magazine they see products being advertised as necessary for a normal teenage life and therefore feel pressure to purchase and in turn “change their definition of normal” (Molly, EGGS, 17).

Participants instantly linked cosmetics to the concept of beauty, with one student indicating the process of *consumer femininity* by stating:

**Nancy** (EGGS, 16): “*Girlfriend* is trying to say that what you buy makes you beautiful.”

Even natural beauty was linked with products, with Ciara (EGGS, 16) stating that the look of natural beauty is achieved by using subtle make-up techniques.

### *Learning to be Female*

The content of teen magazines ultimately socialises young women into positions of subjectivity. An emphasis on physical beauty in particular sets standards for young women. For example, although one of the magazines with the smallest focus on cosmetics is *Crème* (NZ) as shown in Figure 2, they are still included. This inclusion of make-up content can be seen as questionable and problematic because the producers target a wide demographic, meaning the same messages imparted to a 16 year old are also targeted at girls as young as 10.

An example of this concern can be found in the February 2011 issue of *Crème*'s which featured a page on make-over competition winner Kelly Robertson who, along with four friends, won a make-over and a goodie bag full of cosmetics (p. 49). Kelly and her friends look no older than 12 years old, although their ages are never actually given. Photos show them having make-up applied and looking “glam” afterwards. Thus the

magazine is promoting an interest in cosmetics and a struggle with physical appearance to girls of a very young age. The focus on cosmetics is an example of what Durham (2008) terms the “*Lolita Effect*”. Girls are encouraged to adopt a sexualised and mature appearance prior to even reaching the teenage years. This type of media regulates a stereotypically feminine appearance and tends to desensitise young girls to sexual material. The feature recommends that cosmetics should be a hobby for the younger reader, or “tweens”, which should be developed into a skill as one matures.

Female subjectivity is also related to heterosexuality in the magazines. One participant in an EGGS focus group pointed out that teen magazines are based on a heterosexual lifestyle with no emphasis on gay rights or alternative sexualities. There is constantly a focus on boys in the magazines – their attractiveness as well as their hobbies and opinions – so that girls can better understand them. The recognition of this by the EGGS student implied that the same support and advice for girls interested in non-heterosexual relationships is not available, potentially alienating a group of readers. THS students did not raise this issue but did point out that the magazines lack representation of the middle ground or “ordinary” people:

**Kate** (THS, 15): “The people who are in-between, like the nerds.”

This neglect of different subjectivities limits the ability of a range of teen readers to identify with the magazines. The standard representation of a “normal” teenage girl coerces young women into a judgemental state of mind, exemplified by the following comments:

**Audrey** (THS, 16): “Some people look just like really naturally pretty and there’s other people and you just look at them and you think oh they’d look so much better with a hair straightener or eye liner.”

**Gwen** (THS, 16): “This is going to sound really mean, but I prefer the really thin models, like I don’t think the bigger models portray clothes as well.”

Although the acceptance of ideological messages with regard to femininity and beauty suggests THS students were more vulnerable than EGGS students to the dominant

ideologies within the teen magazines, the study sample was too small to adequately develop this potential line of enquiry.

The presence of contradictory messages within the magazines was a subject discussed in every focus group. While participants were aware of them, they were divided in how they felt about being faced with contrasting messages. Some found them frustrating and confusing while others were more amused by the contradictions. The main contradiction participants were frustrated by was the content that celebrated a healthy body image in contrast to the skinny models in the beauty and fashion pages. As Wolf (1990) has pointed out, women's magazines want to liberate women but not too much – hence the presence of these contradictions.

**Corinne** (EGGS, 15): “You see them saying like oh yeah celebrate your curves or celebrate your flaws or something like that and then they’re like oh but lose this weight fast.”

Comments similar to Corinne's were common across all four groups. Andrea (16) from THS felt angry with the magazines for sometimes placing articles regarding eating disorders amongst pages that showed nothing but skinny models. Of the 16 magazines analysed, there were two instances of this occurring. The June 2011 issue of *Dolly* (Aus) included a story on how to tell if your friend has an eating disorder (p. 96) and the very next issue of the same magazine featured a real-life read titled “I weighed as much as an 8-year-old” (p. 77). The messages that go along within this type of content therefore get lost amongst the *discourses* supporting conformity to a beauty ideal. This creates a conflict for readers who are expected to sympathise with the eating disorder articles but also take note of beauty directives.

Despite noting the many contradicting messages, participants generally agreed it was difficult to not let the content and images negatively impact on their self-esteem. The negative feelings towards themselves occurred during and immediately following interaction with the magazines:

**Corinne** (EGGS, 15): “You don’t feel good after looking, you feel like oh well this is what I’m missing so I feel like I have to go to the gym or go eat a carrot or something.”

**Nadine** (EGGS, 15): “There’s like full pages of acne solutions and like how to lose a whole lot of weight and it makes you feel gross. Like usually I feel incredibly gross because of my acne covered face, my hairy arms and shit.”

However, the knowledge of the media’s manipulation of images helped the girls to try and ignore negative messages:

**Riana** (EGGS, 15): “I think it’s Photoshop, cosmetics . . . that’s what I think to make myself feel better.”

Riana’s statement suggested that the wiser young women are to the manipulation of media images the better it will be for their self-image. When they can personally recognise what has been altered in a media image and acknowledge the production that has taken place to create it, the images lose some of their power over the reader. The acknowledgement of untouched images that is emerging in some teen magazines, for example with the addition of *Girlfriend*’s (NZ) “Self Respect” tags, is a start.

### *Positive Content*

Along with the beauty and fashion content, both *Crème* (NZ) and *Girlfriend* (NZ) do promote positive body image campaigns throughout their issues. *Girlfriend*’s campaign is titled “I Am Beautiful”, while *Crème*’s is called “I Heart Me”. *Dolly* (Aus) will sometimes also feature articles with positive messages, as in the January 2011 issue which includes an article on body confidence (p. 116). These campaigns use everyday readers as models and do not digitally manipulate the images. *Seventeen* (USA) also uses real-life readers as models and the use of Photoshop is prohibited. When images are untouched in *Dolly*, “Retouch Free Zone” tags will appear next to the image to let the reader know it is unmanipulated. Similar to this is *Girlfriend*’s use of “Reality Check Self Respect” tags that frequently pop up next to images with details about the production of the image. For example the May 2011 cover features Lady Gaga and a

“Self Respect” tag is located in the bottom left-hand corner with the text “Gaga has a team of stylists and designers to complete her quirky looks”; in August 2011 the same tag is accompanied by “Readers, not models, were used in this shoot” (p. 30). *Girlfriend* introduced the “I Am Beautiful” campaign after a survey found that only 39% of their readers think they have positive qualities to their bodies and that 52% of readers find it hard to accept compliments from others because they do not believe them themselves (p. 27).

These elements are added to teen magazines to ensure the producers are meeting their social responsibilities. The increase of news stories concerning representations of women in the media as well as global campaigns such as the Dove Campaign For Real Beauty (2012), which encourages self-esteem and beauty as all-inclusive regardless of age and body shape, has meant that the media is under more scrutiny to confront their own limitations. The addition of positive image campaigns to teen magazines is in reply to the controversy surrounding female representation. While readers may appreciate the more positive content, it still appears as a contradiction alongside stereotypical beauty content and manipulated images of women. These campaigns may often struggle to get their messages across.

Often the magazines will also feature articles that are not related to the body or physical appearance, for example the May 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* (NZ) contains an article on forgiveness (p. 34) and in the June 2011 issue of *Dolly* (Aus) includes one on happiness (p. 92). This different content was appreciated by focus group participants as promoting more of a balance in lifestyle and interests. Articles on the environment and real-life stories about young women doing extraordinary things are also frequently featured, for example the article titled “I raised \$60,000 for a school in Cambodia” in the June 2011 issue of *Crème* (NZ) (p. 60). The addition of these articles expands the genre of teen magazines and is an example of the magazines adapting in the light of criticism surrounding representations of women in the media. Producers are likely hoping that the inclusion of these articles will set them apart from rival magazines and result in recognition of their attempts to include positive stories and messages for young women.

While participants recognised that they were affected by the negative aspects of teen magazines, some also discussed the more positive side, explaining that it was necessary



to not take the magazines too seriously and only adopt the good messages. The health and advice pages were considered helpful by the young women who sometimes felt they could not discuss their personal issues with family, friends or professionals:

**Petra** (EGGS, 15): “Sometimes when you don’t know what to do and like your friends don’t have experience with guys the magazines have really good advice so then you just follow it.”

### *Discussion*

The content of teen magazines that endorses the development of a specific female subjectivity is akin to the content researched in the literature. The magazine analysis and focus groups revealed that much of teen magazine content is related to physical beauty and has a negative impact on young readers as “girls [are developed] into women bathed in discourses of stereotyped femininity” (Wykes & Gunter, 2005, p. 96). The magazines display cosmetics as a source of self-confidence for young women. The issue here, as Wolf (1990) has pointed out, is that women can sometimes be made to feel invisible or ugly without make-up. The fact that women are pressured to wear make-up displays a socio-cultural inequality between men and women as men obviously are not required to paint their faces in order to be recognised as attractive and in possession of self-confidence. When there is one rule for men and one rule for women there is a social imbalance.

The concentration on a physical beauty that is stereotypical leads to the alienation of those who do not fit teen magazines’ imagined reader. The content sets regulations for teenage girls’, interests guiding them towards hobbies and interests that will see them accepted socially. As Matheson (2005) has identified, magazines construct ideologies of normality and thus also of deviance, which creates limited subjectivities for teenagers. The content of the magazines attempts to set the boundaries for readers, whether this is with regard to fashion, hobbies or physical appearance. Frost (2001) has recognised these boundaries as an attempt by society to protect teenage girls, who are always defined as problems and in need of restriction to specific subjectivities. Teen magazines follow women’s magazines in creating “multi-piece invitations to invest in temporary and imaginary identities” (Hermes, 1995, p. 64).

The recognition of a lack of representation of alternative sexualities in focus groups was consistent with Vanska's (2005) finding a dominant heterosexual imagery in teen magazines. Not only is the imagery heterosexual but content in general rejects the options of homosexuality and bisexuality. Considering focus group participants stated that the information and advice offered were important reasons why they read teen magazines, the fact that only one viewpoint on sexuality is offered limits the development of subjectivity. Yet while homosexuality is not directly engaged with, it is interesting to note that some advertisements feature women in a sexual and seductive light even though they are targeted at females (Romaine, 1999). Such advertisements encourage tacit lesbianism without raising the topic explicitly. However, this creates a confusing contradiction for readers because such images are placed alongside a strongly heterosexual narrative in which homosexuality is a taboo. Readers are thus denied a complete representation of sexuality, which promotes conformity to heterosexuality.

Positive messages and campaigns included in the magazines are evidence of magazine producers ensuring they are seen to present young women with ways to accept themselves as they are. This content is missing from *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus), resulting in a deeper appreciation for *Crème* (NZ) and *Girlfriend* (NZ) by focus group participants. However, while these campaigns are positive for readers they can also create confusing contradictions. The campaigns call for positive self-image but are placed amongst a strong beauty *discourse* largely based on socio-cultural ideologies. Images and beauty content conflict with the more positive messages producers are trying to establish. This illustrates that what Malkin et al. (1999) found regarding the positioning of conflicting material side by side on magazine covers is still occurring today. The more general conflict apparent in teen magazines is that perfection is out there but always just out of reach (Martin, 2007). Regardless of striving for excellence and acceptance according to society's definition of beauty it will never quite be achievable and can only be pursued through following strict guidelines and the constant consumption of various products.

## The Interaction of Local and International Discourses

Effective analysis of both international and national magazines requires a focus on local culture and *discourses*. This places the locally produced magazines in the wider context of the teen magazine genre and recognises ways that local *discourses* can make differences to the generic conventions that shape *discourses* of beauty in teen magazines. According to readership numbers, readers in the local setting prefer *Girlfriend* (NZ) and *Crème* (NZ), and this section explores why this is the case. Firstly, how the New Zealand magazines promote a local connection is outlined followed by a discussion of how these *discourses* related to a local culture are read by teenage girls. Finally, how the magazines reflect a local understanding of beauty alongside the *Next Top Model* reality television franchise is explored.

When comparing the local titles with the international titles it was found that the layout of the magazines is very similar and the same themes can be found running through all the content. However, beauty themes and messages are much stronger in *Seventeen* (USA), reflecting a society that places more emphasis on a generic beauty ideal and its connection with the feminine. New Zealand magazines also feature more positive campaigns regarding a healthy body image (such as those discussed on p. 84) whereas these were not found in *Seventeen*. The latter's clear relationship with the physical can be seen in its contents page that tells the reader there is one extensive section dedicated to fashion and another, separate, section dedicated to beauty. *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus) and *Crème* (NZ) all have one section that covers both fashion and beauty. This suggests that there is more of a variety of content in the Australasian magazines as fashion and beauty take up fewer pages, leaving room for alternative content.

The fashion and beauty pages attempt to keep readers up to date with popular trends. New Zealand magazines feature products available in the local market and prices are shown in local currency, making them more appealing for local readers. The May 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* demonstrates the magazine's assumed ability to keep readers in tune, with a fashion and beauty blog titled "New Season Trend Update" (p. 44) in which fashion and beauty editor Lucy picks out items that she calls "Autumn Must-Haves". These include a cream blush, a waist belt and orange lipstick. The opposite page also endeavours to deliver fashion news. "The Cut" features "the coolest fashion news from

around the globe” (p. 45). The mention of “the globe” somehow legitimises the updates, as if they are hot off the press, ensuring New Zealand is in sync with the much larger fashion-leading countries. However, what is mentioned in this particular issue is in fact Rip Curl jeans (from Australia) and Kathryn Wilson shoes (from New Zealand). This attempts to locate New Zealand amongst the wider global fashion trends and styles and signifies that our small country is worthy of being included in the world’s coolest fashion news.

### A Local Connection

New Zealand magazines obviously have a stronger local *discourse* than *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA). The inclusion of local celebrities within the content is evidence of this. In particular, the January 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* is described as a “Kiwi Pride Spesh” and features some of New Zealand’s most popular young celebrities, both male and female. This issue therefore includes more local content than usual but still exemplifies the type of New Zealand focus common in *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. The main feature is six pages long and includes images of the stars and a small blurb on their success. Page 27 features Silver Fern Maria Tutaia, Warriors player Kevin Locke, female band Ivy Lies, *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* season 2 winner Danielle Hayes, surfer Paige Hareb and radio DJs Brad Watson and Sharyn Wakefield (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: "Kiwi Pride Spesh". From *Girlfriend*, January 2011. p. 26-27.

The composition of this page is busy as the magazine producers try to fit in as many stars as possible. The language used is informal and written phonetically in some places, for example “but heaps of peeps believed in his ah-mazing skills”. The article writer has also abbreviated many words, for example “fash sense” and “peeps”. Contractions also denote an informal voice, with “it’s”, “hasn’t” and “he’s” appearing throughout. Interrogatives or rhetorical questions are utilised to speak directly to the reader, for example “Who can forget the outspoken girl from Kawerau who took out *New Zealand’s Next Top Model?*”

Shaded backgrounds of images and white space have been used to split the A4 page into six sections, one for each star or stars. The text has been double justified so as to tidy up the page and keep it balanced. Because this is an article rather than an advertisement or advertorial the written text is just as important as the images used. Producers have attempted to provide a mix of stars from different *genres* ranging from very popular (Maria Tutaia) to the less known (Brad Watson and Sharyn Wakefield). They are also people who would appeal to the target demographic of *Girlfriend*. Sport is a part of New Zealand’s local culture and this is shown by the inclusion of a sporting *discourse*. Certain *orders of discourse* or characteristics significant to the *discourse* help inform the readers’ understanding. For example, being a sports star connotes certain attributes. They are hard-working, disciplined and possess natural talent and healthy bodies. These characteristics already tell the reader a certain amount about the stars featured. Sports stars hold a privileged social position in New Zealand and are often seen as positive role models, which is likely why they have been included in the feature.

Many of the images displayed have been provided by an agency so have not been taken by *Girlfriend*; the exception on this page is the image of Maria Tutaia who also features on the cover and has been styled and made up for the shoot. The other images provided appear to have been taken at publicity shoots where hair, make-up and wardrobe may have been styled, meaning the stars are looking their best. The article is therefore promoting young, talented Kiwi stars who are also attractive. The images all display some naturalistic *modality*; the image of Tutaia is slightly lower in this type of *modality* as she also features on the cover of this issue and therefore has been made-over for the shoot. The lack of context for most of the pictures lowers *modality* overall, resulting in

medium naturalistic *modality* dominating. The fact that colours and tone are standardised adds to the truth value of the visual representation for those featured.

This local *discourse* speaks directly to an imagined community created by the magazine producers. This community is based on a generic understanding of young New Zealand women who hold a particular set of values and interests that connect with a sense of national identity, as theorised by Anderson (1994). This article works on the assumption that these stars would be known to teenage readers, that they are influential to the readers, and that readers are interested or fans of those featured. The subconscious message is that teenagers should strive to be like these people: they are successful New Zealanders and you can be too!

Not only are local celebrities displayed in local magazines but some articles are also directly targeted at a local audience, for example the August 2011 issue of *Crème* contains an article titled “Show Your Love For Christchurch” (p. 30). These types of articles and images directly appeal to the reader as a member of a specific local culture and invite reader connections to such content. The connection to the specific culture identified may only be present for a section of readers, however. New Zealand’s society is increasingly multi-cultural and media needs to accommodate this diversity so that all feel included.

The presence of celebrities was a drawcard for readers of teen magazines and while local celebrities were appreciated in *Crème* and *Girlfriend*, it was noteworthy that all four magazines in this study feature many of the same international stars. For the local magazines this locates them within the larger teen magazine genre; it also connects the titles together in terms of representing a specific, generic beauty *discourse* evident across all the content.

### *Comparison: Local and International Discourses*

The inclusion of local and international *discourses* in the magazines works to connect readers to the content in order to show that the magazines are specifically targeted at a teenage audience from a specific geographic location. In terms of *Crème* (NZ) and *Girlfriend* (NZ), the local *discourse* involved attempts to draw in local readers and thus establish the magazine as the most popular in the market.

The mass media's definition of beauty is often Western and white and this is reflected in teen magazines where white models are generally utilised over other ethnicities. The use of the term Western here refers to a general representation of beauty that has developed from the dominant Western civilisations of North America and Western Europe. Multi-culturalism was given minimal representation in the magazines analysed for this study, with all four titles dominated by a white, Western understanding of beauty. Out of the titles analysed, *Seventeen* (USA) represented the greatest diversity of cultures, featuring women of African-American as well as Asian descent. However, very rarely do non-white women appear on covers. Of the 25 issues examined in total, only two had a non-white woman on the cover: The January 2011 issue of *Dolly* (Aus), which featured Australian singer Jessica Mauboy who is of Pacific Island descent, and the January 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* (NZ), which featured three cover girls, one of which was Silver Fern Maria Tutaia who is of Samoan descent.

The lack of representation of different cultures creates a racist beauty ideal which is not reflective of the make up of 21st-century Western societies. This neglect of the importance of multi-culturalism tends to alienate readers of different ethnicities, developing a *discourse* of beauty from which they are isolated. Furthermore, in most issues of *Dolly* (Aus), *Girlfriend* (NZ) and *Crème* (NZ) non-white women are only shown if they have a celebrity status – for example the singer Rihanna or the actress Brenda Song. This creates a belief that non-white women are not suitable as models and therefore do not naturally fit the beauty mould. They must possess a talent in order to be represented by the mass media.

The lack of diversity in images within the magazines was recognised by participants in the EGGS focus groups. One Pasifika student stated that:

**Riana** (EGGS, 16): “None of them [the models] look like us.”

While another Asian student pointed out that:

**Joy** (EGGS, 17): “There are not much [*sic*] different cultures being represented as well.”

This is not a subject brought up by THS students, the large majority of whom were Caucasian. This might suggest that THS participants felt satisfied that their particular cultures were represented within the content, perhaps creating a stronger connection between them and the magazines than what was felt at EGGS. Readers of teen magazines are confronted with a cultural stereotype of beauty that is not all-encompassing, which particularly limits non-white women's social standing.

Focus group participants also noticed that there was a lot more advertising in international magazines, describing *Seventeen* (USA) as “mostly ads”. It is important to note here that New Zealand magazines do also have a high density of advertising content, however it seems local producers successfully mask advertising as tips, suggestions and news, as participants at both schools considered advertorial content separate from advertising material, reading them as articles instead. Because the international magazines feature more obvious advertising they lost their appeal to a New Zealand audience because readers were unfamiliar with the stores mentioned and prices were in a foreign currency. Local magazines promoted stores popular with teenage girls, for example Glassons and Lippy. They also displayed clothing and products that were more within the price range for a teenager, especially *Crème* (NZ), which advertises cheaper fashion stores such as The Warehouse or Cotton On. Focus group participants also preferred the selection of celebrities featured in local magazines. They often include local celebrities such as *Shortland Street* actors or sports personalities. Stars on the covers are also well known (for example, Lady Gaga or Emma Watson). This was also the case with the cover models of *Dolly* (Aus), however EGGS students pointed out that they did not know who some of the *Seventeen* cover models were.

### *The Next Top Model Reality Television Franchise*

Many of the *discourses* discussed above can also be found anchored in the American and New Zealand versions of the *Next Top Model* reality television franchise. A generic format applies to the franchise which was first developed as *America's Next Top Model* and then sold worldwide. The competition is run the same way regardless of version and consists of a number of challenges and photo shoots that are judged by a panel of



fashion industry experts. National versions are adapted for the local audience, including photo shoots at national landmarks as well as local celebrity guest judges.

Nearly all focus group participants were excited to discuss the shows and appeared to be faithful viewers of both versions. However, there was no uniformity on preference, with a small majority preferring *New Zealand's Next Top Model*. Reasons for preferring the local version were put down to familiarity, for example the Kiwi accent and local settings. For EGGS students there was also the added interest that there was the possibility of seeing the models filmed in Auckland locations. The local version was also preferred because participants felt the outcome would directly affect them, for example the winner would be in local media and advertising campaigns. The winner of *America's Next Top Model* would likely disappear from their memories faster. The shows connect with teen magazines in that they also include a specific beauty *discourse* and encourage a relationship between women and ideologies of femininity. As both genres are located within the mass media, socio-cultural and economic pressures influence their content.

In terms of the different definitions of beauty within the two versions of the show there was some disagreement amongst focus group participants. There was recognition of some development over early seasons, with judges searching for more unique looks as opposed to a stereotypical beauty. However, participants contradicted one another with regard to which show represented an ideal of beauty that was not necessarily stereotypical. Participants from both schools mentioned a search for an alternative beauty, meaning competitors who had unique physical attributes that set them apart from everyone else. For example, one EGGS student described a recent contestant on *New Zealand's Next Top Model* as having bright orange hair and “pointy features”. Conventional beauty was therefore not automatically going to mean success on the show.

The search for an alternative look is more than likely due to the advertising contracts agencies can get for the models, preferring someone who is a little different to promote products so the advertisements are unique and memorable for consumers. However, some attributed unique beauty only to *America's Next Top Model*, with one participant stating that the two versions were:

**Nancy** (EGGS, 16): “Quite different because New Zealand’s got the harshness of the industry, like there’s barely any fat girls but like *America’s Next Top Model* is like they’re all beautiful. Like this is quite an unusual look but it’s beautiful.”

The size of the models was also briefly discussed, with some students happy that the shows had some representation of what the industry calls “plus-sized models”. That said, it was noted that these contestants often went out in the early rounds. Participants also recognised that the term plus-sized did not represent the models well and believed that the term is simply used to describe models who are regular sizes rather than stereotypically thin.

Because of the local *discourses* involved, representations of beauty within *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* were more significant for young viewers. The local *discourses* left most participants feeling more connected to the local show. The more composed personalities of the contestants and the atmosphere of the show in general reflects New Zealand’s less demanding approach to beauty as compared with America where there is a strong focus on competitors’ desires to become internationally renowned models. While the American version also attracts viewers for these same reasons, for the focus group participants it was more about watching to experience the drama and sensational content the show had to offer.

It was noted that the calibre of modelling in the American version was a lot more professional although it did involve more behind-the-scenes “cattiness”. This was put down to the fact that New Zealanders are perceived as more relaxed. Additionally American contestants were thought to be more focused on modelling careers whereas New Zealand contestants enter “because they can”. The drama that reality television relies on for ratings seems to be more dominant in *America’s Next Top Model* than in the local version. It was also decided that *America’s Next Top Model* was both more professional and more melodramatic, with the contestants having to carry out very unusual photo shoots, for example pretending to be animals. The representation of beauty in *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* was reduced, just as it is in local teen magazines. The local teen magazines and *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* therefore

engage with a beauty *discourse* to a lesser extent than both the international teen magazines and *America's Next Top Model*.

### *Discussion*

Both *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA) have not been locally adapted for a New Zealand audience as the same issues that sell in Australia and America also sell here. Therefore the local accents discussed by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) are particular to locally produced magazines. However it should be noted here that because *Dolly* is produced in Australia, which shares many of New Zealand's social and cultural ideologies, the magazine translated much more clearly than *Seventeen*. Focus group participants were able to relate to *Dolly* whereas they could not with *Seventeen*. Machin and van Leeuwen's (2003) point that cultural difference in a deeper sense is not recognised in women's magazines seems to be the case here. Baumgardner and Richards (2010) questioned the international relatability of topics in an American teen magazine, and this study has found that besides a stronger beauty *discourse* which seemed to alienate New Zealand readers there is little that local readers can relate to in *Seventeen*. The fact that the international magazines are not locally adapted means that readers of teen magazines are connected to a global homogeneous group of young women who are all interested in the same topics (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004), and there is no recognition of young women's individuality.

The areas that remained constant across all four titles corresponded with what Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) found in their study: the *modality* of the images in the magazines and the prevalence of a problem-solution format. The media is thought to be valuable in constructing an understanding of what constitutes the local and intends to communicate something about culture in order to mediate across gaps therefore establishing a local connection between readers (Ginsburg 2002). However, teen magazines that are widely distributed are forfeiting an association with the local for a more global connection. *Girlfriend* and *Crème* promote a collective identity of young New Zealand women, meaning of course that the local *discourse* involved in these magazines would not necessarily translate to an international audience.

While the representation of a global understanding of beauty apparent in the international magazines is working to diminish diversity (Schiller, 1971), it is important

to note that while Frith et al. (2005) found local magazines to be not the most popular in their country of origin, this is not the case for teen magazines in New Zealand. While readers of teen magazines will be exposed to global ideas when interacting with *Seventeen* (USA) and *Dolly* (Aus), readers seem to be influenced more by the presence of local *discourses* and demonstrate a preference for reading magazines produced in New Zealand.

## **Conclusion**

The discussion of the various themes identified in the magazine titles has provided an in-depth look at the current state of teen magazines available in the local market. Socio-cultural ideologies concerning beauty are present in much of the content, implying that representations of feminine beauty are narrow and stereotypical. The messages young women are receiving about beauty ideals maintain a subordinate social position for women as beauty rules and regulations are passed on to the younger generation. However, as is evident from the analysis of the different titles there is more positive content coming through in the New Zealand magazines, such as articles on accepting your body shape, which is providing young New Zealand women with more positive ideologies concerning beauty and female subjectivity.

## Chapter 5: Summary and Concluding Comments

### Introduction

This study set out to examine the role of beauty *discourses* in teen magazines and to consider both the encoding and decoding of ideological messages by both the magazine producers and the target audience. Focusing on *Crème* (NZ), *Girlfriend* (NZ), *Dolly* (Aus) and *Seventeen* (USA), this research analysed text and images related to beauty as well as the opinions and attitudes of the target audiences. This chapter concludes the thesis by presenting an overview of the significant findings of the study as well as addressing limitations found within the work and recommendations for further research.

### Research Objectives: Summary of Findings

The main objectives of this study were to examine beauty *discourses* and how they are defined within teen magazines' content. These *discourses* were then related to ideologies concerning gender and consumerism and the impact these have on the development of female subjectivity. The presence of internationally and nationally produced magazines in the New Zealand market also called for an exploration of local *discourses* in order to examine how the different titles encode a beauty ideal.

This research was particularly interested in analysing encoding and decoding processes in order to better understand the role of ideological structures within the content. Chapter 1 hypothesised that *discourses* and ideologies relating to gender and consumerism impacted young women's understandings of what constitutes beauty and the development of their subjectivity. A subsequent review of the literature and the focus group data collected for this study indicated that as a consequence of reading teen magazines young women's self-image and worth are negatively impacted on. Furthermore, the differing content and standards of beauty in national and international magazines reflect the conflicting messages concerning female subjectivity for young women.

After an initial examination of the beauty *discourses* within the magazines it was decided to frame the discussion in terms of a generic beauty *discourse* inflected by different accents, depending on where the magazine had been produced. The beauty *discourse* tended to reflect generic standards and definitions of beauty and aligned the term specifically with physical traits and products. The difference between the magazines' representations of beauty came in the extent to which each individual title engaged with this *discourse* and its association with the ideologies of gender and consumerism. Beauty was, much of the time, defined in terms of products. This is more obvious in *Dolly* and *Seventeen*, where the advertisements featured are to do with beauty products. *Crème* and *Girlfriend* tend to maintain a variety of advertisements, including ones for television shows and DVDs rather than just cosmetics and skin products. The large percentage of advertising material in *Seventeen* alienated focus group participants; the other three titles contained a wider variety of content. Thus *consumer femininity*, whereby femininity is defined through the use of products, was very strongly present in *Seventeen*. Products were established as necessary to a young woman's life and the implication is that in order to be accepted into womanhood she must prove her worth through purchase and application of these products.

The New Zealand magazines represented a more diverse approach to beauty, encouraging the development of a more rounded subjectivity rather than one dominated by a desire for physical beauty. This meant they engaged with the generic beauty *discourse* to a lesser extent than *Seventeen* and *Dolly*. Articles supporting interest in good health, friendships and school are common in the New Zealand magazines. As studies using American or British magazine titles in their research have suggested, *Seventeen* was more explicit in their involvement with a generic beauty *discourse* (McRobbie, 1991; Talbot, 1995; Currie, 1999). *Seventeen*'s beauty content is reflective of the society in which it is produced and encourages a fiercer and all-consuming interest in cosmetics and exercise regimes. A number of focus group participants did not identify with the strength of this beauty *discourse* in *Seventeen*.

*Crème* and *Girlfriend*, while still following some generic conventions of teen magazines such as the inclusion of a *consumer femininity discourse*, also included a wider variety of content for their readers, with beauty and fashion balanced amongst articles, quizzes, posters, advice pages and so on. Consequently, the beauty *discourse* represented in

these two titles was similar and tended to define physical beauty not only through cosmetics but also through products such as moisturisers or skin products. Alongside this, the inclusion of positive self-image campaigns such as “I Heart Me” in *Crème* and “I Am Beautiful” in *Girlfriend* promotes a more personal and broad frame of beauty that supports self-acceptance and worth. Focus group participants were drawn to these campaigns, recognising the positive messages the magazine producers were attempting to impart. This connected the readers to these magazines in a very different way as they considered them less superficial than *Seventeen*. *Dolly*’s representation of beauty was located in the middle of the four titles. While maintaining a smaller beauty section like *Crème* and *Girlfriend* do, *Dolly* does concentrate a lot more on fashion which is intricately linked to the body and self-image. However, the fact that many focus group participants believed *Dolly* was locally produced shows how close it is to the New Zealand magazines in tone and content.

The way the beauty *discourse* was encoded had an impact on the level of enjoyment readers received in their interaction with the titles. *Seventeen*’s content is more explicit than the other three, directly guiding readers towards maintaining a high level of self-maintenance in order to achieve success and acceptance into adult femininity. While all created a *synthetic sisterhood* by utilising a constructed young female voice in written text, *Seventeen* speaks to its audience in a more mature tone than the rest by avoiding abbreviations and ad lib language. For participants it was less patronising and appealed to the older end of the target audience. *Crème*, *Girlfriend* and *Dolly* used a very informal tone, abbreviating words, using abbreviations (for example LOL and OMG) and printing words phonetically for emphasis. However, this seemed to alienate the older participants (16 and 17 years) who found such use of language to be amusing and disengaging. Some participants were almost offended that the magazine producers were portraying teenage girls in such an absentminded way.

While *Seventeen* is explicit in its desire to engage an interest in physical appearance for its readers, it must be recognised that although the other three titles are much more implicit, they still engage with the beauty *discourse* – it is encoded in a much more subtle way and readers may not always consciously recognise it as such. The world of cosmetics, for example, is represented more as a fun hobby for young women whereas *Seventeen* represents it as a necessity for both being female and attracting male attention.

This was evident in the focus groups, with Thames High School (THS) students admitting one of the main attractions to teen magazines was make-up tips which they saw as harmless and helpful information. However, the message here is more that cosmetics are endorsed for young women and therefore are of social importance to them and necessary for development into femininity. In the THS focus groups the processes concerning *consumer femininity* were therefore in progress.

Younger participants tended to be impacted more by the images of women in the magazines rather than the text. Flicking through the magazines, participants stated that images of perfect women negatively impacted their self-esteem, with many saying they felt bad about themselves immediately after reading the magazines. Even though they were able to recognise that the images were manipulated the negative feelings towards themselves were still present, although the process of thinking more logically about the images enabled them to reconcile these feelings. Participants from Epsom Girls' Grammar School (EGGS) were able to identify these media practices more so than THS students who did not mention the use of digitally altered images, suggesting the possibility that many of the images used in teen magazines were taken at face value by these participants.

The young women in the focus groups possessed a generic and stereotypical understanding of beauty at a manifest level, however the ability of some young women to question attributes of the magazines indicates there was a degree of questioning informing their reading of the magazines. This is in line with Gitlin's (2003) understanding that there is a site of *negotiation* in hegemonic processes. Despite this evidence of critical reading, it was generally believed that society's definition of beauty was too dominant to ignore.

The representation of beauty in teen magazines works alongside the wider mass media's influence over young women's personal definitions of beauty, for example reality television franchises such as *Next Top Model*. *Crème* and *Girlfriend*, however, encouraged a more holistic understanding of beauty that was not necessarily linked with products or a thin body image and this influenced readers positively. While there is still some way to go, these two magazines at least attempt to reject some aspects of society's



influence over beauty's definition and this is heartening considering these two titles are the most popular amongst New Zealand teenage girls.

The development of young women's subjectivities in New Zealand is not determined solely by the teen magazines they choose to read. Within the focus group participants were aged between 14 and 18, their subjectivities were already influenced by socio-cultural ideologies through other media forms. Therefore teen magazines support, rather than create and define, these ideologies in readers. A key influence on subjectivities is the representation of *consumer femininity*, ranging from processes that are undetectable by readers to ones that are more obvious. The ability to identify ideological messages and manipulated images enables readers to be less affected by them. The reading of teen magazines may inform an interest in specific subjects that aim to feminise young women, such as cosmetics. As teenagers move on to women's magazines these interests continue to be endorsed. For example, while *Crème* and *Girlfriend* advocate an interest in make-up as an experimental hobby for young women, this can also set girls up for a lifetime of participation in the cosmetic culture. It may start as a hobby, but it can develop into a part of their self-identity and therefore female subjectivity.

All four teen titles connected with the local culture in which they were produced, with *Dolly* and *Seventeen* not adapting their content for a local New Zealand audience. Given this, it is not surprising that readers received more enjoyment from and connection to *Crème* and *Girlfriend*. These two titles were quite obviously locally produced, often featuring local cover models and content largely linked to the local. For example shops and products mentioned were known to readers, and national celebrities featured alongside international stars. *Seventeen*, by contrast, often features celebrities who New Zealand readers were not familiar with and stores and brands that are not available locally. This immediately alienated local readers from the content. *Dolly* however translated more easily to readers, probably because of the closer geographic and cultural proximity Australia has to New Zealand.

*Crème* and *Girlfriend* feature articles that correlate to local society by including local readers' stories in columns such as "Real Life Reads" and "Embarrassing Moments". This establishes a strong link between the magazine and its readers as the stories are close to home and it is relatively easy to nominate one's own story to be included in an

issue. Articles sometimes also speak directly to a local audience, for example the August 2011 issue of *Crème* included an article on “Ten Ways to Show Your Love for Christchurch” (p. 30) while the June 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* featured an article titled “The Helpful Country” (p. 30) that showcased local teenage girls’ brief stories about doing volunteer work for New Zealand charities. These types of articles are also seen in *Dolly*, however they are Australian-based; *Seventeen* does not incorporate this kind of content at all.

*Seventeen* had the greatest representation of cultural diversity, utilising African-American and Asian models to the same extent as white models. Such diversity is something the other titles should adopt, particularly considering New Zealand’s melting pot of cultures. EGGS students were quick to point out the lack of diversity in *Crème*, *Dolly* and *Girlfriend* but THS students did not raise this. Many of the EGGS students therefore felt that they were not included by the media’s definition of beauty, due to their ethnicities. The contrast here may be related to the fact that the focus groups run at EGGS included a culturally diverse group of young women whereas the THS groups were largely white New Zealand young women. The emphasis placed on white beauty in the titles is alienating for other ethnicities. When images in popular magazines constantly illustrate beauty as white they are creating a racist beauty ideal subconsciously in their readers that is very difficult to overturn.

Alongside the various representations of beauty across all four titles, *America’s Next Top Model* and *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* were briefly discussed in the focus groups in order to better understand participants’ responses to mainstream media representations of beauty. The purpose of this was specifically to extend observations of focus group responses beyond the magazines’ representations of beauty, and to help draw comparisons and contrasts between local and global definitions of beauty. *Next Top Model* is a global franchise that is adapted by production companies in different countries to allow for local *discourses* that will connect with local audiences. While the competition itself includes the same international format, the fact that *New Zealand’s Next Top Model* features local judges, contestants, settings, accents and guests makes it distinctly New Zealand.

There appeared to be division between viewers of the two shows among the participants. While *America's Next Top Model* was accepted as a better show in terms of production values, this did not mean it was the clear favourite. In fact the concentration on physical beauty was, for viewers, much the same between the two programmes, with most participants noting that judges were often looking for unique rather than stereotypical beauty. However, regardless of this participants believed there were still aspects to the models that are universally recognised as “beautiful”, for example smooth, clear skin and big eyes.

The participants who voiced their opinions on *New Zealand's Next Top Model* felt more connected to this show as a product of the local industry due to local settings, accents and the chance that they may know someone involved. Local contestants may also feature in the local teen magazines as the same demographic is targeted. This occurred in the January 2011 issue of *Girlfriend* where the season 1 winner featured in the “Kiwi Pride” feature (p. 27). Because America is distant both geographically and culturally, the American show had less of a personal connection for New Zealand viewers and it was more the presence of Tyra Banks as host that attracted viewers to the show.

The more relaxed style of *New Zealand's Next Top Model* is paralleled in *Crème's* and *Girlfriend's* representations of beauty and is reflective of New Zealand's more laid-back culture and attitude, which contrasts with the culture that produces *Seventeen* – the same culture that produces Hollywood movies. Focus group participants interacted with the titles that were dominated by local content and this contrasted with the skim reading that was more likely to occur with the international titles. The focus on the local content and a local definition of beauty was much less confronting for participants who could receive enjoyment from the magazines without necessarily feeling inadequate. International magazines are therefore deemed to have a more negative effect on readers' self-esteem levels due to the less engaging material and heightened display of a stereotypical, mainstream beauty *discourse*.

There were some unexpected aspects that arose from both the magazine analysis and the focus group research. Firstly, while it was anticipated that there would be a difference between the national and the international magazines, the extent to which they differed was surprising. While maintaining the layout and style of a generic teen magazine,

*Crème*'s and *Girlfriend*'s content proved to vary a great deal more from *Dolly* and *Seventeen* than was expected. The content of the New Zealand magazines was more positive for the development of female subjectivity, encouraging interests in other realms besides fashion and beauty. The introduction of positive body image and self-respect campaigns gives the New Zealand magazines a unique element that sets them apart from other teen magazines.

The difference in the opinions of focus group participants from EGGS and THS was also a revelation. EGGS students generally harboured negative feelings towards the magazines, while THS students seemed to have a positive relationship with them. This was attributed to EGGS students' recognition of negative ideological messages and manipulation of images within the magazines. This could be attributed to the availability of media courses at EGGS; these were lacking at THS.

## **Recommendations**

*Crème* and *Girlfriend* maintain a distinct approach to beauty that is different to that of both *Dolly* and *Seventeen*. The introduction of their positive image campaigns are noteworthy, however the magazines send contradictory messages when they still engage with a generic beauty *discourse* and image manipulation. The next step would be to phase out the digital altering of images and more strongly feature models and celebrities with no make-up so that it becomes the norm to see women in their natural state. However, the need to maintain advertising revenue from beauty industries in order to stay in print is one huge obstacle to this becoming a reality.

Featuring models with different body shapes is one practice that all four titles could benefit from. Regardless of how many campaigns are run or how many articles tell young readers to love their body, responses from focus group participants suggested that the greatest benefit for readers would be more exposure to various body shapes. This is also true of the use of models from diverse cultures. The addition of Maori, Pasifika, Asian and Indian models would help to realign beauty with diversity, particularly in the cases of *Crème* and *Girlfriend*.

The focus groups revealed that the more variety in content there was, the more enjoyment and connection readers had to a particular title. The broader content of *Crème* and *Girlfriend* kept readers engaged for longer and stimulated their minds more than the magazines that primarily concentrated on beauty and fashion. A wider frame of content also means there was more to choose from to shape subjectivity, rather than limiting options to beauty and fashion. This also holds true in terms of the dominance of the consumerist representations of femininity. There are many types of femininity and being female does not necessarily have to mean adhering to strict conventions surrounding physical appearance. The magazines need to acknowledge this by demonstrating acceptance of other forms of femininity in order for readers to make their own decisions as to where they fit in.

Beauty is not an exclusive club from which the majority of us are rejected, but in order for this to be recognised socially the media must begin to make changes and present more inclusive representations of beauty. Media education in schools is also recommended as it was obvious to the researcher that the EGGS focus group participants were more alert to the media's ideological messages and the production of a text than the THS students. Media studies as a curriculum subject is offered at EGGS whereas it is only available via correspondence at the much smaller THS. The more knowledge that is out there for young women on the tricks of the media the more its ideological power will be challenged.

## **Limitations and Strengths**

While every endeavour has been made to ensure this research has addressed the topics related to the thesis statement and research questions, this study is not without its limitations. Firstly, that the focus group research only dealt with a small sample size, therefore the generalisability of the results is restricted. Clearly, it cannot be assumed that this study's findings apply to all teenage girls in New Zealand aged between 14 and 18 years.

Because this research was carried out over a period of two years, data collection occurred throughout 2011 and no 2012 issues were covered in the magazine analysis. Considering *Crème*'s and *Girlfriend*'s inclusion of positive image campaigns and focus

on aspects of life other than beauty and fashion in 2011, the researcher was encouraged to find that in late 2012 the *New Zealand Herald* ran an article about *Seventeen* magazine being presented with a petition to include at least one unmanipulated image in each issue (Kamm, 2012). The petition was instigated by a 14-year-old American girl and signed by 85,000 young women. Thanks to their efforts, *Seventeen* editor Ann Shoket has pledged that her retouching team will leave body shape alone and that the technology will only be used for “non limb-related offenses” such as clothing wrinkles and stray hairs. Furthermore, when Photoshop is used the original photos will be displayed on the magazine’s Tumblr account. These are all positive signs but the timing of this news meant that it could not be taken into consideration when analysing *Seventeen*.

In terms of strengths, this study contributes to New Zealand media studies and gender or feminist studies as there has been little written locally on beauty *discourses* embedded in the variety of teen magazines that this study engages with. Additionally, the inclusion of the target audience’s voices provides this study with insights that are lacking in some academic works. Although the focus group material was secondary to magazine analysis, it was considered important to consult with the target audience to better understand the decoding of content.

The use of a hybrid methodology and a number of methodological tools allowed the study to examine various areas in order to provide a succinct analysis of teen magazines in their current state. The complementary relationship between CDA and social semiotics enabled an in-depth analysis of both images and written text and accounted for the stages of production and socio-cultural processes that inform the development of a text.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While relatively small in scope, this study has nevertheless revealed some areas worthy of further analysis. The age group of the focus group participants was 14–18 years and by this stage in their development participants had already built the foundations of their female subjectivity. The older end of the demographic had already begun to migrate across to women’s magazines such as *Cleo* and *Cosmopolitan*. It would therefore be

interesting to conduct the same research on younger readers of the magazines, for example 10–14 year olds who arguably are more easily influenced by media.

This study has exposed a general lack of multi-cultural representatives within beauty *discourses*. After reading some dated literature on this topic the researcher assumed that this would no longer be the case. Surprisingly, however, this study's focus group participants brought this up as an issue. The nature of this study did not allow the time for an in-depth focus on this subject and it would be of interest to compare the whiteness of beauty's representation in perhaps the 1990's with the current day to see how much progress, if any, has been made in the last 20 years.

The comparisons between the two schools used in this research are engaged with but not explored to any great extent. More research in this area is therefore recommended, focusing on the target audience, their social, cultural and economic backgrounds, and how these may influence their interaction with media images of beauty. This study also did not allow for input from magazine producers. Future research could include this so as to better understand text production and ideas or messages behind the content. It would also be beneficial to see how well the producers believe they know their target audience and subsequently if teenage readers fit this mould they create. The benefit of this would be to compel producers to embark on a state of self-reflection, so that they may better understand the decoding of messages that are often bound up in ideologies.

Any future research in this field will help to develop local knowledge that will hopefully identify the limitations of the mass media's ideological representation of beauty. Such research must also be made public and young women educated on the wider frame of a media text. The more mainstream this knowledge becomes the less power media images will hold over women.

## **Concluding Comments**

Overall, the results of this study suggest that teen magazines produced in New Zealand are heading in the right direction by giving young women positive messages about their self-image. International magazines are encouraged to follow suit, however overcoming society's ideals about beauty may prove harder for cultures that are strongly influenced

by gender ideologies. Considering the popularity of teen magazines amongst young women, this media form seems a good space to give young women positive messages about beauty in order to redefine its meaning for future generations.



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## Appendix A: Call For Participants



### FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH – CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS



My name is Sacha Willetts and I am currently doing a Masters of Communication at AUT.

I will be running focus groups at Epsom Girls in the **first 2 weeks of Term 3** and am calling for interest from **students in Years 10-13**. Students will only be involved in **one focus group** which will take place during a **lunch break** and be approximately 60 minutes in duration. **Snacks and beverages will be provided.**

My research **concerns teenage magazines** (such as Crème, Girlfriend and Dolly) and the **perceptions of beauty** within them. We will be looking at magazines and discussing a range of topics. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and if students feel uncomfortable at any stage throughout the process they are welcome to withdraw with no worry. Everything that is said in the focus group is **completely confidential** and at no stage will the information shared with the group be repeated. Names will not be used within the final project.

If students are interested they can **pick up an information sheet from Student Support Reception**. In order to participate they must return a signed parental consent form and a personal consent or assent form (consent forms are to be signed by those students 16 years and over, assent forms are for those pupils younger than 16).

**Forms must be returned to Student Support Reception by Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 3pm**  
Thank you 😊

## Appendix B: Indicative Questions

### Indicative Questions



Small Talk warm – up: introductions, favourite activity out of school

OPENING QUESTION (in order to get participants talking)

- I want to find out more about your favourite teen magazines. First of all what are your favourite teen magazines?
- Why are they your favourite teen magazines?
- How do the magazines represent what it means to be a teenage girl? Do you agree/disagree with how they reflect the experiences of teenage girls?

CONSUMER FEMININITY

- What do you understand by the word ‘femininity’?
- How do you think the magazines define femininity/being feminine?

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

EXERCISE 1: The participants will be asked to take 10 minutes in pairs to browse through a number of different titles (the locally produced *Crème* and *Girlfriend* as well as the international *Dolly*, *Seventeen* and *GL*). At the conclusion of this time they will be asked to present to the group which magazine is initially their favourite and which is their least favourite and why. Following this several different areas will be discussed:

- Tell me what beauty means to you?
- In what ways, if at all, do you see your understandings of beauty reflected in the teenage magazines that you read?

Sub Questions:

I’m interested in any connections you see between the teenage girl magazines and the TV shows NZ’s Next Top Model and America’s Next Top Model.

- Firstly, do you watch either NZ’s Next Top Model or America’s Next Top Model?
- Why do you/don’t you watch these shows?
- What differences, if any, do you perceive between the two shows?
- Which of the two shows would you watch most often and why?

Firstly, I ‘m going to ask you to compare and contrast the TV shows. And then secondly, I’m going to ask you to compare and contrast the NZ shows with the NZ magazines.

- What are the similarities between representations of beauty in NZ’s Next Top Model and representations of beauty in America’s NTM?

- What are the differences between representations of beauty in NZ's Next Top Model and representations of beauty in America's NTM?
- What similarities do you perceive between NZ's Next Top Model and the NZ magazines in terms of how they reflect the experiences of teenage girls?
- What differences do you perceive between the NZ's Next Top Model and the NZ magazines in terms of how they reflect the experiences of teenage girls?

### TRANSITION QUESTIONS

- What do you understand by image manipulation?
- What sort of tips have you learnt from the magazines?
- What do the magazines do well and what do they leave out?

### KEY QUESTIONS

- Do you think there is a difference in definition between these words?
- Which word do you identify with the most and why?
- Which word do you identify with the least and why?
  1. Pretty
  2. Cute
  3. Hot
  4. Beautiful
  5. Sexy
- Do you think the magazines have an impact on how you perceive/feel about yourself? How?
- Do you think the NZ teen magazines are different to the ones which are produced overseas? How?
- Do you notice a difference in content (eg. language used in articles, advertising) between the NZ magazines and the foreign magazines?

### ENDING QUESTIONS

- Considering everything we've discussed today, what type of impact do you believe the magazines have on your sense of self and experiences of life?
- If you had to summarize the main messages of the magazines, what would they be?

Researcher will summarize the findings and ask participants if the summary is appropriate

Researcher will give a brief overview of the study and ask if there is anything else participants would like to add.



## Appendix C: Confidentiality Agreement

# Confidentiality Agreement



*Project title:*                    *A Girl's Best Friend? Socio-cultural definitions of beauty in teenage magazines*

*Project Supervisor:*    **Dr Geraldene Peters**

*Researcher:*                    **Sacha Willetts**

---

- ☐ I understand that all discussions during this focus group will be kept confidential by the researcher and the project supervisor.
- ☐ I understand that my name will not be used in the final written project.
- ☐ I understand that quotes may be used in the final written project but that they will not be attributed to me.
- ☐ I agree that I will keep everything discussed in this focus group confidential, including anything other participants may say/do.

Participant's \_\_\_\_\_ signature:

Participant's \_\_\_\_\_ name:

Researcher's signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011  
AUTEC Reference number 11/48.***

## Appendix D: Caregiver Letter



Dear Participant/Parent/Caregiver,

I am a Masters student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and am currently recruiting for teenage girls aged between 14 and 18 years to help in a research project I am conducting on teenage magazines perceptions of beauty.

I am conducting two separate focus groups which I will run myself at your/your child's school. The focus group will run for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be conducted either during a lunch break or after school (depending on availability).

During the course of the focus groups we will be looking at magazines such as *Girlfriend*, *Dolly*, *Seventeen* and *Cream* and discussing the following topics:

- how teenage magazines define beauty
- how the magazines impact on the girls self esteem and self perceptions
- why the girls read teenage magazines
- what the girls take away from the magazines

Each focus group will obtain approximately 8 to 10 participants and all information will be kept strictly confidential.

The information will be used in informing my thesis to be handed in at the end of 2012. Within the body of my project no real names of participants will be used, although direct quotes may be but accredited to a pseudonym.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you have any further questions or queries.

I would love to have your/your daughter's participation as I am hoping to begin an academic body of work which is lacking within a New Zealand context.

Many thanks

Sacha Willetts  
027 315 2096  
[swillets@skytv.co.nz](mailto:swillets@skytv.co.nz)

Geraldene Peters (Primary Supervisor)  
[geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz](mailto:geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix E: Guardian Consent Form

### Parental/Legal Guardian Consent Form



*Project title:* **A Girl's Best Friend: Socio-cultural definitions of beauty in teenage magazines.**

*Project Supervisor:* **Dr Geraldene Peters**

*Researcher:* **Sacha Willetts**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 01/02/2011.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that the focus group will be run at (insert time and location) on (insert date here).
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw my daughter/legal guardian from this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw my daughter/legal guardian, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to allow my daughter/legal guardian to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011  
AUTECH Reference number 11/48.**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix F: Participant Consent Form

# Consent Form



**Project title:** *A Girl's Best Friend? Socio-cultural definitions of beauty in teenage magazines*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr Geraldene Peters*

**Researcher:** *Sacha Willetts*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 01 February 2011.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011  
AUTECH Reference number 11/48.**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix G: Participant Assent Form

# Assent Form



**Project title:** *A Girl's Best Friend? Socio-cultural definitions of beauty in teenage magazines.*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr Geraldene Peters*

**Researcher:** *Sacha Willetts*

- ☐ I agree to fill out a preliminary questionnaire prior to the focus group being conducted
- ☐ I have read and understood the sheet telling me what will happen in this study and why it is important.
- ☐ I have been able to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that while the information is being collected, I can stop being part of this study whenever I want and that it is perfectly ok for me to do this.
- ☐ If I stop being part of the study, I understand that all information about me, including the recordings or any part of them that include me, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011  
AUTEC Reference number 11/48.**

## Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

06 Feb 2011

### Project Title

A Girl's Best Friend? Socio-cultural definitions of beauty in teenage magazines.

### An Invitation

Dear Students,

My name is Sacha Willetts and I am a Masters student at AUT currently working on a project about the portrayal of beauty in teenage magazines such as Crème, Girlfriend, Dolly and Seventeen.

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group where we will discuss your experiences reading such magazines. The focus group will take place on school premises during a lunch break and will consist of 8-10 members of the same age as you. It will be relaxed and informal and be approximately 60 minutes in duration.

We will be discussing a number of topics of which are listed on this hand out. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if you feel uncomfortable at any stage throughout the process you are welcome to withdraw with no worry. Everything that is said in the focus group is completely confidential and at no stage will the information you share with the group be repeated. Your names will not be used within the final project.

Please have a read of the information below which will give you an idea of the study and what would be required of you.

If you would like to be involved you will need to complete either a voluntary consent form (for those of you who have turned 16) or an assent form (for those of you aged 14 and 15). Your parents or legal guardians will also need to sign a consent form allowing you to take part.

I would very much appreciate your involvement in this project.

Many thanks,

Sacha Willetts

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to determine how teenage magazines define the word 'beauty' to their readers and the impact that this has on its readers self esteem and body image.

The project will be submitted to AUT as fulfilment of my Masters of Communication qualification.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a female aged between 14 to 16 years.

Depending on the number of returned consent forms from parents or legal guardians, successful participants will be randomly selected. If the number of returned forms greatly exceeds my expectations I will consider adding a few more focus groups so that more students can be involved in the study.

### **What will happen in this research?**

Prior to the focus group being conducted you will be asked to fill out a preliminary questionnaire. This questionnaire will give me some basic information about you, you will not be asked to put your name on it.

You will attend a focus group during a lunch break or after school. The focus group will consist of 8-10 young women of the same age as you. It will be a relaxed and informal atmosphere and all information shared during the focus group will be strictly confidential.

In the focus group you will be looking at several different magazines and describing what you like or do not like about them. We will also be looking at some images of women or celebrities and discussing what you do or do not like about the pictures.

Further to this we will be talking about how the magazines make you feel about yourself, how they influence your interests or hobbies and how you feel they portray beauty.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Some of the subjects we discuss may make you feel uncomfortable. These include how the magazines impact on your self esteem and body image. We will be talking about aspects of yourself that you like and also aspects that you may not like (if any!) If you begin to feel uneasy at any time during the project you are welcome to withdraw from the study with no consequences.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Your school counsellor is aware of the study that is being carried out. Although they do not know who the participants are they are available to discuss any questions or issues which may arise out of the study with you.

Your school also has EARS (THS) students or Body Image Leaders (EGGS) who will be available to you should you wish to talk to them regarding any issues or concerns.

If you do not feel comfortable being completely honest in front of your peers during the focus group, you are more than welcome to approach me at the end to talk about anything that you may have withheld or that is worrying you.

At all times confidentiality will be enforced. We will sign confidentiality agreements amongst ourselves stating that what we discuss within the focus group will not be repeated. Your name will not be used at all in the final project.

### **What are the benefits?**

The benefit of this study is that you will be helping in creating some local (New Zealand) knowledge on teenage magazines and the perception of beauty. A lot has been written on teen magazines, however most of what is written is done so internationally and using international titles (such as *Seventeen*). You will be helping to create a body of work which will begin a look at specifically what YOU and your friends think about the magazines you read.

As a health or media student you may also find that the research project mirrors those things that you discuss in class, and may help you to understand them more or think about them in a different way.

Also....there'll be snacks! ☺

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The cost to you as a participant is your time. You will be asked to give up 1 lunch break over the course of one week.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You will be given 2 weeks to discuss this project with friends, family and teachers. Should your parents be interested an information session will be offered to them prior to the study being conducted.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

By the end of the 2 week period you will need to return a signed parental consent form as well as a voluntary consent form (for those aged 16) or an assent form (for those aged 14 and 15) signed by yourself. These forms are attached to this information sheet. Please return all these forms to Student Support Reception.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you wish to receive feedback I am more than happy to do so at the conclusion of my research being conducted. Please let me know if you would like this and I will take your contact details.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, *Dr Geraldene Peters*, [geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz](mailto:geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz), Ph 09 921 9999 ext.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?****Researcher Contact Details:**

Sacha Willetts.

[sacha.willetts@gmail.com](mailto:sacha.willetts@gmail.com)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Geraldene Peters

[geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz](mailto:geraldene.peters@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011, AUTECH Reference number 11/48.



# Appendix I: Preliminary Questionnaire

## PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE



School I Attend (please circle one): *Thames High* *Epsom Girls*

Age (please circle one): 14 15 16 17 18

Which of the following magazines have you/do you read (please circle all relevant):

*Girlfriend* *Dolly* *Crème* *Seventeen* *Frankie* *GL* *Teen Vogue*

Are there any other titles you read/have read which I have not listed? Please state which these are: .....

Where do you get most of your information regarding make up, beauty or fashion?

.....  
.....

How often do you read teen magazines (please circle one):

*Every Month* *Every couple of months* *Hardly Ever* *Never*

Do you have a subscription to any of the magazines? Which ones?

.....  
.....

Do you borrow magazines from your friends to read (please circle one):

*Yes* *No* *I'm the person they borrow them from*

Which part of a new magazine do you read first?

.....

Why do you read this part first?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Which part do you read last and why do you read this part last?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Are there any parts of the magazines which you don't bother reading (please circle one)?

Yes

No

Which parts are these and why don't you read them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Are there any interests or hobbies you have picked up from the content of the magazines? What are they?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you find products/fashion in the magazines that you have then gone out and bought?  
Can you list a couple of examples?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you find yourself comparing any part of your body to the images you see in magazines? Which parts and why?

.....

.....

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.....

.....

.....