

“Keeping it Real”: Young Working Class Femininities and Celebrity Culture

By

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree

of PhD

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore young working class women's engagement with celebrity culture, and its connection with their everyday lives and subjectivities. Given the ubiquitous nature of contemporary celebrity culture, and the repeated debates regarding the potential 'harm' celebrity images of perfection have on young women's self-esteem, this study seeks to move away from traditional 'audience' research, and adopt a more ethnographic approach to understanding the significance of the discourses of celebrity culture for the everyday lives of young women.

Through a discourse analysis of several celebrity gossip texts, this thesis argues that the discourses within celebrity culture are highly 'classed' and highlights that the little empirical research on female audiences of celebrity gossip magazines does not pay significant attention to the category of social class. Therefore, this research seeks to explore how young working class women not only negotiate and interact with the 'classed' discourses of celebrity culture, but also the role these discourses play in young working class women's everyday lives and lived experiences. The empirical data demonstrates *how* young working class women negotiate the complex discourses that are at work in celebrity culture, particularly with regards to the construction of the self, the female body, fashion, and beautification. Furthermore, through a feminist ethnographic framework, this thesis explores the place of celebrity discourses within the context of young female working class experience, and provides a valuable and much needed insight into the ways in which these discourses are at play in the subjectivities of young working class women.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Celebrity, Femininity and Authenticity

This thesis explores the discursive field of celebrity gossip magazines and the operation of these discourses in the worlds and subjectivities of young working class women. Taking a qualitative, interpretative, broadly ethnographic approach to audience research, this thesis seeks to understand the ways in which classed discourses and subject positions within the field of celebrity culture and magazines are taken up and invested in, or denied and defended, by young working class women in everyday life. The focus of this study is primarily on the corporeal and the way in which celebrity discourses of the body, beauty and fashion are constructed along classed lines. The empirical chapters of this thesis will demonstrate its central argument; that talking about celebrities has become a way of communicating to others who *we* are through positioning ourselves in particular ways, and that the body is used as the primary site of accomplishing this in everyday life.

Background and Rationale of the Research

Firstly, I have a confession to make: I am such a fan of Britney Spears that I named my car after her. I'm not even a fan of Lily Allen, yet she was the inspiration behind my cat's name. I love celebrity culture, and I make no apologies for stating from the outset that my weekly addiction to *Heat* magazine is partly responsible for the production of this thesis. In fact, every Tuesday I rush to get my weekly fix of celebrity gossip and fashion recommendations, and to paw over pictures of half-naked female celebrities to find out how they got their 'bikini bodies'. However, my love

affair with celebrity culture turned into an academic interest when I decided to analyse *Heat* magazine for my master's dissertation. Ever since, I have read celebrity magazines in two different, and often contradictory, ways: the 'subjective me' who enjoys reading about celebrity drama and recreating celebrity 'looks', and the 'critical, feminist me' who wonders *why* so many of us are so fascinated with reading about other people's lives, bodies, and what they are wearing.

Thus, the initial interest in the topic of femininity and celebrity is very much informed by the 'subjective me'. My teenage 'girl crush' on Geri Halliwell¹ and her 'girl power' message was responsible for my initial interest in feminism; however, an academic interest in feminism was developed thanks to a male sociology teacher who told us the only thing we needed to know about feminism was that feminists think 'all men are bastards'. My personal and scholarly interest in representations of women, particularly young women, developed throughout my early twenties during my sociology degree, and in my mid-twenties I decided to leave my job in fashion retail to pursue this academic interest.

The focus of the research

Initially, this thesis started life as a study exploring 'traditional' women's magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, and *Glamour*. Whilst these magazines (and their readers) are indeed relatively under-researched, it became clear from my own fandom of celebrity magazines that there was a genre of magazine, and indeed a cultural movement, emerging that warranted significant critical and feminist attention.

¹ The member of the Spice Girls also known as 'Ginger Spice'.

Whilst there have always been 'stars' (Dyer, 1998), the all-pervasive cultural phenomenon we witness 'stardom' as today can be considered as a new development (Turner, 2004). Indeed, the rapid development of an entire 'sub-genre' of the women's magazine market entirely devoted to all things celebrity in the early 2000s particularly warrant academic attention. Furthermore, they are particularly worthy of feminist critique: you don't need to look beyond the front cover to understand that the celebrities featured within them are almost entirely female. In addition, the focus of celebrity magazines is almost entirely on how female celebrities *look* whilst they are doing what they do, rather than what they do *per se*, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Whilst some feminist analyses of media representations do include examples of celebrity representations, albeit often limited to a discussion of 'Hollywood stars' (Negra, 2001; Epstein, 2000), a comprehensive feminist discussion of celebrity discourses and the ways in which these are negotiated and lived by young women is missing from this body of work. Furthermore, the way in which the very concept of 'celebrity' is constructed through discourses of gender and class is also overlooked, both in the body of feminist work on cultural representations and in the field of 'star studies' itself (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). In contrast to work which claims class has lost its analytic value in our 'consumer society', this thesis contends that class is central to the meaning and constitution of celebrity. As Tyler and Bennett (2010) point out, celebrity is a key vehicle through which value is distributed in public culture, and is instrumental in practices of distinction-making between individuals and groups in everyday life. However, Tyler and Bennett's (2010) discussion is limited to an analysis of the media, and this thesis seeks to explore this 'classed' distinction-

making at an empirical level, with a particular emphasis on the construction of the gendered and classed self in everyday life.

Representations of celebrity women are increasingly becoming the focus of critique both inside and outside academia. Young womanhood in particular exists within the realm of public debate as a topic of fascination, enthusiasm, concern, anxiety and titillation (Harris, 2004a). The category of 'young woman' has recently been reconstituted within neo-liberal western capitalist societies, in which young women are increasingly configured as 'top girls' (McRobbie, 2007; 2009) and 'can do girls' (Harris, 2004a). Indeed, young women are now celebrated as successful, sometimes more so than young men, in many arenas of public life, including education (Ringrose, 2007a) and employment (McRobbie, 2007; 2009), implying that young women have supposedly 'won' the battle for equality (McRobbie, 2009). As such, young women's lives have taken on fresh social and cultural meanings, and a newly valorised femininity has emerged in the context of young women's apparent liberation. Indeed, my own girlhood was strongly influenced by this discourse of empowerment: as I danced around my bedroom, the Spice Girls' lyrics I was singing into my hairbrush as I imitated Geri Halliwell in front of the mirror told me that I was a strong, independent girl who could do and be anything I wanted, and all *without* a man.

However, beyond the 'girl power' discourse stand the girls who are unable to embody the successful, postfeminist female subject that dominates our cultural landscape: coming from a working class background myself, I began to wonder about the extent to which the 'girl power' discourse served to obscure the enduring inequalities

between women, not just between women and men. As Walkerdine *et al*, (2001) argue, working-class women and girls come to occupy fragile and restricted positions in relation to the category of the 'successful female subject', meaning that parts of their working-class self must be regulated, corrected or left behind. Indeed, Tyler (2008) and Tyler and Bennett (2010) note that class antagonisms are currently being played out within contemporary culture, with working class femininity in particular being pathologised through the reviled figure of the 'celebrity chav' (such as Kerry Katona, Jade Goody and Katie Price). Thus, this thesis seeks to explore the negotiation and interpretation of these classed discourses by working class young women themselves, and the way in which these discourses are taken up or avoided in their construction of subjectivity in everyday life.

Whilst young women are celebrated as having 'arrived' in the public world (Harris, 2004a), they are also the object of extreme concern within wider culture. Popular culture may celebrate all things 'celebrity', but other areas of the cultural milieu, such as broadsheet and 'middle market' tabloid papers, denigrate celebrity culture and the supposed 'effect' it has on society. This 'effects' argument is particularly applied to young women, who are the subject of concern for both their physical and moral well-being: for example, skinny celebrities are popularly cited as the reason for eating disorders amongst girls and young women. The popular truism of 'blaming' celebrity culture and the media in general for high levels of eating disorders (Wykes and Gunter, 2005) is evident in many newspaper articles about young women and body image (for example see Henry, 2007). Furthermore, popular arguments suggest that girls and young women are becoming 'preoccupied' with celebrity at the expense of their educational and moral well-being (for example see Tallis, 2009). These

arguments echo the standpoint of a particular tradition within the academy that sees popular culture as evidence of cultural decline (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997). Once more, this argument is bound up with notions of class, with the culture of the working class 'masses' constructed as superficial and trivial (Holmes, 2004). However, as McRobbie (1994) points out, an increase in the 'superficial' doesn't necessarily represent a decline in meaning, and young working class women's status as primary consumers of the genre (discussed further below) forms another component of the rationale for exploring this groups' negotiation and application of celebrity discourses.

The Celebrity Weekly Magazine

Whilst the 'textual' focus of this thesis is on 'magazines', these magazines were chosen as a stimulus to explore young women's negotiation of celebrity precisely because they can be seen to embody the qualities of the broader phenomenon of celebrity culture. Llewellyn Smith describes *Heat* magazine as 'the bible of contemporary celebrity culture' (2002:114), and Holmes argues that, '*Heat* can be conceived as a particularly productive site for thinking through the construction, circulation and consumption of contemporary celebrity culture' (2005:22). Thus, a focus on celebrity magazines allows me to explore the discourses of celebrity culture that are both specific to the magazines' 'world view' and symptomatic of celebrity culture as a whole.

In order to investigate the women's weekly magazine market, at the outset of this project I examined two data sources that allowed me to map the market and its

readership, the Audit Bureau of Circulation figures and the National Readership Survey. At the time of this scoping exercise, six out of the top ten selling women's weeklies were a celebrity gossip magazine (ABC data Jan-Jun, 07). In 2007 when the scoping exercise was carried out, the best-selling celebrity weekly was *Closer*, followed by infamous sister publication *Heat*. One time leader of the market *OK!* was the third highest selling title, with lesser known titles *Now* and *New* trailing behind (ABC data Jan-Jun, 07). *Closer* is unique in terms of its approach to celebrity culture. Using the tagline 'Celebrity + Real Life = *Closer*' in its advertising, it features stories and fashion with a celebrity angle, as well as in-depth human interest stories from 'real life' readers. Furthermore, sister publication *Heat* has an iconic status within popular culture: it acts as 'part fashion bible, part gossip magazine, and part televisions listing guide' (Feasey, 2006:178). *Closer* and its contemporaries seek to bring the 'ordinary' reader into the glittering world of celebrity, showing us how to have the body, face, and fashion sense of a 'star'. Their 'moralising' critique of inappropriate celebrity behaviours also show us how to 'act' like a star. Furthermore, in emphasising the 'everydayness' of celebrity, these magazines aim to represent stars as 'ordinary', emphasising their flaws and knocking them off their 'pedestals' (Holmes, 2005). In doing so, these magazines have been described as 'the province of the cellulite bottom' and 'the rogue nipple' (Llewellyn Smith, 2002:12).

Gender and Class in the Celebrity Market

I would like to briefly outline the readership characteristics of the celebrity magazine market as they stood at the commencement of this study. It is no surprise that women make up the bulk of the readership of celebrity women's weeklies (NRS, 2007);

however, within the market there are some interesting divisions in terms of the magazines women read by age and class. *Heat* was particularly popular amongst younger women, at that time reaching more 15-34 year olds than any other women's weekly magazine (NRS, 2007). Interestingly, *OK!* and *Hello* commanded a slightly older female readership, and were most popular within the 35-44 age range (NRS, 2007). Thus, the bulk of celebrity magazine readers were found to fall within the 15-34 category, and as such this study chose to focus on young women aged 16-30.

There are also some interesting divisions in readership in terms of social class: NRS (2007) data revealed that the vast majority of celebrity weekly readers were concentrated in social grade C1, which the survey characterises as 'lower middle class'. It was significant that titles *OK!* and *Hello* attracted significant readership from social grades A and B (NRS, 2007). However, *Heat* and *Closer* had the highest proportion of readers from social grade C2, which the NRS (2007) labels 'skilled working class', along with titles *Reveal*, *Star*, and *New* (NRS, 2007). These class-based differences in readership can be seen reflected in the cover price, with the titles read by those in social grade C2 commanding a lower cover price.

Reading magazines

This initial scoping exercise allowed me to identify the classed nature of the women's weekly market, with celebrity magazines attracting more readers from the working classes than other women's weeklies, and particular titles being popular with particular fractions of the working class. This justified my focus on working class young women in particular as the main audience for these magazines. However, in

terms of the magazines that were the focus of the research, I allowed the preferences of the young women in the study to guide the magazines I analysed and read with them. Indeed, the different groups of young women all had specific titles they preferred to read: the Molefield girls preferred *Closer*, the Ashpool girls liked *Heat*, the Molefield mums read *OK!*, and the Tinsworth girls enjoyed *Heat* and *Look*, which has more of a focus on celebrity fashion. The mums stood alone in their preference for *OK!*; in fact, the other young women in the study disliked *OK!* because it had ‘too much writing’ (Vanessa, Ashpool girls) and was full of celebrities they ‘didn’t know’ (Sian, Tinsworth girls). Many of the young women also perceived *OK!* to be a magazine for women of higher social status than themselves:

Ceri: Oh I’ll have OK! then.

Sian: Here, you can have Reveal.

Ceri: No, I’ll stick to my high class OK! And read about toffs who I don’t even know who they are!

-Tinsworth Girls (1st Reading Group)

Actually, the young women generally expressed a preference for the ‘lower class’ titles, such as *Heat*, *Closer* and *Reveal*, on the grounds that they preferred a ‘trashy’ celebrity gossip magazine:

Lilly: I like all the cheap ones I do, like Reveal and New and that. The gossip's a bit more juicy and it's not as snobby.

Amy: Yeah, when I read a magazine I just want to read something trashy and gossipy like Reveal or Closer or something. If I wanted a classy read I'd buy Cosmo.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Thus, the celebrity magazine market is significantly divided in terms of those magazines that are considered 'classy' and those that are considered 'trashy'. Apart from the mums, all the other young women openly preferred the 'trashier' (and cheaper) magazines. The mums saw *OK!* as providing 'value for money', as there was more in it and it would last them for the whole month (even though it is a weekly, not a monthly magazine). For the other young women, the fast and weekly consumption of celebrity magazines is a significant part of their everyday life and is almost 'routine' or 'habit'. For the mums in this study reading celebrity magazines was a luxury in terms of time and money, and as such they read *OK!* in order to get the most out of their investment. This difference can be seen to reflect the young mums' interaction with celebrity culture as a whole, and this thesis will explore the way in which the young mothers can be seen to take up different positions in relation to the discourses of celebrity culture than the other young women in the study.

The young women seem to recognise the low cultural value of these texts within wider society in their categorisation of them as 'trashy' and 'cheap'. However, they value these texts on the basis of their lack of pretension and the resultant 'authenticity' this affords them. Given the class-based connotations of particular celebrity titles, it is important to consider the class-based nature of the magazines'

latent meanings, which very few studies of these magazines and celebrity culture more broadly have attended to (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). However, more significant is the way in which these classed discourses are subjectively experienced by working class young women, who are often the subjects of shame, humiliation and derision within the magazines, which informs the empirical focus of this study.

The Aims of the Study

The cultural and academic context of the topic described above informs the focus for this study. From a critical engagement with existing literature (see Chapter Two) and my own analysis of celebrity magazines, three central research questions have been developed that this research seeks to address. These are:

- How are the discourses within celebrity magazines, particularly those that are used to culturally construct the female body, interpreted and negotiated by young working class women?
- In what different ways do young working class women position themselves in relation to these discourses within celebrity magazines?
- How do these discourses inform young working class women's accounts of subjectivity and presentation of self in everyday life?

'Keeping it Real' and the structure of the thesis

In order to explore these questions, this study will combine several qualitative methods across various social sites, such as textual analysis, reading groups, narrative

interviews and participant observation. The use of a multi-sited ethnography spanning the period of a year allowed me to collect rich, contextual data regarding the operation of these wider discourses in young women's everyday lives. This study focuses on the way in which the classed discourses of celebrity culture are negotiated and interpreted, and resisted or taken up, by twenty young women from the South Wales Valleys, ranging in age from 16 to 28, some of whom are in education, others in employment, and some are full-time mothers. Particularly, this thesis is concerned with the way in which these discourses operate to construct femininity and the female body, specifically in relation to social class. This study adopts a broadly interpretive, social constructionist framework, and draws on various key theoretical concepts from theorists of social class, gender, identity, the body, and feminist cultural theory. Using this framework, this thesis specifically explores the way in which authenticity is the primary discourse through which the young women in this study negotiate and construct the site of the body, and through which they can be seen to invest in particular positions in relation to these.

As such, this thesis is aptly named: the title reflects the important status of 'authenticity' as a key discourse both within celebrity magazines and the young women's negotiation of them. As this thesis will argue, being a 'real' and 'ordinary' person, with a 'real' body, 'real' beauty, and 'real' style is of paramount importance, not only within the magazines themselves, but also the girls' negotiation of them and the construction of their own selfhood. Furthermore, the focus of this study is on how celebrity discourses are subjectively experienced in *real* lives: the methodological design of the study is designed to give partial access to the lives of the young women in this study across several key ethnographic social sites in which these discourses are

lived and experienced. Thus, authenticity, and being 'real', is at the heart of this study, and is where the discourse of the 'real woman' within celebrity magazines and the lived experience of authenticity as it is constituted in the subjectivities of 'real women' intersect.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This introductory chapter has allowed me to set the scene for the thesis as a whole, exploring the personal and academic motivations behind the study, and locating the topic within specific debates concerning celebrity culture, gender, and class, to which this study hopes to contribute. This study's original contribution to knowledge lies in its research design, which allows me to explore the complex and often contradictory applications of celebrity discourses in the lives of young working class women, which is yet to be fully explored.

Chapter Two critically engages with the academic literature and body of theoretical work that has informed the focus of this study. Here, I trace the shifts in conceptualising the young female body and representations of it. I argue that, despite a vast field of literature that is concerned with the cultural 'representation' of the female body, relatively little attention has been paid to the way in which these discourses are subjectively experienced by young women themselves. In this sense, this critique of the literature informs the focus, aims and analysis of this research, as well as providing a useful backdrop to the cultural field of the representation of young women within the media. As such, this chapter examines literature that explores the complex relationship between class and femininity both within the media (Tyler and Bennett, 2010; McRobbie, 2009), and in lived cultures (Skeggs, 1997). It also

outlines the key theoretical concepts around class, the body, gender, and feminist cultural theory that will be used to inform my analysis presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

The third chapter outlines the methodological and theoretical framework underpinning this research. The feminist framework that this study adopts is discussed, along with the theoretical model of exploring media texts in relation to 'socially-situated subjects'. Through a critical engagement of the field of audience research, I argue that an exploration of the media's place within subjectivity and everyday life necessitates empirical research with an ethnographic framework. Thus, this chapter outlines and explores the various qualitative research methods and tools that were used to collect the data for this research. In keeping with the ethnographic tradition, this chapter also considers my own subjectivity within the research process in terms of the ways in which this was brought to bear on data collection, analysis and representation. Furthermore, it also explores the ethical dimensions of feminist-oriented ethnography in terms of the research relationships that were formed throughout the fieldwork. Finally, this chapter considers some of the limitations of this study, including the limited nature of the sample and the validity of the data and the findings.

Following the methodology chapter are the four empirical chapters of the thesis that present the main findings of this research. The first of these aims to provide a context for the kinds of classed identifications the young women in this study can be seen to make with celebrity culture, and places these within the context of their everyday lives and subjectivities. This chapter specifically relates to the way in which the

construction of contemporary selfhood is classed, and introduces the discourse of authenticity and its significance in the construction of female working class identities. This discussion provides the social, cultural and moral context in which the young women can be seen to make classed identifications in terms of their bodies, beautification practices, and the way they dress.

Chapter Five begins my exploration of the female body as the primary site of celebrity culture and the young women's engagement with it. In this chapter, I draw on my own analysis of celebrity magazines and the empirical data from ethnographic research with young working class women to trace a shift in the discursive construction of the female body from the skinny, androgynous body towards a celebration of the curvy, yet toned, 'sexier' and more 'authentic' version of the female form. It explores the ways in which the young women interpret this discursive shift, and the ways in which they regulate their own bodies in terms of avoiding the representation of the working class, excessive body (Skeggs, 1997; 2004a) and the now pathologised 'skinny' body. I also consider the particular 'classed' affects of positioning themselves in particular ways in relation to these discourses of body shape.

In Chapter Six, I explore the process of 'making up' the face and body in terms of beautification practices such as makeup and fake tanning. I argue that the discourse of 'natural' beauty within celebrity culture pathologises representations of working class beauty cultures as excessive, overly sexual and inauthentic. I analyse the young women's negotiation of the discourse of 'natural' beauty within celebrity culture, and

the way in which this classed discourse is subjectively experienced in their own practices of 'making up'.

The final empirical chapter, Chapter Seven, examines the way in which bodies are clothed and the articulation of 'style' within celebrity culture through the discourses of individualism and authenticity. Here, I explore young women's lived experiences of 'dressing up' in relation to the sophisticated style of celebrity culture, and describe the identity work involved in, and particular affects of, this classed performance. I argue that representation of working class styles in the form of 'slapper' and 'chav' are pathologised and shamed within celebrity culture, and explore the variety of complex ways in which these young working class women position themselves in relation to these representations. This chapter also explores the associated practice of 'shopping' as a way in which individual style is created within a group context, and a means of confirming their own status as empowered, individual consumers.

In the final chapter, I synthesise the findings of the previous four chapters and consider what these findings contribute to existing scholarly and popularised understandings of young working class women's negotiation of celebrity discourses. I argue that despite the girls' complex relationships with the discourses of celebrity magazines, their talk is still primarily centred on them and their bodies. This can be understood in relation to the wider social context of their classed positions, in which the only form of capital they have is their bodies (Skeggs, 1997). The multi-lens nature of this research has enabled me to explore the young women's regulation and construction of their bodies within different social contexts and through their own accounts of the ways in which bodily regulation is subjectively lived and experienced.

This concluding chapter therefore seeks explore how this preoccupation with their bodies can be understood in terms of the wider social and cultural construction of femininity and class. Finally, this chapter identifies future avenues for research, and provides a personal account reflecting on the journey of the PhD and the way in which I have come to understand my own bodily subjectivity through it.

Chapter Two

Young classed femininities, the body and celebrity culture

The fields of academic writing and theoretical frameworks with which this thesis connects are numerous: celebrity has become a ‘meta discourse’ that encroaches into all areas of social and everyday life (Redmond, 2006), and as such its meaning is often difficult to pin down. This chapter will argue that the academic literature as it stands fails to comprehensively consider the complexity with which young women make and refuse different identifications with celebrity culture. Furthermore, I argue that the arena of celebrity culture needs to be subjected to a more gender-focused and class-focused lens. Throughout this thesis, I will demonstrate that the discourses of celebrity culture are primarily focused on the display of wider values concerning the signification of femininity and social class, which is accorded little attention in the field of ‘star studies’. As such, this chapter highlights the way in which the framework adopted by feminist scholars of class (Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine *et al*, 2001 to name a few) can be usefully applied to understanding celebrity culture and its consumption in everyday life. Within this chapter, therefore, I will draw on various key theoretical concepts from different social theorists, primarily feminist cultural studies theorists, around the themes of identity, class, gender and the body.

The popular ‘moral panics’ about the ‘effect’ of celebrity culture on the physical and mental well-being of young women, and the consequent concern in the academic literature with the representation of gender in the media, means that the place of the discourses of celebrity culture within young women’s lives often go unconsidered. Instead, the empirical investigation of the ‘consumption’ of media representations has

been replaced by a concern with ‘fan studies’ (also see McRobbie, 2009), which does not explore the way in which class, gender and subjectivity interrelate in this process. This study uses multiple theoretical lenses to explore a field which, as this chapter will highlight, is a highly complex and contradictory terrain. As such, this chapter will map the different fields of study, such as cultural and ‘star’ studies, feminist media studies, critical social psychology, and the topic areas which inform the themes that emerged out of this study, such as girlhood studies, feminist analyses of the body and embodiment, fashion, beauty, and class. In exploring these theoretical fields, I will argue that these areas of inquiry need to connect with one another in order to produce a comprehensive understanding of the way in which young working class women negotiate celebrity culture, and the way in which this is incorporated into their everyday lives and subjectivities.

‘Here come the girls’: Young women, popular culture, and visibility

I would first like to consider the relatively recent concern with young women within the popular media and the academy. Today’s media is a highly gendered world, with young women in particular being the popular media’s main focus of attention. For example, Hopkins (2002:2) argues that ‘this is a *girl’s* world’, and more recently McRobbie (2009) has also shown that young women are being put under a spotlight so as they become visible in a particular kind of way. This increasing visibility, or ‘luminosity’ to use the term McRobbie (2009:54) borrows from Deleuze, of young women in contemporary media has led to a proliferation of a new type of femininity represented by popular culture. These young women ‘illustrate how young women have made it; they are emblematic of the arrival of the can-do girl in the public world’

(Harris, 2004a:127) and represent a 'new girl order' (Kehily, 2008). Young women who appear in the media seem to live by the mantra of 'girl power', believing that young women can do and be anything they want through hard work, determination and 'girl power'. Seemingly empowered women are everywhere, especially in the pages of the celebrity magazines this research explores, where their success and achievement of fame and fortune is repeatedly celebrated as a marker of feminine success. Here, I shall consider the 'girl power' discourse within the media, and the way in which girls and young women have been simultaneously celebrated as the beneficiaries of late modern social change, and pathologised as 'in crisis' and worthy of significant concern (Harris, 2004a).

Girl Power and empowerment

During the 90s, pop music phenomenon the *Spice Girls* received much attention from academics (Lemish, 2003), and their message of 'girl power' spawned a breed of 'popular feminism' in the media that emphasised independence, assertiveness and empowerment (Hollows, 2000). Indeed, 'Girl Power' has even been added to Roget's thesaurus as a synonym for 'feminism' (Hopkins, 2002). Some claim that this sense of empowerment is also reflected in the culture and outlook of young women more generally: 'young girls, especially, seem to be a new breed of women...they have begun to speak a new language, and it is one of buoyant confidence' (Walter, 1999:2). Cultural imagery stresses the agency of its female characters, like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, who is more likely to be seen 'kicking ass' (Pender, 2007) than crying into her pillow over a man.

Indeed, it is the case that the young women who fill the pages of celebrity gossip magazines are hailed as ‘successful’ and ‘empowered’: they are (mostly) beautiful, slim, rich, sexy young women. For Hopkins (2002), our culture has wholeheartedly embraced these ‘virtually super heroic ideals of young femininity’ (2002:3), which she claims provide images and identities that can become a site of positive experimentation in the negotiation of girlhood. In what is often termed a ‘postfeminist media culture’ (Gill, 2007), the young woman is recast as a ‘neo-liberal’ subject constantly engaged in the construction of the self (Harris, 2004a; Gill 2007; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008). Their alleged status as ‘individualised subjects’ (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992), and furthermore neo-liberal ‘empowered’ subjects, means that young women are commonly regarded to construct themselves as sexy young women in an act of self-fulfilment rather than as sexual objects for the pleasure of men. This is therefore the ‘freely chosen wish of active, confident, assertive female subjects’ (Gill, 2007:259), rather than a manifestation of male domination and oppression.

Many argue that this formation of self and new sense of female empowerment is inextricably linked to consumer culture. For instance, Taft (2004) argues that the most pervasive meaning of ‘girl power’ is as ‘consumer power’, and Harris (2004b) claims that consumption is central to this new citizenship, which is evidenced by the consumer rights and buying power the media urges us to exercise in our consumption choices. It is young women in particular who are seen to wield this economic power, and consumer culture places buying power and the consumption of the symbols of femininity that display ‘girl power’ credentials at centre stage of personhood. As Taft (2004) rightly points out, this means that ‘girl power’ is only accessible to those girls

and young women who can afford these signifying products and practices. This thesis will explore the extent to which working class young women, who cannot afford these symbols of feminine success, attempt to be included in the celebrity/consumer culture that has come to symbolise female empowerment and personhood. This link between celebrity culture and the consumer worlds of young women as they are experienced in everyday life is not explored in sufficient depth by the existing body of feminist work. The fashion/beauty industry, of which celebrity culture is now a significant part (Pringle, 2004), appeals to these new affluent female subjects to embrace their new position as agentic consumers and to display their 'freedom' and new found power through the consumption of things for the body. However, many feminists claim that the 'beauty myth' is the last remaining obstacle in the way of women's advancement (Wolf, 1991), since it pits women against each other in a hierarchy of beauty (Ferguson, 1983) rather than against the very sources of female oppression. The beauty industry and its wider discursive and social function will be discussed further below.

'Troubled' Femininities

As a result of neo-liberal discourse, a proliferation of 'new femininities' have come into being (Gill and Arthurs, 2006) which Kehily (2008) argues characterise the changes in young women's experiences and their engagement with the social world. The representation of many of these 'new femininities' resonate with the 'girl power' discourse and represent femininity as empowered and empowering, such as the 'working girl' and the 'yummy mummy'. However, some of these 'new femininities', such as 'ladettes' (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) and 'chavs' (Tyler, 2008;

Tyler and Bennett, 2010), have been constructed as ‘problematic’, leading to widespread moral panics about the ‘state’ of contemporary femininities. As literature which explores these ‘problematic’ femininities argues, they implicitly evoke categories of social class (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) and construct working class, particularly white working class, femininity as pathological. This thesis will therefore explore the extent to which the representation of white working class femininity is pathologised in celebrity culture, paying particular attention to the discursive construction of ‘train-wreck’ femininity (see Chapter Four of this thesis). Fairclough (2008) notes the proliferation of young female stars spectacularly represented as ‘out of control’, experiencing mental and physical breakdowns in the full, scrutinising glare of the media, such as Britney Spears, Amy Winehouse and Kerry Katona. This study will critically explore these ‘problematic’ representations of femininity, and the way in which they are constructed via class categories.

Thus, the message that young women have ‘made it’, symbolised by their increased visibility, is more complex than the ‘girl power’ message would suggest, as many of these feminist critiques have demonstrated. It is this body of work that this thesis critically examines and responds to. Whilst it could be argued there are indeed strong, female role models in the form of glamorous, sexy, rich celebrities who are independent and ‘successful’, the way in which particular femininities are culturally constructed as ‘problematic’ suggests that the picture is not quite so rosy for all young women. It is some of these young women, in the form of working class young women, this study seeks to explore, both in terms of their ‘problematic’ representation and the way in which this position is subjectively experienced and lived.

Anti-feminist culture and the pain of 'doing girl'

In a critique of the 'girl power' discourse, many argue that we are actually witnessing a period of 'retrosexism' (Whelehan, 2000) which seeks to 'undo' the gains of feminism (McRobbie, 2009). This critique argues that the 'empowerment' we see in the popular media is in fact a highly sexualised raunch culture (Levy, 2006; Walter, 2010) in which young women become complicit in their own objectification in the assumed 'knowledge' that they are now equal with men. Gill (2003; 2007) conceives of this as a shift from 'objectification' to 'subjectification': the hyper-sexualised presentation of young women's bodies is a knowing and direct response to feminism having been 'taken into account' in contemporary culture (Gill, 2003, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Gill (2007) argues that this display of 'sexual empowerment' hides the inequality that still exists between women, since only some women will be able to present themselves in this socially endorsed way. As such, the boundaries of 'normative' femininity become ever-smaller and ever more exclusionary to particular groups of women, including working class women, who are typically pathologised on the basis of their 'excessive sexuality' (Skeggs, 1997; 2004).

More important, however, is Gill's (2003) argument that the shift she traces from sexual 'objectification' to 'subjectification' entails a shift from an external male judging gaze, to a self-policing and narcissistic gaze (also see Orbach, 2010). As such, this thesis will explore the extent to which young working class women embark on this supposed regime of self-perfection and self-critique (McRobbie, 2009). Sexual subjectification, Gill argues, 'has turned out to be objectification in new and even more pernicious guise' (2003:105), since the resulting 'look' of women's bodies is so

similar to what has always been prized by patriarchal culture (Gill, 2007). However, I will also explore the importance of the female-to-female gaze in contemporary celebrity culture: these magazines are full of pictures of young women in their bikinis and glamorous outfits designed principally for other women to look at and judge their physical and 'moral' worth. The concept that young women's 'success' is able to be 'read off' from their body is therefore particularly poignant within celebrity culture. Wolf's (1991) claim that women tend to resent each other if they look too good and reject each other if they look too bad not only applies to the young women's negotiation of celebrity culture, but also their social interaction with other young women in everyday life. In fact, the body of empirical work that explores the everyday peer cultures of girls demonstrates the extent to which they engage in the policing of their own and each other's bodies, manifesting in a wariness of one another and competitiveness on the basis of appearance (Hey, 1997; Guendouzi, 2001; Ringrose, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Kelly and Pomerantz, 2009). Similarly, Hermes (1995:127) argues that readers interpret celebrity magazines through the 'repertoire of melodrama', which involves taking pleasure seeing things go wrong for celebrities, and can also be seen in light of the female-to-female gaze when young women 'enjoy' seeing female celebrities looking 'unkempt' (Holmes, 2005). Coward (1984) has argued that women are encouraged to view both their own and other women's bodies with a critical 'male gaze'; this thesis will therefore explore the way in which the gaze operates in young women's experiences of celebrity culture and everyday life.

Thus, the representation of women in the media is highly complex and often contradictory: the celebration that young women have 'made it' is often undermined

by hyper-sexual images and a popular concern that young women are a 'concern' or at risk' (Harris, 2004a). As Gill succinctly summarises it:

'confident expressions of 'girl power' sit alongside reports of 'epidemic' levels of anorexia and body dysmorphia: graphic tabloid reports of rape are placed cheek by jowl with adverts for lap-dancing clubs and telephone sex lines; lad magazines declare the 'sex war' over, while reinstating beauty contests and championing new, ironic modes of sexism; and there are regular moral panics about the impact on men of the new, idealized male body surgery, while the re-sexualisation of women's bodies in public space goes virtually unremarked upon' (2007:1).

This thesis will demonstrate that nowhere is the complex and contradictory terrain of women's representation so clear than in the field of celebrity culture. Whilst many feminist studies acknowledge celebrity culture in their analyses of the representation of femininity in the media, the way in which young women themselves negotiate these contradictions is left relatively unexplored. Many feminists argue that, as a result of the consumer image of female empowerment, the pain involved in 'doing girl' has been forgotten (Kehily, 2008; McRobbie, 2009). This thesis attempts to connect this important work which focuses on 'representation', with an empirical understanding of the way in which 'young woman' is actually performed by white working class women. The cultural and third wave feminist focus on the 'pleasure' involved in 'doing girl' (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; 2004) has detracted from the complex nature of this field, and this study will explore the extent to which young working class women experience both pleasure and pain in their engagement with feminine culture and the performance of 'femininity' (Skeggs, 1997).

Theorising Class and Subjectivity

Feminist scholarship that pays particular attention to the way in which young women 'do girl' often also highlights that the 'pain' of doing girl is particularly more pronounced for working class young women who lack the cultural, social, and economic capital to engage fully in the consumer culture of young women's empowerment. As such, Kehily (2008) argues, these young women are positioned as the 'at risk' subjects we should be 'concerned' about as they are prone to early motherhood and social exclusion. Indeed, the representation of this 'type' of femininity in the media attaches social stigma to this breed of young woman in the figure of the 'chav mum' (Tyler, 2008). The empirical chapters of this thesis will explore the way in which 'working class' young female celebrities are represented, and how the young working class of this study negotiated these classed representations.

Conceptualising Class

Social class as a concept has recently returned to feminist analysis after falling off the radar in the 1990s when the 'death of class' (Gorz, 1982) was declared.

Contemporary neo-liberal discourses serve to reinforce the elimination of class as a significant category in late modern theory, with a focus on 'individualisation' and 'choice' embedding the reasons for social inequality in the subjectivity of social actors rather than societal, structural factors (Walkerdine, 2003; Skeggs, 2004b).

However, many feminist scholars in particular have reinvigorated class analysis through transforming the way in which the concept is theorised. This body of work,

to which this thesis hopes to contribute, conceives of class not as a set of ‘empty’ signifiers (Lawler, 2005a) (e.g. employment), but as something we *are*. In their theorisation of class, Skeggs (1997; 2004a,b,c; 2005), Lawler (1999), Reay (2004) and Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) amongst others demonstrate that class cannot be understood solely in terms of economic capital, and highlight that previous ‘classifications’ based on economic factors have been shown to be inadequate (Crompton, 1993). As Skeggs (2005) notes, understanding class involves moving beyond the economic and understanding ‘how class is made through cultural values premised on morality, embodied in personhood and realized (or not) as a property value in symbolic systems of exchange’ (2005:969).

Within this body of work, class is considered as ‘dynamic’ (Lawler, 2005a), and configured by and within the social and the cultural. As such, classes exist not as ‘essential attributes’ but as ‘divisions that are produced and reproduced’ (Lawler, 2004:119). The focus of much of this work is on the lived experience of classed categories, and takes into account the legacy of Bourdieu’s (2007) attention to the cultural, symbolic and identity-forming aspects of social class. As Lawler (2005a) points out, this is not to say that the cultural signifiers of class are divorced from economic systems, but that the cultural and symbolic economy through which class is partly signified is not reducible to these economic factors. Lawler (2005a) reinforces this argument in noting that working class people are not primarily marked as ‘lacking’ or ‘disgusting’ in economic terms, but through their assumed lack of knowledge and taste. This reinforces Sayer’s (2005) argument that class and classed normativity is increasingly configured in moral terms.

As such, this body of work, within which this work is also located, relies heavily on the work of Bourdieu (2007) and his consideration of the role of different forms of capital in generating and maintaining class distinctions. Whilst Bourdieu himself did not pay particular attention to gender (Adkins, 2004a), his analysis of these forms of capital have allowed feminists to usefully adapt his work within a feminist framework (Skeggs, 2004c). Cultural capital, or acquisitions of knowledge and particular ways of being that have the potential to be turned into economic capital (Skeggs, 1997), is the concept particularly used by feminists to explore classed practices and the way in which these are 'gendered'. Feminist scholarship in this area has produced some rich accounts of the complex way in which 'cultural capital' operates in the lives of working class women (Hey, 1997; Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001), and the way in which they are 'othered' by their supposed lack of cultural capital.

Reconfiguring Working Class Identities: The 'Chav'

Indeed, recent work into the way in which class is being culturally re-configured (Skeggs, 2009) through newly invigorated class antagonisms attest to this: the figure of the 'chav' (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010) so prominent within popular culture and everyday discourse can be seen as a particularly vicious moral attack on the white working class. In these new ways of 'othering' particular kinds of femininity and class, the concept of 'class' may not be named directly (Skeggs, 2005) but is mobilised through moral frameworks. As Tyler and Bennett note 'the contemptuous term 'chav' has become widely used to describe young, white, working-class men and women as shiftless, tasteless, unintelligent, immoral or criminal' (2010:379). This representation of the white working class is currently

constructed as problematic, with ‘white trash chav’ being one of the ways in which ‘disgust’ towards the white poor is mobilised in contemporary culture (Heywood and Yar, 2006; Brown, 2005; Tyler, 2008). Within celebrity culture, the phenomenon of the ‘celebrity chav’ is particularly a female affair (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). Marked by their bodily and dispositional excesses, young women such as Colleen Rooney¹, Kerry Katona² and Katie Price³ are at times reviled within celebrity culture on the basis of their perceived lack of cultural capital. Tyler and Bennett (2010) argue that these representations of the ‘celebrity chav’ remind us of the difficulty and undesirability of transgressing class boundaries.

Thus, the young working class women who are the focus of this study are constructed ‘problematically’ by the wider discourses of class currently operating within society and culture at large. Whilst Tyler and Bennett (2010) have recently given the classed discourses of celebrity the attention it is due, they do not explore the way in which these categories of class are lived and subjectively experienced by the young women they pathologise. Skeggs and Wood (2008; also see Skeggs, Wood and Thumim, 2008) note the lack of class-based analysis of the ‘audiences’ of media texts: this study precisely responds to the need to acknowledge the class discourses that are at play in celebrity culture and the negotiation of it by the young working class women

¹ Colleen Rooney is married to footballer Wayne Rooney. As a couple, they are often critiqued in the popular press for their lack of ‘taste’ despite their wealth as a result of their working class backgrounds.

² Kerry Katona became famous as part of ‘girlband’ *Atomic Kitten* when she was a young working class girl. Since leaving the band she has found continued ‘fame’ as a reality television star and tabloid media interest, particularly for her relationships, drug addiction, her bi-polar disorder and the changing size of her body. She is often described as a ‘celebrity chav’.

³ Katie Price found fame as a glamour model, but has since branded herself as a reality television star and business woman, lending her brand to a wide range of products from perfume to equestrian equipment. Tabloid interest in Katie focuses on her relationships with men and the cosmetic procedures she frequently undergoes to change her body and face. She is also critiqued for her lack of ‘taste’ and labelled as ‘common’ and a ‘chav’.

who are seemingly alienated and pathologised by the representations of class and femininity within it.

Whilst feminist analyses of popular culture have broadly analysed the discourses attached to the female body, many of them neglect the 'classed' nature of these representations, and the way in which working class women position themselves in relation to these discourses. The way in which the 'chav' is configured within celebrity culture is particularly through the signification of the body (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). As Skeggs' (1997) study demonstrated, young working class women invested in their bodies as a form of cultural capital, since 'class is always coded through bodily dispositions: the body is the most ubiquitous signifier of class' (Skeggs, 1997:82). Given the heightened significance of the classed female body in celebrity culture, this study will explore the way in which young working class women invest in their bodies in light of this new configuration of working class female bodies. The female body within feminist analyses is increasingly associated with social mobility in the wider neo-liberal context (Walkerdine, 2003; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008). As McRobbie (2009) argues, 'success' within the world of work relies upon young women 'making-up' in accordance with normative and prescriptive ideals of femininity. This is in both the physical and metaphorical sense: women must make 'up' to achieve 'upward' social mobility. McRobbie (2009) argues that for young women, body image acts as a form of employability, and for working class women their bodies are a principal way in which social mobility (or the faking of it) can be achieved. In light of these arguments that theorise and problematise the relationship between class, femininity and the body, this study will also explore the

nature of working class young women's investment in their bodies. The wider construction of the female body within feminist theory is discussed further below.

Class, Gender and Identity: Experience and Subjectivity

Given the 'death' of class within neo-liberal ideology, its role in the formation of identity was also erased from late modern social theory. Whilst the feminist work referred to above has reinstated class analysis and its role in subject formation on to the academic agenda, late modern theories of identity production claim that we need to move away from the structural 'zombie' categories such as class if we are to understand the way in which identities are constituted in late-modern times (Beck, 2000 cited in Lawler 2005a). Beck (1992) and Giddens' (1991) focus on individualisation and personal agency means that identity formation within social theory has been divorced from traditional moorings of class, gender and ethnicity, with identity being something that is now entirely self-produced. In this sense, the self can be understood as a project to be worked on (Skeggs, 2004b), and as such becomes the kind of 'subjectivity that one can consume oneself into being' (Bauman, 2001 cited in Walkerdine, 2003:247). Furthermore, this version of the self is *reflexive*, and is in this sense 'a self that reflects upon itself' (Skeggs, 2004b:81) and is constantly in the process of production.

Adkins (2004b) notes that a common criticism of the 'reflexive self' is the way in which it assumes subjects somehow exist outside of social worlds; in this sense, this version of the self can be critiqued for its 'realist' stance. As many of the scholars interested in class analysis discussed above highlight, this has particular implications

for understanding the self as 'classed'. Skeggs argues that not only is the reflexive self *male* (Adkins, 2002 cited in Skeggs, 2004b), but that he is also middle class: he has the knowledge, resources and technologies required to produce the reflexive self. The working class, in particular working class women, do not have access to the *right* and *morally valued* cultural resources to construct and perform the reflexive self (Skeggs, 2004b). In this sense, Skeggs (2004b; 2005; 2009) claims that the technologies of self-production are class processes, and that the making of the self *makes* class.

As a result of their 'lack' of cultural resources, Skeggs argues that within prevailing dominant discourses of subject formation, the working classes literally do not have a 'self' (2004a) in that they are incapable of being individuals or selves that *matter*. If an individual does not display the requisite reflexivity in their self-production, their failure is characterised (and moralised) as an individualised failure to know the self and to produce a self-reflexive personhood (Skeggs, 2004b). As Lawler (2005a), Walkerdine (2003), and Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008) also note, 'inequality' is understood as faults and personal failures that are embedded within the subjectivities of social actors. For Walkerdine (2003), this has meant that the language of psychology has come to replace the grammar of exploitation.

Thus, feminist scholars of class once more usefully deploy Bourdieu's (2007) social theory to understand identity formation and subjectivity. Adkins, (2004a) notes that Bourdieu's work offers a framework of the subject as not simply engaged with the world (as in the 'reflexive self'), but also *in* the world, which is particularly appealing for feminists working with categories of class. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' can be

seen as a useful way of reflecting upon the individual/society dualism that is at the heart of the debates concerning contemporary self-hood (Swartz, 1997). Skeggs (2004c) notes that for some the concept of 'habitus' is considered to have produced a theory of subjectivity that is also located within the social. Whilst this does restrict what can be understood beyond the social (e.g. the unconscious) (Skeggs, 2004c), 'habitus' nevertheless provides a useful framework for considering working class subjectivity. As Lawler (2004) notes, 'habitus' can be a way of theorising a self that is socially produced, but that is also constitutive of social relations.

In this sense, it is important for theorists of class to understand not just how class is 'conferred' (Lawler, 2005a), but also how class is subjectively felt and experienced. Those working with Bourdieu's theoretical framework pay particular attention to the 'affects' of class in terms of the emotions and dispositions categorisations of class entail (Reay, 2004; 2005; Sayer, 2005). Reay (2005) claims that class is etched onto our psyches with particular affects, and as such develops and expands Bourdieu's different forms of capital to include 'emotional capital' (Reay, 2004). Jenkins (2002) claims that Bourdieu's main weakness is his inability to conceptualise subjectivity, and that actors know more about the social world than Bourdieu is prepared to allow. In this sense, the appropriation of Bourdieu for theorising subjectivity by feminist scholars, such as Skeggs (2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2005; 2009), involves working beyond Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' to understand how class is made through cultural values that are premised on morality and *embodied* in personhood, subjectivity and lived experience. This study uses this framework to understand how classed selves are both conferred (by celebrity culture) and experienced and embodied in the subjectivity of working class young women.

The Construction of the Female Body: Shape, Size and Class

Much of the literature on celebrity culture pays more attention to 'ordinariness' and fame, rather than to the gendered nature of the phenomenon. This thesis will demonstrate that celebrity culture is a domain in which young women have taken centre-stage and are subject to extreme public and moral scrutiny in a way that is not applied to male celebrities. Feasey's work (2006; 2008) acknowledges the gender dimension of celebrity culture, and Geraghty (2000) also argues that it is women who 'are particularly likely to be seen as celebrities whose working life is of less interest and worth than their personal life' (2000:187). I would add to this that it is also their bodies in celebrity gossip magazines that are the particular focus; their body shapes, their sense of fashion and style, and their beauty regimes and hairstyles is of equal, if not more importance, than their private lives. It is these aspects of femininity that define their moral worth and success as young women within celebrity magazines, which therefore brings into question the way in which the body has become a form of cultural capital for young working class women now more than ever.

'Airbrushed' perfection and impossible female body ideals

In the highly sexualised media culture described by Gill (2007) and others (Levy, 2006; McRobbie, 2009; Walter, 2010), it is particularly clear that femininity works on and through the body, which forms the focus of enquiry for 'corporeal feminism'. The 1970s feminist focus on 'images of women' in the media revealed varying versions of the female body ideal throughout history, and demonstrates that cultural ideals of the female body are both contextually and historically specific. Through

examining the art of various historical periods, it has been well documented that the body ideal for women was once extremely full-bodied, rounded, and, in our particular culture of slenderness, some may say obese. Bordo (1993) and Wykes and Gunter (2005) both trace a definite shift from the curvaceous hourglass form of the female body that was the body ideal of the 1950s, to the thin, slender and androgynous body that became the norm in the 1980s and 90s. Many feminists have critiqued the media for presenting an impossible ideal body image of extreme thinness for young women to aspire to. For instance, McRobbie describes the features of the fashion image as 'extreme thinness, stick-thin legs and arms, almost completely flat chests with barely a hint of breasts, narrow boyish hips, flat tummy, sculptured facial features, large eyes and chiselled cheek bones (2009:100). Similarly, Negra argues that one of the most distinctive features of the post-feminist era has been 'the spectacular emergence of the underfed, over-exercised female body (2009:119). This thesis questions the extent to which this remains the case, particularly within celebrity gossip magazines' representation of 'curvy' celebrities and in light of the popularised 'size zero debate', discussed further below.

Given the proliferation of images of female 'thinness' in the media, there is a prevailing sense of concern over the physical and mental well-being of young women and their bodies. 'Moral' panics have ensued about the fragility of young women's health, who many argue are put under pressure to conform to impossible images of slenderness and develop eating disorders as a result (Frost, 2005). The 'size zero debate', as it is more commonly known, currently rages in the popular and broadsheet press and across various TV formats. As this thesis will demonstrate, the celebrity gossip magazine in particular argues against impossible images of slimness precisely

due to the perceived negative effects on young women's physical and mental health. Feasey (2006), the only academic to consider the way in which the female body is represented in celebrity magazines, argues that celebrities are not presented as having 'naturally' perfect figures, but as women who have to work extra hard in the gym or counting the calories in order to obtain their toned, slim yet curvy figures. This thesis will develop this insight further, and explore the way in which bodily discipline is both normalised and pathologised in celebrity culture. *Heat* invokes a popular feminist discourse that 'normal' women should not be subject to such practices, and be free to 'eat cakes' and have 'fat days', and Feasey (2006) summarises *Heat*'s position as follows: 'the reader should play with fashion trends and find pleasure in their health and beauty regime rather than feel societal pressure to take such drastic and potentially harmful steps to create a particular look' (2006:188). However, the complex and contradictory nature of this position, and the way pathology also seeks to normalise, is unexplored in Feasey's (2006) work. As such, this thesis attempts to build on her argument by exploring the extent to which old ideals of the female body are evoked by feminist-sounding arguments.

These popular feminist arguments that incite young women to resist pressure to discipline their bodies can be seen as an example of McRobbie's (2009) proposition that feminism has been 'taken into account' by popular culture, and Gill's (2007) recognition that feminist ideas have become 'common sense' across a range of postfeminist media texts. McRobbie (2009) claims that bodily anxieties and pathologies, such as eating disorders and self-harm, have become normalised as part of young female subjectivity, and signify young women's 'illegible rage' at the loss of the capacity to challenge the narrow grid of intelligibility as a result of the loss of

feminism. However, as Hey (2009) notes, McRobbie (2009) focuses primarily on the successful 'alpha girls' of postfeminism, for which the price of their success is the rebuke of self-punishment (Hey, 2009) and their complicit silence in the face of male oppression. This obscures the complexity of the way in which young women are able to achieve 'success': as Hey notes, 'the cultural capitalisation of bodies also induces a *structural effect which* means that working class and poor young women *cannot* secure legitimate recognition in this cultural market of class (2009:16). Indeed, this thesis will explore the extent to which McRobbie's (2009) signs of 'illegible rage' are pathologised, and not normalised, within celebrity gossip magazines, and are represented as the province of 'train wreck' celebrity discussed above.

However, as significant as the 'size zero debate' is, it relies upon the 'effects model' to explain young women's relationship to the media: as such, it assumes that young women are passive in their negotiation of the media, rather than the active subjects in control of their own selfhoods that postfeminist media culture would suggest. The 'media effects' model has been criticised for its inability to meaningfully measure or explore the 'effects' of the media (Gauntlett, 2005) and simplifying the complex way in which young women interpret images of the female body and experience their own bodies in relation to these. The 'effects' tradition within media studies gave way to the 'uses and gratifications' model precisely because of its failure to incorporate an account of *how* individuals interpreted the media differently (Brooker and Jermyn, 2003). As the following chapter will demonstrate, the 'uses and gratifications' approach led to a proliferation of media research that positioned the audience as 'active' and media texts themselves as 'polysemic' (Evans, 1990). Despite the positioning of audiences as critical and knowing, 'blaming the media for reproducing

and extolling representations of unrealistic female bodies that influence young women to starve themselves has almost become a popular truism' (Wykes and Gunter, 2005:3). However, as McRobbie (2009) also acknowledges, nowhere is there a sustained discussion about the cultural significance of these images in the lives of young women, let alone young working class women who are potentially further distanced from the current cultural ideal. This aspect is something I seek to explore further by considering what is entailed in the subjective processes of looking at and consuming these cultural forms.

Culturally constructed bodies: Sexiness and 'Raunch' Culture

This thesis adopts a broadly social constructionist approach to the theorisation of the female body, seeing the meanings attached to bodies as constructed by discourse and through social actors' interaction with both the media and other social actors. That we are currently witnessing a possible shift from the extremely slim body to the curvy yet slender and toned body (see Chapter Five of this thesis) demonstrates that the body is a product of social and cultural processes. Furthermore, it is particularly the case in contemporary popular culture that the body is harnessed as an 'inhabited and presented visual space' (Frost, 2005:65). In keeping with neo-liberal discourse and the notion of the 'reflexive self' (Skeggs, 2004b), Orbach (2010) argues that our bodies are increasingly being experienced as objects to be honed and worked on, and that this is particularly the case for young women. Furthermore, the individual woman is deemed responsible for the presentation of her body, and is 'judged' by it as her 'calling card' (Orbach, 2010:5). As such, young women are encouraged to embark on a Foucauldian-style regime of self-perfectability (McRobbie, 2009).

Bodies have become sites of display (Orbach, 2010), and within celebrity culture, sites of spectacular display of feminine success and wealth.

As a part of the 'size zero debate', the use of airbrushing to create the illusion of perfect 'living doll-like' femininity (Walter, 2010) is now being questioned in popular culture. This is on the same grounds as the traditional feminist argument that took issue with the way in which women are incited to judge themselves with a highly critical lens (Orbach, 2010). As this thesis will demonstrate, celebrity gossip magazines have made an 'anti-airbrushing' commitment and are on a quest to show celebrities 'as they really are', not how they are artificially 'created' by image management and digital enhancement. These 'unkempt' (Holmes, 2005) images provide a tiny dent in the polished representations in the wider media that we are more used to (Orbach, 2010), yet demonstrate that the body is a highly constructed and regulated site. The way in which these magazines, often viciously, dissect the meanings attached to certain female celebrity bodies, and young women partake in this process, is one of the ways in which the female body is currently culturally and socially constructed.

Recent writing on the representation of the female body demonstrates that a woman's body is currently being constructed in relation to sexual allure (Walter, 2010; Gill, 2007), which Walter (2010) argues is a young woman's primary passport to success. Female sexiness is now read through the popular feminist language of 'empowerment': the star personas of 'glamour girls' such as Jordan/Katie Price, with their extreme version of female sexuality, are often read through the language of feminism. In fact, the Cambridge University Union debating society debated whether

Jordan is a 'feminist icon' or not in May 2008. Walter (2010) notes that from an early age girls are encouraged to present themselves in a sexual way: previously 'seedy' brands such as *Playboy* now suggest something naughty, cheeky, ironic, and above all aspirational. Indeed, many of the young women in this study pledged their allegiance to the *Playboy* brand and ethos, with one participant Vanessa (17, Ashpool girls) claiming that she would love to become a 'bunny' in the mansion, but that her mother would disown her. Vanessa's attachment to the *Playboy* brand is possible precisely because of popular feminism: young women have supposedly achieved equality, and thus expressions of female sexuality are considered as acts of self-empowerment done for oneself, not for the gaze of men. As McRobbie (2009) points out, there is seemingly no exploitation involved in the famous 'Hello Boys' *Wonderbra* advert; the model enjoys it. Thus, feminism is invoked by the sexualisation of culture (Paasonen, Nikunen and Saarenmaa, 2007; Atwood, 2009) only to be dismissed as 'irrelevant' (Gill, 2003, 2006, 2009; McRobbie, 2009). As such, the connection between female sexuality and the body is greater than ever in the 'raunch culture' of the wider media (Levy, 2006) that makes young women more visible than ever. Indeed, Hakim (2010) proposes a theory of 'erotic capital' to add to Bourdieu's other forms of capital: in this sense, the ability to perform 'sexy' can theoretically be turned into economic capital, particularly within certain industries within the labour market (Hakim, 2010).

These hyper-sexualised representations also have implications for young women's construction of self and subjectivity; however this presently remains relatively under-investigated by feminist inquiry, which tends to focus mainly on the representation of female sexuality and the body itself. As such, this study questions the extent to which 'sexy' is able to be performed by working class women. Hakim's (2010) concept of

‘erotic capital’, whilst useful for understanding social processes within our sexualised culture, does not consider the differential access women have to ‘erotic capital’: does everyone have the ability to accumulate erotic capital? Hakim (2010) seems to imply so, claiming that potentially all women and men possess it, and that it ‘requires some basic level of talent and ability, but can be trained, developed, and learnt, so that the final quantum goes far beyond any initial talent’ (2010:14). She does note, however, that erotic capital has greater value when it is linked to high levels of economic, cultural and social capital (Hakim, 2010), and as such is partially linked to social stratification. Considering Hakim (2010) is extending Bourdieu’s forms of capital, which are primarily about the formation of social class, she pays relatively little attention to the way in which accruing erotic capital in the first place is a classed process. This study will therefore explore the way in which ‘sexy’ is able to be performed by young working class women, and the way in which they are able to accrue ‘erotic capital’ (if at all).

Classed Bodies

This leads me to consider the cultural construction of the working class female body. As previously discussed, Skeggs (1997) has argued that the body is a signifier of class: her study demonstrated that young working class women invested in their bodies as a form of cultural capital. The body can be theorised as an ‘active battlefield’ (Macdonald, 2003:221), a site of hegemony where different representations struggle for dominance. This is evident in the cultural construction of the female body within celebrity culture, where the ‘skinny’ and ‘slim but curvy’ bodies can be understood as struggling for dominance. The disciplined body

represented celebrity gossip magazines is thus constructed as a 'work zone', and as such connects with other work which recognises the importance of discourses of health and fitness to the construction of the female body (Macdonald, 2003). This representation is a highly classed discourse of the female body: as Orbach (2010) argues, the middle class body must show evidence of being worked on at the gym, a process which aims to display what the individual has achieved through diligent exercise.

Conversely, the cultural stereotype of the working class body is as 'undisciplined': the excessive and unruly bodies of *Big Brother* contestant Jade Goody (Biressi and Nunn, 2003) and Anna Nicole Smith (Brown, 2005), to take just two examples from the literature, demonstrate that the 'fat' working class body is treated with contempt and disgust. Bordo (1993) notes that in the context of the working class femininity, 'fat' is perceived as indicative of laziness, a lack of discipline, an unwillingness to conform, and an absence of any managerial abilities that confer upward social mobility. Thus, representations of the working class body are read as having no value (Skeggs, 2004a), which both normalises the middle class body and pathologises the working class body. For Bourdieu, the body is marked by its own habitus, and is the only tangible manifestation of the person (Bourdieu, 2007). Therefore be argued that body discipline acts as a form of cultural capital in contemporary culture.

However, more recently the working class female body is culturally constructed in light of a new reconfiguration which questions the 'morality' of the working class body. McRobbie claims that 'the bodies of young women are now to be understood according to a scale running from welfare-dependent, single, with maternity marking

single, to glamour marking success' (2009:134). Tyler (2008) critically explores the phenomenon of the 'chav mum', the kind of poor working class girl with a baby in a pushchair also known as a 'pramface', and identifies this as an intensification of 'hate speech' against the white poor. The way in which this representation of the white working class is highly visible within celebrity culture has only very recently begun to be explored. Tyler and Bennett (2010) have recently sought to understand celebrity as 'a hierarchical domain of value formation characterized by struggles over the social worth and meaning of selected classed, gendered and racialized bodies' (2010:376). The unruly and excessive representation of the working class female body is spectacularly produced within celebrity culture, with construction of the 'celebrity chav' centring on excessive corporeality and the continual exposure of a lack of cultural capital (Bennett and Tyler, 2010).

McRobbie's (2009) analysis of popular television makeover programmes such as *What Not To Wear* demonstrates that the vicious and derogatory speech directed towards their poor-looking, white victim (said in the spirit of 'self-improvement') has become a social norm and an acceptable way to speak of the appearances of working class women. Skeggs (1997) claimed that the young working class women in her study were aware of these negative moral judgements made regarding their appearance and lack of respectability, and used certain techniques to 'pass' as middle class to avoid these. In light of Skeggs' (1997; 2005) work, this study will question the extent to which young working class women may or may not socially construct their own bodies in an attempt to 'pass' for the version of femininity circulating within contemporary celebrity the positions they take up in relation to these femininities.

Pathologising the female body

Whilst the working class female body is associated with excess and failure, the middle class female body has become associated with feminine success, and more importantly as a form of social mobility (Walkerdine, 2003; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008; McRobbie, 2009). These kinds of discourses specifically link the display of the body with particular forms of subjectivity: we've all heard the popular saying, 'healthy body, healthy mind' which implies the body is not only indicative of, but also constitutive of, subjectivity. Many, such as Wykes and Gunter (2005), note that mastery, control and discipline of the body are indicative of a healthy mind/self. This thesis will explore the extent to which celebrity gossip magazines, in their anti-size zero and anti-obesity stance, place young women along a continuum of strong/disciplined women, and weak/undisciplined women. The extremely 'skinny' body and the excessively large female bodies are both constructed as weak/undisciplined. The body is a matter of intrinsic worth, and as such, the 'right' body signifies the 'right', classed attitude (Brown, 2005).

As Bordo (1993) notes, the very slender female body has always been connected with fragility and a lack of power. Whilst in wider media culture the 'skinny' body has become glamorised and idealised (McRobbie, 2009; Negra, 2009), this thesis will explore the extent to which that ideal is being questioned and resisted by the cultural construction of the female body in celebrity magazines. Thus, it is also the 'skinny' female body, regarded as taking bodily discipline and control 'too far' that is pathologised. Similarly, Bordo also notes how bodily discipline, 'too aggressively pursued...leads to its own undoing' (1993:183). The body that is firm, tight, smooth

and toned is, according to Bordo, 'a body that is protected against eruption from within, whose external processes are under control' (1993:190). Bordo's (1993) argument is that the focus on 'pathology' obscures the normalising function of the technologies of body management, something which this thesis also highlights with regards to celebrity culture's discursive construction of the female body. This study will use Bordo's insights as a basis for understanding the discursive construction of the skinny body within celebrity culture, and the way in which the young women negotiate this representation.

Earlier I introduced McRobbie's (2009) concept of 'illegible rage' which she attaches to the pathologised forms of the female body. She argues that popular feminine domains, such as the woman's magazine, create, foster and maintain a certain level of tolerance to bodily discontent amongst young women. McRobbie's (2009) argument is that, far from pathologising conditions such as anorexia, bulimia, and self-harm, popular culture 'normalises' them. As such, the 'out of control' figures of celebrities such as Amy Winehouse are normalised, and making oneself ill in the course of striving for perfection is deemed practically acceptable (McRobbie, 2009). However, this thesis demonstrates that the pathologisation of these bodily practices is more complex than McRobbie (2009) suggests. Within the field of celebrity gossip magazines, the figure of Amy Winehouse and those like her represent a type of femininity that is deemed 'out of control', precisely signified by their extremely thin bodies. Their out of control, weak fragile bodies are the bodies associated with vilified 'train wreck' version of femininity previously discussed (Fairclough, 2008). Their bodies are pathologised using the language of popular feminism, since celebrity gossip magazines embrace the 'healthy' and 'under control' body and vilify, often

with scathing viciousness, the bodies of extremely thin or skinny, ‘anorexic-looking’ celebrities. However, this thesis will explore the ways in which celebrity magazines both revile *and* normalise the technologies of controlling the body, and the way in which the feminine pathologies McRobbie (2009) discusses are bound up with class discourses of morality that are attached to the body.

Socially Constructed Bodies

Whilst it is important to consider the field of representation with regards to the cultural construction of the female body (in which, one could argue, social constructions of the body may well be embedded), it is particularly important to consider the way in which young women *experience* and construct their own bodies in everyday life in relation to these wider discourses. There is some valuable work being undertaken that seeks to understand the complex way in which girls and young women negotiate the complex and contradictory representations of young women’s bodies (Rich, Holroyd and Evans, 2004; Charles, 2008; Coleman, 2008; Renold and Ringrose, 2008; Ringrose 2008a, 2010). This important research makes more complex the relationship between cultural images and young women’s experience of their bodies, and explores the way in which girls and young women can actively resist the cultural representations of bodies. As Renold and Ringrose (2008) highlight:

‘The ways in which postfeminist debates and politics are frequently contained within cultural studies and media representations make for a strong and complex analysis of cultural representation...but for a problematic analysis of critical consumption at the level of lived everyday lives’ (2008:315).

Using the theoretical concepts of Deleuze, Guattari, and Butler, Renold and Ringrose (2008) seek to reconfigure the way in which girls and young women can be understood to experience their bodies. Specifically, they explore how girls are navigating the heteronormative discourses of gender and sexuality, and the way in which they actively reject and resist dominant cultural representations of hyper-femininity. This study will also pay attention to the complex way in which young women both take-up and resist dominant cultural discourses of femininity and the female body within celebrity culture, and in their lived experiences and accounts of subjectivity.

In particular, this study will question the way in which the young women's active positioning in relation to dominant cultural discourses of the female body is classed. As some feminists have recognised, not all young women have the same cultural resources at hand to produce or 'become' the corporeal ideal (Skeggs, 1997; Hey, 2009), and this study focuses on working class young women who may lack the cultural capital to perform the kind of female corporeality currently prized by society. Whilst Tyler and Bennett (2010) have recently begun to unpack the loaded concept of the 'celebrity chav', the social construction of the working class female body within the context of these newly invigorated and spectacularised representations of working class femininity, is yet to be explored.

This is important due to the 'affects' of class previously discussed (Reay 2004; 2005), something that can only be explored via empirical research that focuses on *experience*. The bodily affects of class have been highlighted by feminist empirical

research (Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine *et al*, 2001; Lawler, 1999). These studies theoretically frame class as ‘embodied’ through the appropriation of Bourdieu’s (2007) concept of cultural capital. In this sense, cultural capital takes the form of dispositions of the mind and body, which is particularly relevant to the focus of this research. Skeggs (1997) highlights that class is ‘embodied’ in the sense of appearance and also ‘being’:

‘class is not just about the way you talk, dress or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you have A levels or went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, your psyche, at the very core of your being’ (Kuhn, 1995:98 in Skeggs, 1997:90).

Thus, whilst analyses of cultural representations are useful, the classed way in which people understand and experience their own bodies are not reducible to these. Indeed, the young working class women in Skeggs’ (1997) study actively sought to challenge and resist dominant middle class inscriptions. In conducting in-depth qualitative research with young women, this study seeks to build on this research, and explores the way in which classed categorisations of the body are lived and subjectively experienced. For Walkerdine *et al.* (2001), class is written across the bodies and minds of young women, and as a result McRobbie (2009) argues that working class women will never truly achieve the bodily styles that apparently ‘come naturally’ to middle class women; they will never truly ‘belong’. This brings with it particular affects, affects which this study seeks to explore in terms of the ways in which young

working class women negotiate and experience classed discourses through their own bodies.

Beautification and Adornment

Besides the issue of body image in terms of shape and size discussed above, another significant aspect of women's bodies is the way in which they use cosmetics and clothing to adorn and visually present their bodies. This section will explore the way in which the concepts of beauty and fashion have been used in feminist analyses of the media and the everyday lives and subjectivities of young women. It will also demonstrate the way in which discourses of beauty and fashion can be seen as 'classed'.

The Beauty Myth: Pleasure and Pain

There is a well-versed argument within feminist analyses and the popular media itself that the media circulates images of 'impossible' beauty. Wolf (1991) sees this as intrinsically linked to female liberation, and argues that 'the more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us' (1991:10). Indeed, a rejection of beauty and fashion practices was at the heart of second wave feminism (Hollows, 2000). The 'beauty myth' is the last remaining of the old feminine ideologies that control women, and Wolf (1991) suggests that in terms of how young women feel about themselves 'physically', they may actually be 'worse off' than their un-liberated grandmothers. She argues that, with the decline of the ideology of domesticity, the

world needed a new ideology that would compel women to consume, and the answer was to compel them to buy more things for the body (Wolf, 1991). Whilst this is true, recent work has also emphasised the significance of domesticity in postfeminist media culture (Brunsdon, 2005; Negra, 2009): the preoccupation with home improvement and domestic labour (particularly cooking- think *Nigella Bites* and *Come Dine With Me*), implies that women must be beautiful, domestic goddesses.

However, many argue that the reality is that media images of perfect beauty will always remain elusive and out of reach to 'real' women, thus forcing them to spend even more money attempting to conform to an impossible ideal (Wolf, 1991; Pringle, 2004). Furthermore, it is often argued that large numbers of people (particularly young women) use female celebrities as 'role models', and that this is most evident in the arena of personal appearance (Pringle, 2004). Therefore, given the current trend in the advertisement of the beauty industry for celebrity endorsement, the link between beauty, celebrity, and young female consumers should not be neglected in the consideration of the lived practice of 'making-up'. This thesis argues that the links between beauty, consumerism and celebrity culture (Pringle, 2004) are not made strongly enough within academic literature, and an exploration of the dynamics of these relationships in the everyday lives and subjectivities of young, particularly working class, women are under-explored.

Whilst it may seem that Wolf (1991) emphasises the oppressive nature of the beauty myth, she, along with Radner (1989), also recognises the pleasure many women take in beautification and the transformation of one's appearance (also see Walter, 2010 and Chapter Six of this thesis). She also acknowledges that the beauty myth

simultaneously drives women apart *and* binds them together in a celebration of shared 'femaleness'. However, the beauty myth, combined with the hyper-sexualised culture described earlier in this chapter, means that the woman who has 'won' is the woman who foregrounds her physical perfection and silences any discomfort she may feel (Wolf, 1991; McRobbie, 2009; Walter, 2010). Thus, women are caught in a double bind: in order to avoid disapproval they must learn the skills involved in beautification; however, by being associated by such trivial matters, women are unable to ever achieve significant power and status (Grosz, 1994).

Many note that within postfeminist media culture, the 'makeover' and transformation of one's appearance using beauty techniques has become associated with personal 'empowerment' (Negra, 2009). MacCannell and MacCannell (1987) and Radner (1989) argue that from the late 1980s, the role of beauty for women changed from achieving an aesthetic designed to attract men, to beauty as a means of self-improvement, confidence and pleasure. In fact, work by Davis (1995) argues that women are using the extreme form of beautification, cosmetic surgery, as an act of empowerment in which they are in control of and constructing their own identities. A recent survey carried out on behalf of the Girl Guides highlighted that 50 per cent of girls aged 16 to 21 would consider cosmetic surgery to make themselves thinner or prettier (Bennett, 2009).

Third wave feminist literature also celebrates the world of feminine adornment as a site of female power and emancipation, and is often associated most famously with the reclamation of the colour pink (or 'pinkaphelia' as Baumgardner and Richards (2000:159) call it), nail polish, and *Barbie*. Branded by some as 'lipstick feminism',

the reclamation and appropriation of those symbols of femininity that once stood for female oppression (Hollows, 2000) as symbols of female emancipation is regarded by some as anti-feminist and drained of any real political power. As Munford argues, 'too often the lipgloss, high heels, Barbies and vibrators are more visible than a body of politics' (2007:275).

Thus, the focus on beautification as an 'empowering' process, and the fact that feminism has been 'taken into account' (McRobbie, 2009) in so many ways in the postfeminist terrain, may obscure the pain involved in 'doing girl'. For example, Walter (2010) notes that the hypersexualised culture discussed above, whilst having an impact on all women, weighs particularly heavily on working class women. This study explores the extent to which this is due to the problematic cultural construction of working class women's sexuality. Working class women's 'excessive' sexuality puts them at increased risk of being branded 'slappers' or 'slags': as Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) note, young or teenage motherhood is primarily a working class affair, and pregnancy is not a part of the construction of young middle class femininity. Furthermore, recent work on 'chav' culture (Tyler, 2008) also explores the precarious sexual identities of working class young white mothers, who have become increasingly vilified and embody wider social anxieties about female sexuality.

Thus, this study seeks to understand the lived practice of 'making up' experienced by working class young women within the context of our highly sexualised postfeminist media and celebrity culture. McRobbie (2009) notes that, whereas once working class women were urged to do 'respectability' (Skeggs, 1997), they are now urged to aspire to a 'glamorous' and individual mode of beauty. She argues that for the 'new cultural

intermediaries' ('bourgeois' women) this glamorous beauty is 'effortless', but for working class women it requires significant labour to achieve. It is these class differences between the universalised category of 'women' that much of the work on 'beauty', including Wolf's (1991), neglects. It is also of note that the image of 'beauty' advanced and circulated by the beauty myth is predominantly a nostalgic one of 'powder-puff whiteness' (McRobbie, 2009:42; see also Black, 2006), and as such also neglects the racialised nature of discourses of beauty.

In the eye of the beholder...

The above discussion leaves hanging the question, 'what is beauty and what does it mean to be beautiful'? As Black and Sharma (2001) argue, beauty is contextually specific, and the symbols of beauty vary according to age and class: as such, 'beauty is never a pure category' (2001: 104). This thesis will propose the argument that 'beauty' as a concept within celebrity gossip magazines and young women's lived cultures has undergone a recent shift to the idea of 'natural' beauty, in which beauty labour, whilst still performed, is hidden in the visual presentation the young woman makes to the world. Negra (2009) also argues that the postfeminist version of beauty involves a de-emphasis on the visibly made-up face, and that women are now under particular pressure to efface the signs of their own labour. In effect, women need to learn a specific way of applying makeup so as they appear not to be wearing any, which involves using natural colours and producing a 'subtle' look. As a result, Negra (2009) argues that there is now a far greater emphasis on products that work on the 'health' of the skin, and this study will further explore this link between 'beauty' and

health and the role it plays in the everyday beauty cultures of young working class women.

It is useful to discuss this phenomenon in light of McRobbie's (2009) postfeminist reworking of the 'masquerade'. Using Riviere's (1989) concept of the 'masquerade', McRobbie (2009) argues young women's position as the ideal subjects of feminine consumption demands a particular performance of femininity from young women. This 'hyper-feminine' performance she describes has, according to McRobbie (2009), become the new cultural dominant of the fashion-beauty complex. She claims that 'the new masquerade constantly refers to its own artifice... [and] draws attention to its own crafting and performance' (2009: 66-67). In Riviere's (1989) original concept of the 'masquerade', she claimed that femininity is worn as a mask, and that this mask is indistinguishable from a 'genuine' femininity. As such, she collapses 'authentic' femininity and 'artificial' femininity together (Riviere, 1989): with women *everything* is a performance and a 'masquerade'. For Butler (1990), femininity is a series of performances that create the illusion of a 'proper' and 'authentic' femininity (Renold and Ringrose, 2008). Celebrity culture's focus on 'natural' beauty can be understood in light of these arguments as a particular performance of femininity young working class women are currently required to perform.

McRobbie (2009) argues that the 'postfeminist masquerade' acts as a mode of inscription across the whole surface of the female body (McRobbie, 2009), which seeks to ironically locate women back inside the terms of traditional gender hierarchies. It is particularly the case that the 'top girls' of neo-liberalism perform the 'postfeminist masquerade' of hyper-femininity in an unconscious bid to contain the

threat women's success poses to men and patriarchy (McRobbie, 2009). As a result of women's participation symbolically masculine terrains, and the possible destabilisation of the gender hierarchy this poses, young women must re-establish the terms of heterosexual desire by adopting the 'postfeminist masquerade'. McRobbie's (2009) argument here is also based on the argument of Riviere (1989), who claimed that 'women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men' (1989:35).

However, in focusing on the 'alpha girls' of postfeminism, McRobbie (2009) neglects those girls and young women who are not invited to recognise themselves as 'privileged' subjects of social change. As Hey (2009) also argues, it is the 'trophy girls' of postfeminism who are represented as the 'victims' who are haunted by the loss of 'feminism' and the requirement of the 'new sexual contract' to reject feminist critique. But what about those young women who have not entered into this 'new sexual contract' and who never 'had' feminism in the first place in order to lose it? As the work of Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) and Skeggs (1997) demonstrates, working class young women *cannot* secure legitimate recognition in this cultural market of class. Hey (2009) rightly notes that whilst the 'postfeminist masquerade' may contain distress for some privileged young women, more is likely to be at stake for working class and poor young women whose performance of the 'masquerade' is read as a 'display' and poor 'imitation' of femininity (Skeggs, 1997). Hey (2009) argues that it is as impossible for working class girls to resist this pathology as it for middle class girls to live without consequence in the 'masquerade'.

Whilst McRobbie's (2009) analysis is undoubtedly useful, I concur with Hey's (2009) observation that her account represents the *social* dressed as the *cultural*, and as such it obscures the complex ways in which the 'masquerade' is negotiated, experienced and lived by young working class women in particular. As Skeggs (1997) notes, the young working class women in her study did not have a possessive relation to normative (bourgeois) femininity and actively challenged middle class norms of appearance. These possibilities for resistance are left unheard in McRobbie's (2009) account, which does not resonate with the way in which empirical studies of girls and femininity demonstrate they are subverting and resisting the heterosexual matrix (Renold and Ringrose, 2008). As such, this study seeks to question young working class women's *experiences* of making up in light of McRobbie's (2009) discussion of the cultural terrain in which these practices are set, and explore those possibilities for resistance to 'the new cultural dominant'.

'Making-up' as lived practice

Few studies explore young women's lived practice of 'making up', despite widespread acknowledgement from feminists of beauty's persistent role in women's lives, now more than ever (McRobbie, 2009; Negra, 2009; Walter, 2010). Given the popular feminist mantras circulating in the postfeminist media about 'loving yourself', the way in which young women narcissistically construct and beautify themselves is significantly under-explored. Tyler (2005) uses the work of Freud to explore the way in which this may occur: Freud argues that women love on the basis of love for themselves, '*what she herself is, what she was, what she would like to be and someone who was once part of herself*' (Freud, 1991:84 in Tyler, 2005:28). Tyler

(2005) notes that, according to Freud, beautiful middle class women are more likely to be narcissistic than ugly working class women which, although this demonstrates the class bias in Freud's work, it also highlights the way in which beauty is a 'classed' discourse. Tyler (2005) argues that due to an internalisation of heteronormative power relations, women can be simultaneously both conscious of the negative effects upon their self-esteem of cultural ideals of femininity, and feel compelled to adhere to those ideals to avoid 'failure'. This thesis will therefore seek to explore *how* this contradiction is *lived* and the extent to which classed dynamics of beautification are a part of these experiences. As Davis (1995:58) points out, we must 'be able to explore [women's] lived experiences to their bodies, to recast them as agents, and to analyze the contradictions' in their beauty practices.

Dellinger and Williams (1997) conducted one of the few empirical studies that focuses on the way in which women use makeup in everyday life. Whilst this study was conducted before McRobbie's (2009) consideration of 'making-up' and the way in which it is thought to enhance career success, their exploration of why women wear makeup at work can be considered to contribute to this debate surrounding the presentation of the female body and upward social mobility. Their study found that many women were not conscious of their everyday makeup use, and described it as 'routine' or 'habit' (Dellinger and Williams, 1997). Whilst the women in their study described wearing makeup as a 'personal choice', many feared the negative social consequences of not applying makeup 'properly' or not wearing makeup at all. In fact, many of the women in their study saw makeup as the key to presenting a competent and successful image in the workplace (Dellinger and Williams, 1997).

Particularly relevant for this study is the link they demonstrate between wearing makeup and looking 'healthy', and not wearing makeup and looking 'unhealthy' (Dellinger and Williams, 1997). It is precisely these 'affects' of looking and feeling 'bad' or 'unhealthy' (and the moral and social consequences of this), and the 'affects' of 'feeling good' and 'looking healthy', that this thesis explores as a significant part of young women's negotiation of discourses of 'beauty' in their everyday lives. Importantly, Dellinger and Williams' (1997) work also demonstrates the way in which makeup acts as a signifier of 'heterosexuality'. Their argument here can clearly be linked to McRobbie's (2009) discussion of the 'postfeminist masquerade' and its function to re-establish heteronormativity in neo-liberal times.

This study also explores the function of makeup and beauty within female peer cultures, and, following Wolf (1991) explores the extent to which it is something that both bonds girls together and drives them apart. Dellinger and Williams' (1997) research also demonstrates this to be the case: whilst many women 'bonded' at work over beauty talk, many also recognised the divisive features of such talk. They also indicate that the postfeminist discourse of 'beauty as empowerment' is at work in women's perceptions of 'making-up': many women in their study saw beautification as self-indulgent time which signified 'independence' (Dellinger and Williams, 1997). This thesis also explores the way in which postfeminist discourses of beauty as a form of empowerment operate in young working class women's beauty cultures in particular, who could be seen as representing a form of 'failed' femininity (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001; Skeggs, 1997). Thus, with so little work exploring the lived, subjective experiences of these complex discourses of beauty, this thesis seeks to

consider the continuities and contradictions that accounts of beauty practices by working class young women reveal.

Fashion and style as 'making up'

The way in which women clothe the body is also of paramount importance in postfeminist media culture, particularly so within the world of celebrity gossip magazines. Clothing is a large part of hyper-sexualised postfeminist media culture more generally, and a significant component of McRobbie's (2009) 'postfeminist masquerade'. From the extreme of young women wearing highly sexualised clothing, such as T-shirts emblazoned with 'Fit Chick Unbelievable Knockers' (Gill, 2003), Jodie Marsh famously wearing a belt as a 'top', and the bikini clad girls on 'Girls Gone Wild' (Levy, 2006), to the appropriation of feminine, 'girly' styles, clothing has become *the* way of visually presenting the body.

Fashion and style can also be considered in terms of the wider 'girl power' discourse discussed above. As Zaslow (2009) notes, style play is particularly interesting to explore in a cultural era that is infused with the discourse of 'girl power', which suggests that young women can *choose* when to dress 'girly', when to dress 'sexy', and when to dress 'powerful'. In keeping with Taft's (2004) definition of 'Girl Power' as consumer power, Klein (2010) has also noted the power of celebrity within advertising discourse, which rates celebrities in terms of their marketing and branding power potential. Thus, many claim that celebrities legitimate consumerist values, and shepherd us into processes of imitative and appropriate consumption (Turner *et al.*, 2000). McRobbie (2009) sees this 'obsession' with consumer culture as playing a

vital role in the 'undoing of feminism' she describes. Indeed, Negra (2009) claims that shopping has become a lifestyle practice and a form of postfeminist corporeality, and this study will explore the ways in which consumption of fashion and style is embedded within the young women's peer cultures and construction of self.

An analysis of discourses of style within the wider postfeminist media once more reveal the way in which the cultural construction of 'style' has classed inflections. In an exploration of the TV makeover, McRobbie (2009) explores the way in which working class women and older women are encouraged to step forward into the labour market and consumer culture through transforming the way in which they dress. 'Glamorous' fashion is presented as aspirational (McRobbie, 2009), and this study will seek to explore the way in which glamour and sophistication operate in young working class women's lives against the predominant view of working class women as the antithesis of glamour, as 'unkempt' and 'scruffy'. Fashion and style are culturally regarded as coming effortlessly and naturally to middle class women (McRobbie, 2009); however, for Skeggs' (1997) working class young women, style was not seen as something that middle class women knew anything about, and was constructed as a working class competence. In fact, Skeggs (1997) argues that clothes were highly invested in by the working class young women in her study as one of the few alternative sources of cultural capital they had. In light of these insights, this study will therefore explore the meaning of style and the 'glamour of aspiration' (McRobbie, 2009) to working class young women who are frequently culturally invoked as having 'no style'.

In terms of the way in which young women currently clothe their bodies, there are many cultural analyses, such as McRobbie's (2009) 'postfeminist masquerade', on which to draw. However, a consideration of the way in which discourses of style operate in everyday life and within the realms of subjectivity is also important to consider. Willis claims that young people are 'very adept at the symbolic work of developing their own styles, and also at "reading off" and decoding the dress styles of others' (1990:88). As Zaslow notes, it has also become the way to 'name oneself, mark oneself, disguise oneself and engage in dialogue with multiple and conflicting social discourses' (2009:114). As such, this process is more complex than simply 'imitating' the styles of the stars: as Driscoll (2002) argues, the relationship between young women and style is highly complex due to the persistent tension between agency and complicity.

This tension between complicity and agency is also invoked within celebrity gossip magazines and the young women's social construction of style, as the empirical chapters of this thesis will demonstrate. 'Goods' and styles are able to take on particular meanings (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978) that say something to others about the wearer: indeed, for Skeggs' (1997) young women, clothing and appearance became the means by which they felt they could know and place others. As such, fashion and style is intrinsically linked to the neo-liberal conceptualisation of the 'individual', and as such is also bound up with those discourses of female agency and social mobility (Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008; McRobbie, 2009) that characterise current times. In constructing fashion in relation to female agency and individualism, this also opens up the possibilities for resistance to normative femininity through fashion. For example, Zaslow's (2009) study of girls in New York demonstrated the

ways in which some of the girls used style as a subversive tool to play with identity and to offer alternative versions of femininity. However, whilst 'girl power' discourses frequently construct 'dressing up' as a form of feminine pleasure, Zaslow (2009) found that this is not always the case and that it is often regulation, pain and fear that dominate young women's accounts of style. Zaslow (2009) concludes that it is precisely those discourses of choice and individual power that leads to such intensive monitoring of their styles by themselves and peers.

For the young women in Feasey's (2006) study of *Heat* readers, the construction of fashion and style within the magazine was not only 'pleasurable', but also reassuring. Feasey (2006) highlights the way in which *Heat* magazine can be seen as an arbiter of fashion tastes, dictating styles readers should try on and styles they should avoid. Within these magazines, celebrities are constructed as 'ordinary women with extraordinary wardrobes' (Feasey, 2006:185). As such, the extraordinary 'fashion image' that McRobbie (2009) discusses is very different to the images of 'celebrity fashion' in celebrity gossip magazines, which is framed by the discursive tool of 'ordinariness'.

As Feasey argues, readers saw something 'special' about a celebrity look, with 'the personality in question bringing a certain level of style, glamour or sartorial cachet to any outfit, be it either high-street or haute couture' (2008:694). Feasey (2008) goes on to note that, far from simplistic notions of emulating particular looks because that look was 'special', the young middle class women in her study claimed that seeing specific fashions on a celebrity made the look 'safe' and thus 'wearable'. This is because, Feasey (2008) argues, the celebrities are framed as wearing these clothes in

their everyday lives and not just modelling them; they are 'tried and tested' as celebrities go about their daily lives, and are judged as style 'successes' by the moral framework of *Heat*. Thus, this study will further explore the way in which young working class women negotiate and interpret the meaning of celebrity style, but also the way in which these discourses operate in their own construction of stylised selves that they present in everyday life.

Celebrity culture, ordinariness and 'star-gazing'

Much of the literature discussed so far relates directly to the way in which feminist writers in particular have theorised the cultural 'postfeminist' landscape, and the way in which femininity is increasingly constructed as 'embodied' and highly regulated through bodily discipline, beautification and fashion. Whilst some of this literature usefully engages with celebrity culture, there is another field of literature that specifically explores the study of 'stars' and fame, which contains some useful concepts for the way in which this thesis explores the discourse of 'authentic' femininity in relation to contemporary female selfhood and subjectivity.

The 'Celetoid' and Tabloidisation

Turner *et al.* (2000:2) claim that 'it would be hard to exaggerate the pervasiveness of celebrity in the contemporary media', and that the way in which celebrity culture infiltrates every aspect of social, cultural and even political life should lead us to consider it as a 'new' phenomenon. Celebrity is now a phenomenon that is attributed discursively (Marshall, 1997): traditional models of fame that were premised on talent

and achievement (Dyer, 1998) have now made way for models of fame that emphasise its 'random' nature (Littler, 2003). To capture this, Rojek (2001) introduces the concept of the 'celetoid', which is characterised by a form of fame that is attributed by the media to an individual considered 'noteworthy'. This is exemplified by the number of 'ordinary' people appearing in the media (Turner, 2004), particularly through the 'reality television' genre.

Celebrity culture's focus on 'ordinariness' is a classed discourse that has, until relatively recently, gone unexplored in star studies: that working class people are presented with an 'alternative' route to success, fame and fortune, such as Jade Goody and Kerry Katona, is significant, particularly as it is young women who are highly visible within these genres. As Skeggs and Wood (2008) highlight, the word 'ordinary' is just one of the euphemisms used as a substitute for the term 'working class'. Tyler and Bennett (2010) discuss the way in which 'chav' celebrity is originally constructed around a 'respectable' working class identity marked by a lack of pretension (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). Yet, they also note that the term 'ordinary' within the context of celebrity culture generally retains 'disparaging' connotations. (Tyler and Bennett, 2010:379).

As such, this 'positive' construction of their 'ordinariness' soon gives way to a construction of the celebrity as lacking in cultural capital, style and taste for which they are subjected to the nation's vilification and disgust (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). Nonetheless, working class 'authenticity' has value in some cases: for example, Tolson (2001) highlights the importance of the work of Goffman in celebrity culture's valuing of the 'real' self of the celebrity behind the performance that is the 'public'

mask or persona. Thus, if celebrity culture can be seen as a site of struggle over the meaning of class (Tyler and Bennett, 2010), then it is particularly important to explore the way in which these discourses of class operate in the everyday worlds and subjectivities of young working class women. As such this thesis seeks to explore the way in which performances of self are categorised as ‘real’ and ‘fake’ both within the magazines and the young women’s accounts of subjectivity.

Furthermore, the field of celebrity culture and its various genres in which working class people have become highly visible are regularly regarded as ‘trashy’ (Skeggs and Wood, 2008) and of low cultural value (Holmes, 2005). Often dubbed the ‘tabloidsation debate’ (Turner, 2004), critics of celebrity culture argue that our celebrity-driven culture is premised on the artificial and the trivial (Schickel, 2000), with celebrity gossip magazines having a particularly ‘bad reputation’ in this respect (Hermes, 1995). However, those working within the field of cultural studies have noted that an increase in what some perceive to be the ‘superficial’ does not necessarily represent a decline in meaning (McRobbie, 1994). In fact, I would argue, it necessitates an exploration of the way in which audiences, particularly working class audiences, relate to this new genre of media culture given the predominance of them within it.

Imagined communities and regulated selves

Celebrity culture, and the discourse of ‘gossip’ associated with it, can be seen as serving particular social functions. For example, Feasey (2008) notes that celebrity ‘trivia’ can form a common bond between women, as well as imitating the way in

which the discourse of gossip has the ability to cater ‘to women’s interest in each other’s lives’ (Brown, 1994:31). As such, celebrity gossip can be considered as having a wider social cohesive function (Hermes, 1995) within feminine cultures. Also of note is the ‘class-based’ nature of the discourse and social practice of ‘gossip’, which is often associated with working class women. Some argue that celebrity gossip serves to ‘replace’ the ‘real’ community of female friends, that Bird (1997) argues has been lost, with an ‘imagined community’ and ‘extended family’ (Hermes, 1995).

An extension of this argument can be found within psychological literature, in which Horton and Wohl (1993) claim that consumers of celebrity engage in ‘para-social interaction’ or as Turner describes it, ‘interactions which occur across a significant social distance...with people ‘we don’t know’’ (2004:6). The resulting ‘illusion of intimacy’ has been treated problematically in much of the psychological literature on ‘celebrity worship’, and is generally conceptualised in terms of fostering pathological behaviour, such as stalking and celebrity homicide (Jensen, 1992; Schickel, 2000). Most famously, John Maltby and his colleagues (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2004; Maltby *et al.*, 2005) claim that whilst we are all ‘stargazers’ to some extent, there are a group of signs and ‘symptoms’ that characterise ‘extreme’ levels of celebrity worship. In popular discourse, girls and young women are considered as particularly at risk of being extreme ‘celebrity worshippers’ (Maltby *et al.*, 2005). Celebrity culture is therefore considered to have a particular role in identity formation for the female audience (Stacey, 1994), with fame being constructed as the ‘ultimate girl fantasy’ (Hopkins 2002:4). As Harris puts it, ‘it is in a world of celebrities, popstars, supermodels and entertainers that young women are encouraged to be somebody.

Indeed it is often these kinds of figures who are supposed to illustrate how young women have made it; they are emblematic of the can-do girl in the public world' (2004a:127).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the themes within the academic literature, and sometimes popular discourse, that relate to the way in which young women and their highly visible bodies are constructed, represented, consumed and lived. It has paid particular attention to the relatively under-explored discourses of class that are clearly marked on the bodies of young women, particularly so within the realm of celebrity culture. I have examined the cultural construction of young women and their bodies within postfeminist media culture, exploring the work of Gill (2003; 2007) and McRobbie (2009) amongst others to critically discuss the way in which feminism has been 'taken into account'. This discussion highlighted that young women and their bodies are both a category of social celebration *and* concern. An exploration of feminist analyses of class highlighted the ways in which constructions of 'problematic' young femininities are predicated upon social and cultural formations of class (Skeggs, 1997, 2004a; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010).

I was also concerned to trace the shifts in conceptualising the female body and the notion of embodiment: I highlighted the significance of the young female body as a site of social and moral concern and struggle in both popular discourse and feminist analyses, and explored the way in which young female bodies are culturally

constructed as hyper-sexual, and mobilise discourses of class. This chapter has also introduced and explored the important concept of the 'postfeminist masquerade' (McRobbie, 2009), which the empirical chapters of this thesis will draw upon and critically engage with in order to understand the way in which the young female body is lived. Fashion was also seen as a key process in the embodiment of young femininities, and this chapter discussed some of the feminist work in relation to the TV makeover genre, which can be usefully applied to the analysis of celebrity culture. Finally, this chapter considered the way in which work located within the field of 'star studies' and its focus on 'authenticity' and 'ordinariness' can also be usefully applied to the consideration of celebrity culture as a 'field' in which gendered and classed identifications are made, produced, and lived.

From this critical engagement with the existing literature, I have been able to identify areas that require further exploration that have informed the focus for this study.

Primarily, there is insufficient 'audience' research exploring the way in which people negotiate celebrity culture and celebrity magazines. Given the way in which feminist analyses of celebrity and media culture highlights the way in which working class women are pathologised, how do these classed and moral discourses operate in the everyday lives and subjectivities of young women? This is the central question that this research seeks to address. For example, how is the discourse of 'girl power' (as consumer power) lived by young working class women who do not have the requisite amount of economic or cultural capital to display these signifiers of empowerment? How is McRobbie's (2009) 'postfeminist masquerade' lived by working class women, who are not performing femininity in symbolically masculine terrains, given that they are 'judged' on the same terms? In particular, a clear gap in feminist literature leads

me to ask how 'making up' and 'dressing up' in an 'authentic' way is subjectively experienced by young working class women. Furthermore, given the popular and scholarly focus on body size and shape, how is bodily discipline being configured within celebrity gossip magazines, and how are these practices taken up or resisted by young working class women in the social construction of their own bodies? The following chapter will seek to explore *how* these questions can be explored, and address the way in which discourses of celebrity, femininity and class are lived and affectively experienced through a multi-layered, multi-sited methodology.

Chapter Three

The 'Real' Audience: Text, Discourse and Everyday Life

Introduction

This chapter will outline the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research, and describe and evaluate the various methods of data collection and analysis employed to answer the three key questions of this research:

- How are the discourses within celebrity magazines, particularly those that are used to culturally construct the female body, interpreted and negotiated by young working class women?
- In what different ways do young working class women position themselves in relation to these discourses within celebrity magazines?
- How do these discourses inform young working class women's accounts of subjectivity and presentation of self in everyday life?

As such, I will situate this research within the wider context of audience research, and the specific fields of feminist media studies and sociological feminist understandings of women's lives. Many of the analyses of the contemporary media discussed in the previous chapter (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009; Negra, 2009) rely upon a critical reading of the media, and do not explore the interpretation of the media by young female audiences. Whilst the value of this work is not in dispute, this study attempts to develop and contribute to this work by exploring the way in which the young women in this study negotiate those discourses used to construct celebrity in their

everyday lives and subjectivities. Like Walkerdine, this study is also concerned with ‘the production of subjectivity in everyday practices and how to understand the place of the popular within this’ (1997:57). In keeping with the feminist framework of this research, I will also explore my own position and subjectivity and its place in the research process and analysis throughout the chapter.

Introducing the Girls

I would like to introduce the young women that are the sample for this study, and explain the reasons behind their selection. However, firstly, a note about the terminology that will be used throughout this thesis: I will refer to the participants of this study both as ‘young women’ and as ‘girls’. Whilst I am aware of the sassy and empowered (and some might say anti-feminist) overtones the word ‘girl’ has gained in contemporary popular culture, it is also a term that does not just apply to ‘girlhood’ but also extends into the twenties (Harris, 2004a), and even thirties. The participants referred to themselves both as ‘girls’ and ‘young women’ interchangeably throughout the fieldwork, more often as ‘girls’ than young women. They also used the discourse of ‘girlhood’ to frame other young women, referring to their friendship groups as ‘the girls’ for example. Therefore, the terminology used within this thesis reflects the young women’s own use of these terms interchangeably.

Young, Female, Working Class and White

Young women have been chosen as the focus of this study precisely because of the issues highlighted in the previous chapters: not only are young women the primary

audience for celebrity gossip texts (National Readership Survey, 2007), but they are also the objects of both 'celebration' and 'concern' (Harris, 2004a; Gill, 2007) within the popular media and the academia. Furthermore, as this thesis will demonstrate, the focus of celebrity magazines is overwhelmingly on the female body and its discipline, regulation and adornment. As such, it is young women that are the focus of this study, despite anecdotal evidence that young men are increasingly involved in this traditionally 'feminine' domain of culture¹.

It is the classed background of these young women that is central to this research. To my knowledge, the only other study of the 'audience' of celebrity gossip magazines explored the 'responses' of middle class young women (Feasey, 2006), without situating them and their responses to celebrity culture within the context of their classed everyday lives and subjectivities. This thesis will demonstrate the highly classed nature of celebrity culture, within which stereotypical representations of working class femininity are subjected to a moralising discourse that imposes shame and humiliation upon them. As a group of women 'othered' by celebrity discourse, it is important to explore the place of these discourses in the construction of subjectivity and everyday life. Furthermore, the lure of 'fame' is also highly classed: as Walkerdine pointed out back in 1997, fame represents one of the few promises and hopes open to working class girls to escape working class drudgery, which I argue is currently exacerbated further through the rhetoric of 'ordinariness' within ubiquitous celebrity culture.

¹ The Ashpool Girls had a male friend who they claimed was more interested in celebrity culture than they were, who also acted as their style and beauty 'guru' and whose opinion on all matters corporeal the girls valued, and they were disappointed he could not be involved in the study, as was he. However, given the already wide focus of this study, to introduce masculinity and its construction within celebrity culture is to enter into yet another field of study that explores precisely that (Cashmore, 2002).

Therefore, I chose my sample from three South Wales Valleys communities: ‘valleys girls’ come with a negative social label not dissimilar to the ‘chav’ (Tyler, 2008), and their parental occupation, educational qualifications and aspirations, occupations, income, and for the younger girls in the study, ability to access EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance) all indicate the young women’s working class backgrounds. Furthermore, a report for the Welsh Assembly Government (David *et al.*, 2006) indicates that the South Wales Valleys are an area of considerably higher social deprivation, in comparison with the rest of Wales and England, in terms of educational attainment levels, unemployment, income, and participation in professional occupations. It is important to note that none of the families of the young women in this study were accessing social welfare: as such, these young women represent a specific ‘fraction’ (Bourdieu, 2007) of the working class, who aimed to achieve social mobility to some extent, and whose ‘habitus’ was predicated on the same moral values of ‘respectability’ that Skeggs (1997) describes. However, these young women are frequently labelled by others (particularly in the cities) as ‘chavs’, a cultural reference which this thesis will demonstrate bears relevance not only to their negotiation of celebrity culture, but also the positions they take up in relation to the discourse in terms of their own subjectivity.

It should also be acknowledged that the sample of young women is entirely of white British ethnic origin, and that the South Wales Valleys in which they live are predominantly white communities. As Duke (2008) and McRobbie (2009) both note, there is a lack of representations of black and Asian femininity in magazines and popular culture more widely, and Duke’s (2008) work specifically seeks to explore how black girls mediate ideals of femininity that do not apply to them. However, this

study will focus on the way in which the ‘white trash chav’ label evident within celebrity gossip magazines is negotiated by young, white working class women living in an area that is predominantly white and working class.

Locating the Sample

This study took twenty young women aged between 16 and 30 as its focus on the basis that this demographic are the primary consumers of celebrity magazines (as discussed in Chapter One). In this sense, the selection of these girls could be considered as ‘purposive sampling’, since I have selected these young women on the basis of what is known about the readers of celebrity magazines, and about the classed discourses within the media from academic literature. As such, access to young women across this age range would require locating young women at different stages in their life, and therefore within different ‘institutional’ settings and contexts. It is a deliberate element of the research design to select young women at different stages of their life trajectories: it could be said that the Molefield Mums and the Tinsworth girls may represent the lives and trajectories of the Ashpool and Molefield girls in several years time.

In order to recruit 16-18 year olds, I visited two schools, which identified young women with few educational qualifications as potential participants. The girls selected were a ‘natural’ friendship group in order to meet the requirements of the research design, which is outlined further below. Two groups of this age were recruited from different areas, the Ashpool Girls (n=8) and the Molefield Girls (n=3), in this way. In order to gain access to ‘older’ groups of young women, I contacted

various workplaces including call centres, offices, and retail outlets, which allowed me to place a flier in their staffrooms. Rachel, who worked in an office near to Tinsworth, replied to the flier and was willing to participate with three of her childhood friends. Thus, the way in which this group was recruited was different to the other groups since Rachel was self-selecting and interested in the research, whereas the other groups were identified by a member of staff in the schools that were contacted. However, Rachel and her friends (n=4) did fit the research criteria in terms of age and class background, and so were able to be included in the study.

Finally, the young mothers group (n=5) was identified via a website, and the group organiser, Jane, was happy for me to come along to the group. A young mothers group was included precisely to access young working class women not in education or employment, in order to include a wider sample of working class young women.

‘Young’ motherhood is considered a typically working class affair (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001) and is currently a vilified phenomenon in popular culture (Tyler, 2008).

Furthermore, the representation of the mother as an object of desirability in popular culture only celebrates the white affluent stay at home mother (Negra, 2009), and as such these young women are not represented in the figure of the celebrity ‘yummy mummy’ prevalent within celebrity magazines. As such, this group of young women are a potentially ‘doubly alienated’ group from the discourses of celebrity culture, and are therefore an important group of young women to include in this study.

The table on the following page gives information about the young women in the sample, including data on their age, class, occupation, and some more qualitative data about their interests and favourite celebrity in order to introduce the different

personalities of the girls in this study. As a small-scale, qualitative study, this sample is not intended to reflect the range of circumstances of young working class women at various stages of the life course between the ages of 16 and 30. It does, however, provide in depth 'snapshots' of young working class women in particular positions, and demonstrates the nuances of a social group too often problematically labelled as a homogenous 'working class'. These nuances are brought to bear in the analysis of the data, which took account of the way in which their lived subjectivities were a part of their negotiation of celebrity culture, and the differences that arose between the data of the groups.

Name	Group	Age	Educational qualifications	Occupation	Interests	Favourite Celebrity
Lilly	Molefield	18	NVQ Health and social care	Student/ P/T in café	Clubbing/drinking	Lilly Allen
Amy	Molefield	18	NVQ Health and social care	Student/ P/T in cinema	Hip Hop Music	Amy Winehouse
Katie	Molefield	18	NVQ Health and social care	Student	Shopping	Katie Price/Jordan
Tasha	Ashpool	16	GCSE Resits/NVQ Home Ec	Student/ P/T in retail	TV/ Films (esp. X Factor)	Cheryl Cole
Mel	Ashpool	17	GCSE Resits	Student	Hanging out with friends	Katie Price/Jordan
Anne	Ashpool	16	GCSE Resits	Student	Cars and Football	Doesn't have one
Julia	Ashpool	16	GCSE Resits	Student	Bebo	Cheryl Cole
Vanessa	Ashpool	17	GCSE Resits	Student	Fashion/Making Jewellery	Vanessa Hudgens
Rhian	Ashpool	17	GCSE Resits/AS level Home Ec	Student/ P/T in retail	RnB music	Leona Lewis
Diana	Ashpool	16	GCSE Resits/AS level English	Student/ P/T in retail	Fashion	Katie Price/Jordan
Kat	Ashpool	17	GCSE Resits/AS level Home Ec	Student/ P/T in working men's club	Cars and Makeup	Charlotte Church
Jane	Molefield Mums	25	GCSE	Mother	Interior design/Dr Who	Cheryl Cole
Kathy	Molefield Mums	28	GCSE/2 A levels	P/T healthcare asst.	Fashion	Jennifer Aniston
Holly	Molefield Mums	24	GCSE	Mother	TV and Shopping	Britney Spears
Sophie	Molefield Mums	20	No qualifications	Mother	TV	Katie Price/Jordan
Nicole	Molefield Mums	23	GCSE	P/T retail asst.	TV	Katie Price/Jordan
Rachel	Tinsworth	23	GCSE/3 AS levels	F/T Admin asst	Handbags/Shoes	Audrina Partridge
Sam	Tinsworth	22	GCSE	F/T retail asst.	Makeup/Beauty	Cheryl Cole
Sian	Tinsworth	22	GCSE	F/T Admin asst.	TV/Films and Fashion	Audrina Partridge
Ceri	Tinsworth	23	GCSE/3 AS levels	F/T Admin asst.	TV and Shopping	Cheryl Cole

The Research Design

This section outlines the theoretical foundations of the research and the overall research design, before moving on to critically examine each of the methods used to explore the topic of young working class female subjectivity and the discourses of celebrity culture.

Feminist Research and Epistemology

As highlighted in Chapter One, this research is informed and driven by feminist principles, and as such the methodology is situated within a feminist framework. Whilst there is insufficient space to adequately trace the development of feminist theory here, feminists have long argued that traditional (and male-centred) epistemologies cannot capture the complexities of female experience (Harding, 1987). As such, 'feminist standpoint theory' centres on the claim that all knowledge springs from experience (Skeggs, 1997), and as such legitimises women as the primary 'knowers' of this experience. However, Skeggs (1997) argues that this perspective is problematic since it confuses 'being' with 'knowing'. In fact, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which my 'being' a young woman may indeed be brought to bear on what is presented as 'known' about the young women's lives and subjectivities in this study.

Indeed, Maynard (1994) claims that feminist research must go beyond foregrounding women's experience, using feminist theory to build explanatory frameworks. As such, a feminist methodology must entail critical reflection on women's accounts of

their experience: as Skeggs' position demonstrates, it is possible to hold on to the concept of 'experience', but as a way of 'understanding how women occupy the category 'woman', a category which is classed and raced, and which is produced through power relations and through struggle across different sites in space and time' (1997:27). Skeggs (1997) notes that this is not the foundation of 'knowledge' about the category of 'woman', but is central to the construction of subjectivity and theory and the way in which we come to know and be known. This enables us to make the shift 'from experience as a foundation for knowledge to experience as productive of a knowing subject in which their identities are continually in production rather than being occupied as fixed' (Skeggs, 1997:28).

In keeping with this view of experience and the way in which it provides access to subjectivity, this study is situated within a broadly social constructionist framework indebted to the work of Foucault (Burr, 2003). This framework facilitates a consideration of the accounts and actions of the young women, and their subjectivities, in relation to a range of contradictory discourses within contemporary celebrity culture (and beyond). It also allows for an exploration of the ways in which they position themselves in relation to these discourses in terms of how they take up and resist those subject positions on offer within celebrity magazines. This positions young women as active negotiators of their own identity (Burr, 2003), and enables me to consider the young women's accounts of experience and subjectivity as 'partial truths', since 'truths' within this framework are problematic, unstable and multiple (Burr, 2003).

As well as assuming a feminist framework, this thesis also accords with the broad aims of feminist research: namely, to improve the position of women within society and improve women's lives (Klein, 1983). This study is also committed to highlighting the *differences* between women, and the differential power particular subject positions are accorded both within the media and everyday life. As Skeggs (1997) also notes, research with young working class women is important since it has the potential to end the continual representation of working class women as a threat to social order. If this research impacts on the representation and understanding of young working class women in anyway then, following Skeggs (1997), I will also consider it a partial achievement.

Locating the field: Active Audiences and Ethnographic Research

This study employs a multi-layered methodology so as to explore not only the young women's understandings of the texts of celebrity culture, but also the ways in which these discourses operate in their everyday lives and subjectivities. As Skeggs, Wood and Thumim (2008) highlight, a multi-layered methodology allows research participants access to different modes of articulation, and as such enables different kinds of knowledge to be displayed. In this research, a multi-layered methodology allows partial access to both the 'performed' self and the 'narrated' self in relation to the discourses of celebrity culture. It allows me to identify those discourses salient to their performance of self, and to explore the way in which these are narrated in accounts of their subjective experiences.

This section will trace the rationale behind the development of a multi-sited ethnography for exploring the link between celebrity culture and the subjective experiences of young working class women through a critique of the field of audience studies. Whilst young women are constructed as empowered, postfeminist subjects who are confident, successful and 'equal', simultaneously a moral panic rages concerning the damaging psychical and physical 'effects' of the media on young women. Celebrity culture has very much become a part of this 'effects' debate, popularly accused of providing unattainable images of femininity that are responsible for epidemic levels eating disorders and insecurities amongst young women (Wykes and Gunter, 2005; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). However, whilst the focus of this study is the young women themselves and their negotiation of celebrity culture, it is not intended to be a piece of research about the 'effect' of the celebrity media on young women due to the endemic problems with this model (discussed below). Instead, this study explores the way in which the discourses of celebrity culture are at play in these young women's everyday lives and construction of subjectivity, and as such employs a multi-layered approach to data collection that combines qualitative textual analysis and multi-sited ethnographic approaches.

As a discipline, media audience research began with the simplistic objective to 'measure' the effects of the media on people's attitudes and behaviours, also known as the 'hypodermic' model. However, in the 1980s the discipline of cultural studies significantly developed audience research. Most famously, Hall's (1980) 'encoding/decoding' model laid the foundations for considering audiences as 'active' through his concepts of the 'negotiated' and 'oppositional' readings, as well as investigating the power of the text to 'prefer' certain legitimate audience readings.

Hall's model was taken up in a number of audience studies throughout the 1980s, most famously Morley's (1980) study of news programme *Nationwide*. However, critics of the 'encoding/decoding' model rightly questioned the operation of power within it: for example, who decides on the 'preferred reading' of the text in question, and how much power is attributed to encoding and how much to decoding.

Furthermore, and most importantly for this study, this model does not allow for the exploration of identity and subjectivity in relation to media consumption.

Still, Hall's model has a legacy that saw a shift away from the hypodermic model of 'effects' towards the positioning of audiences as 'active'. This gave rise to a number of feminist-orientated studies in the 1990s which sought to explore audiences' negotiation of specific cultural texts, including soap operas, romantic fiction, films, and women's magazines, and position those audiences as active producers of a text's meaning (Lull, 1990; Radway, 1994; Stacey, 1994; Hermes, 1995; Ang, 1996).

Indeed, instead of exploring audiences' negotiation of texts through 'one-off' encounters with participants, some studies began to take a longitudinal and 'ethnographic' approach to media consumption, and situated the research process within everyday settings (Lull, 1990; Walkerdine, 1997). Alasuutari (1999) describes this as the 'third generation' of audience ethnography, which precisely attempts to rethink the place of the media in everyday life and explore the discursive space they occupy in lived realities in a more sociologically-informed way. However, as Nightingale (1993) highlights, much of the audience research included under the term 'ethnographic' could not be considered ethnographic in conventional understandings of the method: she argues that this became a shorthand descriptor for empirical 'active

audience' research as a discipline, and referred to the research techniques rather than the research strategy (Nightingale, 1993).

Whilst this study could be classed as a piece of 'audience' research, it recognises that much of the previous research on media audiences decontextualise media texts and their negotiation of them from people's social contexts and subjectivities. For instance, Ang (1996), Stacey (1994) and Hermes (1995) explored the 'audience' through letters, and many audience focus groups are unknown individuals brought together for the purposes of the research, as in Feasey's (2006; 2008) study of celebrity magazine audiences. For this reason, I find this conceptualisation of the 'audience' in audience research problematic precisely because it decontextualises media consumption from its everyday setting, and groups together audience segments with no consideration of individual subjectivity. As this thesis will demonstrate, the consumption of celebrity gossip magazines is a social as well as an individual practice, and the consumption of magazines within everyday social contexts is largely ignored in previous research. This is the primary reason for selecting friendship groups as the sample for this research: the research setting and relationships between participants would be more 'naturalistic' than in traditional audience research, and would allow for a more ethnographic exploration of the place of the celebrity text and its discourses in the social worlds of these young women.

Towards a Feminist Media Ethnography

This critique of the field of audience studies led me to design this research project to include methods that allow partial access to 'everyday life' and subjective experience.

Whilst this study is not a 'full-blown' ethnography, it adopts an ethnographic approach to studying the place of media texts in everyday life, and as such uses some ethnographic 'tools' (Green and Bloome, 1998) in order to do so. The fieldwork took place over the course of one year, in which I repeatedly met with the girls both to read magazines and engage in other activities ordinarily engaged in by that particular friendship group. The research design has employed a mixed qualitative method approach in order to shine a light on different elements of the way in which celebrity discourses are incorporated into everyday life and young, working class female subjectivities. This allows me to integrate the data collected via these different methods to produce a more complex and nuanced discussion of the place of celebrity discourses in their lives. Since this research has celebrity magazines as its focus, the research design also incorporates textual analysis in order to identify the discursive framework of celebrity magazines. To explore the young women's negotiation of these discourses, reading groups, participant observation and narrative interviews were used in an attempt to recognise their role in the construction of young, female, working class subjectivity. Below is an overview of the phases of the research design that were carried out with each and every one of the groups of young women in this study, and the following sections will outline and critically discuss the use of each of these methods.

Timescale	Research Activity	Data Generated
Month 1	One meeting for recruitment and one observation session in natural setting	Fieldnotes (12 pages) and transcripts of 5 audio recordings in the field (25 pages)
Month 2	First Reading Group	5 Audio transcripts primarily (169 pages), also fieldnotes (10 pages)
Months 3/4	Participant Observation in natural settings (two or three times with some groups)	Fieldnotes primarily (30 pages), but some transcripts of audio recordings (20 pages)
Month 5	Second Reading Group	5 Audio transcripts primarily (161 pages), also fieldnotes (8 pages)
Months 6/7	Individual Narrative Interviews	20 Audio transcripts primarily (345 pages), also fieldnotes (20 pages)
Months 8/9	Participant Observation- activity of young women's choice e.g. shopping, 'girly night in', cinema etc.	Fieldnotes primarily (37 pages), but some transcripts of audio recordings (28 pages)
Month 10	Final Reading Group	5 Audio transcripts primarily (176 pages), also fieldnotes (8 pages)
Months 11/12	Participant Observation- various natural settings (three times- final one a disclosure session)	Fieldnotes primarily (44 pages), but some transcripts of audio recordings (17 pages)

Reading Groups: The Celebrity ‘Text in Action’

As previously highlighted, focus groups are a typical method used to explore audiences interactions with a media text, which often takes the form of the decontextualised response of the audience after viewing or reading. As such, I decided to situate celebrity magazine consumption within everyday life through an ethnographic framework: this involved a modification to the typical ‘focus group’ method that involved allowing the young women to consume the magazines in settings and ways that were more naturalistic to the way in which they consumed them in everyday life. Some other explorations of the way in which girls read magazines, such as Duke (2008), have made use of the technique known as ‘autodriving’ (McCracken, 1988), and used the magazine as a stimulus device during the interview in order to gain a more vivid interpretation of the text and strengthen descriptions of their reading experiences. This was used as a basis for the format of the reading group session, which sought to gain partial access to the actual reading experience rather than accounts of it after the event.

Several other studies are currently seeking to situate media consumption within everyday social settings, such as Skeggs, Wood and Thumim’s (2008) study of reality TV. They employ the ‘text in action’ approach (Wood, 2007), which is designed to capture the dynamic interaction between the viewer and the TV programme as an ‘event’ in real time in contrast to traditional audience research in which audiences’ responses to media are gathered after viewing/reading (Skeggs, Wood and Thumim, 2008). Whilst the ‘text-in-action’ method (Wood, 2007) is designed for use with

television, it is not dissimilar to the way in which this study explores the young women's interpretation of celebrity magazines, to which I now turn.

The Staffroom and the Consumption of Celebrity Magazines

The inspiration for this method came from my own experience of working in fashion retail. In the middle of the table in the staffroom were a pile of celebrity magazines which were the focus of most people's breaks, and were central to staffroom interaction. As individuals casually flicked through the magazines, conversation was dominated by celebrity gossip, bodies, beauty and fashion; the focus of these magazines. However, staff also related these aspects of celebrity culture back onto themselves and their own social lives through a moralising discourse of 'I would never do that', 'I would never wear that', or 'I would never want to look like that'. Thus, I began to think about the possibility of incorporating this into my research design instead of the focus group method used in much traditional audience research.

Initial meetings with the different groups of young women revealed that asking young women about celebrity culture did not elicit fruitful responses: when asked why they liked and read celebrity magazines, or who they liked and why, they were mostly dismissive and unresponsive to these questions, which may well have formed the schedule for a focus group interview. This may be an example of the way in which methods of social research must be sensitive to issues of class: Skeggs, Wood and Thumim (2008) found that their working class participants offered shorter responses to questions about reality TV that need no further elaboration. Furthermore, in comparison to their middle class participants, Skeggs, Wood and Thumim (2008)

found that the responses by working class women were less reflexive and revolved around the immediate pleasure that form of media provided. My girls' responses were similar:

Kelly: So why do you think it is that you like to know what celebrities are up to?

Mel: Dunno really, just something to do innit?

-Ashpool Girls (Having lunch in sixth form common room)

Kelly: OK, so what's interesting about seeing celebrities doing silly things?

Lilly: Just funny really, innit?

Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Research on audiences of celebrity magazines with middle class women (Feasey, 2006; 2008) used the focus group method to good effect, and the young women in that study provided lengthy, reflexive and elaborate responses to their interaction with celebrity culture. However, in this study, the young women's responses to my 'discussion' questions in the extracts above did not elicit discussion at all: their responses required no further elaboration and the other young women merely nodded in agreement. A consideration of the ways in which class may be at work here is therefore needed: perhaps these young women felt particularly 'interrogated' by a researcher whom, at this stage in the process, they did not know well, and were unsure of the 'right' thing to say about a topic which is not normally discussed in this way. It is also possible they simply weren't interested in answering my questions, and were not afraid to show it. It is also possible that, as young working class women, they were unable to articulate their experience of celebrity culture in a verbal response to particular questions that may bear no relevance to their understanding or experience

of the texts. Whilst this may be taken to imply celebrity culture is ‘more significant’ to middle class girls, this research indicates that this is not the case. As such, I would agree with Skeggs, Wood and Thumim (2008) that this is another example of the way in which particular forms of capital can be activated by the research encounter. As young women with little educational capital, the focus group setting may resemble particular educational settings, with a teacher-like figure asking questions of them. As such, I decided to take a more participant-led approach to exploring the young women’s negotiation of celebrity culture.

In previous research on magazines, the act of reading has been conceptualised as a solitary activity (Hermes, 1995; Ferguson, 1983); research has tended to explore individual reading practices (e.g. Duke, 2008) or conducted focus groups after reading has taken place (Jackson and Westrupp, 2010). However, my experience of the staffroom and initial encounters with the young women in this study led me to believe there is also a ‘social’ element to magazine reading. Many of the young women carried magazines around with them, which then became the focus of social interaction and talk in break times at school and work, at one another’s houses, the pub, and in the mother’s group meeting. As a result of these observations, I was able to attempt to ‘recreate’ these naturally-occurring instances of interaction between the young women. As Skeggs, Wood and Thumim (2008) note about the use of the ‘text in action’ approach in exploring television viewing, my presence and the ‘deliberate’ nature of the meeting means that I cannot claim this gives a ‘truer’ picture of their negotiation of celebrity magazines as, like all research settings, it was always to some degree a ‘constructed event’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However, I was careful to arrange reading groups in settings I had seen the young women read

magazines together, such as a café, the sixth form common room, each other's houses, pubs, and the room in which the young mothers held their weekly group.

Spontaneous Consumption and the 'Redundant' Researcher

I had thought that the first few sessions with the young women would be quite experimental, working out how best to manage these sessions and explain to the young women what I wanted them to do. Interestingly, I didn't have to: the instant I placed a pile of magazines in the middle of the table, each of the girls picked one up and began reading and talking, without looking to me for any direction. This 'spontaneous' and undirected consumption dominated these sessions, and allowed me to occasionally ask 'why' they thought something, or what they would do in that situation, without the use of an 'aide memoire'. In this setting, the young women were able to set the agenda, and were therefore able to articulate, in a non-direct way, their attachments and identifications with celebrity culture in a way they were unable to in a more formalised 'interview' setting. The group setting also enabled me to explore how class and other categories, such as sexuality and respectability (Skeggs, 1997), were being 'performed' by the young women, both to each other and to me, in the social and group consumption of celebrity texts.

My role as 'facilitator' of group discussion was made redundant by the presence of the pile of magazines and the absence of an interview schedule; as such, in the first couple of reading group sessions I was unsure as to how to conduct myself, and was left feeling a little like a 'spare part'. Rather than detachedly (and somewhat awkwardly!) observing the young women reading magazines, I joined in the process

and read the magazines, which enabled me to ask questions of the girls and for them to ask questions of me, which I also consider to be important data. In fact, my participants gave me little choice other than to join in their discussion: *do you fancy David Beckham?; would you wear that?; that hairstyle would really suit you; would you ever have cosmetic surgery?* These were questions I could have been asking them in a more traditional focus group approach, but that they were in fact asking of me. More importantly, this meant that the girls themselves were responsible for the flow of talk and construction of meaning, rather than being on the receiving end of questions that may not have had any relevance to their own meaning frames.

As in a traditional focus group which uses 'naturally-occurring' groups, there were some issues regarding group dynamics (Bloor *et al.*, 2002) that should be recognised as coming to bear on the data collected using this method. The Ashpool girls are a significant example of this in two respects. Firstly, the group was introduced to me as a naturally occurring friendship group by the teacher through which I gained access to them. However, on first meeting them it was apparent there was a clear 'split' in the group, with three of the girls on one table and five girls on another. In the initial meetings, I discovered this split was a significant feature of this group, and as such decided to divide the group into two to conduct the fieldwork. This not only avoided issues of group disclosure and the ethical issues that may have arisen from this, but also mimicked the natural friendship cultures of this group.

Furthermore, some members of the group were particularly dominant and some less forthcoming: as Bloor *et al.* (2002) note, it is common to have shy or reticent participants in group settings. In the Ashpool girls, Anne hardly spoke in the first

reading group session, despite the other girls' encouragement to do so and my attempts to involve her in the conversations. Her silence extended into the other time I spent with the girls in school, shopping and going for lunch, and even time I spent with her and Julia in Julia's house before a reading group. The other girls all reassured me that this was typical of Anne's behaviour; however, I can't rule out the possibility that Anne's silence and non-participation was as a result of my presence and our 'distance' from one another in terms of 'identity'. I reflect on this issue further in my consideration of the data in Chapters Four to Seven.

Originally, this method was designed to explore the young women's interpretations of celebrity magazines and their particular discursive frameworks, rather than the young women's everyday lives and subjectivities, for which the other ethnographic methods had been incorporated into the research design. However, due to the fact that these were pre-existing friendship groups, it was of note that discussions of celebrity stories frequently led into stories of individual and group experience. Thus, the reading group method also allowed for some, albeit limited, insights into their everyday lives and subjectivities on which the other methods in the design could build.

The Narrative Interview: Eliciting Personal Accounts

In order to gain an insight into the subjectivities of the young women in this study, qualitative narrative interviews were used in order to explore the young women's lives and construction of self. As Byrne (2003) highlights, narratives have long been of interest as a method of accessing an individual's subjectivity, experience and reflections on the past. Furthermore, she highlights that feminist researchers in

particular favour this method as a means of accessing women's voices (Smith, 1993 in Bryne, 2003). Since the remit of this study is broader than the young women's interaction with the text, and extends into the application of these discourses in everyday life and subjectivity, this method allows me to explore *how* the young women account for themselves and their lives, and the discourses they invoke to do so.

Given the interpretative turn in the social sciences (Riessman, 1993), the story has become the principle way of accessing 'experience'. As Riessman (2008) later elaborates, narrative interviews also have more in common with ethnographic practice than with mainstream interviewing techniques. The interpretative turn (Riessman, 1993) has thus spawned a plethora of methodological tools for eliciting data across a number of research settings. Indeed, stories were collected in the data elicited across the other ethnographic sites of this study, since stories are a form of discourse that is known and used in everyday interaction (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Whilst some researchers make a distinction between stories and narratives (Bryne, 2003), I will follow Coffey and Atkinson (1996) in using the terms 'narratives' and 'stories' interchangeably, and approach narratives in social research as first-person accounts of experience.

The Narrative Method: Questions and Technique

This thesis acknowledges the complexity of the field of narrative research and the plethora of approaches to eliciting narratives in qualitative research. This study uses specific elements from some of these to form the basis for the method undertaken,

particularly the approaches of Hollway and Jefferson (2007) and Wengraf (2001). Hollway and Jefferson's approach to interviewing is based on psychosocial principles, and whilst this study does not fully adopt a psychosocial approach to fieldwork and analysis, there are elements of their approach that are generally useful for eliciting narratives in interviews settings, and psychosocial concepts I will draw upon in order to interpret my data. Their approach is premised on the idea that participants must be allowed to express their experiences through their own meaning frames, which can allow partial access to many of the assumptions, feelings and unspoken knowledge that are difficult to access via more direct questioning techniques (Hollway and Jefferson, 2007). These principles of narrative interviewing require the researcher to follow participants down *their* trails (Riessman, 2008), and as such represents a significant change from qualitative, semi-structured interviews in which the researcher has a number of 'topics' to cover in order to guide the interview (Spradley, 1979).

Surrendering control for the direction of the interview was difficult to do. As a fledgling researcher, I was eager to ensure I collected the 'right' data to answer my research questions. As I sat and listened to stories about dead pets, broken bones and riding in the back of boys' cars, I agonised over how I would integrate this rich data with the data on celebrity culture, even though I had selected this method precisely to elicit accounts of everyday life and subjectivity. Therefore, as the section on 'analysis' in this chapter will highlight, *how* they constructed their narratives, and the discourses they employed in order to do so, was just as significant as the actual content of their story.



The difference between a 'standard' qualitative interview and a narrative interview was also difficult for many of the participants. As Hollway and Jefferson (2007) note, the ideal narrative interview requires the interviewer to, having asked the question, be silent and *listen* to the participant. My silence, and their anticipation of it, was uncomfortable for some of the girls: some gave uncomfortable laughs, some uncomfortably drank or ate, and a couple deliberately asked me questions so as to avoid continuing their narrative. Both Hollway and Jefferson (2007) and Wengraf (2001) base their different approaches to narrative interviewing on the principle of *Gestalt*, which is more fully incorporated into Wengraf's (2001) highly prescriptive method of narrative interviewing. This was first developed by German sociologists (Rosenthal and Bar-On, 1992 in Hollway and Jefferson, 2007), and is the notion that there is a particular 'order' to each person's life that the narrative interviewer should elicit. This is similar to Hollway and Jefferson's (2007) use of the psychoanalytic concept of 'free association', in which the narrative is driven by 'unconscious' logic which supposedly reveals to the researcher more 'emotional motivations rather than rational intentions' (2007:37). Whilst I do not adopt a full 'psychosocial' approach to analysis, there are some elements and concepts of this approach that can be usefully applied to my data. For instance, the way in which they construct their narratives and 'unconsciously' connect particular stories or people to one another could perhaps reveal contradictions or connections that could form the basis for understanding the way in which the discourses of celebrity culture are lived and subjectively experienced.

My One and Only Question

In keeping with this approach, I asked an initial SQUIN (Single QUestion aimed at Inducing Narrative) (Wengraf, 2001) in order to provide participants with a starting point from which they can begin to construct their account. As Wengraf (2001) notes, SQUINs can be temporal or event centred, and I carefully constructed my SQUIN in order to elicit accounts of *experience* rather than general statements. I gave the same question to each participant, as outlined below:

'So this isn't like an interview where I ask you loads of questions and you give me a short answer and then wait for the next question. It's more of an opportunity for me to find out a bit more about you and your life, so I'm going to ask you to tell me about yourself and your life, things you've done, things that have happened to you, things you can remember, so that I can get a sense of your life and your experiences. So I'm going to ask you one question to give you a starting point which might take you back to a certain point in your life, and you can say as much or as little about that as you like. After I ask my question, I won't ask anymore or interrupt you, and from then on you can take it wherever you want, and tell me about whatever you want, whatever comes into your mind. Some people find this easy, some people find it really difficult, so don't worry if you think you're running out of things to say or if there are any silences, they are just there so that you can think about the thing you want to talk about next, so they are not awkward in any way, I'm not hurrying you to say anything, just take your time and think about what comes next for you. As I've explained before, you don't have to tell me anything you don't want to, and anything you do tell me is anonymised in my research. When you're talking, I might be writing a few

words down, but I am listening to you, it's just at the end I might ask you to talk a bit more about some of the things you have mentioned. Is that all OK? Do you have any questions? OK, so my question is, can you remember the time when you first started experimenting with makeup and hair and beauty, and can you tell me about anything you remember happening around that time?

This initial question is related to celebrity culture in terms of its emphasis on 'making up' and the lived practices of femininity (see Chapter Six). However, this question is designed to elicit an account of their *experiences* of makeup use, potentially enabling me to explore the relationship between discourses of celebrity beauty and their own subjective experiences. It is also designed to take the young women back to a certain point in their lives from which they can continue to tell their narrative.

Whilst I asked the same question to each participant in order to create some degree of validity to the study, I quickly learned that for some young women 'making-up' was a more significant part of their lives than others. For example, self-identifying tomboy Anne had little experience of making up, and as such the question did not elicit the narrative I had hoped. Her response shut down the possibility of continuing the narrative, yet can be seen as just as illuminating as the other girls' responses that did focus on their experiences of making-up:

Kelly: Ok then, so, my question is, do you remember the time you started becoming aware of makeup and beauty and that kind of thing, and can you tell me about what you remember happening around that time?

Anne: I don't do makeup. No. I have got makeup like, I just don't wear it, no. I don't know why, just, I never fancied it [pause 20 seconds, and from her body language she is definitely not going to say anymore].

Kelly: OK, do you remember what happened when other girls started wearing makeup, like your friends?

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

As the above extract demonstrates, the question designed to elicit narrative did not do so in all cases: my second attempt at a narrative question was based on Hollway and Jefferson's (2007) advice to avoid 'why' questions, and was designed to elicit an account of experience and to begin her narrative from a discussion of beauty as in all the other girls' narratives. However, on reflection, given the wealth of personal data I had collected about the girls at this stage in the research, I should perhaps have begun their narrative accounts from a meaning frame more personal to them, and as such more relevant to their lives. Anne's narrative interview was very different to that of the other young women since she was particularly reluctant to take up full control for the direction of the interview, waiting for me to ask her questions despite the fact I had said I wouldn't. In keeping with my feminist stance, it is important to consider that, as well as the 'irrelevance' of the initial question, my own 'girly' appearance and consequent 'distance' from Anne's own 'tomboy' identity position may have played a role in Anne's reluctance to speak,. Furthermore, as Hollway and Jefferson (2007) note, some people may feel that their lives are not sufficiently interesting to justify a 'story', or may lack the cultural, social or linguistic capital to be able to 'tell' their story. As such, the questions I asked Anne in her interview were designed to elicit

narratives rather than direct responses, and were based on things she had said in the interview, or that I knew about her from previous encounters.

However, Wengraf (2001) warns that normally the interviewer should not break the silence lest the *Gestalt* be interrupted: 'your informants silence should not be interrupted, however helpful you think your interruption might be' (2001:136). One of the main problems with this technique was the visible discomfort this caused some of my participants: whilst I was able to 'learn' to become comfortable with the silence, and reassure my participants that it wasn't 'awkward' and I wasn't 'waiting' for them to tell me something, it was not something the girls were able to easily adjust to or understand. Although I held the narrative interviews in the setting of their choice so as to make them feel as comfortable as possible, its difference to our normal 'conversational' interaction left some of them uneasy, and eager to fill the silence with something 'relevant'. Since they were aware of the focus of the study, there were times in particular narrative interviews where the girls began 'randomly' talking about celebrities. Whilst this could be understood as an indication of the significance of celebrities in their everyday lives, I read most of these instances as either 'desperate' attempts to fill the silence triggered by their association of me with talking about celebrities, or a desire to give me something 'relevant' to my research, which many of them expressed at the beginning of the interview as a concern about what I had asked them to do.

The Difficulties of 'Telling the Self': Lost identities

Furthermore, 'telling the self' was easier for some of the girls than others. Obviously whilst individual character traits were at work here, there were some differences between the different groups of young women in their approaches towards the telling of the self. For example, many of the Ashpool girls (although uneasy in the beginning) were able to easily tell their stories, whereas the young mums all expressed particular discomfort and difficulty in 'telling the self'. As the empirical chapters of this thesis will show, the mums' narrative accounts were full of nostalgia and loss, and as such, perhaps invoked negative emotions in comparison to the other young women in the study. The 'self' was a highly charged subject for the mums in particular, most of whom felt they had 'lost' themselves since having a child: as mothers, they claimed that they were only used to people asking and talking about their *children* and not *themselves*.

Whilst the experience of the interview was uncomfortable for this group in particular, most of them also claimed it was a positive experience, and in some ways was "therapeutic". Indeed, when the mums discussed their narrative interviews together, they all said that they should discuss themselves and their lives more often. Due to the nature of the narrative interview, it could at times be considered to resemble therapeutic discourse, although Wengraf (2001) notes that 'therapy' is not the concern of the narrative interviewer. However, this is an ethical dimension of narrative interviewing that requires further attention in light of the fact that the guiding ethical principle of conducting research is not to cause harm or distress to research participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As such, the narrative interview

requires careful ethical consideration in terms of the distress it could potentially cause some participants, as well as the possible benefits it could bring.

At the end of the young women's narratives, which ranged from 20 to 95 minutes (excluding Anne's, which lasted 10 minutes), I loosely followed the procedure laid out by Wengraf (2001) for eliciting further narrative data in a second part to the interview. The narrative accounts given by the young women varied enormously: some did contain an over-arching 'life-story' narrative, whilst others were a collection of smaller 'snapshot' stories that made little sense as a coherent, chronological whole. Through listening attentively to their narratives, I had taken note of some of the 'general' statements they had used that could be put as a question designed to elicit further narrative. Both Wengraf (2001) and Hollway and Jefferson (2007) note that to construct these questions the interviewer should use the respondent's own words and phrases in order to retain the respondent's own meaning frames. One example of this was when Sian said in her narrative that she was 'always arguing with her sister', about which I asked in the second part of the interview, 'you said you're always arguing with your sister, can you remember any particular times you had an argument and what happened?'. Furthermore, Wengraf (2001) argues that it is important to ask these follow-up questions in the same order as they appeared in the original narrative in order to replicate their *Gestalt*.

Often this second part of the narrative interview went on longer than the initial narrative account: it was clear the familiarity and security of a format more closely resembling a conversation put many of the girls at their ease and facilitated their willingness to talk. Even when I had reached the end of my list of further narrative

topics, the young women continued to tell more stories prompted by their own 'free association' or *Gestalt*. Whilst I see the value of Wengraf's (2001) attempts to formalise the narrative interview method, I did find it 'overly' prescriptive, and instead used both his and Hollway and Jefferson's (2007) narrative methods as a basis for my own.

Let's Do Lunch: Participant Observation and Ethnography

This study has explored young working class women's negotiation of celebrity within an ethnographic framework in order to explore the way in which these discourses relate to their everyday lives and subjectivities. 'Ethnography' as a theory of the research process is concerned to see how structures are lived, reproduced and challenged on a daily basis (Willis, 1981 in Skeggs, 1994), which allows me to explore the different ways in which celebrity discourses are lived through observing the girls in different settings. As Skeggs (1994) notes, having access to different parts of the young women's lives through an intense and lengthy period of fieldwork helped her to define her research as 'ethnographic'. The array of social contexts in which I was able to interact with the young women in my study included coffee shops/cafes, cinemas, shops, their houses, pubs/bars, their sixth form common room and the school hut in which the mothers group was held. Thus, in addition to observing the young women reading magazines and listening to their accounts of their lives, observing (and also participating with) the young women in a variety of settings also allows me to explore way in which the discourses of celebrity culture are lived and experienced. The 'ethnographic' part of this study is constituted by the way in which these methods, through an ethnographic framework, are integrated to produce a more

holistic and nuanced picture of the way in which young women negotiate celebrity culture in their everyday lives.

Hanging Out and Fitting In: Settings and Contexts

Observing the young women in the settings they ‘naturally’ inhabited meant that I participated in different activities with different groups: for example, the Molefield mums did not go shopping together, whereas this was the principal social activity for the Ashpool girls. The mum’s group took it in turns to have ‘coffee mornings’ at one another’s houses; however, the Tinsworth girls did not go to one another’s houses very often and met in pubs and restaurants for lunch and drinks. My own identity in terms of both my age and class background meant that in most of these settings it was easy to become an ‘insider’: as a young woman who also enjoys shopping, going out for lunch and meeting for coffee, I was able to participate in these activities fully. I was around the same age as the Tinsworth girls and many of the mums, and not ‘too old’ so as the Ashpool girls and Molefield girls could not relate to me.

However, there were particular settings in which my own identity meant I was unable to participate in the groups’ activities fully. This was most notably the case in the young mums group, given that I was the only young woman in the group without a child, and also not used to inhabiting settings such as the mother and toddler group. As such, and in keeping with the tradition of feminist ethnography, I acknowledge the differential power relations at play between different women (Skeggs, 1994), and between researcher and researched, in research contexts. The mums repeatedly highlighted my status as a ‘non-mother’ in comparison with their statuses as mothers:

as such, my field notes mainly consisted of their humorous references to ‘what I had to look forward to’ and their comments about my ‘tidy’ appearance, which indicated to them there was no possibility that I had children. I also noted the feeling of inferiority and immaturity throughout my meetings with the mums in my fieldnotes, who frequently said things like ‘you won’t understand that until you have kids’, and ‘bless you, just you wait ‘til you have them, then you’ll know’.

Motherhood occupies a particular discursive space within popular culture: as Negra (2009:63) notes, motherhood is frequently equated with ‘full womanhood’, with ‘chick flicks’ and postfeminist drama staging motherhood as ‘empowering’ and ‘desirable’. My childless status was certainly brought to bear on the data collection in terms of what the young women disclosed to me, how they disclosed it, and also how I interpreted their disclosures. Indeed, it is possible that the sense of ‘loss’ of identity many of the mums describe is an unconscious expression of their own perceptions of me, who they may see as a representation of themselves before they had children.

It has become increasingly fashionable to locate the ‘researcher-self’ within the research process (Coffey, 1999): indeed many accounts pay particular attention to how the process of fieldwork can be seen to construct the self in emotional and physical ways (Coffey, 1999). This is something to which I return at the very end of this thesis in Chapter Eight. Here, I consider the position of the ‘researcher-self’ within the research process, and the way in which my own subjectivity was brought to bear on this. In the observational settings in particular, my presentation of self was key: it was when I was shopping with the girls or engaged in casual conversation over lunch that the young women began to be interested in *me*, a phenomenon common in

many accounts of feminist ethnographic research. As Skeggs (1994) notes in her reflexive account of ethnography, a feminist researcher is intrinsically interested in the *lives* of the women they are studying, and as such quite personal questions can be asked and personal accounts given. Above I have indicated the girls' desire to know my views on celebrity culture, but they were also interested in *my* life in terms of my hobbies, interest and personal relationships. Since they had been open enough to allow me to into many different, often personal, areas of their social life, I felt it only right, and in the interests of the research, to also disclose (some of) myself to the young women as they had done for me. Had I not, their responses to me and my presence could have been very different, and could have led to them perceiving me as 'stuck up' (see Chapter Four of this thesis), meaning they may have been more 'guarded' towards me. However, it is also important to clarify that I was not 'faking friendship' (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002), and gave the information freely and in keeping with my own moral values and ideas about social relationships, and not solely in the interests of eliciting disclosures from them.

Observing and participating with the young women in some of the settings in which they inhabited together in their everyday lives, enabled me to collect rich, contextualising data in which to situate their narrative accounts and their negotiation of celebrity discourses. This allows for a more nuanced analysis of the continuities, complexities and contradictions that might be evident across the different ethnographic research contexts. As Ringrose (2008a) notes, media representations do not map unproblematically onto subjective experience, and the multi-sited ethnography described above is designed so as to reveal the complexity with which young working class women are subjectively positioning themselves in relation to the

discourses of celebrity culture. It is to the identification and analysis of those discourses I now turn.

Reading the Text: Magazines and Discourse Analysis

The fieldwork process described above was underpinned by a close textual analysis of the magazines that are the focus of this study. The textual analysis of celebrity magazines informs the analysis of the empirical data presented in the following four chapters of this thesis: whilst I do not present an overarching and lengthy analysis of these texts in this thesis, it was a method used to inform the data collection and analysis, and as such is important to consider here. Whilst the research questions of this study go beyond the 'text', it was necessary to identify the discourses at play in celebrity magazine culture in order to explore how these discourses are subjectively lived and experienced by young working class women. This involved paying close analytic attention to a sample of fifteen magazine issues: these were selected prior to each of the fifteen reading groups conducted and were based on the young women's own preferences, as discussed in Chapter One. Throughout the period of fieldwork, I comprehensively analysed seven issues of *Heat* magazine, three issues of *Closer*, two issues of *Reveal*, two issues of *OK!*, and one issue of *Grazia*. However, also throughout the period I paid close analytic attention to the array of magazines in order to facilitate discussion with the young women and to keep myself 'up-to-date' on celebrity news and gossip.

The Field of Discourse Analysis

There is a plethora of approaches available for the analysis of media texts. Some of these are more 'quantitative', in the form of content analysis, which is used to verify and confirm manifest content (Altheide, 1996; Berger, 2000) in a replicable way using a coding frame to count the frequencies of particular categories (Gunter, 2000).

However, this study is specifically interested in the deeper, latent meanings of the texts, and as such quantitative approaches to textual analysis would not generate data that would identify the discourses operating within celebrity magazines. Thus, in keeping with the ethnographic framework of this research design, qualitative forms of textual analysis would enable a more nuanced picture of the way in which discourse operates in celebrity magazines. Discourse analysis in particular is a method that enables analysis to go beyond manifest content, and explore *how* this is used, for what purpose (Wood and Kroger, 2000), and how it links with wider societal and cultural processes (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002).

The term 'discourse' is in itself problematic: this thesis shall employ a broad definition of the term that is concerned with questions of 'representation'. Kress and Van Leeuwen claim that discourses are 'socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality' (2001:4). Similarly, Phillips and Jørgensen define discourse as 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or some aspect of the world)' (2000:1). This definition of discourse is more in line with Foucault's conceptualisation of the term rather than linguistic approaches to discourse (Hesmondhalgh, 2006), and refers to what is knowable, sayable and doable in particular contexts. In the present study, discourse analysis was applied not only to

the analysis of celebrity magazines, but also to the analysis of the spoken language of the young women, as I will discuss later in this chapter. However, as discourse analysis has become increasingly fashionable in the social sciences, it has also become a term with a multiplicity of uses in different disciplines (Wood and Kroger, 2000). According to Gill (2000:172) 'there is no single discourse analysis', and she claims that there are at least fifty-seven varieties of the method all laying claim to the term. As such, Taylor (2008) notes that discourse analysis is best understood as a field of research rather than a single practice.

Discourse analysis has roots in the post-structuralist linguistic tradition, and as such pays close attention to patterns of language use (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2001; Taylor, 2008). Whilst the language used within the magazines is indeed the focus of this study, it does not employ methods of discourse analysis that are more closely aligned with the field of linguistics, such as Wooffitt (2008) and Yates (2008). Since my analysis of celebrity magazines is primarily concerned with issues of cultural *representation*, my analysis was guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth referred to as CDA) as outlined by Fairclough (1993; 1995; 2003). In this tradition, the focus is not language *per se*, but the phenomena that are created discursively *with* language (Wood and Kroger, 2000). It is CDA's focus on the connection between social practices and discourse, and its useful application to the analysis of media texts (Fairclough, 1995), that justifies its suitability for use within this study. Furthermore, Fairclough (2003) notes that ideally textual analysis should not be carried out in isolation, and argues that textual analysis needs to be framed within ethnography in order to explore the meaning and significance of the text to audiences. As such this method of critical textual analysis is useful for identifying the

discourses of celebrity culture that can then be used to frame the ethnographic fieldwork with my sample of young working class women.

Given the focus of this study on discourses of gender and class, it is also of note that discourse is understood as an integral aspect of the operation of power and social control in society (Bloor and Bloor, 2007) within CDA, and as such seeks to identify discourses which operate in service or resistance to existing power structures. In the present study, CDA is therefore useful for exploring the power relations with respect to gender and class that are in operation in celebrity texts, which may serve to maintain existing power structures and support discrimination. For example, the construction of the 'normal' female body (see Chapter Five) can be seen in terms of the way in which it reproduces hetero-normative femininity (Butler, 1990), and places women's 'success' within the context of a 'sexy' body. Furthermore, representations that vilify working class femininity can also be seen to reinforce the power relations that exist between women with differential social, cultural and economic resources.

Doing Critical Discourse Analysis

In keeping with the 'critical' element of CDA, it was necessary to adopt an analytic stance that attempted to 'make strange' (Bloor and Bloor, 2007; Gill, 2000) the familiar language of celebrity gossip magazines. As an avid reader long before commencing the analysis, it was difficult to 'step back' and examine the texts with a critical eye, since much of the language and imagery within them was a 'taken-for-granted' component of my understanding of the magazines. Thus, it is important to note that CDA is by no means an 'objective' reading of a particular text, and as such

the identity of the researcher is relevant to the process in several ways. As Taylor (2008) notes, it influences the selection of the topic to be researched (as highlighted by my rationale for exploring this topic outlined in Chapter One), as well as the type of media text to be analysed. More significant is the way in which the analyst's interpretation of the texts may be a result of his/her subjectivity and class position: in my case, even though I attempted to adopt a 'detached' and 'critical' stance to celebrity gossip texts, my familiarity with them and own set of particular identifications with them means that my analysis and interpretation may not be the same as another researcher with a very different biography. However, as analysis progressed it was possible to see beyond these taken-for-granted discourses that had at first seemed 'naturalised' (Barthes, 2006), but that CDA revealed to be highly constructed. This enables me to be confident that my analysis of the magazines uncovered similar discourses and insights as others applying the same method of analysis to the texts would.

Whilst there is no 'step-by-step' guide to conducting CDA, there are particular aspects of texts to which an analyst should pay particular attention. Fairclough (1993; 1995; 2003) has most usefully outlined the practice of CDA through his 'three-dimensional model', which seeks to analyse discourse at three levels: firstly at the level of the text; secondly in terms of 'discourse practice'; and finally in terms of socio-cultural practice. The first level involves paying particular attention to the linguistic features of the text as a method of representation which enables the construction of particular social identities and styles, and the wider social and cultural (and moral) values that are attached to these (Fairclough, 1993; 1995; 2003). Magazines in particular are a key site within contemporary culture through which particular identities come to be

accorded legitimacy (Matheson, 2005). Paying attention to the linguistic features of the magazines is one way in which it is possible to explore these wider social, cultural and moral values and positions.

The CDA of celebrity gossip magazines undertaken also paid particular attention to the use of figurative language, rhetoric and metaphor (Bloor and Bloor, 2007).

Paying close attention to such aspects of language use enabled me to deconstruct the moral orientation of particular discourses of gender and class: for example the ‘lollypop’ metaphor frequently employed by *Heat* magazine in particular reveals the magazine’s strong ‘moral’ objection to celebrities who they deem ‘too skinny’.

Furthermore, celebrity magazines’ use of ‘chav’ rhetoric reveals particular class antagonisms that underpin the discursive construction of class and gender through moral frameworks.

In keeping with CDA’s focus on the wider social and cultural values attached to these discourses, my analysis also paid attention to the ‘intertextual’ and ‘interdiscursive’ nature (Fairclough, 1993; 1995; 2003) of celebrity gossip magazines. As Fairclough (2003) notes, every text has relations with other texts, and this is particularly the case for celebrity gossip magazines that frequently make reference to other cultural forms, such as films, television, newspapers, websites and, increasingly, social networking media such as Twitter. As such, my analysis of celebrity gossip magazines also paid particular attention to the way in which discourses of celebrity culture operated through the representation of other media texts within gossip magazines. This was also necessary since the young women’s negotiation of celebrity magazines never purely focused on the magazine itself, and frequently fed into discussions of ‘Reality

TV', popular music and film in response to the magazines' coverage of them. As Fairclough (2003) notes, incorporating parts of other texts always involves decisions about discursive framing. Therefore, the way in which other media texts within celebrity culture are discursively constructed was also a feature of this analysis, and facilitated the identification of broader discourses of celebrity culture beyond the magazines.

Analysing Visual Images

However, CDA's focus on language often ignores the 'multimodal' (Paltridge, 2008; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) nature of many media texts, including celebrity gossip magazines. In fact, from the initial observation sessions with the Ashpool girls in their sixth form common room, it was clear that their reading of celebrity magazines was overwhelmingly a 'surface reading' of the text, and particularly focused on their *visual* rather than linguistic components. Once more, perhaps there are class issues at play here regarding 'reading' and language. However, this led me to pay particular attention not only to specific features of language within the magazines, such as titles, headings and extracted quotes, but more importantly to the images which were the focus of the young women's negotiation of the magazines, particularly those images of the female body. This gives credence to the use of multiple methods within this study, since data gained in one setting is able to inform the way in which data is generated in another, enabling different types of qualitative data to be integrated to inform a comprehensive 'whole' analysis.

Within the tradition of discourse analysis, there is recognition that attention should indeed be paid to images; however, as Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) note, there is a tendency for discourse analysts to analyse images in the same way as if they were linguistic texts. Hence, in order to explore the images within celebrity magazines, I turned to the increasing body of literature that treats images as a distinct field of study. For these critics, the ‘understanding of the world is being accomplished not by reading words, but by reading images’ (Lester, 2000:352). However, like discourse analysis, there are ‘remarkably few guides to possible methods of interpretation, and even fewer explanations of how to do those methods’ (Rose, 2001:2). The tradition of visual analysis stems from the semiology of Barthes (1973; 2006) and the two levels of meaning, denotation and connotation, which operate in any visual sign.

Developing this tradition into a social semiotic approach, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argue that the visual analyst should pay attention to the way in which images are ‘framed’, and their spatial relations with other images and text. Indeed, attention should be paid to the way in which particular aspects of the visual are more salient than others. Furthermore, the circumstances under which the image was produced must also be considered (Rose, 2001): this aspect of visual analysis was particularly relevant for my analysis of celebrity gossip magazines, which often feature ‘paparazzi’ pictures of celebrities ‘off-guard, unkempt, unready’ (Holmes, 2005) as a way of claiming an unmediated ‘reflection of the real’ (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). Thus, my analysis of the images within celebrity magazines paid particular attention to these features and their relationship with the text.

Discourse and Social Practice

Fairclough's (1993; 1995; 2003) second stage in his three-dimensional model involves paying critical attention to the way in which texts are produced, distributed and received by audiences. Whilst I recognise the production and distribution of celebrity magazines to be an important component of the way in which celebrity magazines are understood and also consumed, it is beyond the remit of this study to pay attention these aspects, and is one of the limitations of this study. However, this study does focus on the 'reception' element of social practice. Finally, Fairclough (1993; 1995; 2003) claims that CDA should involve an analysis of the text's 'more immediate situational context, the wider context of institutional practices of the event it is embedded within, or the yet wider frame of the society and the culture' (1995:62). This stage is particularly useful for making the connection between *language* and social practices at the level of discourse, and enabled me to make connections between the discourses within celebrity magazines, and those within wider culture. For example, the analysis presented here was able to make connections with the discursive representation of the figure of the 'chav' within celebrity magazines, using relevant literature (e.g. Tyler, 2008; Hayward and Yar, 2006; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) to link these with discourses of classed identity within wider culture. A focus on the situational context also enables me to integrate the data generated as a result of the ethnographic fieldwork to build a comprehensive, nuanced analysis of social practice.

Data Analysis: Interpretation and Integration

Above, I have discussed the principles which guided the analysis of celebrity gossip magazines. However, in order to usefully integrate this data with the data collected via the empirical fieldwork, many of these principles were also used to identify and explore the discourses on which the young women drew in their negotiation of the texts, their accounts of subjectivity, and my observations of them in particular social contexts. However, it is important to emphasize that the analysis of the data collected for this study was an ongoing process that began from the moment of data collection, which continued throughout the writing process (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) and will continue long after the finalisation of this thesis.

Organising and Managing Data

The main task of the analysis undertaken here was to integrate different data sets that were designed to explore different elements of the research topic. As such, the analysis used qualitative thematic coding (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) as a basis from which to initially understand the themes emerging from the different forms of data. In order to easily code and retrieve the data collected as a result of the empirical methods adopted by this study, qualitative data analysis computer software NVivo8 was used. This was a useful way of managing and organising the vast amount of data I had collected over the period of the fieldwork. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note, managing data via computer software packages has no 'conceptual' advance over manual techniques of data management. However, for the vast amount of data

collected, the speed with which particular codes were able to be retrieved was beneficial.

Particular segments of data were able to be coded with a number of analytic codes using NVivo8, which as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note, facilitated the analysis of the complex relationships between them. Whilst NVivo8 does more than simply allow the researcher to ‘code and retrieve’, I did not use the package for any other purpose than data management, and the intellectual work of analysis began through the interpretation and integration of these codes. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) warn, coding may fragment the data which in turn may lead to a certain amount of data loss. With this in mind, and this study’s use of a multi-sited research design, it was important to remember the full picture and not to decontextualise the data (Hollway and Jefferson, 2007) from either the setting, or the other pieces of data gathered via different methods in the fieldwork process. Thus, the theorisation of my data took account of the integration of the different data types that the multi-layered methodology elicited after the coding process had fragmented the data.

Analysing and Interpreting the Data

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note, one should move beyond the codes, working on categories and themes that seem central to the analysis, and explore both their meanings and relations with other categories. In this thesis, this involved looking for patterns, themes, contradictions and irregularities, as Delamont (1992) suggests, which facilitated the process of theorising the data. Much of the significant analytical and theoretical work on the data was done during the writing process: as

Coffey and Atkinson note, 'analytical ideas are developed and tried out in the process of writing and representing' (1996:109). Much to my supervisors' dismay, I produced around 100,000 words worth of initial 'analysis' which served this very purpose, and enabled an exploration of the different meanings present in the data. Writing as a form of analysis enabled me to structure the account in to the form it has taken in this thesis. As such, writing played a significant part in the generation of ideas about the ways in which the data could be theorised.

It is important to note that whilst narrative interviews were used to generate data, this data was not subject these to a comprehensive 'narrative analysis'. However, attention was paid to particular features of narrative, such as the ways in which the young women structured their narratives and the connections they made between particular sub-stories within it. Hollway and Jefferson (2007) adopt a psychosocial approach to the analysis of narrative interviews; whilst in this case a full-blown psychosocial analysis was not feasible due to the amount of data generated, analysis did attend to the way in which elements of their narrative were connected, and the possible ways in which these can be understood that are not directly verbalised in the young women's accounts. The analysis of the empirical data gathered in the different research settings also makes use of the psychosocial concept of the 'defended subject', which Hollway and Jefferson describe as 'understanding the effects of defences against anxiety on people's actions and stories about them' (2007:4). The analysis presented in Chapters Four to Seven of this thesis at times makes use of this way of understanding how the young women make particular defences of their 'selves', and their unconscious anxieties about being positioned as working class subjects.

The analysis of the young women's narratives presented here was primarily framed in terms of their social and cultural character (Squire, 2008), in a similar way to my analysis of the empirical data collected in the other research settings. As Phoenix (2008:65) argues, 'understanding of how narrators use culture in their narratives requires that analysts go beyond what narrators say in order to recognise how narrators draw on the wider culture'. The multi-sited ethnography of this study enabled an exploration of the narrative data in relation to the other data collected about their lives and subjectivities using different methods. This involved the identification of key themes used by the young women to organise their narratives, and exploring the patterns and contradictions within the stories in a similar way to the analysis of the other forms of empirical data. Furthermore, particular 'types' of narratives were able to be identified that occurred across many of the young women's accounts: for instance, 'success stories', 'moral tales' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), 'love stories' and 'transformation' stories which were united by particular structural properties. Identifying these 'genres' in the process of analysis formed the basis for interpreting their stories and integrating them within the other pieces of empirical data, and also the discourse analysis of magazines.

'Stories' were not just limited to the data elicited from the narrative interviews, but also across all of the other research settings, to which this method of analysis and its insights could also be usefully applied. However, in interpreting these stories, it was important to consider the social context in which these narratives were told, meaning they should be contextualised as an 'oral performance' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:76). For example, a personal narrative told to the group in response to a story in

a celebrity magazine must be interpreted differently to one which was told in the narrative interview as a sub-story within their 'whole' narrative.

It is also important to remember when analysing narratives that these are 'constructed' accounts: as Riessman points out, 'stories don't fall from the sky (or emerge from the innermost "self"); they are composed and retrieved in contexts' (2008:105). Hollway and Jefferson (2007) rightly note that narrative interviews rely largely on the recollections, motivations and memory of the respondent, which problematises the extent to which a researcher can accept their account as the 'truth'. Whilst the multi-sited ethnography attempts to compensate for this limitation by observing the young women as well as listening to their accounts, the 'partial' nature of these accounts is nonetheless a significant limitation to the narrative interview method. Yet it remains that 'all stories will be incomplete, since experience and subjectivity cannot fully make their way into language' (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 2008:9), and this study takes as its object of analysis the narrative itself as a 'constructed' event, negating the potentially problematic issues of 'truth' and accuracy.

Analysing Researcher Subjectivity

The young women's accounts of themselves may have in part been constructed in relation to their perception of my identity, or their perceived proximity or distance in terms of the relationship they felt they had with me. Some of the young women were keen to 'give me what I wanted', and some of their accounts may have been an indirect response to this desire to answer the question they 'thought' I was asking of them (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 2008), not just in the narrative interview

context, but across all the research sites. Thus, it was important that an analysis of the data took account of what they didn't say as much as what they did say, the continuities and contradictions both within their accounts and within and between settings, and the ways in which these were constructed, rather than attempting to interpret their narratives as the 'truth'.

In keeping with a feminist approach to ethnography, it is important to explore the way in which my own subjectivity played a part not just in the data collection, but also in the interpretation of the data and the analysis presented here. My focus in this thesis on the 'body', and its regulation and adornment, may indeed be a reflection of my own personal interest in beauty, fashion, and the regulation of my own body. Given the richness and broad remit of my data, I could have taken the analysis in a number of different directions, including focusing on the classed nature of 'gossip' and its place in young working class female peer cultures. Thus, my own interest in 'making-up' may well have played a role in my interpretation of the data. Indeed, there are always likely to be multiple lines of analysis identifiable in a corpus of data such as this. However, recognition of researcher subjectivity, and considering alternative interpretations of the data through sustained and comprehensive analysis, enables a researcher to be reasonably confident that the analysis presented is valid. This is further discussed later in the chapter.

Ethical Considerations

Whilst I have touched on some of the ethical considerations throughout the discussion of the methods used in this study, it is important to fully explore the ethical

implications of my research design. A commitment to conducting this research in an ethical manner was a primary concern throughout the process. This research was passed by Cardiff University's ethics committee, and ensured the usual safeguards, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were in place.

The operation of power in research relationships

As a piece of feminist research, which places emphasis on the differential power relations between women (Skeggs, 1994; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002), it is important to consider the power of both the researcher and the researched.

Walkerdine (1986 in Skeggs, 1994) suggests that power of the researcher to objectify their participants in the research process is similar to that of the 'male gaze'. Whilst I recognise this, and gave much careful consideration to the way in which I 'represented' the young women within thesis, I agree with Skeggs (1994) that the research process can also have positive outcomes for research participants. Skeggs (1994) notes that being 'researched' can evoke a sense of 'self-worth' at being deemed 'interesting enough' to study. Indeed, many of the young women in this study also expressed this view. Furthermore, it is also an opportunity for someone to *listen* to them and take what they say seriously (Skeggs, 1994), and for many of the young women in this study this was one of the main positive outcomes of being part of the research. The young mums in particular, whilst finding it difficult, enjoyed 'telling the self', claiming they were rarely given the opportunity to talk about themselves and have someone attentively listen. However, it remains that I was given the power to have access to different aspects of their lives, and able to 'represent' them in potentially 'negative' ways.

The power of the researched often goes unrecognised in accounts of fieldwork: Skeggs (1994) claims that many feminist researchers overstate the power of the researcher and categorise their participants as 'victims', when in fact many find enjoyment in the process. Furthermore, many times during the fieldwork I was left outside in the cold, snow, wind and rain, having driven for over an hour to reach them, which at times made me feel powerless and entirely at the mercy of the girls. Without the girls' participation, there would be no research, and in this sense the young women could be regarded to hold a certain degree of power over the research process. Furthermore, many of the young women specifically stated that they had enjoyed the overall experience, and many did not want to accept my token gesture of a gift voucher as a thank you for their time.

There were, however, several instances throughout the research process in which the differential power between me and the girls became evident. Whilst, for reasons of anonymity, I will not discuss these in detail, there were occasions where the young women's feelings of inferiority and vulnerability became clear through the way in which other relationships could be understood as being 'transferred' onto the research relationship. Within the tradition of psychosocial research, many researchers (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001; Hollway and Jefferson, 2007) note the way in which researchers and research participants unconsciously position each other in roles that are familiar in their everyday relationships. At times, I was positioned as 'teacher' by the younger girls, and in some episodes as a source of guidance, advice and help. The Ashpool girls could be understood to position me as having more knowledge and power than themselves in particular contexts, and at times it was necessary for this to be recognised in order to help those participants in particular distress or need to meet

my ethical obligations as a researcher. Furthermore, some of the mothers who had relationships with social services also, at times, transferred the position of ‘social worker’ onto me, seemingly justifying and defending the way in which they brought up their children in their conversations with me in light of what they interpreted as an attack on their mothering ability. Thus, it is important to be aware of the ways in which the researcher has power over the researched, and the affects this may have on them.

The Ethical Dimensions of Rapport and Friendship

Finally, I would like to consider the way in which feminist ethnography in particular can foster strong ‘bonds’ between a researcher and their participants. My proximity to the young women in terms of gender, age, class and ethnicity, not to mention our shared love of celebrity culture, provided the basis for a strong rapport. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) claim that establishing rapport has now become a professional skill which entails researchers managing their appearance, behaviour and self-presentation in order to build rapport and trust. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) also discuss the ‘impression management’ work that researchers in the field are required to do. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) argue that ‘faking’ rapport in order to facilitate disclosures is ethically problematic in terms of informed consent. Whilst participants may consent at the beginning, as a deeper rapport with the researcher develops they are more likely to expose their intimate experiences and emotions which they may have preferred to keep private (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002). This is an important consideration in periods of prolonged fieldwork, in which informed consent should be continually obtained. As such, in each research encounter, I did my best to ensure the

young women were still consenting to being a part of the research process, and not accepting me as a member of the group and disclosing experiences or emotions they would not want to be a part of the research process.

However, whilst I acknowledge 'rapport' has in one sense been commodified and taught as a 'professional skill' in some research contexts, I believe that my relationships with the young women in this study genuinely contained an element of rapport. This was the case with some individuals more than others: I have already shown the ways in which the 'distance' between Anne's identity and my own proved difficult throughout the fieldwork period. However, with other individual girls, particularly the Tinsworth girls whose biographies and trajectories were most closely aligned to my own, I developed a research relationship that closely resembled the relationship I had with my own friends. Indeed, Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003) note the way in which ethnographic fieldwork can forge enduring and rewarding personal relationships.

Furthermore, ethical considerations in terms of the well-being of the researcher are also important: as Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003) note, the personal nature of fieldwork, whilst it may bring joy and fulfilment, also exposes the researcher to vulnerability, hurt, rejection and exploitation. In the present study this was not the case; however, it is important to consider the way in which 'over-familiarity' must be an ethical consideration, particularly for feminist ethnographers, in terms of the emotional well-being of the researcher.

Saying Goodbye...

This leads me to briefly explore the way in which I 'left' the field. The research design specified the phases of the research and *when* I should exit the field: had this not been in place, I may have had even more difficulty in doing so. Even with this framework in place, I was filled with the usual anxiety about collecting 'enough' data and whether it adequately answered my research questions. However, ending relationships that had developed over the course of a year was the main source of anxiety; indeed, towards the end of the research process many of the girls indicated that they would 'miss' me when I didn't see them anymore. Thus, I began to think about whether and how to continue my relationships with the young women. I decided an ethical course of action would be to leave the lines of communication 'open' between myself and the young women, but to leave the decision up to them. It would be unethical to sharply cut off communication with the girls if they wanted to continue to a relationship, but also unethical to insist that they kept in contact.

Indeed, many of the younger girls did continue communication after the period of fieldwork had ended: Tasha kept me updated on her progress in the *X Factor*, and Diana continued to text me to see how I was. The mothers group, who were particularly disappointed I wouldn't be going to their group anymore, continued to text and made it clear they were always happy to participate in future research projects, and I was just to 'pop in' if I was ever in the area. Communication between me and some of the girls continued for around six months after the fieldwork ended, after which communication dwindled and I have not heard from them for some time. I often wonder what they are up to now, particularly the younger girls: each year I

watch *X Factor* waiting to see Tasha fulfil her lifelong ambition to sing in front of Simon Cowell and Cheryl Cole on the TV. However, allowing my participants to decide the form of our 'post-fieldwork' relationship was the most ethical course of action. This is because my perception of 'closeness' may not have been reciprocal, and as such any continuation of a relationship needed to be on their grounds.

Limitations of the study

Whilst I have reflected throughout this chapter upon the limitations of particular elements of the research design, I wish to briefly end by considering the limitations of the overall study. As my description of the sample demonstrated, one of the main limitations of this study is that, due to the nature of the sample, I was unable to pay attention to ethnicity at an empirical level, which is significant given the predominantly 'white' nature of representations within celebrity culture.

Furthermore, since this study has focused on 'young womanhood', it also neglects the way in which younger girls are negotiating and utilising celebrity discourses, which is particularly pertinent given the recent literature on young female sexualities (Renold, 2005; Jackson and Westrupp, 2010; Ringrose 2010).

Ideally, I would have carried out a more in-depth ethnography in a range of different settings; however, this would have been at the cost of being able to cover the same number of groups of young women, and being able to conduct an analysis of celebrity gossip magazines. Conversely, I would also have liked to have included a more diverse sample of working class young women: it would have been of value to explore the negotiation of these discourses by young women who self-identify as

'chavs' or in lower working class backgrounds. However, this would have been at the cost of eliciting the rich, in-depth and complex data I achieved.

Whilst this research design's strength is its internal validity in its use of mixed qualitative methods and multi-sited ethnography, there are also some validity issues pertaining to the individual methods used in this study. Indeed, the usual limitation of discourse analysis, that it fails to consider the interpretation of texts by audiences, is negated via its inclusion within an empirical and ethnographic framework. However, it remains the case that the analysis of celebrity gossip magazines in this study must also be considered as 'subjective', since my own particular biography and identity may have been brought to bear on the analysis, limiting its validity. However, recognising this and taking care to explore alternative interpretations goes some way to overcoming this. Reading groups, while designed to elicit data regarding the young women's negotiation of celebrity discourses, were very much driven by their responses to the text. As I previously discussed, the girls also spoke about their lives and experiences in these sessions; as such, I must be aware that these were revealed in response to specific stimuli within the magazines, and may not be a 'key concern' or significant experience of their everyday life.

Furthermore, narrative interview data must also be analysed with caution: issues of 'truth' and factual relation to 'actual' events are a common critique of narrative data (Riessman, 2008). However, adopting a social constructionist approach to analysing narratives means that whether or not that is what 'really happened' is not the focus of analysis (Riessman, 2008): my analysis of the young women's narratives focused on the way in which they generated meaning, and the discourses they invoked in order to

do so, rather than an interrogation of ‘factual’ events. The division between what people *do* and what they *say* they do has long been a tension within qualitative research, with what people do often accorded primacy over what is said (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003). However, in agreement with Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003), I argue that the use of both within this research design, while having their individual limitations discussed above, elicited rich sections of data which were able to reveal continuities and inconsistencies that made for a comprehensive analysis of the topic.

The interpretation and understanding of the young women’s experience could also have been enhanced by sharing some of my interpretations of the data with the young women themselves. Skeggs (1997) notes that when she did this, the young women’s interpretations often differed from her own, since knowing is always mediated through the discourses available to use in understanding experience. Skeggs (1997) explains how she uses an academic framework to interpret their experiences that was not available to the young women in her study: perhaps greater analytic insight of my young women’s own cultural frameworks of interpretation could have been gained from sharing my interpretations with them. Besides the ethical considerations of ‘doing rapport’ (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002) discussed above, this over-familiarity within research relationships should also be a consideration of the way in which the data is analysed, interpreted and represented (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995). The value gained from ‘rapport’ in the process of data collection could possibly mean a loss of meaning, as shared understandings can lead to a loss of critical interpretation (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002).

As a piece of qualitative research that has elicited rich, personal data about a small number of young women's lives with particular social and cultural positionings, this study has little external validity in the sense that it is not necessarily a 'replicable' study. Furthermore, my acknowledgement and consideration of my own particular role in the generation of data through my relationships with the young women also limits the extent to which this study is replicable. However, I was aware of this limitation from the outset of the study, and as such took steps to monitor and scrutinise the extent to which researcher subjectivity was at work in the process. Therefore it is quite likely that a researcher with a similar theoretical approach to my own would describe similar themes if they were to conduct the research with a similar group of young women. Whilst my young women are specifically culturally, socially and historically located, there are many other communities across the UK that are comparable to the South Wales Valley communities, and as such these findings could also be usefully applied to young women within those communities.

Thus, it is important to note the internal validity of this study: Skeggs (1997) takes valid to mean 'convincing, credible and cogent in which the analysis made can be evaluated as rigorous and responsible and the account given substantial and satisfactory' (1997:32). For Skeggs (1997), issues of validity centre on 'plausibility', and following this I argue that the research methods and frames of analysis adopted by this research has produced the most plausible explanation of the questions posed by this research and the most valid account possible. Furthermore, through considering the ways in which my own values and subjectivity were at work, and paying critical attention to this in the analysis of the data, I consider this to constitute a rigorous analysis evidenced in the data itself. Finally, foregrounding the

experiences and voices of the young women themselves also contributes to its validity (Skeggs, 1997), and gives this research plausibility and integrity.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design adopted for this study, and described the feminist theoretical framework underpinning this design. It has also justified an ethnographic approach in relation to the wider field of 'audience research', a critique of which led to the development of a set of ethnographic methods that would facilitate an exploration of the way in which discourses of celebrity culture are taken up in accounts of subjectivity and young female working class experiences. This chapter has given full accounts of each of the methods used as part of the research design, and acknowledged the limitations these methods may have. Furthermore, this chapter has also included an account of the interpretation of the data, which was premised on the notion of *integrating* the different forms of data gathered from different ethnographic contexts and settings. Particular attention has also been paid to the relationships between researcher and participants that were encountered and negotiated, including a consideration of the ethical dimensions of these relationships. Indeed, this chapter has sought to give a reflexive account of the research process, and a discussion of researcher subjectivity has been considered throughout the chapter in terms of the way in which this may have been brought to bear on the collection, interpretation and analysis of the data. Recognition of this, and paying careful attention to explore alternative interpretations, gives this study a high degree of internal validity, along with the integration of data gained from different social sites using different

qualitative methods of inquiry. This thesis now moves on to four empirical chapters which outline the findings of the research and presents the analysis of this data.

Chapter Four

‘Real’ Celebrities: Gender and Class in Celebrity Culture

Introduction

This is the first of four empirical chapters that will explore young working class women’s negotiation of the discourses of celebrity culture and the use of these discourses in accounts of their everyday lives. These chapters will present an integrated analysis of the data collected during the empirical fieldwork with the young women. It is not possible within these empirical chapters to present a full and comprehensive discourse analysis of celebrity gossip magazines; however, the analysis of the empirical data discussed is informed by textual analysis, which will be presented and summarised where relevant.

Here, I wish to provide an analysis of the context in which the young working class women can be seen to make particular identifications about their bodies. Through exploring the young women’s negotiation of celebrity culture, and the operation of key discourses within their everyday lives and subjectivities, this chapter provides a basis for understanding the way in which gender and class are represented and negotiated, performed and lived. This chapter pays particular attention to the way in which the ‘fame as ordinary’ and ‘authenticity’ discourses can be seen to invoke particular classed identifications from the young women. It also explores the significance of these discourses in their everyday lives and construction of their own ‘real’ selves.

Understanding the Moral Construction of Class through Celebrity

Identifications

Chapter Two highlighted that, whilst the field of ‘star studies’ has explored the discourse of ‘authenticity’ within contemporary conceptualisations of fame, its intersection with discourses of ‘gender’ and ‘class’ remain relatively unexplored. Significantly, the classed nature of the ‘fame as ordinary’ discourse identified within the field is not often discussed in terms of social class (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). Tyler and Bennett (2010) demonstrate the ways in which celebrity produces and sustains class relations, and argue that celebrity is instrumental in practices of distinction- making between individuals and groups in everyday life. It is these practices of distinction-making in everyday life that this chapter attends to.

Authenticity, Ordinariness and Moral Worth

This thesis highlights that celebrity culture is a highly ‘gendered’ phenomenon: my analysis of celebrity magazines clearly demonstrated that their focus is particularly on young women and the presentation of their bodies. As such, it is particularly young female celebrities who are rendered ‘ordinary’ through the pervasiveness of the discourse of ordinariness that my analysis revealed to be central to celebrity magazines. Their positive inscription of celebrities they judge as ‘down-to-earth’, such as Charlotte Church¹, Katie Price and Colleen Rooney, clearly rely on their construction as lacking in pretensions (Skeggs, 1997) and as ‘representative’ of the readership. Whilst it not the main intention of this thesis, it is important to highlight

¹ Charlotte Church found fame as a classical singer as a child and has ‘become a woman’ in the public eye. Her relationships and body are the particular focus of media coverage surrounding her, and celebrity magazines applaud her ‘down-to-earth’ attitude despite her fame.

the way in which ‘celebrity’ as a concept is framed within gossip publications: my analysis revealed that both talent (the ‘achieved’ form of celebrity as outlined by Rojek (2001)) and personality (an ‘ordinary’ one, of course) are combined to create the concept of a ‘good’ and ‘deserving’ celebrity. Thus, as others have noted (Holmes, 2005), these two constructions of celebrity are seemingly contradictory: celebrities must be simultaneously extraordinary *and* ordinary, having extraordinary talent and ‘ordinary’ personalities. However, within gossip magazines, the ‘ordinary’ personality is not what it seems: an analysis of these texts revealed that in order to be ‘ordinary’ in a positive sense, one must have that ‘star quality’ that gains the public’s interest. In this sense, ‘ordinary’ is not simply a synonym for ‘boring’. Those celebrities who are truly ‘ordinary’ (and thus ‘boring’), such as many of the contestants on reality TV, are berated by the magazines and the young women in this study as ‘unworthy’ or ‘undeserving celebrities’. Central to my analysis was that, within celebrity culture, ‘ordinariness’ and ‘authenticity’ are in fact ‘performances’ (Tolson, 2001). In considering who is the primary audience of celebrity magazines (discussed in Chapter One), it could be argued from my analysis that ‘ordinariness’ is a device through which ‘extraordinary’ celebrities appeal particularly to working class audiences through their ability to ‘perform’ ordinary.

Thus, from my analysis it became clear that ‘ordinary’ within the context of celebrity magazines is tantamount to Skeggs’ (1997) concept of ‘unpretentiousness’. A lack of pretension acted as a signifier of ‘authenticity’ within the magazines, a value I found to be highly morally prized. Those celebrities who are ‘down-to-earth’ are more ‘real’ than those who are ‘stuck up’ and are consequently rendered ‘fake’. My analysis highlighted that this dichotomy, of ‘real’ and ‘fake’, underpins the

magazines' discursive construction of all aspects of celebrity, including selves and bodies. This dichotomy allowed certain bodies and selves to be rendered 'authentic', and others to be rendered as 'fake'. My focus in this chapter is the 'authentic' self, and the way in which this is constructed in 'classed' terms. The young women particularly expressed their preference for 'real' celebrities through mobilising implicit discourses of class. In the extracts below, the girls discuss their identification with Katie Price, which is framed in terms of their own position as working class:

Jodi: Oh I love her [Katie Price] I do.

Kelly: Why's that?

Jodi: I dunno, I have done since, for ages haven't I, I think she's mad.

Jane: I like her, I must admit, one of the only celebs I like because she's...

Jodi: She's honest in't she?

Jane: Yeah, there's no airs and graces with her.

Jodi: Yeah, and like, she's out there, doing something, I just think she's great.

-Molesworth Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Diana: She's [Katie Price] like one of us, she doesn't look down on people [Rhian: No], and she's just sums our personalities up [Rhian: Yeah], so I think that's why I like her.

-Ashpool Girls (at Rhian's house watching TV)

Katie Price is a weekly staple of celebrity magazines, and is constructed in relation to her 'ordinariness'; sometimes this means she is depicted as 'common' and 'crass', but overwhelmingly this positions her as 'normal'. The quotes above demonstrate that the young women feel a particular 'affinity' with Katie, and invoke classed discourses

in order to verbalise this connection. That Katie ‘doesn’t look down on people’ and has ‘no airs and graces’ means the girls consider her unpretentious, and therefore as ‘authentic’ in her realness and honesty. In describing Katie in these terms, they also position themselves as unpretentious and authentic, using Katie to represent their own personalities as ‘down-to-earth’, normal girls.

As Holmes (2005) also notes, celebrity magazines take pleasure in knocking celebrities ‘off their pedestals’. My analysis revealed that this is particularly the case for stars that are seen to be ‘getting too big for their boots’ and have allowed fame to ‘go to their heads’. As such, the young women particularly identify with celebrities who came from similar backgrounds to themselves, and are still ‘recognisable’ as such. In the extracts below, the Ashpool Girls describe their admiration for these celebrities:

Diana: Like Joe, he’s known from Eastenders, but if you like actually go to his house, it’s like so small, you think like celebrities have all these big houses, but like Joe it showed the other day, he was on ‘Family Fortunes’ the celebrity one, and it goes to the houses and shows like their family and stuff, and his house is just like, normal, it’s like, to be honest it looks like a little council flat or a little council house like ours, and his mother don’t take it for granted like...

Rhian: That’s good really though, in’t it?

Diana: Yeah, that’s what I’m trying to say, he’s just like us basically...I look up to Joe I do, coz he’s like amazing, he is, he really is.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Rhian: It's like Leona really in 't it? She came from like quite a poor background didn't she? But she's still grateful and she's still like us really, she doesn't like, some celebrities take it for granted, but I don't think she does really, does she? Like the way she was brought up and stuff which was a good thing really.

-Ashpool Girls (Having Lunch in the Sixth Form Common Room)

In these extracts, the girls highlight the importance of unpretentiousness and authenticity within the context of social mobility. This time, the girls explicitly refer to the working class (poor, council estate) backgrounds of these stars, and the way in which they still display the same 'moral' characteristics of these backgrounds, i.e. being 'honest' and 'real'. Their shared background is also a reason for their identification with particular celebrities, in their assertions that they are 'just like us'.

Thus, the young women are clearly making certain 'classed' identifications within the 'field' of celebrity, displaying a clear affinity with particular celebrities on the basis of their perception of their own 'classed' subject positions, which particular celebrities can be seen to embody the qualities of. As such, the young women do not configure class in economic terms, but mainly in 'moral' and 'unspoken' terms, in keeping with Sayer's (2005) conceptualisation of the way class is currently mobilised.

Furthermore, 'ordinariness' not only makes these celebrities 'real' in terms of the performance they give, but they are also 'real' in the sense that the young women's identifications with them are based on their 'real lives', as this chapter will also demonstrate. Framing and interpreting fame and celebrity in terms of 'ordinariness' not only encourages working class young women to affectively engage in celebrity

culture, it also makes fame seem potentially more achievable for working class women in particular.

'Real' Mums: Working class mums and the 'Yummy Mummy'

Whilst the Molefield mums also used the discourse of 'ordinariness' to navigate their way through celebrity culture, there was a further level to their engagement with the notion of 'authentic feminine selves' which came particularly from their subject positions as young working class mothers. Their construction of 'ordinary' not only related to 'unpretentiousness' and 'authenticity', but also to the nature of their everyday lives and identities as 'mothers'. Celebrity motherhood was constructed by the young mums as 'inauthentic' when compared to their own experiences of motherhood, which they construct as 'authentic', as the extract below demonstrates:

Jane: I think they [celebrity mums] should just get real I do. They don't bath or dress their own kids or anything, or do the bloody school run.

Jodi: No.

Michelle: I think some of them do don't they? I think some of them try don't they.

Jane: Hmm, but they all got nannies.

Michelle: Yeah they all got nannies.

Jane: They all got nannies and cleaners doing all the bloody housework.

Nicole: They don't know what it is like we know what it is, you know they don't.

Jane: No coz they all manage to put makeup on and do their hair and stuff!

Michelle: But I do think, I don't know how much time they spend with their kids, but I do think, I bet the time they do spend with their kids they spend with their kids, do what they need to do, like play.

Jane: Yeah

[Murmur of agreement]

Michelle: We don't have as much time for that, so I mean.

Jane: No.

Kelly: Coz it says here that these celebrity mums are 'just like the rest of us', do you think that's true?

Nicole: No they're not are they coz they got loads of money and stuff, so they can afford nannies and whatever they want.

Jodi: No way.

Michelle: See they're all there in these pictures going to the park and stuff, they probably hand them over then.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Within celebrity magazines, my analysis revealed that the figure of the 'yummy mummy' is the predominant representation of motherhood. Thirty-something mothers who retain their glamour and sophistication, *despite* being mothers, sit in stark contrast to the pathologised representation of the 'chav mum' Tyler (2008) describes. However, the 'yummy mummy' is framed within the magazines through the discourse of authenticity, which positions the 'yummy celebrity mummy' with the reader. In *Hot Stars* for example, their feature on 'yummy mummies' claimed that 'they may be stars, but when it comes to their little ones, celeb mums are just like the rest of us' (*Hot Stars* pp.92-3, free with issue 666 of *OK!*).

However, clearly the young working class mothers in this study do not consider themselves 'yummy mummies'. Using the dominant discourse of authenticity, the young mothers question the ordinariness of celebrity mothers in the extract above, and resist the cultural construction that these mothers are 'real' mothers. The mothers invoke the category of class to explain their difference from celebrity mothers, who have the *money* to afford nannies and cleaners to do the domestic role which constitutes the majority of their role in everyday life, and which prevents them from becoming the 'yummy mummy'. In fact, celebrity mothers are rendered 'fake' on the basis of their groomed appearance, which does not reflect the realities of these mums' own lives and identities as mothers. As Nicole says:

Nicole: If they were shopping, sweating, struggling, their hair looked a mess and they were in their pyjamas, then I'd say they were real mums!

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

For Nicole and the other mums, 'real' is conceptualised in terms of the everyday struggles motherhood represents, which are not represented by the groomed and glossy figure of the celebrity 'yummy mummy'. However, it is interesting to note that (here at least) the mothers do not display the desire to become the figure of the 'yummy mummy'. In constructing celebrity 'yummy mummies' as 'fake' and their own experiences of motherhood as 'real', they (morally) elevate themselves above the 'yummy mummy'. This demonstrates that the way in which young women make identifications in the 'field' of celebrity is not only classed, but are also made (or not made) in relation to subjectivity.

'Stuck up her own arse': Pretension and artifice

Further developing an analysis of the way in which particular dis-identifications with the celebrity field are made, the young women in this study mobilised the discourse of ordinariness to draw distinctions between themselves and those celebrities who could be considered the antithesis of the way in which we have seen they view themselves, 'stuck up'. The way in which the young women disassociate themselves from, and dis-identify with, particular discourses can be usefully interpreted from a psychosocial perspective. Through a psychosocial lens, 'disassociations' or processes of 'dis-identification' can be understood as unconscious 'psychic separations' (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001:159) which drive subjectivity. Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) also note that in 'dis-identifying' unconscious recognitions are made about what they are disassociating themselves from, in this case, 'stuck up' celebrities. As I have previously discussed, celebrity magazines take pleasure in knocking 'arrogant' celebrities off their pedestals (also see Holmes, 2005). Research by Hermes (1995) also suggests that readers enjoy it when things go wrong for celebrities, which she describes as a sense of 'cosmic justice'. Given the way in which the young women see themselves as unpretentious, it is unsurprising that they not only distinguish themselves from those celebrities they regard as pretentious, but also mock and ridicule them:

Mel: You know Posh? I hate her! Don't she look so stuck up her own arse like?

Tasha: Yeah.

Vanessa: She is really stuck up, she just looks down on everyone.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Sam: I can't stand any of the WAGs to be honest, they all look proper stuck up.

Sian: Oh yeah, just coz they're going out with someone with money who buys them Balenciaga handbags, they think they're better than everyone else, but you can still tell they're just as common as the rest of us.

-Tinsworth Girls (Having lunch)

In these extracts, the girls describe particular celebrities as 'stuck up'. Throughout the sessions, 'Posh' (a.k.a. Victoria Beckham) was frequently discussed by the girls in this way. Indeed, her media nickname of 'Posh' is a not-so-thinly veiled way of indicating her middle-class appearance and demeanour, which was in contrast to the stereotypically 'working class' identities of the other Spice Girls, and remains attached to her star image today due to her 'lavish' lifestyle and consumption patterns, and her tendency not to smile in photographs. Whilst the magazines themselves do not frame it quite in the same way as the girls, their frequent jokes about the way in which she can't 'crack a smile' draw on the same characterisation of someone as 'stuck up'. The phrase 'stuck up' is a colloquial saying with clear class connotations: it evokes imagery of someone 'sticking their nose in the air' and 'looking down their nose at others', and is also a synonym for 'snobby', which entails a certain level of pretence in elevating oneself above others.

Thus, as the extract from the Tinsworth girls demonstrates, that someone is perceived as 'stuck up' can be understood as an expression of their (and wider societal) concerns about 'social mobility'. As Tyler and Bennett (2010) note, the figure of the 'celebrity chav' reminds us of the difficulty and undesirability of transgressing class boundaries. We have already seen the importance the girls place on remaining 'true to your roots',

and within the working class habitus, in the process of accruing economic capital, and the girls' hatred of WAGs (Wives and Girlfriends of footballers) on the basis of their pretensions reflects this. Ridiculing celebrities who appear 'stuck up', as in the extracts above, could be seen as a device through which these young working class women seek to understand their own 'classed' subject positions, and seek to attach 'pride' and 'authenticity' to working class identities. As such, one could argue that their anti-pretentious and 'pro-ordinary' attitudes are attempts to re-evaluate and challenge dominant middle-class inscriptions, and to invest in their 'ordinariness' and authenticity as a form of cultural capital, something in which they are generally regarded as lacking.

However, their critique of 'stuck up' celebrities could also reflect their own anxieties regarding their class position and social mobility. As Skeggs (1997) argues, working class young women are conscious of the judgements made about them by 'middle class' women, who they perceive to 'look down on them' socially and morally. They are also aware of their inability to 'pass' as middle class (Skeggs, 1997). Sian's comment that WAGs are 'just as common as the rest of us' indicates her belief that WAGs are unable to 'fake' the signifiers of social mobility through the consumption of designer handbags. This perhaps reflects her own anxieties about achieving social mobility and her ability to 'fake it' whilst remaining authentic and true to her working class roots. It may also reflect her desire *not* to be seen as 'fake' and to trying to pass as 'middle class': achieving a respectable form of working class femininity (Skeggs, 1997) is, as this thesis will demonstrate, the way in which these young women invest in their bodies as a form of cultural capital. This will be discussed further in Chapter Seven in relation to the ways in which the young women 'dress up'.

In Sian's comments above, the primary mistake the WAGs make is their consumption of 'excessive' designer goods that are beyond the means of working class women. The implication is that, whilst on a middle class woman's arm this bag would be a marker of success, on a working class woman's arm the bag is a signifier of a 'fake' self. However, consumption within celebrity magazines is actively encouraged, and must-have products feature on nearly every page. As my analysis of the magazines revealed, these are the kinds of products that are marked within celebrity culture as indicating female 'success', yet in an 'authentic' way (as opposed to the inauthentic, designer handbags of the WAGs).

The extract below demonstrates this contradiction faced by young working class women who are encouraged to consume to 'be somebody', yet encouraged to remain 'ordinary' and 'humble' both by working class moral cultures and the discourse of celebrity outlined in gossip magazines. This extract demonstrates the complex way in which models of consumption are affected in the young women's conceptualisation of the working class self:

Kelly: So if you all had lots of money like celebrities, what would be the first thing you'd all buy?

Tasha: A house, and a car...

Julia: I'd give some of the money to my parents, I don't know how much though.

Then I'd go off on a shopping trip. I'd be off to London, I'd invite all these lot, 'right, here we go!'

Vanessa: Yep.

Julia: But I wouldn't be like, up my self. I hate people who are like, up their self.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Julia: I hate people like that.

Tasha: I like people who are down to earth.

Vanessa: They need to show where they come from, coz they didn't have it all, you know, all the time.

Julia: Loads of celebs brag about money don't they?

Tasha: I think loads of them waste money.

Vanessa: That's wrong that is.

-Ashpool Girls (Conversation over lunch in a café)

Given the way in which being 'up yourself' is constructed by the girls, it is unsurprising that they defend against it in the extract above. If they were to have economic capital, the girls are keen to emphasise to each other and to me, that they wouldn't be 'up themselves'. Julia demonstrates this by claiming she would give (some) money to her family, and take all of her friends on a shopping trip to London. Here, the young women can be understood as 'performing' ordinariness and authenticity in order to defend against the position of 'stuck up'. These young women come from working class cultures in which 'waste' and 'snobbery' are judged as immoral (for example, Vanessa's assertion that it is 'wrong'). However, celebrity magazines promote consumption as a marker of 'success', which can be seen to present a kind of 'double entanglement' (McRobbie, 2004) for working class girls in particular. This argument will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

Peer Cultures: Authenticity in everyday life

The 'classed' dichotomies of celebrity culture discussed above (ordinary/extraordinary, real/fake, down-to-earth/stuck-up) were also at stake in the young women's accounts of their everyday lives and subjectivities. This thesis argues that the 'classed' way in which they negotiate celebrity images can be regarded as a way in which their wider social and moral worlds and judgements become known. The figure of the 'stuck up' working class girl was particularly mobilised in the young women's peer cultures. For example, within the Ashpool Girls, half of the girls didn't like one of the other girls, Diana, on the basis that they thought she was 'stuck up'. From the first occasion I met with the girls in their sixth form common room, it was apparent that most of the girls did not like Diana, as this extract from my fieldnotes demonstrates:

Once again, Diana, Kat and Rhian were sat away from the other girls. The two groups of girls exchanged looks in a way that made me sense some tension and animosity between them. Diana didn't speak to any of the other girls whilst I was there, the only connection between the two groups seemed to be Vanessa, who also didn't speak to Diana... Diana told me that the other girls didn't like her, and that's why they were sitting away from her. She asked me if it's OK to take part in my study separately... Vanessa also asked me if I was going to do the groups separately, to which I said yes. Tasha then said that she was glad of this, because she couldn't stand Diana because she was so 'up herself'. Mel agreed and said that Diana looks down on them all and thinks she's so much 'better' than them and acts 'all stuck up'.

-Ashpool Girls (Extract from fieldnotes in common room)

Throughout the period of fieldwork, the other Ashpool girls' dislike of Diana on the basis of her 'pretentiousness' became more and more apparent. Indeed, many of the girls spoke about this issue in their individual narrative interviews. In her narrative interview, Anne claimed this was typical of many people in her school:

Anne: Some people there [at her school] are so stuck up though, loads of people are stuck up. They like, love themselves, yeah, and they're like, 'don't talk to me, I don't want to know', so. Like, they come from the same place as me innit, so just act like it.

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

Here, Anne considers 'stuck up' as a performance that is inauthentic in comparison to her construction and display of self. In doing so, she also expresses 'pride' in her working class identity, which she regards performing 'stuck up' as a disavowal of. In the extract below, Sam also expresses a sense of pride in her working class identity in her account of her interaction with her middle class boyfriend's family and friends, and her refusal to 'act up':

Sam: When were out with Dana's friends they're all buying champagne just to prove a point. I go the opposite way and buy pints of cider [laughs]. It's like, Dana can be a bit pompous sometimes... but Dana's got a few friends that are pompous, and last new years I had to go out to dinner with them, and ah, it brought out the valleys girl in me then, because they're getting all pompous and being la-de-dah, and there's me just getting more and more common the more drink I had. And I was thinking in the end, I went the opposite way, coz I was acting really common just to like, bug them really, to annoy them, and I was thinking, I'm not actually this bad, but they were like,

'ah you're from Tinsworth', so I was like, acting up to it, and I was thinking, ah, and all the girls were at a house party having fun and I'm stuck at this dinner party as it was, with all these toffs, that's basically what they were. And then there's Dana acting up, and I was like, 'Dana, you're just from Bosfield, you're nothing special, you haven't got all the money that they've got and that's not really you', coz they were on about all their nice holidays they've had, and I was like, 'well, I've gone to Magaluf with the girls, and Ibiza with the girls', and they're looking at me as if to say, 'commoner', I don't care! [laughs].

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

Throughout her account, Sam repeatedly places her 'common' identity in opposition to the 'pompous' identity of her boyfriend and his friends and family, and does so with pride. Her boyfriend's 'acting up' is perceived by Sam as 'inauthentic' in comparison to her authentic performance of a working class 'Tinsworth' identity. Sam admits that her performance was an 'exaggeration' of her working class identity, which she used in the situation to counter her boyfriend's and his friends' 'snobby' performances. Thus, her performance, rather than being 'fake', was used to distance herself from the 'pompous' performances of her boyfriend and his friends, and to reinforce her identity as 'authentic'.

In light of this, many of the young women were keen to distance themselves from accusations of snobbery, and were anxious of the way in which certain 'performances' might be perceived as 'stuck-up'. In an extract from her narrative interview below, Julia demonstrates her disgust at her attempt at 'sophistication' being misinterpreted as 'snobbery':

Julia: On the way to the dinner and dance these people were just looking at me as if to say, 'oh my god, she's stuck up, in't she?', coz I had like, one of those like shawl things on, and it was all furry, and my mother went, 'and where are you off to, lady muck', I was like, 'don't call me lady muck mam, I ain't stuck up'. Quite a few people said that behind my back, like.

-Ashpool Girls (Julia's Narrative Interview)

The event of the dinner and dance was significant for Julia in particular: it was her chance to show others that she was 'sophisticated'. However, much to her dismay, her efforts were misrecognised by some as 'stuck up'. The repercussions and affects of performing 'sophistication' are therefore particularly difficult for working class young women, who must give authentic performances of this, yet within the context of that ordinariness so valued by celebrity culture and their peer cultures (also see Chapter Seven).

The girls' friendships were also based on the perception of their selected friends as ordinary and 'down-to earth', not 'stuck up':

Holly: I really like Jane, she's not stuck up like some of the others. That's why we get on I think, why we became good friends.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Thus the identifications (and distinctions) they make with celebrities are the same identifications they make in their everyday peer cultures. As such, their negotiation of the 'celebrity as ordinary' discourse within celebrity gossip magazines can be

understood as a way in which the wider moral values of their peer group become known. Their voices also demonstrate that these girls don't want to 'act up' and pretend to be 'middle class': in fact, their accounts revealed they were ambivalent about the way in which they would construct themselves in the face of social mobility. The next three empirical chapters explore this insight further.

Melodrama and gossip

Whilst all of the young women in this study were at pains to distinguish themselves from 'problematised' femininities (discussed further below), many relished and enjoyed a certain degree of 'drama' and 'spectacle'. However, 'drama' was taken up by the different groups of young women to different extents, which demonstrates the complex nature of the processes of identification that are at work in their negotiation of celebrity culture. These 'processes of identification' from a psychosocial approach can be seen as affective attachments to notions of community, nation and belonging (Clarke, 2006). A psychosocial approach to identity formation explores these unconscious 'processes of identification' or attachments, and uncovers the psychological and emotional dynamics at work in subjectivity. Considering this concept in my analysis highlights the extent to which processes of identification differ between the groups of young women. For the Tinsworth girls and the Molefield mums, 'drama' is something they are not particularly interested in:

Holly: Oh bloody hell, what's going on with Jordan now? I swear to God, that woman's life is one long soap opera! One thing after another, you just kind of get a

bit bored by it don't you, like oh god, what next? Like I read it all about her, and I watch it all, but I wouldn't really say I was that interested in it, coz it gets boring...

-Molefield Mums (3rd Reading Group)

However, the younger groups of girls (the Ashpool girls and the Molefield girls) did enjoy a certain level of 'drama' in celebrity stories:

Kelly: What do you like about Jordan?

Katie: She's always got something going on in her life...

Lilly: She has ha'n't she?

Katie: She's always in some magazine. It's like showing the scar on her breast...

Kelly: Hmmm.

Katie: There's always something going on with her body...

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Tasha: I love reading about all the gossip, I do. All the drama about people cheating and having affairs, and people who are secretly going out with each other, and people who always have something going on, like Jordan, there's always loads of interesting stories about her.

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in café)

Thus, there is a clear division between the age groups in their engagement with the discourse of 'gossip' and 'drama' within celebrity culture. My methodological design enabled me to gain insights into their everyday lives, and allows me to place this observation within the context of these. In their accounts of their lives, the younger women's narratives were full of stories of 'teenage angst' and the drama of 'he said,

she said'. Brown (1994) notes that the discourse of gossip caters to women's broader interest in one another's lives, and gossip was a central way in which these young women made sense of their everyday lives. The 'ups and downs' of celebrities' lives as chronicled in celebrity gossip magazine related to the way in which they narrated their own lives.

Conversely, the narratives of the older young women, the Tinsworth girls and the Molefield mums, were not constructed around such narrative devices, and instead focused on the mundane-ness and boringness of their daily lives, with 'drama' being firmly relegated to their 'past lives' before having children or entering the workplace. The accounts of the older young women were constructed around the discourse of 'responsibility' in the shape of employment and/or children, and as such 'drama' was not applicable to their current experiences. This invites an analysis of the wider discourses of power at work here: as young women get older, they are encouraged to 'be somebody' through the neo-liberal routes of work or motherhood and dispense with the 'trivialities' of youth, such as gossip. It is also of note that 'gossip' is historically attributed to the cultures of working class women (Hermes, 1995), and the older young women in this study may also be defending against cultural constructions of the working class woman as a 'gossip'.

Pathologising Working Class Young Women: Celebrity Culture and Distinction

My analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that the moral values of ordinariness and authenticity are highly valued within celebrity culture. However, this is ordinariness within particular discursive limits. Some representations of femininity within

celebrity magazines invoke class-based representations that pathologise the cultural construction of the working class woman. This has also been noted in other postfeminist media genres, such as the TV makeover (McRobbie, 2009). Tyler and Bennett's (2010) recent discussion of the female 'celebrity chav' highlights the way in which cultural representations of working class women within celebrity culture are characterised by their vulgarity, bodily excesses and lack of cultural capital. Thus, from my analysis of celebrity magazines, whilst the 'celebrity as ordinary' discourse brings celebrity and reader to the same level, representations of 'car crash' or 'train wreck' femininity within celebrity magazines serve to elevate the reader above the celebrity. My analysis of the magazines revealed that 'train wreck femininity' is particularly concerned with the fragile mental health and nervous breakdowns of young female celebrities, and this section will explore the way in which the dispositions of these young women are marked as 'working class' in celebrity magazines.

'Train-wreck femininity' in celebrity magazines

Britney Spears², Amy Winehouse, Lindsay Lohan, Kerry Katona, Katie Price, Nicole Richie, Mischa Barton, and Lilly Allen are just a few of the young celebrity women to be represented as 'car crash' within the magazines I analysed. 'Car Crash' celebrities are celebrities who are deemed 'out of control', which encompasses many of the postfeminist feminine pathologies McRobbie (2009) discusses, such as eating disorders and irrational neurotic behaviour, to general pathologies such as

² Britney Spears is an American singer who publicly suffered a nervous breakdown. Her career, her body and her relationships came under particular scrutiny from the press during this time. Her decision to shave her head was seen as the 'peak' of Britney's nervous breakdown. She lost custody of her children and her father was appointed responsibility for her by a judge.

drug/alcohol abuse, mental illness/depression, gambling and debt. As a continuation of the theme of 'ordinariness' to its logical conclusion, these representations seek to present the grimy 'reality' as well as the glossy image of celebrity (Harper, 2006). Whilst mental illness within celebrity culture has been explored (Harper, 2006), the way in which young female celebrities with mental illnesses are treated unsympathetically, and actually vilified, by celebrity gossip magazines is relatively unexplored. Harper (2006) claims that women's magazines encourage readers to sympathise with female celebrities' mental health issues; however, from my analysis of celebrity magazines, I argue that readers are not encouraged to sympathise with the depression of Britney Spears, or the drug addiction of Amy Winehouse.

In fact, the spotlight of 'shame' is shone on these young women: they are constructed within the magazines as the 'failures' of neo-liberalism who have failed to construct an empowered, individual, successful female self. Their representation as examples of 'train wreck' or 'car crash' femininity within celebrity magazines serve as a warning to (working class) readers about 'losing control'. As Jackson and Tinkler (2007) note, 'out of control' is typically reserved for cultural constructions of working class versions of femininity, such as the 'ladette'. The way in which these unruly bodies now constitute unruly minds within celebrity gossip magazines is an example of the way in which class antagonisms are being reconfigured and circulated. For example, Britney Spears' very public breakdown was often discussed in relation to her 'unruly', excessive body within celebrity magazines; her inability to stay away from fatty foods and drinks was a signifier of her poor mental health within celebrity magazines.

The girls' understanding of the term 'car crash' or train wreck' was premised on one central idea: that you shouldn't want to look, but can't help it. In fact, the young women in this study claimed to be completely 'disinterested' by stories based on 'car crash' scenarios, yet a significant amount of their discussion centred on the women who were precisely represented in this way:

Ceri: I do read it, and I do watch the TV show, but I think the TV show's like, it's easy watching and it's like, car crash TV as well, coz you watch it, but you're like, 'urgh', waiting for something to happen. And when they argue and stuff, it's cringe, like you cringe... Yeah, and Britney's another one, but she's car crash as well.

Rachel: Yeah.

Ceri: That's part of the interest with her, that I like to watch when she's having like, mental breakdowns. Makes me feel better!

[Laughter]

Sian: The thing with Britney though is that most people still want to see her succeed don't they, [Ceri: Yeah], whereas Kerry Katona, it's like...

Sam: Oh no.

Ceri: That's like car crash in a mean way, you think, 'hmm, how bad is it gonna get?'

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In the extract above, Ceri draws on the 'repertoire of melodrama' identified by Hermes (1995) in her statement that reading about Britney's troubles makes her 'feel better'. Within the gossip magazines, my analysis showed that Britney's working class background is often constructed problematically in relation to her mental health. Pictures of Britney looking 'unkempt' categorise her as 'trailer park' (the American

version of the 'chav'), and this cultural representation of 'working class' appearance is used as evidence of her mental deterioration. These images are always juxtaposed with images of the star looking groomed and sophisticated which are used by the magazines to demonstrate her 'sanity'.

Furthermore, in the extract above the young women also distinguish between two types of 'car crash': celebrities who they want to recover, and those who they watch to see 'how bad it's gonna get'. Kerry Katona is one such celebrity whose life is dramatised in celebrity periodicals as a 'train wreck'. Again, the cultural representation of Kerry draws heavily on the 'classed' stereotype of the 'chav', and as such she is subject to ridicule and disgust (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010) from the young women:

Jane: Argh, don't get me started on bloody Katona again. She is nothing but a train wreck that woman. Pathetic, just pathetic, gross, disgusting, urgh. Why the hell the magazines print stuff about her I dunno, I won't read it. She's such a chav, 'chavving it up' down the aisles of Iceland, taking drugs and buying flash cars she can't afford. Please.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

All of the young women in this study refused to engage with stories about Kerry Katona; in fact, they all actively *avoided* reading stories about her, and were reluctant to answer any questions I had about their opinions of her. Their refusal to engage with the 'chav' image of Katona can be understood as a way of distinguishing themselves from it: in this sense, these working class young women are performing

their 'respectability' and 'sophistication' in distancing themselves from the problematised working class femininities represented by Britney and Kerry. Their refusal to engage with her representation can also be understood as a psychosocial defence against a representation that is 'too close' to the way in which they might be viewed by others. The psychosocial concept of 'defence' is useful as it offers a way of understanding the young women's discursive positionings in a way that takes account of unconscious processes. For example, Walkerdine *et al.* (2001:91) argue that 'what is stored in the unconscious is often painful and the individual sets up many defences to avoid feeling that pain'. The psychosocial concept of 'defence' therefore offers an insight into the way in which the pathological representations of working class women's bodies are defended against in order to avoid the psychic pain these representations cause.

My analysis highlighted that many of the young women who are subject to representation via the 'train wreck' discourse are mothers: as Fairclough (2008) also notes, what is 'socially acceptable' female behaviour narrows with the arrival of children. The damning disapproval celebrity magazines showed when Britney was frequently pictured with 'no knickers on', compared with their more light-hearted 'telling off' of child-less female celebrities such as Paris Hilton, demonstrates this point. Furthermore, Fairclough (2008) notes how some female celebrities with 'wild child' pasts, such as Angelina Jolie and Nicole Richie, are represented as 'redeemed' through motherhood, and my analysis of celebrity magazines reinforces this argument. Thus, young women are encouraged by the moral condemnation of certain female behaviours as 'out of control' to act in particular ways that are in accordance with 'traditional' gender roles. This reinforces McRobbie's (2009) argument that the

'postfeminist masquerade' serves to re-stabilise gender hierarchies by reinforcing traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Cheryl Cole: From 'Chav' to 'Sweetheart'

Whilst many working class celebrities, such as Kerry Katona, are represented problematically within celebrity magazines through invoking pathologies of working class femininity, one working class celebrity in particular is not represented problematically in terms of her working class background. Cheryl Cole first became famous when she was selected on reality TV show *Popstars: The Rivals* to become a member of Girls Aloud. At that time, her 'working class' roots, having grown up on a council estate, and appearance (often labelled the 'chav' of the band) received significant attention. As did her problematic 'working class' disposition when she was found guilty of assaulting a toilet attendant in a nightclub. However, Cheryl Cole is often now popularly referred to as 'the nations sweetheart', after shaking off those working class attributes that are pathologised as 'chavvy' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010), yet remaining 'true to her roots', down-to-earth and keeping her 'Geordie' accent. Cheryl's new representation as 'sophisticated' and 'stylish' within celebrity magazines is emblematic of the way in which young working class women are required to perform 'sophisticated' (rather than vulgar) femininity in order to achieve success (McRobbie, 2009).

By its very nature, the changing representation of Cheryl Cole constructs working class femininity as something that needs to be transformed and worked at, and

particular elements of it corrected and left behind (Walkerdine, *et al.*, 2001). The young women also construct Cheryl's previous image as problematic:

Nicole: Look at Cheryl Cole there. That's years ago when they first started. I can't remember her looking like that!

Sophie: She was a right chav and got in loads of fights.

Nicole: Oh yeah she was she got in that fight didn't she? They don't mention that anymore now she's on the X Factor!

Kelly: No!

Nicole: Back when she was called Cheryl Tweedy!

[Laughter]

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Ceri: I'm glad she doesn't dress like that anymore, she did used to be such a chav. But look at her now, you wouldn't think that she came from a council estate would you?

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

These extracts highlight that Cheryl's previous 'chav-like' appearance at the beginning of her media career is associated with the pathologised behaviours of working class women, such as fighting (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). Many of the young women made particular identifications with Cheryl Cole as she appears now throughout the study on the basis of her ability to transform from what she was (a chavvy-looking girl from a council estate) to what she is constructed as now within celebrity magazines (a sophisticated style icon, yet still identifiable as 'working

class'). The extracts below highlight the young women's particular identification with Cheryl's current representation:

Ceri: Page 25, ahhh, yeah, let's take a moment, just to all look at Cheryl.

Rachel: Lucky she was in it this week wasn't it?

Ceri: She's so pretty, I just want to be her best friend [Laughter]. I love her, like on X Factor she's really like, she's not, she's honest, but she's not horrible to people, which I think is a nice quality to have, and she wears nice clothes, so I like that as well, and yeah, I just love her really, I just want to be her [laughs].

-Tinsworth Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Jane: I like Cheryl!

Holly: Yeah I like Cheryl!

Trish: Yeah, Cheryl's cool...

Jane: C'mon, who wouldn't wanna be Cheryl Cole?

-Molefield Mums (Coffee morning)

Vanessa: She got one of the best sense of style.

Kelly: Is that Cheryl Cole?

Tasha: Yeah, she dresses tidy now, like

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In the first extract, Ceri invokes not only Cheryl's sophisticated appearance ('she wears nice clothes') but also her moral qualities that are a part of the construction of working class 'ordinariness' so valued within celebrity magazines as a basis for her admiration. For example, she is 'honest' and she isn't 'horrible to people', which can be read as the exact opposite of being 'fake' and 'stuck up'. Many of the young

women repeatedly expressed the desire that Ceri and Jane do above: the desire to *be* her, and to embody the qualities of being working class and both sophisticated *and* authentic. The desire that is at play here is their desire to avoid the pathologies of working class femininity, such as the *chav* (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010), and to embody a form of ‘respectable’ (Skeggs, 1997) and ‘sophisticated’ working class femininity in their own construction of self. McRobbie (2009) argues that ‘glamour’ is currently celebrated as a marker of aspiration for working class women. However, she argues that ‘glamour’ is particularly hard for working class women to achieve, since they are represented at such distance from it (McRobbie, 2009). Skeggs (1997) also noted that, whereas her working class women felt positioned by class, they did not similarly feel positioned as ‘feminine’: femininity was considered a ‘performance’ that was simultaneously a site of pleasure and anxiety. The following three chapters further explore the young women in this study’s performances of femininity in relation to the classed performances of femininity within celebrity magazines.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way in which the field of celebrity culture is marked by representations of social class that celebrate a particular aspect of the working class habitus (ordinariness), and pathologise other aspects, such as excess, vulgarity and poor taste (also see Tyler and Bennett, 2010). In this chapter, I have introduced some of the identifications the young women make with celebrity culture, and the way in which these invoke moral discourses that mobilise categories of social class. In particular, I have shown both the magazines’ and the young women’s dedication to

authenticity and ordinariness as a prized moral value. This reflects the importance that 'anti-pretentiousness' played in the lives of Skeggs' (1997) young working class women. This was the key way in which young women in this study interpreted and judged the moral worth of celebrities, each other and themselves. I argue that the framing of celebrity through the devices of ordinariness and authenticity within gossip magazines are the basis on which young women make identifications with celebrity culture. Their interpretation of celebrity through the discourse of authenticity can be understood as illuminating the way in which this discourse operates in their everyday life, peer cultures, and subjectivities.

This chapter has also demonstrated the significance of the dis-identifications the young women make with celebrity culture. Particular versions of working class femininity are rendered problematic within celebrity culture (Tyler and Bennett, 2010), and are represented as vulgar, excessive, tasteless, and 'out of control'. I have shown the way in which the young women in this study defend against this representation of working class femininity, which their position as working class women places them in proximity to. These representations are contrasted within celebrity magazines with representations of working class young women who are sophisticated, glamorous and 'in control' of their bodies and lives, yet remain authentic and ordinary whilst doing so. The young women in this study can be seen to identify with this representation of working class femininity as a way of holding together the competing discourses of 'success' and 'authenticity' in their construction of working class femininity. The way in which this thesis theorises social class, as outlined in Chapter Two, emphasises its moral character, and as such this chapter has mapped the moral landscape onto which the cultural and social construction of classed

bodies can be more broadly understood. The next three chapters will focus on the way in which the site of the female body is constructed within celebrity magazines, and the way in which these discourses are subjectively experienced by young working class women in the social construction of their own bodies.

Chapter Five

‘Real Bodies’: Theorising the body through authenticity and class

Introduction

This chapter will explore the discursive construction of the female body within celebrity gossip magazines, young working class women’s negotiation of these discourses, and the way in which they construct their own bodies through accounts of themselves and their lives. Furthermore, it will demonstrate how the ‘classed’ discourse of ‘ordinariness’ outlined in the previous chapter works through the body in terms of its size and shape. Orbach (2010) notes the rise in ‘public bitching’ about bodies, of which the discussion of bodies within celebrity magazines can be seen as a significant part. Chapter Two noted the way in which the young female body has become a particular site of moral concern in terms of the way in which ‘representations’ effect girls and young women’s physical and mental health. This chapter will explore the way in which some women’s bodies are identified as ‘too thin’, some as ‘too fat’, and some as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ within celebrity gossip magazines, and relate this to the way in which the young women in this study discussed both their own bodies and those of other women.

The Lollypop Brigade: The ‘Skinny’ Female Body

Much of the literature discussed in Chapter Two explored the way in which the popular media has, since the 1980s, glorified the extremely thin, ‘androgynous’ female body as the social norm (Bordo, 1993). Within much feminist work, and

within the media itself, representations of the extremely skinny female body are 'blamed' for idealising a body that is impossible to achieve (Wykes and Gunter, 2005; Orbach, 2010), and producing 'epidemic' levels of eating disorders amongst young women. Even now, critics talk about the waif-like figure as though it is the aesthetic of aspiration (McRobbie, 2009; Orbach, 2010; Walter, 2010). However, this chapter will outline that within celebrity gossip magazines, a strong rejection of this image has taken place. Furthermore, the young women in this study also reject the 'skinny', shapeless female figure. The following section will explore the way in which this shift has been discursively configured.

That girl needs to eat some cakes...

Within celebrity gossip magazines, the 'backlash' against 'skinny' celebrity women takes quite a violent form. My analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that *Heat* magazine in particular labels skinny celebrities 'the lollypop brigade', so-called because their heads appear too big for their thin, fragile, stick-like bodies, and persistently mocks and ridicules female stars they perceive as being 'too thin'. This is often done in a humorous fashion: for example, of Mischa Barton¹ *Heat* says, 'Mischa's friends love playing xylophone on her jutting ribs during quiet moments. For heaven's sake lady, eat some cakes' (issue 379, p.102). This humorous metaphor is also used by the young women to interpret particular celebrities' bodies:

¹ Mischa Barton is an American actress from US teen drama series *The O.C.* Mischa's weight famously fluctuates, and she has been critiqued for being both 'too fat' and 'too skinny' over many years in the media.

Laura: I've never seen such a skinny woman [Victoria Beckham²] with such a big head!

[Laughter]

Holly: I've never looked at her head!

Laura: Have a look, look!

[Laughter]

Laura: She's gross. That head is way too big for her body. Bloody Lollypop!

-Molefield Mums (1st Reading Group)

Mel: Don't that Nicola from Girls Aloud look like she got a massive head, like? Like all skinny and white, and then this massive head on top.

Julia: Like a lollypop! [Laughter]

Mel: Yeah, like a stick.

Vanessa: Way too skinny, just like a lollypop!

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

The above quotes are just two of the numerous instances in which the young women demonstrated their 'anti-skinny' stance, in accordance with that of the magazines, in ridiculing those celebrities deemed 'too skinny'. *Heat* magazine in particular also presents the skinny female body through the rhetoric of shock, in keeping with those wider debates about the 'effect' the representations of such bodies have on young women. Bordo (1993) notes the pathologisation of the body who takes body discipline 'too far', and features such as issue 536's 'Way too thin' describe the pictures of skinny celebrities as 'worrying', 'frightening' and 'scary'. The young women reproduce this kind of language in their own discussions of the skinny body.

² Victoria Beckham was one of the Spice Girls. Since the band split up, media coverage of Victoria has focused on her relationship with her husband, but particularly on her body, criticising her for being 'too thin' and questioning whether she has had cosmetic surgery.

However, the young women's talk importantly highlights the rhetoric of disgust they attach to the bodies of celebrities deemed 'too skinny':

Jane: Oh god Victoria Beckham's gross isn't she?

Sophie: She's just getting, the thinness of her is just sickening.

-Molefield Mums (1st Reading Group)

Julia: She's [Sarah Harding] way too skinny.

Vanessa: Oh, it's disgusting, look at that! I just don't get why someone would want to look like that, it's gross!

-Ashpool Girls- (2nd Reading Group)

Diana: I really don't like her [Cheryl Cole's] figure. Don't get me wrong, most people might think she's got a great figure, but for me it's like she's too skinny she's like more anorexic than anything...I don't believe in skinny skinny, I would never want to be skinny to be honest.

-Ashpool Girls (Lunch in café)

The extracts above are just some examples of the way in which the young women expressed not just their disapproval, but also their repulsion at such skinny representations of the body. Whilst the magazines frame these bodies in terms of humour, concern and disapproval, 'disgust' is specific to the way in which the young women framed these bodies. Given the way in which these bodies are pathologised within the magazines, it is unsurprising the girls would attempt to distance themselves from this kind of body. Their rhetoric of disgust towards these bodies can be understood as a way of creating and performing this distance to each other and to me.

Indeed, they were also keen to distinguish themselves from it in their narrative accounts, unprompted by the magazines:

Vanessa: Everyone always tells me I'm too skinny. I try and put weight on, but I just don't. But it's not nice when everyone is always saying 'oh, you're skinny you are', when you're trying your best to put weight on.

-Ashpool Girls (Vanessa's Narrative Interview)

Sian: I literally only gotta miss a meal and I feel it already, like my clothes start hanging off me, but I didn't eat for 4 days [when she had food poisoning], and my jeans and everything are like hanging off me. And...my uncle came down from Oxford and he said to me yesterday, 'what the hell's happened to you? [laughs] You're all bones!' But it comes off really quick, but it takes me ages then to try and get it back on, so I'm like drinking loads of those build up drinks, my dad's bought me loads of those build up drinks [laughs], so I'm drinking those, trying to put my weight back on...He [her boyfriend] keeps going on at me about putting weight on as well, coz he's like, 'you're too skinny, you need to put a bit more weight on'. So I am always trying to put weight on, coz I don't like people thinking I'm too skinny and that I don't eat when I do.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sian's Narrative Interview)

These young women were relatively slim (approx size 6-8) and had little 'curve' or shape to their bodies. Some of the other girls who were slim also had similar accounts of subjectivity in their narrative. 'Putting on weight' constituted a large part of these girls' bodily discipline, which was performed in order to resist the 'too skinny' label to which they had close proximity. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, the extracts

above highlight that their fears are predicated on the notion that others will think they are ‘unhealthy’ (in body and mind), and that their body discipline is ‘out of control’ in the same ‘frightening’ way as *Heat*’s ‘Lollypop Brigade’.

Skinniness and Artifice

From my analysis of celebrity magazines, it emerged that the skinny body was implicitly constructed as ‘inauthentic’ in comparison with the overtly ‘authentic’ and ‘real’ bodies of slightly larger, curvier celebrities. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the young women navigate celebrity discourses through the discourse of authenticity, which is also applied to the way in which they construct their own social worlds and subjectivities. Thus, the skinny body as ‘fake’, whilst implicit in celebrity magazines, was more overt in the young women’s interpretation of these bodies:

Mel: I don’t like skinny women, see, they look fake an’ that.

Tasha: And I don’t.

-Ashpool Girls (in school sixth form common room)

Jane: That’s just not real is it?

Holly: No it’s not, you’ve gotta be fake to have a body like that.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

In the above extracts the young women explicitly link the skinny body with artifice: these bodies are not ‘real’, and are therefore read as having no (moral) value by these young women. Their defence against the skinny body can be understood as a way of

emphasising their own 'realness' and their own desire to retain an 'authentic' working class body, rather than 'fake' an extremely thin body. This can be understood in terms of Hey's (2009) argument that working class young women might actually be *better* at protecting their mental health since they understand the cost and the impossibility of being other than 'themselves'. As such, the accounts of these young women's experiences of their own bodies can be seen as a refusal to oblige their classifiers, and as an act of cultural resistance. The pressure to be slim is seemingly resisted by the young women here, although, as I will demonstrate later in the chapter, can be understood as qualitatively different to the pressure not to be 'fat'.

What makes skinny bodies 'fake' and 'artificial' are the practices and affects that the body signifies. In celebrity magazines, the practices that produce the skinny bodies of the 'Lollypop Brigade' are constructed as 'out of control' and the young woman 'damaged' and 'weak'. Skinny as an aesthetic represents these practices; although, at times, it is difficult to distinguish between the bodies the magazines are classifying as 'too skinny' and those that are 'slim and toned'. The young women offered me their own interpretations of when a body is 'too skinny':

Sam: There's being slim, and then there's being skinny, like with no meat on your bones.

Ceri: Like, it's not natural, and they look painful, most of them.

-Tinsworth Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Kelly: Right, so what would you say is the difference between being what you think is a normal shape and being too skinny?

Mel: They're like, gaunt and stuff, and you can see their ribs.

Tasha: And they don't have, like her she looks like she got the same size boobs as my sister and she's 7.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

As these extracts demonstrate, for these young women skinny is defined by an angular, bony frame and more importantly an absence of 'curves'. Many of the young women use the term 'anorexic' as a label for this body aesthetic, meaning that anorexia has become a visual term for a particular 'body type', as well as a set of pathologised bodily practices. As the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, this 'curvy', 'sexy' aesthetic is the 'healthy' and 'authentic' version of the female body constructed within celebrity magazines, which lies in stark contrast to the 'unhealthy', 'fake' skinny body.

Unhealthy, Unhappy Bodies

As such, this chapter highlights that the discourse of 'health' plays a key role in the normalising of women's bodies within celebrity magazines. In the extracts below, the young women themselves make the link between the skinny body and ill-health:

Ceri: She's too thin [Tori Spelling], much too thin, that looks unhealthy, that looks painful, her, erm, like when they just look like a walking skeleton, that's just too much.

-Tinsworth Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Jane: My god Courtney Love looks like death! All skinny and bony and white, and her face looks all gaunt like some kind of ghost, seriously creepy.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

In the extracts above, the young women can be seen to attach metaphors of 'death' to images of 'skinny' celebrities: 'death', 'skeletons', 'ghosts', 'bones', 'painful', were amongst the words used by the young women to describe these bodies, which further emphasises the link between skinny bodies and physical ill-health. With the wider discursive focus in society focusing on the importance of a 'healthy body' (Evans *et al.*, 2008), the connection between certain celebrity bodies and particular states of health is one way in which these wider discourses become known to young women.

'Skinny' bodies are also constructed in relation to mental health, both within the magazines and by the young women themselves. In *Heat*'s 'way too thin' feature (issue 536) Madonna is said to have 'taken her quest for perfection way too far' (p.7), and Trinny Woodall's weight loss is attributed to the emotional trauma of her marriage split. The bodily practices associated with this body shape are associated with the notion of 'excess': these women are represented within the magazines as taking bodily discipline 'too far', and as such are rendered 'out of control', obsessive and neurotic. The fragile body of a 'too skinny' female star is indicative of a 'fragile' mind that is plagued by self-doubt and a lack of confidence, the antithesis of the successful, confident, neo-liberal young female subject. As Bordo (1993) also notes, the very slender female body is connected with notions of fragility and a lack of power: she writes that bodily discipline, 'too aggressively pursued, that practice leads to its own undoing in one sense' (1993:180).

Within celebrity magazines, my analysis also revealed the significance of the 'pleasure-denying' aspects of the skinny shape. In ordering skinny celebrities to 'eat some cake' and bacon sandwiches, and to stop excessively punishing themselves in the gym, celebrity magazines imply that the young woman in the skinny body is unhappy and miserable. The young women also read these stars' bodies as indicative of an unhappy self:

Diana: Like, they must eat nothing to be that skinny, like literally nothing. And be like, at the gym all day every day. That's no life, you gotta enjoy yourself, or you'll end up skinny but really miserable.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Tasha: Yeah, my mother's got that video [Natalie Cassidy's workout video]. She's just gone back to her old self. She said she weren't happy about it like, all that she had to, like put her life into exercise and she weren't happy like, so, I suppose, in a way it's better, as no one wants to be thin and miserable.

-Ashpool Girls (Lunch in school sixth form common room)

In these extracts, the girls see skinny bodies as the result of too little food and too much exercise. In this sense, bodily discipline is constructed as performed by women who are miserable and neurotic. The 'voice' of *Heat* in particular never denies itself pleasure or punishes its body in the gym: in its 'beach body survey' (issue 523), *Heat* tells us that their poll revealed that curvier women are favoured by men before proclaiming, 'now, pass us a Mojito before they change their minds' (p.5).

Most of the girls in this study also claimed not to deny themselves the foods they want in a defence against their categorisation as 'neurotic' for being 'too disciplined':

Kelly: Have any of you been on a diet after Christmas for the New Year?

Diana: No, I can't be bothered with diets.

Kat: Tried. Failed [laughs]

Diana: The see-food diet is a good one! See it, eat it! [laughs]. We just love our food! I miss my normal food whenever I've tried to go on a diet.

-Ashpool Girls (Lunch in café)

Sam: I don't say no to things and I don't feel guilty about eating what I want.

Ceri: No neither do I normally, I just normally, I go to the gym, so I think well I go to the gym so I can eat what I want, like but I do eat like, sometimes I think about the times when I wasn't hungry, but I just wanted to stuff my face, and then I'm a bit like...

Rachel: Why did I do that?

Ceri: A lifetime on the hips.

Sam: Like I'll tend to buy the two fingered Kit Kats like if I want a chocolate, like craving, I'll have that with a cup of tea [Rachel: yeah], instead of having a full on chocolate bar...

Kelly: Have you ever done a diet?

Rachel: No, no.

Sam: Every Monday I go, 'I'm gonna diet', and Tuesday it's gone.

Ceri: No I never have, I don't believe in them.

Rachel: I think I'd be very miserable so it's probably not worth it.

-Tinsworth Girls (Out for dinner in the local pub)

In these extracts, the young women construct their bodies as 'unregulated', and themselves therefore as 'happy'. However, Sam's technique of having a 'small Kit Kat' rather than a large chocolate bar, Ceri's admission that she goes to the gym, and Kat's confession that she regularly tries to diet and fails, all reveal that their bodies are still highly regulated and disciplined. The extent of this discipline will be explored later in the chapter.

The dominant discourse of the female body has been shown to vary over time (Bordo, 1993), and my analysis of celebrity magazines and my empirical data suggests we are currently witnessing a rejection of the 'androgynous', 'waif-like' figure, and a subtle shift towards a more curvaceous, yet slender, version of the female body. I would like to place the 'anti-skinny' discourse of the magazines within its wider societal context, and propose that this may be connected to the 'masquerade' of Riviere (1986) which was developed by McRobbie (2009). As part of the 'masquerade's' requirements that women perform a highly regulated version of hyper-femininity, the androgynous version of the female body may be considered too 'masculine' in form, and may therefore represent a threat to patriarchal gender relations at a time when women are entering traditionally male domains. The shift to a curvy, sexy female body thus represents a shift back to a recognisable form of femininity that places women back within the cultural grid of intelligibility (Butler, 1990), and back within traditional gender hierarchies.

The way in which celebrity magazines discursively link the skinny body with feminine 'failure' through neo-liberal rhetoric renders the body 'unruly', and the inhabitant of that body 'out of control'. Whilst the rejection of the skinny body may

sound like a promising step forward for feminist politics, I argue that this is just another example of feminism being ‘taken into account’ (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009) in postfeminist popular culture. As the next section will demonstrate, the ‘overweight’ female body is still subject to intense scrutiny within the magazines, and the young women’s interpretation of them. Furthermore, the young women’s bodies, despite their protests, can also be understood as being highly regulated in light of the way in which they position themselves in relation to the discourse of the ‘undisciplined’ body.

Saggy Bums and Buddha Bellies: The undisciplined female body

The curves so prized within celebrity magazines and by young women must be kept in check: curves must be disciplined so as not to become ‘unruly’. Skeggs notes that the ‘unruly’ female body has historically been linked with representations of working class women (Skeggs, 1997; 2004a), and indicative of the ‘laziness’ attributed to the working class (Bordo, 1993) ‘habitus’. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the way in which bodies of excess were linked to ‘car crash’ femininity within celebrity magazines, and argued that the loss of control of the body is indicative of the loss of control of the mind. The representation of the bodies of Britney Spears and Kerry Katona are two particularly pertinent examples of this: both are working class young women who publicly suffered ‘mental breakdowns’ that were chronicled in the celebrity gossip press, and their weight gain was represented as linked to, and symptomatic of, their breakdowns.

'Letting themselves go': Unruly bodies and motherhood

Rather than 'celebrating their curves', celebrity magazines questioned whether celebrities such as these who put on weight are 'too curvy'. *Heat*'s article on Britney Spears (issue 519) uses pictures of Britney's 'jelly belly' to debate exactly what is considered 'fat'. Whilst the magazine touts the 'anti-pressure to be skinny' line, it neither overtly celebrates nor condemns Britney's weight gain, and refers to other press coverage that describe Britney's figure as 'bulky' and 'saggy'. Within this article, *Heat* both pathologises and normalises Britney's figure, drawing attention to her 'tum', and using readers' comments to claim her figure is representative of normal mothers' bodies. The young women were quick to spot celebrities who had 'gained weight' within the pages of the magazines, and apply the same moralising discourse to their undisciplined bodies:

Amy: I don't think she [Kerry Katona] ever really got over breaking up with Brian, and she's just let herself go like...

Lilly and Katie: Yeah

Amy: I mean she used to be so pretty...

Katie: Yeah, and not so much weight on like.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Kat: Oh, we were just talking about her [Jessica Simpson] on the way down.

Kelly: Were you?

Kat: Yeah, coz there was one picture in one magazine, and then, on the one where they say she's been slammed with a tyre, and then we were looking at another one and

I was thinking, 'there is a difference though', she has put on a lot of weight. It's shocking innit?

Diana: She has put on a lot of weight, she looks really fat there. She's really let herself go.

Rhian: She's been eating too many cakes, I think!

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

As in the extracts above, the young women frequently use the phrase 'let herself go' to describe female stars that had put on weight. This makes clear the link between bodies, and the control and regulation of them: under the discourse of the self-governing, reflexive self that is dominant within neo-liberalism, the unregulated body is categorised as a body out of control. As Skeggs (2005) points out, the moral obsessions historically associated with the working class are now contained within the representation of 'a body beyond governance' (2005:965). These bodies, Skeggs (2005) argues, signal class through moral euphemism: the bodies of Spears and Katona as unruly (as a result of their unruly minds), morally invokes the kind of excessive corporeality associated with representations of the working class body. It is this form of 'moral attribution' that Skeggs (2005) argues is central to understanding contemporary class relations.

The 'body beyond governance' is particularly linked to motherhood: in particular, it is this body that is signalled by the working class young mothers of Britney Spears and Kerry Katona:

Lilly: I used to like Britney Spears' body before...Like before, but now, she's...

Katie: Yeah the body she had, not...

Amy: Coz she's had kids haven't she?

Lilly: Yeah.

Katie: Yeah she's just let herself go when she had kids, like. And Kerry Katona, she's the same.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

In the above extract the young women express their (moral) disapproval at the way in which motherhood has rendered the bodies of Spears and Katona as 'beyond governance' (Skeggs, 2005:965). This kind of discourse was typical of the young women in the study *without* children, who morally disapproved of those young working class mothers who surrendered control of their bodies and 'let themselves go'. However, the young mothers related to these images entirely differently, as the extract below demonstrates:

Holly: I mean, to be fair to Kerry Katona, she has had kids, so she's not gonna have a flat tummy is she? No one's gonna have an amazing body after having kids without having surgery. Real people don't just snap back into shape like frigging Angelina Jolie!

-Molefield Mums (1st Reading Group)

The young mothers took a particularly oppositional stance when negotiating the discourse of the unruly body in relation to those young female stars that had had children. Despite Holly's need to put distance between herself and the 'chav mum'

image of Katona (Tyler and Bennett, 2010), she also identifies with Kerry's 'imperfect' body as a result of having children. Holly also seeks to distinguish herself from representations of celebrity mothers that had lost weight and 'reclaimed' their former body. As indicated in the previous chapter, these 'yummy mummies' were constructed as 'unreal' by these young mums, and here we can see the way in which this construction acts upon the body. For these mums, it is their bodies, which bear all the hallmarks of pregnancy and childbirth, which are constructed as 'real'. In their group talk, the young mums positively constructed their bodies as marked by pregnancy and childbirth:

Jane: No, my husband loves it, at the end of the day I gave birth to his child, so if I'm a few stone heavier he still finds me sexy.

Holly: ...like what your body has done is amazing, so if you're left with a bit of a belly, then what does it matter?

-Molefield Mums (at Mother and Toddler Group)

Holly: I always used to be really slim and toned, then I put all the weight on, but when I look back at pictures of me when I was like, 19, so not that long ago, I looked and felt gorgeous, like I had a tan and my arms and my stomach were really toned, and I had pert boobs and bum, but since having her everything's gone all wobbly and saggy, and there doesn't seem to be anything I can do about it, but that's the joy of pregnancy I guess, wouldn't change it!

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

The above extract shows that these young mums view motherhood as changing their bodies, beyond any self-discipline that they could exert, as if their bodies were now

out of their control. Their bodies are self-constructed as 'beyond governance' (Skeggs, 2005:965); however, the moral implications of this discussed above are refused by these young mums, who demonstrate that motherhood, at times, can be subjectively experienced as a legitimate relief from the heavily regulated body.

However, this 'relief' does not come without particular affects: the young mothers' narrative accounts all elicited a sense of nostalgia about the way they were *before* having children, which was primarily told through their descriptions of their 'pre-baby' bodies:

Sophie: I look back on pictures of myself before I had him, and I had perky boobs, now I don't have any boobs, they've all shrivelled up, and I've not got a flat tummy anymore, I used to have a six pack before, like really toned and I was so confident. Even though I'm not fat now, I used to be really toned and have a nice figure, and now it's just nothing.

-Molefield Mums (Sophie's Narrative Interview)

Jane: I used to have sunbeds when I was younger. Now that was so much fun [laughter]. Coz I was looking healthy and I was, I'd lost a lot of weight at that time anyway, so erm, I was just, and I went blonde, and that made a difference as well believe it or not, I went quite light blonde and I had a really short crop, erm, and I was tanned and toned, and I just felt fantastic. Then I had Daniel and I just completely let myself go and just feel like shit about myself, to be honest. But when you're putting all that effort into caring for someone else that's what happens.

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

The sense of body dissatisfaction in Jane's account above sits in stark contrast to her earlier proud assertion that she was still considered 'sexy' by her husband for giving birth to his child. Their narratives demonstrate that, for these mothers, their bodies are no longer their priority: time once spent regulating them is now spent caring for their children and engaging in domestic labour. This can be understood in terms of Reay's (2004) notion of 'emotional capital', which is concerned with displaying the investment in others rather than in the self. In Jane's account above, she (and many of the other mums) uses her lack of investment in herself as a signifier of the emotional and physical labour she is putting into the self of someone else. As the previous chapter argued, for these mums, a disciplined and toned body is the sign of a 'bad mother': Jane and the other mums can be understood as seeking to display their 'emotional capital' (Reay, 2004) by failing to invest in their own bodies and investing in the bodies of their children. This will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

However, whilst motherhood may provide legitimate relief from the highly regulated body, and an undisciplined body may (in some contexts) be symbolic of the mothers' emotional capital, the affects of this within the telling of the self were present in their narrative accounts, as this extract from Holly's account highlights:

Holly: I don't get to go as often as I need to, but I love going to the gym, because its some 'me-time' isn't it? And you know that it's doing you good and is going to make you feel so much better, and it's just for you, no one else. I feel bad about myself when I can't go, which isn't very often since I had her.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Like Holly, all of the mothers referred to bodily discipline as something ‘enjoyable’ that they do for ‘themselves’ and to have some self-indulgent ‘me’ time. In Holly’s account, bodily discipline, in the form of exercise, is central to the way in which she constructs her sense of ‘self’, the ‘me’. One can understand a contradiction in the young mothers’ accounts between the ‘me’ as a ‘woman’, which is constructed via bodily discipline, and the ‘me’ as a ‘mother’, which is constructed in relation to a *lack* of bodily discipline. Their perception of their bodies as ‘unruly’ can be seen to have particular affects: all of the young mothers described feeling bad or depressed about their bodies and the lack of control they exert over them. Thus, the legitimised relief from the highly regulated body comes at a personal price.

Controlling the body

The young women without children in this study narrated their bodies very differently to the mothers discussed above. In particular, there was a clear difference between the ways in which they constructed their bodies across the different research sites. In reading group sessions, the young women constructed their bodies in relation to the ‘anti-skinny’, ‘anti-neurotic’ discourses discussed earlier in this chapter. Ceri’s statement below is typical of the way in which most of the young women spoke about their bodies in relation to the magazines:

Ceri: I really don't care if I put on a few pounds to be honest, it's like, so what? I'm not going to not eat and drink what I want just because I put on some weight. I just don't get the way people obsess about it all, and are like, 'oh my god, I've put on half a stone' or whatever.

-Tinsworth Girls (Out for dinner in the local pub)

In these sessions, the young women rejected the idea of bodily discipline and being concerned with body image. However, in the narrative interviews of the Ashpool girls, accounts of their bodies were notably absent from most of their stories, which was surprising considering the significant part it played in their talk in the reading groups, and in the various social settings in which I had spent time with them. Yet two of the young women in this group construct their bodies in their narrative accounts in terms of the pressure they felt to control their bodies and not to gain weight:

Anne: I like to keep fit though, coz I don't want to be fat...Ah, and chips, I tried giving up chips, I couldn't do it! They're too fatty, ain't they, so I tried to cut down on chips, but I can't [laughs], it's too hard, coz there's nothing else to eat apart from chips. I have a jacket potato now and again, but chips mostly. I feel guilty though when I eat too many chips, then my Nan goes, 'ah go down the fish shop and get some chips', and I'm like, 'I'm trying to give up chips!' [laughs]. And, oh, I love chocolate, I can't give up chocolate, so I have to do lots of exercise. I don't like no veg, no, but I'll eat an apple, a banana and an orange, but that's about it. I don't eat that very often though. I do want, I want to eat apples more, coz you're supposed to have five fruit a

day ain't you, yeah, I don't [pause 5 seconds]. I don't want to be too healthy, I don't want to be a health freak, coz I still want my chips and my chocolate [laughter].

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

Mel: And erm, what it is now, my mother wants me to go on the pill as well, but that puts on weight as well, like you can get one that don't put on weight, but then, the Microgynon one does, and that's what I got in the house from like, six months ago, something like that, but I won't take it now coz it makes you fat, like and I'm always trying to lose weight as it is. And like, smoking, I wanna give up like, but you put weight on when you give up don't you, so I can't.

-Ashpool Girls (Mel's Narrative Interview)

In Anne's extract above, she demonstrates the way in which she considers body maintenance as central to her everyday life through the way in which she chooses what she does and doesn't eat, and her compulsion to do exercise in order to 'balance' out her unhealthy choices. Similarly, Mel accounts for her choice of contraception and her desire to give up smoking in terms of the potential impact they may have on her body.

Interestingly, out of all of the Ashpool girls, it is significant that these two girls were the only ones to explore the regulation of their bodies in their narrative accounts, since these girls' bodies could be understood to invoke different inscriptions in terms of class and sexuality. Anne is a 'self-confessed' tomboy who in group contexts engaged very little with myself and the other girls, and certainly distanced herself from any talk about femininity and the body. As such, it is significant that the regulation of her body was so significant to her sense of self considering she did not

engage in the mass critique of women's bodies that the other girls did. The other girls frequently conferred the subject position of 'tomboy' to Anne, and in many contexts they speculated about her sexuality based on her 'unfeminine' appearance. Julia, Anne's best friend, told me that she was a lesbian, although Anne herself did not reveal this to me.

As an individual who sits outside the grid of cultural intelligibility (Butler, 1990), it could be that Anne's preoccupation with regulating her body, which is constructed in relation to the discourse of 'health' rather than femininity, acts as a strategy of social survivability for her. For example, Taylor (2007) notes that young working class lesbians are often positioned as 'doubly deviant', and are problematised in a way that is not the case for middle class lesbians who are able to more easily legitimise a lesbian identity. Anne's attempts to regulate her body could be seen as a defence and an attempt to overcome her 'problematic' (non-)feminine identity, and to present a more socially acceptable version of working class tomboyism in the form of a slim, regulated female body.

Similarly, Mel was the largest girl (approx size 14-16) in the Ashpool group, and in group sessions led the articulation of the language of popular feminism in her desire to see images of larger women in the media rather than 'stick insects'. Indeed, her extract below from when we were all having lunch in a café sits in stark contrast to the extract above from her individual narrative interview:

Mel: I think its good they're putting bigger women in the magazines an' that now, like. Skinny women look horrible, but you see them all the time and think 'why can't I

look like that', and then you think, well, I wouldn't wanna look like that, like, you get me? I like being bigger, some 'at to hold on to innit?!

-Ashpool Girls (Lunch in café)

The history of the working class female body's proximity to the problematic concept of 'excess' (Skeggs, 1997; 2004a) means that the excessive working class female body is read as 'distasteful', and as having no value. As such, it is also significant that the regulation of her body is a part of Mel's account of her life and not the other girls'. Her confession that she is 'always trying to lose weight' indicates that, despite her protestations above that she *wouldn't* want to be slim, she does desire to be slimmer, and takes steps in her everyday life to achieve it. Thus, it could be that Mel and Anne's bodies are present in their accounts precisely because their bodies are particularly problematised as a result of their class position. As such, they may feel compelled to defend against those representations of the working class body that are problematic (as excessive and as sexually deviant) in the process of constructing their own subjectivity, hence why it was present in their account and not the accounts of the other Ashpool girls.

The Tinsworth girls and their 'Fat pictures'

The Tinsworth girls' bodies were again constructed very differently in relation to the other two groups. In group contexts, the Tinsworth girls were the group who were most vocal about the importance of not obsessing about their bodies, instead advocating a 'balanced' lifestyle, enjoying everything in moderation, and claiming not to invest too much physical and emotional labour into regulating their bodies (whilst

in doing so revealing some of the labour they do put into their bodies). Once more their narrative accounts presented a different story. Whilst their bodies were not constructed in relation to their everyday lives, as in the young mothers' and Anne and Mel's accounts, they were strongly connected to particular events or periods in their lives in which they perceived their bodies in particular ways. Coleman's (2008) work is particularly useful for understanding the way in which the Tinsworth girls' bodies are constructed in their narratives, as their bodies were particularly discussed in relation to images of themselves. She argues that young women's bodies can be understood as 'becoming' (in the Deleuzian sense) through their relations with photographic images of themselves, demonstrating that the 'meaning' of the body is constantly transforming and is understood differently at particular times (Coleman, 2008). Whilst I do not interpret my data in light of Deleuze's concept of 'becoming', her argument that bodies can be understood as constantly in process through their relation with images is useful for understanding the way in which the girls narrate their bodies.

For the Tinsworth girls, 'holidays' were one particular time that bodies needed to be heavily regulated, both immediately before and after. They were particularly keen to make sure they felt 'good' about themselves in their bikinis on the beach and in their holiday pictures, as Sam's account tells us:

Sam: That's it I don't, like, I'll eat good throughout the week, and then on the weekend, I won't binge, but if I want something, I'll have it, I don't say no then on the weekend, unless I've got something coming up, you know, that you wanna be a bit slim for. Like, when I go on holiday, I always spend at least the month before that

watching what I eat and trying not to eat chocolate, bread, pasta and stuff like that so I don't look all bloated on the beach and in my holiday pictures. Plus I'm always on the go in work, but if I want to lose a bit before a holiday, I'll take the stairs rather than get the lift.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

In this extract, Sam's fears about looking 'bloated' in her bikini in her holiday photos are reminiscent of the 'bikini body' features within celebrity gossip magazines in which the bodies of female celebrities are judged (and sometimes ranked) by the way in which they look in a bikini. The visibility of celebrities' bodies within the magazines is also central to Sam's regulation of her own body, which is clearly linked in her account to particular 'events' at which she will be particularly visible and wants to look 'slim for'. These events mean that Sam subjects her body to a higher level of regulation than in everyday life, in order to gain a body that is appropriate for a particular setting, such as a holiday or a party. Thus, the contradiction that appears in the cultural construction of the female body within celebrity magazines, namely encouraging slim celebrities to 'eat cake' next to features on how to gain a bikini body or lose the 'Christmas bulge', is also present in the young women's social construction of the body, which reveals daily body management and increased periods of body regulation for certain events in their lives.

Their bodies can also be understood as constantly 'in process' as a result of their relations with images of themselves. In the extracts below, Ceri and Sam discuss particular pictures in which they construct their bodies in terms of 'excess':

Ceri: That year I was living the party life, although I did put on quite a bit of weight in that year, alcohol weight, it wasn't very attractive [laughs]. Coz like they had erm, you know those pictures you can get at school of your year photo or whatever, and they had erm, big photo's taken coz they had one every year, and they put them up in the halls and then you could buy them to keep ...we all look back and were like, 'oh my god, I look so fat in that picture' [laughs]. It's horrible, I've got like a proper, full on double chin on this picture, and it's just like, 'urgh', but obviously it was a good year, I just paid for it in some ways [laughs]. Every time I have a blow out I just have to look at that picture!

-Tinsworth Girls (Ceri's Narrative Interview)

Sam: There's this picture of me when I was younger, it was before I started in Debenhams and was temping in an office so I wasn't doing much exercise, but my stomach, I look like I could have been pregnant, and I had flabby bingo wings and a really bloated face. I hate looking at pictures of myself, I'm either pulling a stupid face or there's a part of me that looks fat or something [laughs]. I definitely went on a diet after seeing that picture, they say you should keep a picture like that on your fridge don't they, so you don't keep eating!

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

Here, Ceri associates her 'excessive body' with her 'excessive' student lifestyle, and her relation with that image can be seen as having particular affects. Ceri is repulsed and disgusted by what she perceives to be her 'excessive' body, describing it as 'horrible' and 'urgh', and clearly understands her body in the present in relation to her body in the past through that picture. Sam too has a 'fat picture', in which she claimed she looked 'bloated' and 'pregnant', which encouraged her to adopt her now

disciplined approach to her body. She also refers to the popular idea that women should place their 'fat pictures' on their fridges to encourage them not to overeat, precisely emphasising the relationship between images, bodies and affect. The notion that an image will make a young woman feel 'bad' enough about her body not to eat or to up their bodily discipline, can be understood as a way of defending against the bodies of 'excess' that so repulsed the young women.

In conducting a multi-sited ethnography, I was able to explore the ways in which bodies and their regulation were complexly constructed by the young women, and the ways in which the discourses of the body within celebrity magazines operated in different ways in different contexts. Their performances to the group, and to me, of being 'in control' of their bodies were countered by their individual 'confessions' of their hidden body labour and anxiety. Thus, not only has the pain of 'doing girl' been forgotten (McRobbie, 2009), but it is also regarded as 'shameful'. This is because, as my analysis revealed, the 'natural' female body is constructed as 'effortless' within celebrity magazines, with bodily labour hidden through the way in which the slim, toned body is naturalised. Therefore, the admission that the girls have to 'work' at regulating their bodies, and the visual display of this labour, would mark them as 'working class' (McRobbie, 2009). The display of excessive bodily labour also has particular consequences within their 'habitus', since making too much effort with one's body may be interpreted as a sign of being 'stuck up'. It is to the construction of this natural and 'normal' female body within celebrity magazines that I now turn.

‘It’s Cool to be Curvy’: The ‘Natural’ female body

In the same way that ‘authenticity’ was the discourse through which the girls made particular identifications in the field of celebrity culture, the female body is both constructed by the magazines, and negotiated and lived by the young women, through a claim to ‘authenticity’. Feasey argues that within *Heat* magazine, ‘contemporary stars are not presented as effortless beauties or with naturally perfect figures but rather as women having to make sacrifices in order to appear well toned and perfectly coiffed for public interaction’ (2006:186). She claims that the diet and exercise features within the magazines act as a reminder of the stringent body regimes stars must undertake in the creation and maintenance of their perfect bodies. However, my analysis of the magazines revealed that the construction of the body within celebrity magazines is more complex than this, which is reinforced by the young women’s interpretation of the bodies of female stars.

It is indeed true that ‘excessive’ body labour is pathologised, as the first section of this chapter showed, and, at times, body labour and discipline is shunned and highlighted as ‘too much effort’. However, my analysis revealed the way in which particular bodies were constructed through the discourse of authenticity: the relatively slim, curvy, toned body is naturalised within celebrity magazines through its juxtaposition with the ‘unnatural’ skinny and unruly bodies, and presented as ‘effortless’ and naturally inhabited. Indeed, Bordo (1993) also notes how a preoccupation with pathology, such as fatness and skinniness, may function as one of the most powerful normalising mechanisms which ensures the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining ‘docile bodies’ (1993:186).

In issue 523 of *Heat* magazine, Samia Smith's size 8-10 toned yet curvy 'pear-shaped' figure is celebrated as 'natural' and 'normal' (p.4), and size 8-10 Jennifer Metcalfe is celebrated for having a 'big bum' (p.6). Thus, my analysis revealed a discursive tension within the magazines that represented a curvy but slim and relatively toned body as 'normal', whilst also revealing the diet secrets, hints and tips of these women achieve these bodies that are categorised as 'normal' and 'natural'. These bodies are further reinforced as 'natural' in celebrity magazines by the way in which they are contrasted to other versions of the female body that are constructed as 'fake' (unrealistic, unattainable or surgically enhanced), or 'excessive' (unruly, undisciplined, weak).

'Real women have curves'...

The 'normal' and 'natural' female body within celebrity magazines is primarily constructed around the 'shape' of the female body. As the examples above demonstrate, it is Samia's 'pear shape' and Jennifer's 'big bum' that characterise their bodies as 'normal' in comparison with the stick thin, shapeless bodies of the 'lollypop brigade'. The signifiers of the 'normal' body are a curvy 'hourglass' shape with ample breasts, varying from a slender size 8 to a 'curvier' size 12. However, it is of note that the average dress size of women in the UK is currently a size 16-18 (Dogruyol, 2010).

The discipline required to achieve these 'normal' bodies is hidden through the frequent references to the shapely, curvy nature of the body, which provides evidence

that they haven't taken bodily discipline 'too far' and have exercised the amount of labour deemed 'normal' as part of a 'healthy' lifestyle. The normal/abnormal continuum is reproduced in the young women's interpretations of celebrity bodies, as the extracts below from the reading groups demonstrate:

Kathy: But she's [Charlotte Church] got a real woman's figure haven't she, why don't she just accept that [in response to an article about Charlotte wanting to lose weight]? Normal really in't it?

Holly: Yeah, she got a normal figure she have.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Amy: I think she's [Jennifer Lopez] got a good figure haven't she?

Katie: She's got curves...

Amy: Yeah. She's not super skinny is she? She's normal...

Lilly: She's like, average isn't she? Well, she's not average, but you know.

Katie: Nice and curvy.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Sam: She's [Colleen Rooney] never come across as one of these ones for always dieting has she, it's just like she looks after her body, and there she doesn't look skinny skinny, she just looks like a normal shape doesn't she?

Ceri: Hmm.

Sam: Yeah it's like a real woman's body that is.

-Tinsworth Girls (3rd Reading Group)

The quotes above are just a small selection of the way in which the young women refer to 'curves' as indicative of a 'real', 'ordinary' and 'normal' female body. In

these extracts, Charlotte Church's and Colleen Rooney's size 10-12 figures are described by the girls as a 'real woman's' figure, that are a normal size and a normal shape. Jennifer Lopez's curves are also praised as 'normal'; however, Lilly, after claiming Jennifer's body is 'average', seems to question her use of the word. Lilly is a size 16 (who proudly 'doesn't care', but hasn't eaten chocolate or crisps for six months), and as such would indeed more accurately represent the body of a 'normal' woman in the UK. Lilly's statement that 'she's not average, but you know...' can perhaps be understood in light of the fact that if Lilly claimed Jennifer's body to be 'average', what would that make her body? Excessive and unruly? Here, Lilly can be understood as both demonstrating her awareness that these curvy but slim bodies are not 'normal', and defending against the possibility of her own body being categorised as 'excessive' in comparison.

Happy, healthy bodies

So how do these 'extraordinary' bodies become naturalised within celebrity magazines? My analysis of the magazines revealed that, in its intersection with the discourse of 'health', the curvy body becomes something which is 'effortless' and 'normal'. Previously, I highlighted the way in which the skinny body was negatively constructed through its signification of 'unhealthy' practices and attitudes towards body management. The 'curvy' body is also a 'healthy' body within celebrity magazines, and the Tinsworth girls in particular constructed the female body through the discourses of balance and health, as this quote demonstrates:

Ceri: I think it would be better, rather than focusing on who's too fat and who's too thin, went for like, a healthy situation [Sam: Yeah] rather than, because it annoys me that, I've never been particularly big, and it annoys me when people are like, 'oh you're skinny', it's like I don't eat, and it's like well, it's not, because some people are naturally slim and you could eat like a horse and you wouldn't put any weight on, but then other people, it's not healthy, I think they need to focus on what's healthy rather than what's too fat or too thin by their standards you know, what's normal.

Sam: But it's like when, you know they do all these summer diets and things like that, it's always called diets, it's like a summer diet, or how to lose your winter bulge, and things like that, but they never do an article about, 'this is how you eat healthily throughout the whole year, this is what you should be eating'...

Rachel: Bikini diet...

Sam: Yeah, bikini diet, lose the Christmas bulge after, it's like why don't you just print an article of like, 'these are all your good foods that you should be eating on a regular basis'. They never do things like that.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In this extract, the Tinsworth girls emphasise the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle as constituting what is 'normal' to a particular body. Dieting is constructed as 'unhealthy' in favour of healthy eating all year round, which the girls imply produces a body that is 'natural' to that individual, be it skinny or larger. For Ceri, her slim body is read by others in the same way the skinny body within celebrity magazines is read; however, Ceri constructs her body management as 'healthy' in comparison with those slim girls who don't eat enough and are 'unhealthy'.

The notion that the media is part of the way in which 'health' and 'healthy eating' is taught to young people is well documented (Evans *et al*, 2008). The media are now considered to have a moral responsibility to positively endorse 'healthy' images and messages to young women, which the discursive construction and celebration of the curvy body in celebrity magazines, and the moralising tone in which this is done, can be seen as a part of. The health drive in the wider media is also predicated along class lines, encouraging the working class to aspire to a more 'healthy' (and therefore more 'moral') lifestyle traditionally associated with the 'middle class' body (MacDonald, 2003). The young women themselves also make this link between the working class body and poor health, particularly applying this to the figure of the 'chav':

Sam: I heard a mother say to a little kid in a pram, 'no you're not having a MacDonald's, you had one yesterday, you can have a Gregg's', I was like that [laughter]. And she went and got it a sausage roll from Greggs because she had a MacDonald's the day before. And I just think, if you got all these chavvy mothers, with like 15 of them up the duff, then they're just feeding their kids with junk, coz they haven't been taught how to cook and that. Of course then they're gonna be obese. I'm not saying all our kids come from that, but it is quite, a lot.

Ceri: I think it's an education thing, which is why when Jamie Oliver was doing that school dinners thing, I thought that was good, because if kids aren't getting it at home, like the right fruit and veg and that, then at least someone is making them eat properly.

Sam: Yeah, and what is that new advert with the plasticine, and they're like, 60 minutes, and they're not saying, right 60 minutes and you got to run for an hour,

they're saying throughout the day, innit, so they're trying to say, like promoting a healthy lifestyle like...

-Tinsworth Girls (Having dinner in local pub)

Here, Sam clearly associates the lifestyle of the 'chav' with an unhealthy diet made of 'junk', due to a lack of awareness on the part of stereotypically working class mothers who can't cook or teach their child about healthy eating. The way in which the disreputable working class woman (the chavvy mother) is constructed within their account as unhealthy and 'unknowing', serves to distinguish themselves from this representation and present themselves as 'healthy', 'disciplined', and above all, 'knowing' and in possession of this valuable element of cultural and corporeal capital. Furthermore, constructing the body in relation to the discourse of 'health' serves to reinforce a particular amount of body discipline and management as 'normal': bodily labour performed in the process of being 'healthy' is morally valued, whereas labour performed in the process of vanity is not.

Just as the skinny body was intrinsically linked to psychological weakness within celebrity magazines, the curvy body is constructed as a sign of psychological strength. Curvy women are presented as 'happy', encompassing the discourses of health and well-being that operate in wider society (Evans *et al.*, 2008). The body management technique of 'balance' and 'moderation' we have seen the Tinsworth girls advocate, produces 'happy' women who are not putting too much 'pressure' on themselves to be thin by over-exercising and denying themselves the pleasure of food. The extracts below are examples of the way in which the young woman in the curvy, healthy body is constructed as 'happy' by the girls:

Vanessa: Curvy girls are happier, and that's true. I think.

Mel: Yeah, like when you're curvy you get to look sexy, but you eat the occasional bar of chocolate or burger or Chinese or whatever, so you're happy.

-Ashpool Girls (Having lunch in a café)

Ceri: I don't believe in faddy diets at all, I think the only good way to do it is good food and exercise, and not being too strict with it all. Like, if you wanna bar of chocolate, then have one if it'll make you happy!

Sian: Which chocolate certainly does!

-Tinsworth Girls (Over lunch in a pub)

Amy: [Reads] 'It's cool to be curvy', well yeah, it is at last, thank god.

Katie: Yeah, I think it's more accepted now that women have curves, and that they look better like that.

Lilly: Yeah, they look much healthier and happier. You wanna be happy in your body for other people to be happy with you.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Here, the young women can be seen to link healthy body management with 'happiness', in comparison to the unhappiness signified by 'out of control' bodies. As their talk demonstrates, not being 'obsessed' about their bodies, and allowing themselves chocolate and burgers *in moderation*, is the key to being happy and healthy. This healthy attitude is regarded as 'naturally' and effortlessly producing a 'healthy' body: as such, the young women display a fatalistic attitude towards their bodies that has clear links with this discursive construction of a healthy, normal female body:

Katie: The thing is if you're happy about your body, it's like, you won't try and lose weight, it'll just happen...

Lilly: You'll just enjoy yourself, then won't you?

Katie: Yeah.

Amy: I don't think you'd notice it anyway, if you were happy, you know.

Katie: If you're always complaining about your body then people take more notice of it.

-Molefield Girls (Having coffee)

Sam: Like, I've always been bigger [approx. size 12], my weight doesn't really fluctuate that much, so like, this is just the size I'm meant to be, I guess.

Ceri: Yeah, that's like me, no matter what I eat or do I stay pretty much the same, so this is just my natural weight.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over dinner in the local pub)

In these extracts, the young women invoke the idea that there is a 'natural' and 'predestined' weight they are 'meant to be' as justification for not being 'skinny'. In this chapter I have demonstrated that bodily management and discipline is a significant part of their everyday lives, which was particularly apparent in their accounts of themselves and their presentation of self in everyday life. In group contexts, however, the girls invoke the language of popular feminism to account for their bodies, as in the extracts above, which can be understood as 'performances' that are in keeping with the discourse of the body within the magazines and wider postfeminist culture. Furthermore, the fatalistic attitude the young women exhibit towards their bodies above could also be seen as a way of justifying their failure to

reproduce the slender, toned, curvy female body which is culturally and socially constructed as 'normal' and representative of 'real', average women.

Faking it: Surgery and Authenticity

Given the importance of the 'authenticity' of the female body, it is unsurprising that my analysis revealed that cosmetic or plastic surgery is vilified within celebrity magazines on the basis of its artifice. My analysis revealed that the bodies of celebrities who had had cosmetic surgery were ridiculed and shamed in frequent features that frame cosmetic surgery as taking the quest for body perfection too far. The young women also replicate this discourse in their negotiation of the magazines in the extracts below, branding celebrities with breast implants and other surgical procedures as 'fake':

Katie: She's [Victoria Beckham] too fake.

Lilly: She's had too much surgery haven't she?

Katie: Yeah, way too much, it looks terrible. Like, her boobs, they're just round, and they're like balls, and that's just not natural is it, do you know what I mean?

-Molefield Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Rhian: My god look, Jordan's planning more surgery!

Diana: Think that's the only thing I don't like about her, all the surgery.

Kelly: So you really don't like the idea of plastic surgery then?

Diana: No, I think...

Rhian: I don't see the point in it I don't.

Diana: No, its like people like you for who you are not...

Rhian: Not for what you look like

Diana: Yeah, it's like you're trying to be someone else or something.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Ceri: Like, Audrina's [Partridge] got fake boobs, haven't she. Like, no one that slim has boobs like that.

Rachel: No, definitely fake boobs.

Sam: I hate to see fake boobs on slim people, I just don't think they look right.

Sian: Like Katie Price, we're all used to it now, but if you think about it, she just looks stupid...she looked really pretty and nice natural, like, before she started having surgery.

Sam: Yeah, she did didn't she, there was just no need.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In these extracts the young women's dedication to the discourse of authenticity to interpret the female body is clear, and in the cases of the celebrities discussed above, they emphasise the attractiveness of their bodies *before* they had surgery. The body can also be seen to be linked to the self in these extracts, particularly in Diana's reinforcement of the enduring popular discourse that 'people should like you for who you are, not what you look like'.

However, a wider discourse that represents the working class body as excessive could also be in operation in the young women's position in relation to cosmetic surgery.

As Tyler and Bennett note (2010), large surgically enhanced breasts are a signifier of working class 'chav' celebrity due to their association with glamour modelling and pornography. They cite Shane Watson's article for *The Sunday Times* as an example

of this perception: 'as class indicators go, you can't beat a pair of breasts...The size and shape of boobs are sure-fire ways of placing someone on the social spectrum' (2006, cited in Tyler and Bennett, 2010:386). Unrealistic-looking, large, 'fake' breasts have become one of the signifiers of the unrespectable working class body within popular culture. The young women's attempts to put distance between their own bodies and these bodies in the extracts above can be understood as a psychosocial defence against the implication that this is what their working class bodies might become.

However, whilst cosmetic surgery is almost always constructed negatively within celebrity magazines, there were times in the young women's discussions that cosmetic surgery was framed positively. Vanessa, of the Ashpool Girls, openly 'admitted' to wanting a boob job, and many of the mums were less damning of the surgery undergone by celebrities. The proviso of this positive framing was that the surgery 'looked' natural, i.e. it was a performance that was in keeping with the aesthetic of the curvy, normal, body. For example, in their comparison of the breast enhancements of Katie Price and her sister, the young women demonstrate the way in which cosmetic surgery can be legitimised:

Lilly: Her sister looks better than her coz she looks more natural like, she haven't had nothing done to her had she?

Katie: She's had one boob job.

Lilly: Oh it didn't look like she had to me, she looked natural.

Katie: Like if you take it little steps [at a time] but she went from being quite small

Amy: [yeah]

Katie: to really big, whereas her sister's look more natural.

Lilly: Hmmm, yeah they do look natural.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Katie Price's sister, although she has had a boob job, is considered more 'natural' than Katie's cosmetic procedure by the young women, and on that basis, the surgery is accepted and legitimated. Furthermore, the young women also appeared to sanction cosmetic surgery for any woman who significantly deviated from the curvy ideal before having surgery, with surgery seen as a 'corrective' measure for fixing flabby stomachs or saggy and non-existent boobs. It is interesting that the young mothers appeared to be significantly less 'anti-surgery' than the other groups of young women: in the extract below the young mums demonstrate the way in which motherhood can also make cosmetic surgery legitimate:

Laura: See with these two pictures here right, 'real versus fake', it's gotta be fake right innit, coz they couldn't have picked more saggy looking boobs without a bra!

[Laughter]

Sophie: Let's have a look.

Laura: See which ones you gonna pick? You'd go for fake, well I know I would, with my saggy tits!

Holly: I would never have considered surgery before, but after having kids, I so would have a boob job given the chance.

Kathy: Me too, John's best friend's wife has got fake boobs and they look great, really natural, like I would never have considered it before, but now I'm starting to.

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

The extract above would suggest that having a baby has changed their outlook on cosmetic surgery: Holly claims she had never considered surgery before motherhood, however the visible signifiers of motherhood now etched on her body mean that she would consider surgery in order to revert back to the body she had before having children. The changes motherhood brings to the body changes the way in which young women relate to their bodies, as this chapter has demonstrated, and consequently the way they consider cosmetic surgery and its potential to revert their bodies back to their 'natural' state before having children. Thus, cosmetic surgery is legitimised so long as it appears 'natural' and is 'hidden' by its conformity to the curvy aesthetic. I will now discuss the way in which other, more everyday forms of bodily labour must also be hidden.

Hidden Labour

The discourses of 'authenticity' and 'health' that are used to construct the 'curvy' and 'natural' female body within celebrity magazines also serve to conceal the significant amount of physical and emotional labour that goes into its production. We have already seen many of the young women talk about the way in which they physically regulate their own bodies, and the positive and negative affects of such labour. A particular amount of bodily discipline is normalised both within celebrity magazines and the young women's accounts, which is why the significant labour is often left 'unsaid' or constructed in relation to 'everydayness'. Sometimes the girls recognise this contradiction between what is presented as 'effortless', and the lived reality of bodily management. The extract below shows the girls' response to a picture of

Annalynne McCord, whose body was classified as 'normal' by the magazine they are reading:

Sam: But then if you eat all the fruit and veg in the world that is going to the gym and that is working out.

Rachel: Oh yeah, definitely.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Here, the young women highlight their understanding of the way in which the labour behind Annalynne's body is hidden through its representation as 'natural'. Whilst in group sessions the young women mainly constructed the body through the same discourses as celebrity magazines, there were occasions in group contexts with the Ashpool girls in which some behaviours linked to eating disorders were normalised, as in the extract below:

Mel: I tried to make myself sick, like eating and then making yourself sick, I used to do that.

Kelly: Did you?

Mel: I don't do it anymore.

Kelly: So why did you used to do that?

Mel: To lose weight innit?

Tasha: It doesn't really work though, coz you'll be sick...

Mel: It does work.

Tasha: It doesn't, because as soon as you start eating again you pile it all back on...

Vanessa: Yeah, but then you're throwing it all back up, I tried it it's horrible.

Tasha: Is that what you did then?

Julia: You did it? Why the hell would you do it? [laughter]

Vanessa: No I did not say that. I said I tried it, nothing come up coz it...

Mel: I only used to do it for a couple of months.

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in School Sixth Form common room)

The way in which we have seen the young women deride and morally judge the pathological body practices of celebrities is in contrast to the way in which Mel and Vanessa describe their own practices in the extract above. As this conversation took place in a group context, it is significant that Vanessa tries to defend against the psychological ‘weakness’ associated with eating disorders by aggressively saying that she only *tried* to make herself sick, but was unable to do so. Mel also appears to attempt to ‘save face’ by emphasising that she doesn’t do it anymore. Thus, whilst in one sense, the behaviours of eating disorders are normalised and part of the ‘pain of doing girl’ (McRobbie, 2009) in Mel and Vanessa’s disclosures, they also run counter to the ‘group morality’ which is premised on ‘sensible’ and healthy eating behaviours (as voiced by Tasha’s assertion that making yourself sick does not make you lose weight). Whilst Mel and Vanessa’s disclosures can be understood as symptomatic of McRobbie’s (2009) postfeminist melancholia and the way in which pathology is normalised, I argue that these young women, as working class and therefore not part of the ‘postfeminist masquerade’, and their disclosures should be interpreted differently. It may be that their normalisation of female pathology can be understood not as a response to the loss of feminism, but as indicative of the emotional (and physical) labour involved in the presentation and performance of a ‘respectable’ working class body free from signs of ‘excess’ and artifice.

In light of this, it is interesting to note that Mel's disclosure above, as a size 14-16 girl, is not questioned by the other girls where as Vanessa's disclosure, who is the smallest of the group at around a size 6, is regarded as 'illegitimate' and subject to ridicule. Vanessa defends against this ridicule by adding 2 or 3 dress sizes to the construction of her body:

Vanessa: No curvier, I'd rather be.

Tasha: The one who's saying, she's like a size six saying 'I need to go on a diet'.

Vanessa: I ain't a size 6!

Julia: Size 8 absolute max.

Vanessa: 10/12, more like a 12.

Tasha: No you're not.

Vanessa: I am too! I am, I've got a 'Beyonce bum', I have!

Tasha: No you're not, no way. And you certainly do not have a Beyonce bum! It's so flat you could eat off your bum [laughter].

Julia: She wears baggy stuff man! You're skinny...

Vanessa: I want a boob job though.

Kelly: Do you really? How big would you want to be?

Tasha: Double D!

Vanessa: No, only a little bit, coz I haven't...

Tasha: You'll grow, just coz Beeny [a boy] said you got small boobs.

Vanessa: My cousins have got bigger boobs than me and they're 12. They're sexier than I am!

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in the Sixth Form common room)

In the extract above, Vanessa again aggressively defends against being skinny, and claims to have a 'Beyonce Bum', which the other girls dispute. So important are curves to Vanessa that she claims she would like cosmetic surgery to achieve the ample breasts of the 'normal' female body, which goes against the dominant construction of the female body as 'natural'. Vanessa also links the curvy figure with 'womanliness', and sees a lack of curves as a signifier of immaturity. As young women on the cusp between girlhood and womanhood, the 'curvy' figure has particular appeal to this group of girls who are eager to competently perform 'grown-up' femininity (Renold, 2005; Driscoll, 2002). There is also an indication in the extract above that a curvy body is a signifier of a mature feminine *sexual* identity: Tasha's comment indicates that 'Beeny' (an older boy) has been teasing Vanessa for having small boobs. It is to the construction of the curvy body as 'sexy' I now turn.

Sexiness and the 'Gaze'

Much of the feminist work exploring gender and the media discussed in Chapter Two emphasised the current cultural emphasis on young women being 'sexy' (Gill, 2003, 2007; Levy, 2006; Walter, 2010), which is often read through the discourse of 'empowerment' as a sign of young women's 'equality'. Gill (2003) highlights the way in which sexual objectification has become sexual subjectification in postfeminist culture, and argues that young women have become complicit in their own sexual exploitation as a result. However, Hakim (2010) claims that 'erotic capital', as 'a combination of aesthetic, visual, physical, social, and sexual attractiveness to other members of your society, and especially to members of the opposite sex' (2010:3), is

a form of capital particularly available for women to use *over* men to their advantage in a number of social situations. There are many elements to Hakim's (2010) conceptualisation of 'erotic capital', and this thesis will focus primarily on 'beauty' (in the following chapter), 'sexual attractiveness' (discussed here in relation to a 'sexy body'), and 'social presentation' (discussed in Chapter Seven in relation to fashion and style).

My analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that the curvy bodies of particular celebrities are culturally constructed as 'sexy', particularly in their striking visual and discursive juxtaposition with 'skinny', shapeless bodies. Above, I explored the way in which the young women's objection to the 'skinny' body was not just on the grounds of health, but also on the grounds of attractiveness and a lack of femininity. What was interesting about their discussion of the 'anti-skinny' discourse was their social construction of it in relation to the magazines and to each other, not in relation to what *men* think. However, sexual attractiveness, or 'erotic' capital, is a significant component of the cultural and social construction of the 'curvy' female body. In the extracts below, the young women construct the curvy body as attractive to men:

Diana: Curvy figures are definitely sexier. And not all men go for skinny women, do they?

Rhian: Yeah. You do sometimes wish you could be skinny, but then all the boys do seem to like curvier girls, like.

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in café)

Sam: A real woman has some curves to hold on to, Dan is always grabbing at my flab! He loves it.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over drinks in the local pub)

Mel: Girls with curves are sexy, like skinny girls like Cheryl Cole just aren't sexy at all.

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Thus, the 'desirability' of the curvy female body lies in its appeal to men: in *Heat's* beach body survey (issue 523), men were asked their opinion on a range of female body shapes. The survey revealed that skinny women, women who are 'straight up and down', women with 'boyish' figures, and tattooed women are the least attractive to men, whereas 'pear-shaped', 'curvy', 'regular', and 'big bummed' figures get the thumbs up. The 'curvy' body shape has long been the male ideal of the female form (MacDonald, 2003), and I argue that the shift back to the 'curvy' female body that I highlight in my analysis of celebrity magazines (and in the young women's social construction of the body) can be linked to the masquerade identified by Riviere (1989) and developed by McRobbie (2009). Applying this concept to my analysis, I argue that that the current cultural focus on the curvy body can be linked to the need to protect a recognisable and traditional form of femininity that neutralises the threat posed to patriarchy by women's participation in the symbolically male terrains of work, politics and intellectual thought. The process of producing these bodies reduces the construction of femininity back to the 'trivial' concerns of the body (Grosz, 1994), and place women firmly back within the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Thus, whilst this thesis recognises the literature on female sexuality and 'empowerment' (Hakim, 2010; Baumgardner and Richards, 2000), it can hardly be ignored that this shift back to the 'curvier' female body has long been the *male* ideal (Gill, 2007).

Indeed, young women utilise the curvy discourse of the female body when considering the appeal of their own bodies to men:

Mel: It matters to me anyway, what they [men] think about me.

Kelly: Do you think men prefer bigger girls?

Mel: I hope so! It's something to hang on to innit?

Tasha: Yeah, like my boyfriend, I always say to my boyfriend that I wanna lose weight, and he goes 'no', but my legs, coz the top of my legs they're really thick [Vanessa: I think that], and I got quite big hips, and he's like, 'no don't lose weight, don't lose weight'. And then people like, boys like big bums [laughs].

Mel: Look at that [in magazine], 'I need some curves for a woman to do anything...'

Tasha: Yeah, men like curves, that's why I don't want to be really skinny. Like, my boyfriend is skinny, but I don't feel awkward around him at all, I don't think, 'he's really skinny and I'm not as skinny as him' or anything like that.

Mel: Same as me, like, with my ex he was quite thin, and I didn't, he made me feel normal like, do you get what I mean, and that's why I liked being with him. But my other ex, Billy, he's like that [holds finger up], and I didn't like being around him like coz I felt really self-conscious, like.

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

In the extract above, the girls explicitly construct their desire for curves to their desire to be attractive to men: their perception that men don't find 'skinny' women attractive is the motivation behind wanting to have a 'curvier' physique. Earlier in this chapter, Sian also revealed that her boyfriend encouraged her to put on weight just as the girls claim their boyfriends encourage them not to lose weight in the extract above.

However, above Mel significantly points out that being 'bigger' than the man you are with can be the cause of some anxiety, unless the man makes the woman feel 'normal'. Berger's famous quote 'Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at' (2003:38) is particularly poignant here, as the young women seem to display an acute awareness of the way in which men perceive their bodies. Berger (2003) proposes that this determines not only relations between men and women, but also the relation of women to themselves, and claims that 'the surveyor of woman in herself is male' (2003:38).

What is interesting in relation to the way in which the young women negotiate the magazines is that this gaze is overwhelmingly *female*: young women are seemingly gaining 'pleasure' from looking at (and identifying with and critiquing) other women's bodies. As a media form primarily consumed by women, it is interesting to note the spectacularly sexual nature of the images of female celebrities within the magazines (in their bikini's, often on a beach or in the water), yet my analysis of the magazines revealed that the framing of these images is not sexual. This complicates much of psychoanalytic literature on the 'gaze', which traditionally argues that the woman is presented as 'icon', displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men (Mulvey, 2003). Recently, McRobbie (2009) has also argued that, unlike the cinema analysed by Mulvey (2003), the male gaze does not have a presiding presence in all media, specifically referring to the 'fashion image'. Using the work of Fuss (1994 in McRobbie, 2009), she argues that, whilst it may look like women come to gaze upon images of other women 'as though they were lesbians', homosexual desire is generated precisely so that it can be properly eliminated.

In the extracts below, the young women reflect upon the way in which they gaze at celebrities' bodies in these magazines, and the way in which they look at other women's bodies in their everyday lives:

Ceri: It is a bit weird I think sometimes that we sit here and stare at other women in their bikinis, but it's not like its pervy or anything.

-Tinsworth Girls (1st Reading Group)

Mel: Like if I say, 'you look nice', or 'you've got a nice arse' to Vikki, all boys call us lesbians. But, at the end of the day, why would we want to become lesbians when we've got boyfriends, do you get what I mean? And, no offence if anyone is, but yuk [laughs], it's disgusting man, I'd never do that! [laughs]. Urgh, it just goes through me, man! Just thinking about it, ooh, like all the boys down in Cwmbach, they're on about that they know lesbians and that, and I'm just like that, 'just change the subject, just change the subject', coz it makes me feel physically sick.

-Ashpool Girls (Mel's Narrative Interview)

In the extracts above, the young women reflect upon the attention they pay to other women's bodies, and in doing so attempt to emphasise the way in which this gaze is not 'sexual'. Both girls, Ceri to a lesser extent, express sexual disgust at the implication that their comments about another girls' body might be interpreted as 'sexual'. This reinforces the argument that homosexual desire is culturally invoked precisely so that it can be eliminated (McRobbie, 2009), and highlights the way in which wider heteronormativity (Butler, 1990) operates in the way in which these young women distance themselves from the homosexual female gaze.

This distance is also implicit in many of the other young women's accounts of the way in which they gaze upon other women's bodies. For example, in the extract below Sam describes the way in which she looks at other women in everyday life:

Sam: I'm always looking at other women, though, Dana tells me off because he says I'm giving them dirty looks, but I'm not, I'm just thinking, 'oh she's got a nice figure' or 'that top really suits her' or whatever, half the time I don't even know I'm doing it. Although sometimes I admit I am thinking, 'oh my god, look at the state of her'.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

Here, Sam describes the same techniques of 'judgement' that are used both within celebrity gossip magazines, and the way in which the young women interpret them. Judging a woman's figure and the way in which she is dressed (further discussed in Chapter Seven) is so embedded within the female psyche that Sam claims she doesn't even know she is doing it. As such, the way in which young women gaze upon and judge the bodies of celebrities in magazines is one way in which these wider discourses of moral judgement embedded in their everyday lives become visible and known. McRobbie (2009) has noted that postfeminist culture turns away from male desire, but in no perceivable direction. Whilst this study has shown that male approval is still a significant part of the gaze, it also demonstrates the significance of the female-to-female gaze to the way in which these young women can be understood to socially construct their bodies. As Chapter Two highlighted, the way in which girls police their own and each others' bodies is an established theme in empirical studies of young female peer cultures (Hey, 1997; Ringrose, 2008, 2010). The way in which young women interpret the bodies of celebrities is one way in which these

'unconscious' judgements and practices become visible, as the empirical data from this study shows.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way in which the female body is culturally and socially constructed, and has traced a recent shift in the discursive construction of the body away from the skinny, androgynous female body towards the curvy yet toned version of the female form. Informed by an analysis of celebrity magazines, this chapter reveals the 'curvy' figure to be the current cultural and social 'norm': skinny bodies are pathologised, ridiculed and shamed, and perceived as 'unhealthy', 'unhappy', and 'unreal'. The young women themselves not only concur with this cultural construction, but also actively defend against accusations that their own bodies are 'too skinny' or 'too fat', employing techniques of bodily management and performance in everyday life to ensure their bodies cannot be considered in this way.

However, my magazine analysis revealed that bodily discipline is both pathologised *and* normalised: as such, this chapter has also explored the way in which 'unruly' bodies are culturally and socially constructed. Furthermore, most of the young women engaged in considerable bodily discipline that is 'normalised' in their accounts of subjectivity and everyday life via the curvy body's construction through discourses of health. However, this research also highlights the way in which the young mothers' social construction of the body was particularly contradictory. In one sense, their experiences seemed to represent a legitimate reprieve from the heavily regulated body, where as their accounts of bodily subjectivity suggested the affects of

this were particularly painful, and these young mothers longed for the regulated bodies they inhabited before becoming mothers.

Furthermore, this chapter has argued that 'sexiness' is key to the construction of the curvy body: this shift back to the curvy, heavily regulated body seeks to re-associate women with the trivialities of the body (Grosz, 1994), and neutralise the threat that 'successful' young women pose to gender relations by reverting back to a recognisable and unthreatening form of femininity (McRobbie, 2009). However, the appropriation of 'sexy' by these young women is particularly problematic: young working class women's performances of 'sexy' often render them 'sluts' and 'slags' (Hey, 1997; Walkerdine, *et al.*, 2001). These young women's ability to construct a 'curvy' body (although not excessively so) is the only legitimate way of performing 'sexy' since, as the following two chapters will demonstrate, other avenues of performing 'sexy' (through makeup and clothes) represent uncertain territory for these young working class women.

Chapter Six

'Real' Beauty: The Social and Cultural Construction of 'Natural Beauty'

Introduction

Typically, celebrities are represented as 'the beautiful people'. They are also the people who are used to market beauty products to us on a daily basis (Pringle, 2004). In this chapter, I move the focus away from the shape and size of the body to the cosmetic practice of 'making up' the body, particularly the face. Synott (1989: 607) has argued that 'the face, as unique, physical, malleable and public, is the prime symbol of the self'. Given this, many have argued that the signifiers of beauty vary according to age and class (Black and Sharma, 2001), and this chapter will explore the ways in which beauty in celebrity magazines is constructed in relation to representations of working class beauty cultures, and the ways in these discourses operate in young working class women's lived experience of 'making up'.

It is a well-documented argument, both within academia and the popular press, that the contemporary media creates idealised and unrealistic images of beauty that 'ordinary' women aspire, but will ultimately fail, to achieve (Wolf, 1991). As an example of the way in which feminism has been 'taken into account' (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009), there has been a populist call for more images of 'real' and 'ordinary' women in the media. For example, beauty brand *Dove* has run a 'campaign for real beauty' to provide more 'positive' and realistic role models for women. The discourse of 'natural beauty' that emerged from my analysis of celebrity magazines builds on this populist call for 'real' beauty. Its construction via the broader discourse

of authenticity contributes to the way in which ‘natural’ beauty can be seen to have particular class inflections, and as such has particular resonances with the moral values of working class girls (as discussed in Chapter Four). Thus, this chapter will explore the way in which the young women take up and resist particular (classed) positions in relation to discourses of beauty within celebrity culture.

‘Fake Faces’: Makeup, Artifice and Sexuality

From my analysis of celebrity magazines, I identified a contradictory and complex discursive construction of beauty. Within these magazines, there is a persistent mockery and undermining of the ‘constructed’ look, yet also a demonstration that what is underneath is still not ‘beautiful’. This section will outline the way in which the process of ‘making up’ is constructed as ‘artificial’, and the wearer rendered not only ‘fake’ but also ‘tasteless’, drawing on wider cultural representations of working class women as trashy and unrespectable (Skeggs, 1997).

Slappers and Oompa Lumpas

Many commentators have noted how from the late 1980s, the role of beauty for women began to change from achieving an aesthetic designed to attract men, to beauty as a means of self-improvement, confidence and pleasure (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1987; Radner, 1989). This is in keeping with many postfeminist and third wave arguments (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000) surrounding beautification and the self, and sits in contrast with first and second wave feminist arguments that regarded beautification as a practice designed to control and enslave women (Greer,

1993). Like ideals of the female body, the aesthetics of female beauty vary over time: whereas the bright eye shadow and shocking pink blusher and lipstick of the 1980s was once in fashion, now it is the very antithesis of 'beauty'. From my analysis of celebrity magazines, I argue that 'natural' beauty is the new cultural dominant, with representations of beautification to 'excess' discursively constructed in relation to classed representations of beauty.

In Chapter Two, I explored the work of McRobbie (2009) and her concept of the 'Postfeminist Masquerade', which she argues is the new cultural dominant. Within the 'masquerade', young women construct and present performances of 'hyperfemininity' based on a regime of 'self-perfectability', in which the fashion-beauty complex plays a crucial role. Furthermore, McRobbie claims that 'the new masquerade constantly refers to its own artifice... [and] draws attention to its own crafting and performance' (2009:66-7). However, the discourse of 'natural beauty' that emerged from my analysis of celebrity magazines renders McRobbie's (2009) notion of the 'postfeminist masquerade' more complex in the ways it can be seen to be lived, since any reference to crafting and performance is constructed as female pathology and the ultimate betrayal of the 'authentic' self.

Wearing too much makeup is one of the most significant crimes women can commit against the discourse of natural beauty. The rejection of 'artifice' within female beauty cultures is not specific to the discourse of natural beauty I found within celebrity magazines. For example, BBC3 programme *Snog, Marry, Avoid* takes both celebrities and ordinary young women judged to be guilty of the crime of conducting feminine beautification to excess (too much makeup, too much fake tan, too little

clothing), and parades them to the male public who are asked whether they would rather snog, marry, or avoid them. In keeping with the discourse of natural beauty, these girls are confronted with the news that the men would avoid them, and are subjected to a 'make-under' and transformed into 'natural beauties', at which point men say that they would 'snog' or 'marry' them. Celebrity Jodie Marsh¹ is hailed by the programme as 'the queen of fakery', and celebrity gossip magazines also frequently mock her for her excessive use of makeup and fake tan. The 'make-under' phenomenon can be understood in classed terms as a defence against the representation of 'white trash chav' so vilified in contemporary media culture (Tyler, 2008). Working class women's proximity to representations of excess can be seen to operate in the discourse of natural beauty, with girls in need of 'make-unders' described as 'common', and the end result 'classy' and sophisticated', mobilising the implicit moral categories of class. The young women's interpretations of celebrity beauty echo the rejection of excessive beauty practices, and validate the discourse of natural beauty, as the quotes below demonstrate:

Katie: Argh, [Jodie Marsh] she just looks awful! She totally does my head in she does. I mean, look at her right, she's just gross, she's too orange, and that does my head in too, and she wears way too much makeup. Oh my god, she looks like just such a slapper, look at her! [Laughs] I mean, she looks alright there though. She looks more real like that, coz she's hardly got any makeup on by there.

-Molefield Girls (2nd Reading Group)

¹ Jodie Marsh first found fame as a glamour model, and was famously pictured wearing a belt as a top. Unlike Katie Price, Jodie has not been so successful in forging a career as a reality television star, although she has tried. Jodie is critiqued for wearing too much makeup and fake tan and not enough clothes by the press, which leads to their classification of her as 'common', 'tasteless' and 'brash'.

Tasha: Jodie Marsh, I hate her, she's so ugly.

Mel: Do you watch Snog Marry Avoid? She went back to what she was after though even though she looked tidy.

Tasha: Now she looks like a slag again.

Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In these extracts, the young women display their identification with the discourse of natural beauty through their disassociation and dis-identification with the excessive and the artificial, in this case the grotesque and excessive representation of working class beauty practices embodied by Jodie Marsh.

Their interpretation of Jodie Marsh as wearing 'too much makeup' categorises her as 'ugly' and 'awful', whereas her 'natural' look is described as more 'real' and 'tidy' (which in the Welsh vernacular is used to indicate something is decent and acceptable). However, in the extracts above the young women also imply that excessive making up is directly associated with excessive female sexuality in their labelling of Jodie Marsh as a 'slapper' and a 'slag'. I argue that the discourses underpinning the make-under phenomenon are bound up with the classed notion of 'respectability' (Skeggs, 1997), particularly, I would argue, sexual respectability. The make-under phenomenon is a highly classed trend which attempts to regulate and transform the excessive beautification practices of working class women through shame and humiliation, in the same vein of the make-over format which transforms unkempt working class women into groomed ones (McRobbie, 2009). Again, the young working class women in this study clearly attempt to distance themselves from the typical working class representation of excessive beautification through their

mockery of celebrities such as Jodie Marsh and Katie Price. In doing so, they position themselves within the discourse of natural beauty as in possession of a respectable and authentic version of working class beauty.

Other aspects of beautification besides makeup also have the potential to become 'too much': fake tan has become extremely popular over the last ten years as the trend for 'golden skin' and an 'even all over glow' (*Heat* magazine, issue 519 p.54) has become increasingly fashionable. Pale skin, whilst once an indicator of a 'beautiful English rose', is now an indicator of ill-health within celebrity magazines. My analysis revealed the persistent mockery of those celebrities who were pale: for example *Heat* magazine says of pale, redhead actress Julianne Moore,

'get your shades out people, because Julianne Moore is literally beyond the pale. We even wondered if she was auditioning for Twilight her skin's that fair...has she never taken her clothes off near a source of ultraviolet light before?' (issue 536, p.36).

However, although the very name 'fake tan' suggests 'artifice', as with makeup 'fake' tan must look as though the tan were 'natural' and 'subtle' (*Heat* magazine issue 519, p.54), and women must not make the mistake of tanning to excess and looking very dark or 'orange'. Frequent features in celebrity magazines of celebrities who wear too much fake tan, again such as Katie Price and Jodie Marsh, attract significant attention from the young women in their consumption of the magazines, and these celebrities attract the same mockery and derision as those that wear too much makeup:

Katie: I hate to see people who are like, really orange. Like, you're meant to be the colour you are, and they change!

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

Diana: Oompa Lumpa Rhi, look...Gutted. Oh my gosh, now I know I wanna be brown, but I don't wanna be like that! That's just a lobster, innit, that's awful. Turn over, oh my gosh!

[Laughter]

Diana: Oh that's not fake tan.

Rhian: Yeah, that's fake tan that is.

Diana: No it's not she's painted her face orange, haven't she, that's no way a fake tan can go like that.

[Laughter]

Rhian: Oh my god, that's fake tan, that's awful, if that happened to me I wouldn't walk out of the house! I wouldn't walk out of my bedroom! [Laughs]

Diana: Yeah, you'd lock yourself in! Ah, that's nasty! [Laughs]

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Ceri: She [Jennifer Elliston] looks like a big Oompa Lumpa.

[Laughter]

Sam: That's not just Oompa Lumpa, that's a radioactive Oompa Lumpa!

-Tinsworth Girls (1st Reading Group)

In these extracts, the young women reproduce the cruel, shaming and mocking taunts, such as 'Oompa Lumpa', used by the magazines to describe women who use fake tan to excess so as to look 'unnatural'. So shameful do the girls consider looking 'orange' that Diana and Rhian joke that they would not leave their bedrooms if they

had put on too much fake tan. The proximity of the representation of the working class woman to excess and artifice has led Skeggs (1997) to note that working class women's relationship to femininity has always been produced through recourse to vulgarity, and that working class women's attempts to 'make up' are often read as an unconvincing 'drag act' (2001:298). Indeed, famous drag queen 'Jodie Harsh' takes inspiration from mimicking Jodie Marsh's excessive and vulgar beauty style, reinforcing Skeggs' (2001) argument. In the extracts above, the young women's ridicule of these working class female celebrities can be understood as an attempt to place significant distance between themselves and this artificial, tasteless, vulgar representation of working class femininity. The discourse of natural beauty within celebrity magazines enables them to do so, offering working class young women a mode of femininity that can facilitate a movement away from the sexual and vulgar, and offer a route into 'respectable' working class femininity (Skeggs, 1997).

The way in which the young women mock celebrities for wearing too much makeup and fake tan is reproduced in the way in which they talk about other young women they encounter in their everyday lives. Below are some extracts from the young women's narrative accounts that demonstrate the pervasiveness of this critique of other women:

Sam: You see some of the girls in work, and the amount of makeup they have on, they're orange, like on MAC² especially, and erm, it's just mad the amount they wear, and I think I used to wear a lot, but not compared to what they wear. They have absolutely loads on, but it looks daft, because it's like too much, and they have all

² MAC is a well-known makeup brand here in the UK.

their eyebrows, I know I draw mine in a bit, but they have like theirs really pencilled on.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

Ceri: I remember when we were in school, high school probably, and you had the sort of girls, in our school they were quite rough and slaggy normally, the ones who wore all the makeup, like caked it, you know shovelled it on.

-Tinsworth Girls (Ceri's Narrative Interview)

In the above extracts, the young women discuss 'too much' makeup in relation to representations of 'excess', and in doing so distance themselves from these 'other' working class young women, and place themselves within the discourse of 'natural' beauty. In her narrative interview, Ceri also notes the link between excessive makeup and excessive sexuality when she describes the girls in school who wore too much makeup as 'slaggy' and 'rough'. Again, in doing so, Ceri can be understood as defending against the possibility that she might be perceived as 'rough' and 'slaggy', and presenting herself and her appearance as sexually respectable in comparison to these other girls. In Sam's account, she can be understood to position herself as authentic in comparison with the over the top artifice of the girls on the makeup counters. Thus, the way in which these young women describe 'other' working class women as artificial and overly sexual is similar to the way in which they critique the over the top beautification of particular working class female stars within celebrity magazines. Both constructions of 'other' working class women are used to present themselves, through the discourse of natural beauty, as authentic, and above all, respectable.

Making up as growing up...

Given the clear association between makeup and sexuality drawn by the young women, it is unsurprising that many of the narratives of the young women contained stories in which parents and the school tried to police their makeup use in their teenage years. These could be understood as attempts to protect the innocence of 'girlhood', and to guard against the signification of a premature sexualised version of femininity as signified by makeup. The extracts below, taken from their narrative accounts, demonstrate the way in which their makeup use was policed by others:

Kat: 'But I think, the thing is with my mother, my mother thinks, still thinks, I put too much, yeah I think I do a bit sometimes, but only when I'm going out, like, not everyday. My mother still thinks that I put too much on, and my father is like, 'you're not going out like that' [laughter]...'

-Ashpool Girls (Kat's Narrative Interview)

Holly: I used to plaster so much on, erm, and everyone used to call me 'tango', and shout 'you've been tangoed' at me, and I remember in French class one of my friends saying, 'look at the difference between your hands and your face, your hands are really white and your face is really orange' and everyone laughing. And the teachers were always trying to make me take it off, coz the rules were that we weren't supposed to wear any makeup at school.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Ceri: I remember I used to go into school, and you know at that age as well, everyone's got like blue eye shadow, purple this, like nothing's discreet, you haven't mastered the idea that makeup's supposed to enhance you, you slap it on like a clown.

But my mum didn't let me wear makeup to school, so I used to put it on when I got there, and one day I forgot to take it off on the way home and she was like, 'what is that?' [laughs], and went mental.

-Tinsworth Girls (Ceri's Narrative Interview)

These stories are just some of the many examples of the way in which parents and the school policed excessive makeup use. Whilst it was mainly mothers that took up this role in the narratives, fathers also frequently featured as the 'protectors' of their daughters' sexuality in the well-known scenario of 'you're not going out like that...', as in Kat's account above. In conducting narrative interviews, I am able to gain access to *their* experiences of the same 'shame' that both they and the magazines project onto particular celebrities that wear too much makeup. Holly's experience in the extract above is particularly significant in terms of the 'shame' that was involved in everyone calling her 'tango', and her narrative goes on to recount a particularly public 'shaming' based on her excessive use of makeup:

Holly: And, in year 11, this stupid head of year we had decided to name me, 'little miss I love myself' in like the awards he gave out when we were leaving school, and, just because I wore too much makeup.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Thus, their narratives revealed the same 'policing' of makeup use in their lives by others as they and the magazines apply to the makeup use of celebrities, which can be understood as a way in which these wider social practices become more visible. For these young women, much of this 'policing' took place in their transition from

'girlhood' to 'young womanhood' in a bid to protect the 'innocence' of childhood, given makeup's social status as a signifier of an adult, heterosexual identity. The sexualisation of girlhood is explored in a number of feminist analyses (Gleeson and Frith, 2004; Renold, 2005; Egan and Hawkes, 2008; Coy, 2009), with much of this work noting young girls' rejection of 'childish' femininities in favour of mature sexual ones through the use of makeup and clothing.

Excessive makeup use was also linked to a 'childish' feminine identity in most of the young women's narratives, signifying a naïve, unknowing and immature young woman. Extracts from the young women's narratives shown below demonstrate that learning to 'makeup' is linked to the appropriation of an 'adult' femininity, and described in terms of a broader narrative of 'growing up':

Rhian: ...coz, it [wearing makeup] didn't really interest me, but coz my friends were wearing it it was like, ahh, I gotta start, you know, I'm growing up. So I thought I gotta make the effort now...I suppose that was when I started growing up... normally I just don't care but, now, I've learnt now when you grow up you gotto. Well, you haven't gotto, but, it's the thing really in't it? And you gotto make it look natural, like.

-Ashpool Girls (Rhian's Narrative Interview)

Tasha: Like, learning to wear makeup properly is part of growing up, I think. Like, when you're in year 8 and you've got an orange face and pink stripes and black eyes and that, once you've learned how to do it natural, like, you've sort of grown up.

-Ashpool Girls (Tasha's Narrative Interview)

These 'growth' narratives were particularly present in the accounts of the Ashpool Girls, who as the youngest group of girls in the study, can be understood as nearing the end of the transition from girlhood to young womanhood. Makeup can be seen as a 'rite of passage' into adult femininities in their accounts: Rhian's quote in particular demonstrates the compulsory nature of wearing makeup in relation to signifying 'maturity' within the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, the extract from Tasha above demonstrates that *competent* makeup application, in accordance with the dominant discourse of 'natural' beauty, is also associated with the appropriation of mature femininities, in comparison to the 'garish' and excessive makeup techniques of childish femininities. Here, the discourse of natural beauty is not only linked to performing respectability but also to performing 'maturity' and 'sophistication' as another way of defending against the excessive and the vulgar. 'Sophistication', whilst a highly classed concept, may not necessarily be an attempt to 'pass' as middle class: we have seen the young women note their disrespect for those working class women who attempt this in Chapter Four. Thus, performing 'sophistication' can be seen as a way in which young working class women can avoid those excessive and vulgar categorisations of working class femininity, and perform an acceptable version of working class femininity that is both respectable *and* authentic.

The narratives of all the young women in the study demonstrate that makeup is a perpetual 'learning curve', and no matter what age they were, they would always 'look back' on a naïve and clueless self in comparison to the cultural 'competence' they now have: As such, the Tinsworth Girls and the Molefield mums look back on

themselves at the age of the Ashpool girls and describe their beauty incompetence as a signifier of immaturity:

Sian: I used to think I looked natural back when I was 18, but looking back at pictures its like, what the hell was I doing [laughs]? So as I've gotten older, I've tried to make it a bit more subtle now, because you don't really need to do it, but when you're that age you think you do, but for some reason you think you look natural!

-Tinsworth Girls (Sian's Narrative Interview)

Holly: I've always been quite conscious that I wear quite a bit of makeup though, and that I shouldn't really wear so much. Obviously like I said in school people really picked on me for it, so when I went to college I really tried to tone it down and look natural, but when I look at pictures I still look orange with black eyes and red cheeks! It's only the last few years I've really learnt how to do it natural, like. Mind you, I'll probably look back in a few years on now and think I've got way too much on!

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

As the above extracts demonstrate, the construction of a 'natural' self is a perpetual project, and something which, despite the Ashpool girls' assertions, does not inherently 'occur' at a certain age, but is a continual process of construction. Indeed, Driscoll (2002) also notes the perpetual movement and becoming (in the Deleuzian sense) of girls: using Beauvoir's insights, she argues that feminine adolescence is never finalised, but coheres as a series of events that continually transforms the embodied self. Femininity, particularly making up, can therefore be understood as a 'process' that is continual and incessant throughout a woman's life, in which women are always learning new ways to perform 'woman' that supersede the old ways.

'Up for it': Makeup and sexual identities

Competent making up is also a signifier of a mature heterosexual feminine identity: given the link between makeup and sexuality, it is unsurprising that the young women discuss making up in relation to their discovery of 'boys'. Many of the young women's narratives of learning to makeup also included accounts of boys and boyfriends, as the quotes below demonstrate:

Jane: But er, yeah, I think about 14, I started going out and hanging out with boys and things, you know, you did wear make up then, it just went hand in hand.

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

Holly: I guess you did start wearing makeup to get boys' attention as well I suppose. All the pretty girls that the boys fancied wore makeup, so I guess everyone else thought that was the key to getting a boyfriend.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Kat: Like, all the popular girls were wearing makeup and they all had boyfriends and things, so I guess I started wearing makeup because they were, and I thought it might make boys notice me.

-Ashpool Girls (Kat's Narrative Interview)

For Jane, starting to wear makeup and beginning to go out with boys went 'hand in hand', and both Holly and Kat describe wearing makeup as a way of getting boys' attention. This highlights the problematic nature of arguments that construct beautification as a form of female empowerment and pleasure rather, than a practice performed for men (Radner, 1989), since the accounts of these young women reveal

that beautification is constructed in relation to both. Furthermore, Holly and Kat link makeup to 'social' capital, and describe makeup as a signifier of 'popularity', denoted by the ability to make oneself 'beautiful'. This 'hierarchy' of beauty of between women has long been a theme of feminist research (Wolf, 1991): for the young women in this research, 'making-up' acts as a key mode of distinction between young women based on their appeal and attractiveness to men.

Using makeup also acts as a signifier of sexual *availability* and being 'up for it' in the young women's narrative accounts, whereas a lack of makeup signifies sexual unavailability. Kathy below describes how this operated differently in her everyday life depending on when she had a boyfriend, and when she was single:

Kathy: It wasn't 'til I was 15, 16 and I first had a boyfriend properly that I was interested ...I think, because I had a boyfriend when I was 16 until I was 20, and I think then, if you had a boyfriend when you were young you don't tend to sort of do the scene of trying to be, you know I didn't have to go out, I didn't have to make an effort and that, because I was with, with him for so long. Then when we broke up I started to wear it again then, you know, when you went out on the pull and all that.

-Molefield Mums (Kathy's Narrative Interview)

Whilst many of the young women's narratives implied that 'making up' was a practice engaged in primarily for the self (Radner, 1989), their accounts also demonstrated the link between makeup and the desire to be desired. Sexual attractiveness and being (appropriately) 'sexy' was a significant component of the young women's narratives of the self, and was particularly linked to the way in which

they used makeup. In Kathy's account above, she describes the way in which she stopped wearing makeup when she had a boyfriend, and started wearing it again when she didn't have one. Similarly, many of the young women described a significant change in their beauty practices after a relationship break-up to signify their sexual availability to other men, boost their attractiveness to other men, and as a powerful signal to their ex-boyfriends of what they had let go:

Jane: Like, when we broke up, it was a gut-wrench. I remember going out and getting a drastic haircut, bleaching my hair blonde, always wearing makeup, and going on sunbeds like, every other day. I felt pretty good about myself then compared with when we were together, like, I sort of reinvented myself to be honest, which I've done a couple of times when I've broken up with people.

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

Sam: And, how you do when you have a rebound after you break up from a relationship, you decide to go out and completely change your look, and I decided I didn't like it so I dyed it dark brown and did my makeup all differently, just to show him what he was missing. And it worked, coz he came back [laughs].

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

In these extracts, the young women describe episodes of 'self-reinvention' after a relationship break-up, and whilst these periods are primarily constructed in relation to improving self-confidence, many were also constructed in relation to attracting a new man (or in Sam's case, getting the old one back). Thus, whilst the postfeminist discourse of 'self-perfection' as a route to self-fulfilment is clearly present in the young women's accounts of their beauty practices, it is contradicted by the way in

which making up is also a process carried out to receive (sexual) attention from men. In this sense, the desire to be desired can also be seen as a form of self-fulfilment in the young women's accounts. This clearly relates to psychoanalytic literature (Mulvey, 2003), which conceives of women's desire as the desire to represent and articulate masculine desire (Radner, 1989).

'You're so vain...'

A 'fake' face is also indicative of an inauthentic self, which is unsurprising considering that the face can be considered the prime symbol of the self (Synott, 1989), as previously discussed. In keeping with the focus on the importance of 'authenticity', the young women link a fake face with a fake self:

Kat: Jodie Marsh has had so much surgery, her face looks totally plastic, and all that bloody makeup she wears! She's fake herself, mind, so fake.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Above is just one example of many where the young women equate too much makeup to a 'fake' self: in this sense, makeup functions as a 'mask' which hides the 'real' self from the world. In their negotiation of images of celebrities, the young women deem 'masking' as unacceptable, which is unsurprising given their dedication to the discourse of authenticity that runs throughout celebrity magazines, as highlighted in Chapter Four. However, I shall demonstrate throughout this chapter the way in which 'authenticity' as applied to beauty practices is very much constructed, and as such, the

young women's narratives reveal the extent to which 'masking' must be adopted, albeit in a legitimised form within their working class habitus.

In their negotiation of celebrity magazines, the young women frequently made moral judgements on the 'personalities' of celebrities based on their interpretation of their face. In Chapter Four, I explored the girls' use of the phrase 'stuck up' and the importance of being 'down to earth': too much makeup was also interpreted by the young women as a signifier of being 'stuck up'. Even Jordan, whose working class roots made her a celebrity with which many of the young women identified, is subject to the moralising gaze that renders her 'up herself' because she wears too much makeup:

Sam: The one thing I don't like about Jordan right, is that she wears way too much makeup, and it makes her look fake. When she's not wearing much makeup she looks so much more down to earth, but when she wears all that slap she looks really up herself, like, she bloody loves herself...

-Tinsworth Girls (1st Reading Group)

In this extract, Sam draws upon those categories of being 'down-to-earth' and 'stuck up' that were explored in Chapter Four, whereby working class women who were seen to try too hard to perform femininity was read as 'fake' and performing an (unsuccessful) attempt to elevate themselves above other working class women. Being 'stuck up' in relation to beauty practices is also a way in which the young women classify a woman as 'vain'. The moral condemnation of vanity (signified by wearing too much makeup) was also incorporated into the young women's everyday

lives. Below, over lunch Sam describes the girls on the makeup counter in the department store in which she works, whom she labels as ‘up themselves’ and ‘vain’ because they wear too much makeup:

Sam: I remember one of the girls on the cosmetics counter, I goes, ‘I always look like a scruff in here’, and she goes, ‘yeah, I know’, I was like, ‘oh right then, thanks’.., but they all think they’re something special just because they work on the counters, and I don’t know how people go to them for help, because I wouldn’t want to, coz they’re so up their own arses, they’re really quite rude actually some of them. They wear so much makeup, and they are so vain and up themselves, really.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over lunch in pub)

Wearing makeup, which as I have already demonstrated is a compulsory part of the performance of heterosexual, mature femininity, also comes with the risk of being perceived as ‘stuck up’. Mel describes below the implications this has for the way in which she performs femininity herself:

Mel: ...because I never really liked what I looked like, but when I had makeup on I did, do you get what I mean? Does that sound too vain? Like I wouldn’t want to wear too much and for people to think I’m stuck up, like.

-Ashpool Girls (Mel’s Narrative Interview)

Mel is conscious that wearing makeup renders her intelligible as a heterosexual young woman, but at the same time is aware that other working class women may perceive her attempts to make-up as an unsuccessful and artificial attempt to elevate herself

above her working class female peers and ‘pass’ as middle class. As Chapter Two highlighted, postfeminist media culture encourages young women to ‘love themselves’ through making the most of themselves through body, beauty and fashion labour. However, for working class women, applying this discourse to their own subjectivities involves carefully negotiating the way in which their performances of ‘confidence’ when making up could be perceived as ‘stuck up’ and vain.

This is because the performance of any ‘beauty’, even natural beauty, is a performance or ‘masquerade’ of some kind. Thus, whilst in group contexts the young women demonstrate their dedication to the natural beauty discourse in their rejection of fakery and artifice, their accounts of their everyday lives reveal the extent to which beautification is a form of artifice. Below, Jane describes the way in which she uses makeup as a mask in the same way as celebrities who were criticised in the group sessions. However, Jane’s account contains no shame at her display of excess, and her sense of pleasure at this excess is out of line with the discourse of natural beauty:

Jane: But I love going out with the girls, I love all that. You know, all the girly stuff like straightening your hair for four hours before you go out, and then having to wash it and start over again coz you’ve just mucked it up too much [Laughter]. Caking on the makeup and going out and just being, quite brash really, and I’m quite a shy person and er, you just lose yourself don’t you?

Molefield Mums (Jane’s Narrative Interview)

‘Caking on the makeup’ and being ‘brash’ are precisely the kind of practices pathologised in the cultural construction of beauty I have described in celebrity gossip

magazines. Therefore, it is interesting to note the pleasure Jane describes in performing 'excess' and 'losing herself'. However, Jane's description of herself as 'shy' is not in keeping with the neo-liberal, postfeminist representation of the confident, self-assured young women that the 'girl power' discourse tells us she *should* be. Therefore, Jane's lack of 'shame' may be explainable by her feeling that she is presenting a self-confident young woman to the world: whilst this is a 'performance', it is in keeping with her interpretation of liberated, empowered femininity. Thus, in some instances, using makeup to excess to construct a confident self-assured presentation of self for working class women can be internally legitimated, even if it is not perceived as legitimate by others.

Jane's account speaks powerfully back to the literature regarding 'ladette' culture, which has explored the popular media's portrayal of 'troublesome' young femininities (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). The figure of the 'ladette' has clear working class connotations in its association with 'the excessive (drinking, smoking, sex), disruptive (social order), crude (swearing, rudeness), aggressive (verbal and physical), open (sexual) behaviours of unrespectable working class lifestyles' (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007:255). Whilst the young women are keen to defend against the representations of working class women as 'white trash chavs', what Jane describes above is a significant element of the representation of young female working class culture. The young women's accounts therefore present a contradiction in what young women *think* about making up, and their everyday practices and beauty cultures. Indeed, McRobbie (2009) claims that the figure of the 'phallic girl' (very similar to the appearance and dispositions of the 'ladette') is one of the means by which the 'new sexual contract' makes itself available to women, which enables women to adopt the

'habits' of masculinity without relinquishing their own desirability to men. However, whilst this may be considered a legitimate form of masking in their accounts of subjectivity, their position as working class makes the performance of 'phallic girl' less advantageous and more likely to be read as 'vulgar' and tasteless by many other working class, as well as middle class girls and young women.

Women without Makeup: Femininity and Health

The way in which 'masking' is not subjectively considered shameful (as it is in celebrity culture) can be understood in relation to the moralising discourse that is applied to celebrities and women when seen *without* makeup. Given the current focus on 'natural' femininity in celebrity culture, it is surprising that wearing no makeup is almost as unacceptable as wearing too much. Celebrity magazines' appetite for shots of celebrities 'off-guard, unkempt, unready' (Holmes, 2005) can be seen as a direct response to the populist critique of constructed and altered images of unattainable female perfection within the wider media. Indeed, whilst reading the magazines, the young women often questioned the 'reality' of the images contained within them. Thus, the celebrity gossip magazine market can be understood to fulfil a popular demand to represent celebrities as they 'really' are. This draws on a well-known second wave feminist argument, which championed the resistance of the pressure on women to engage in beautification, a practice that has long enslaved women (Greer, 1993), and seeks to undo all the good things that feminism has done for women materially and politically (Wolf, 1991). However, this section will reveal the complex and contradictory representation of the *truly* natural female face, and explore the way in which young women construct their own unmade faces.

'Rough as a dog': Mockery, shame and the unmade face

Every couple of months, *Heat* magazine runs a feature called 'stars without makeup', which seeks to represent female celebrities who normally wear a lot of makeup as 'ordinary' underneath, in a similar way to the make-under phenomenon in *Snog*, *Marry*, *Avoid*. However, these features are 'posed' shots rather than the paparazzi shots, and many of the young women considered these features 'unreal', doubting the extent to which celebrities were *truly* makeup free:

Katie: Like when they do a photo shoot of them without makeup on, like she looks like she's got mascara on by there, and blatantly got a bit of concealer and powder on.

Amy: Yeah, no one looks like that without makeup do they, they gotta have some on.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

In these features, the girls questioned the claim to authenticity of the images; however, the authenticity of 'stars without makeup' features that presented *un-posed* shots of celebrities were never questioned. Closer inspection of the images in these un-posed features revealed that it is clear that many of these women have been selected precisely because they *don't* look good without makeup. The contradiction within celebrity magazines that simultaneously celebrates celebrities without makeup as 'normal', and mocks them for looking 'rough', is also present within the young women's interpretation of these images:

Kelly: Do you like to see celebrities without make up?

Amy: Oh yeah.

Lilly: I find it funny I do, like she [Claudia Winkleman] looks rough as a dog there!

Katie: Yeah, it's well funny when you see celebrities looking rough without makeup.

Lilly: Like, look how different she [Fearne Cotton] looks without it, she looks well ugly, where as normally she's all glam.

Katie: It just makes you feel better knowing that they all ain't always gorgeous, and so you can have a good laugh at them looking rough. Like, she looks quite ugly there.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

In the reading group sessions, the young women replicated the mockery applied by the magazines to those unfortunate celebrities who aren't 'naturally beautiful', and do not look 'good' without makeup. In knocking celebrities off their pedestals in this way, it could be argued that celebrity gossip magazines deny those particular celebrities upward social mobility, and containing them within working class beauty cultures of too much, or in this case too little makeup. For my working class young women, seeing celebrities looking 'rough' without makeup provides reassurance that celebrities are 'just like them', yet also serves as a warning against going without makeup. As such, there were times when some young women 'confessed' to one another to feeling compelled to wear makeup everyday:

Katie: Oh I have to have makeup on everyday unfortunately.

Amy: Me too, I couldn't even pop to the shop without makeup on...

Katie: [Giggles] If I've got no make up on I'm like 'oh my god no I look really ugly!' I'm not that confident see, so I've gotta have some on to make myself feel good and I know you shouldn't but, you know, to have some confidence.

-Molefield Girls (Having coffee)

The 'pain' of doing girl (McRobbie, 2009) in the postfeminist context is clear in the extract above: their disclosures are against the postfeminist discourses about 'loving the skin you're in', and as such are expressed in a 'confessional' tone. Katie indicates that she *shouldn't* feel uncomfortable without makeup on, but needs it to feel confident, and even claims she feels 'ugly' without it. Given their ridicule of some of the celebrities without makeup (Fearne Cotton was also called 'ugly' by Lilly and Katie in the previous extract), it is unsurprising that the young women feel they are unattractive without makeup.

These confessions were more poignantly narrated in their accounts of everyday life, with makeup being the key aspect of their feminised selves. Making-up was a routine part of their everyday lives, and extracts from their narrative accounts below demonstrate the way in which makeup is a significant part of their construction and presentation of self:

Kat: I think makeup to me is like, I couldn't go outside of the door without it now...I just can't go out without straightening my hair, washing my hair... There's erm, I think makeup is quite important to a lot of girls, coz I know I wouldn't go outside the door without it.

-Ashpool Girls (Kat's Narrative Interview)

Sam: I wouldn't walk the dog without my makeup on, I can't do that [laughs]... I left my makeup at my boyfriend's, and I'd come home, realise I left it, and then had to drive all the way down to Cardiff just to get my makeup, coz I couldn't go to work the next day without it, can't be doing without my war paint [laughs].

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

Holly: 'But I can't go out to the shops or anything, I couldn't go without makeup on, or you know, it's silly like...but I couldn't go out with out makeup on you know, coz I just feel I look really terrible without it, really ugly and horrible, erm, and I just don't want anyone to see me like that. I mean I could run into someone I know. Even if I'm just hanging around the house, like if I have a day off and I'm just in with her, I just, yeah, I still put a bit of makeup on in case someone comes to the door or something, or one of my friends drops in for a cup of tea, I couldn't have them see me without some makeup on'.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

In these extracts, the young women describe the way in which they cannot leave the house, to go to the shops, or walk the dog without makeup for fear of being *seen*. There is a clear distinction drawn in the young women's accounts between 'inside' and 'outside' the house: in order to venture outside, the young women feel compelled to wear makeup as a strategy of 'social' survivability. Above, Sam describes her

makeup as her 'war paint', which is a common slang term for a lot of makeup. This term is interesting in relation to my argument that makeup acts as a form of social survivability for these young women: the 'mask' makeup provides is worn and subjectively legitimised to enable them to 'fight' in the battle that is social life. Furthermore, in terms of their class position, wearing makeup may also be a significant part of the 'battle' that is upward social mobility: within celebrity culture, successful and competent making up is equated with 'success' and 'employability' (McRobbie, 2009), and unsuccessful making up associated with failure and working class beauty cultures. Wearing (appropriate) makeup can therefore also be seen as a way of facilitating social mobility *without* denying the working class moral value of authenticity.

Given this link between social survivability and makeup, and the need for a 'public' face, the young women are drawing on the very same distinction my analysis revealed as key within celebrity magazines. 'Gossip' about celebrities works via a distinction between the inauthentic 'image' created by the star and PR machine, and the 'real' star behind the public façade. The front stage/ back stage dichotomy of Goffman (1990) can therefore be seen to operate in the way in which people relate to celebrity culture, wanting to see the 'real' individual rather than a constructed image. The distinction between the front stage and back stage self within celebrity culture reinforces the way in which it operates in everyday life, particularly with regards to femininity. Makeup is the primary way in which the young women distinguished their 'real' selves from the selves they use as a public face in their accounts of subjectivity. However, given that the 'real' self (without makeup) within celebrity magazines is simultaneously celebrated and ridiculed, it is unsurprising that the young

women's accounts are riddled with the same contradiction. The account of Holly above is full of repulsion at her 'real' face, and she uses words such as 'terrible' and 'horrible' to describe the way she looks and feels about herself, affects that were repeated across most of the young women's accounts. Being 'truly' real was not an option for most of these young women.

Appropriate femininities: Making up and Tomboyism

Thus far, I have demonstrated the way in which the young women embraced the discourse of natural beauty, which was simultaneously contradicted by the pressure they felt to makeup, and the negative affects of the unmade self. The accounts of the young women enabled me to identify several negative social responses that the young women feared: unacceptable femininity, undesirability, and ill-health. Makeup was a strategy used by the young women to avoid reprisals on the basis of these socially unacceptable criteria, and was therefore integral to the 'natural' self that they constructed, performed and presented to the world.

Firstly, many of the young women used natural makeup to present a 'valid' and socially acceptable version of femininity to the world. It is interesting to note that the dominant representation of femininity within celebrity magazines is stereotypically 'girly', and few representations deviated from this construction. Accounts of several of the young women contained a narrative which detailed their journey from socially unacceptable 'tomboy' identities, to acceptable 'girly' ones. For most, this was seen as a natural part of the transition from a childish femininity to a heterosexual, adult femininity, as in the extracts below:

Kat: I think, well, from 13 onwards because I was such a tomboy, I used to say to my father, 'I'll never wear makeup, I'll never wear makeup' but then I started then about 13 onwards I think. And then a lot of, like most of my friends were doing it as well, so that's when, everyone else was doing it, and you didn't want to be different and people still think you're a tomboy at like, 14.

-Ashpool Girls (Kat's Narrative Interview)

Jane: I didn't really bother with makeup as a child, coz I was a tomboy, so it wasn't 'til I was, pfff, 12 or 13 maybe that I raided my mother's makeup box and started messing about with different things, but erm, friends were wearing makeup before I was, so I was, I was still quite slow in that area...But I didn't really do the child thing, like my daughter does and she's four and she wears makeup, she's got makeup sets and she will sit in front of the mirror for an hour with you know, eye shadow up her forehead [laughter] and stuff, but I didn't really do that at all, I was very tomboyish, I liked playing football and that...But er, yeah, I think about 14, I started going out and hanging out with boys and things, you know, you did wear make up then...

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

Above are just two of the many 'tomboy to girly' stories told by the young women, which express their sense of their own 'difference' from other girls around them, who were beginning to appropriate a mature and socially valid heterosexual feminine identity. Fear of the childish label 'tomboy' (Renold, 2005; Paechter and Clark, 2007) motivated Kat's 'change' in her extract above, and for many of the young women who previously occupied a 'tomboy' subject position, 'fitting in' with the development of other young women by wearing makeup was a common theme.

Only one young woman in the study, Anne, still identified herself as a 'tomboy'. Her refusal to wear makeup is a strong part of her tomboy identity, and it was this that she used to differentiate herself from her 'girly' friends in her narrative account:

Anne: I don't do makeup, see, I'm like a tomboy... my friends always put makeup on, I'm like, 'why do you need to do that for, you don't need it', but they do it anyway, they put on loads. It's weird it is. My mother bought me makeup for Christmas see, so I said, 'I don't know why you bought me that, coz I don't wear it', but all my friends come over then, and they just started having it, so I just said, 'ah you may as well have it, I don't want it'.

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Account)

In the extract above, Anne identifies herself as a tomboy on the basis of her refusal to 'makeup' in a typically feminine way. The accounts of the other girls in the Ashpool group also define Anne by her 'tomboy' identity on the basis of her refusal to 'makeup':

Julia: Anne likes football, same as me, but I'm not a tomboy, Anne is, see, coz she don't wear makeup or do her hair or anything.

-Ashpool Girls (Having lunch in café)

Tasha: Anne's a tomboy she is, she doesn't wear makeup or like fashion or anything, like you've probably noticed, so she's different to the rest of us and so sometimes she doesn't seem as part of the group as everyone else. Mind you, at the ball, she actually looked like a girl for once [laughs].

-Ashpool Girls (Tasha's Narrative Interview)

In the above extracts, Julia and Tasha identify Anne by her 'difference' from themselves and the rest of the group on the basis of her lack of makeup. Anne's voice was notably absent from reading group sessions with celebrity magazines, and it is of note that most of the girls' talk in these sessions centred around femininity practices, something in which Anne has little personal investment. In her own narrative account, Anne talked about the pleasure she took in celebrity culture in terms of 'gossip' and stories, but expressed her dislike for all the features about makeup and clothes in the magazines. Her engagement and investment in 'gossip' culture can be seen as a tool of social survivability for Anne, since her refusal to make-up clearly places her at risk of being ostracised from a group which is very much predicated on feminine beautification practices. The term 'investment' here is used provide a psychosocial insight into Anne's engagement with 'gossip' discourses: drawing on the work of Henriques *et al.*, Ringrose (2007b) argues that the complex investments of subjects in discourses are not always conscious or will-full, but often are unconscious and not always under the control of subjects. Analysing the young women's 'investments' in celebrity discourses in this way will enable me to explore the 'dynamical, messy, contradictory positionings often outside the remit of our own will and desires' (Ringrose, 2007b:269).

The Ashpool girls' sixth form dinner and dance is a good example of Anne's perceived 'difference' from the rest of the group in her failure to make-up. This event can be seen as a critical moment in all of this group's narrative accounts, and the story of 'making-up' was central to all their stories of this event. Anne also gave an account of this event in her narrative, although in comparison to the accounts of the

other young women of this event, it was very short and disengaged. Below is Anne's account of making up for the ball:

Anne: I wasn't looking forward to at first coz I'm not into dresses an' that, but yeah, I did, it was good it was, apart from all the makeup an' that. They did all my hair and makeup and stuff, and that was weird...I didn't enjoy the dressing up part, no... I'm not fussed on makeup, so it looked a bit weird.

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

Anne describes the making up for the ball as painful, where as in the other girls' accounts this was more pleasurable than the actual event itself. However, the other girls' accounts of Anne's beautified appearance were in contrast to her own:

Julia: We like say to Anne to put make up on coz she like, I'm not saying she's not pretty, but when like, she put makeup on for the dinner and dance, she did look absolutely pretty, and my mother went, 'ah, who's that girl next to you?', I said, 'ah Anne' and erm, my mother was like, 'oh my god like, is that the short tomboy one?', I was like, 'yes', 'oh she's pretty in't she?', I was like 'yeah, she can be'.

-Ashpool Girls (In sixth form common room-Anne not present!)

Mel: I did Anne's hair and makeup for the ball and she looked lush, wanna see a picture? See, she looks really pretty there, like a girl for once, so she should make the effort more often, like!

-Ashpool Girls (Mel's Narrative Interview)

Above, Julia and Mel display their approval at Anne's recognisably feminine look, and their disapproval at her refusal to engage in what they regard to be a compulsory adult heterosexual feminine practice. In my observation of the group, the girls often encouraged Anne to buy makeup on shopping trips, and advised her on how she should apply the products they were suggesting, claiming they would make her look pretty. Although Julia above is quick to deny the implication that without makeup Anne is not pretty, their over the top reactions to Anne with makeup on reinforce the argument that making-up is a compulsory practice as part of the highly regulative matrix of cultural intelligibility (Butler, 1990) that renders young women's bodies legible as feminine and heterosexual.

The living dead: Not wearing makeup and ill-health

Finally, the strongest negative social consequence of not wearing makeup was the fear of looking 'unhealthy'. This section will demonstrate the way in which the discourse of 'natural' beauty and makeup is merged with a wider discourse of 'health' and wellbeing. Dellinger and Williams (1997) found that many women received negative comments about their health when they didn't wear makeup to work. From my empirical data, it emerged that a failure to makeup was also associated with ill-health: most of the young women claimed to use makeup to avoid looking 'unhealthy', which was particularly the case for the group of young mothers. Below, the young mothers explain that their use of makeup is purely to counteract the 'unhealthy' appearance they perceived motherhood to produce:

Jane: Like, if I've had a tough night with the kids and I'm looking rough, then I'll need to put some makeup on to look and feel human again [laughs].

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

Holly: She doesn't let me get much sleep unfortunately, so I have to wear makeup to stop me looking like a zombie and like, really ill and stuff. Without it I just look dead, you know, just not right, I just look gaunt and pale and drawn out, and my features aren't as defined and stuff, and my eyes just look dead, and my cheekbones aren't even there.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Looking 'rough' and unhealthy was perceived by the young mothers as a part of motherhood, and makeup as something they used in their everyday lives to project an image of 'health' and vitality, rather than 'ill-health' and fatigue. Whilst motherhood was an added dimension to their accounts of making-up, the other young women in this study also described their unmade faces as 'unhealthy', as the extracts from their narrative accounts below demonstrate:

Vanessa: And then he [her Dad] tells me, 'you're looking pale today' ...I'm trying to get some fake tan somewhere, coz people won't, will stop calling me pale, fair-skinned or whatever coz everyone thinks I look ill. But, erm, coz I can't really swallow tablets, they're like really big, massive iron tablets are.

Ashpool Girls (Vanessa's Narrative Interview)

Sam: I just look so dead without makeup, my face is really pale, my eyes are all sunken, I've got no colour in my cheeks, no I look really ill without makeup on, like a zombie.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's narrative Interview)

Anne: I'm gonna get a fake tan though, like a spray one,, to get some colour, because I'm too pale and so I always look a bit ill.

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

You will notice in all of the young women's descriptions of themselves without makeup the frequent references to 'zombies', 'death' and illness, which is contrasted by their descriptions of themselves with it as 'healthy' and 'human'. The pathologisation of the unmade face as 'shameful' is therefore further compounded by its construction as 'unhealthy'. Furthermore, through evoking 'death' metaphors, such as those described above, the young women demonstrate that makeup can also be regarded as 'life-affirming': looking 'alive' was one of the main objectives of making-up the face and body with cosmetics. Even Anne, the self-identifying 'tomboy', shows above that she is susceptible to the 'health' component of the natural beauty discourse, and wants a spray tan to rid her of the pale skin that is a signifier of 'ill-health'. Furthermore, in constructing the unmade face in relation to such stark metaphors of ill-health and death, moderate makeup use is defended against any accusations of vanity and narcissism, which as we have seen is a contradiction in the young women's discourse that they must constantly negotiate. Thus, since makeup is about making oneself look 'healthy', and given the current power and dominance of health discourses in wider society (Evans *et al.*, 2008), justification is given to the

young women's 'masking' practices on the basis of 'normalisation' and correction, as well as its 'life-affirming' function.

Thus far, this chapter has outlined a clear contradiction in the discourse of beauty within celebrity culture, and the young women's own accounts of their beauty practices. Makeup is simultaneously 'bad' because it is artificial, fake and self-denying, yet is socially necessary to avoid the mockery, shame and social stigma that being *truly* natural brings. Hence, the carefully constructed discourse of natural beauty attempts to smooth over this contradiction, and plays a key role in the young women's negotiation, understanding and application of beauty cultures. It is the 'normal' and 'natural' face, and the use of makeup to present a more 'polished' version of the 'real' self, to which I now turn.

The Myth of Natural Beauty: Authenticity and Pleasure

The moral panic currently besieging the media regarding unreal and impossible images of female perfection has sparked a plethora of programmes and advertising campaigns that draw heavily on the discourses of authenticity and naturalness found in celebrity gossip magazines. The media's current obsession with thrusting so-called 'ordinary-looking' women into the limelight can be seen as a reaction to the popular moral panic over unattainable images of airbrushed beauty and its 'effect' on young women. However, I will demonstrate that the focus on 'naturalness' is illusory and that, despite the label, 'natural' beauty is still highly aesthetically prescriptive and constructed. Furthermore, I will also demonstrate the extent to which 'natural' beauty

is a highly classed discourse, and explore the negotiation of this aspect of natural beauty by the young working class women in this study.

Constructing and consuming the natural

Natural makeup involves applying just the *right* amount of makeup, so that it appears that no labour was involved in achieving the look. Within celebrity magazines, this serves as the antithesis to the over-styled, overdone and ridiculed face of the 'slutty' working class woman who wears too much makeup, and the 'rough' face of the 'lazy' working class woman who wears too little. As such, 'natural' beauty uses makeup as a form of enhancement, emphasis, and correction of natural features, rather than as a method of disguise or masking. Negra (2009) also notes the de-emphasis on the visibly made up face, with women under obligation to efface the signs of their own labour. The 'myth' of natural beauty as found within celebrity culture is that *everyone* possesses it: this also serves to conceal the differences between women, since if everyone can be beautiful, there can be no hierarchy of beauty. However, as Riviere (1989) argues, there is no 'naturally' beautiful feminine woman beneath the masquerade of femininity, as the repulsion at stars, themselves, and others without makeup expressed by the young women demonstrates. However, celebrity magazines and the young women themselves repeatedly draw on the discourse of natural beauty in their interpretation of certain celebrities as 'effortlessly' embodying the qualities of natural beauty, without reference to its 'constructed' nature. Below are some examples taken from group sessions of where the young women use the discourse of natural beauty to describe particular celebrities:

Diana: I do think she's [Cheryl Cole] really pretty. But I think she's naturally pretty, it's like a role model for like young children really, and for like our age, not to have surgery and everything I think, coz she's just naturally pretty. The less makeup she wears, the prettier she looks.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Sam: Colleen's [Rooney] really pretty as well, she was like, she don't even need much makeup on, and she just shoves her hair back and she looks, she's just really naturally pretty, like.

-Tinsworth Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Here, Diana regards 'natural' beauty not only as a physical quality, but also a moral quality: Cheryl Cole's *natural* rather than artificial (through cosmetic surgery) beauty is so morally valued, that Diana considers her a 'role model' for people her age on precisely those grounds. The moral framework through which the discourse of natural beauty is constructed is based on the importance of the presentation of an 'authentic' self, and is particularly at play in the Ashpool girls' discussion of a magazine feature on the changing beauty styles of Nicola Roberts, in which the discourses of excess and insufficiency are both used to endorse a constructed 'authentic' look:



Figure One

Source: Heat Magazine (2009) Issue 523: 98

Vanessa: Look at 2004 she looks better.

Tasha: I know, yeah, but she's all fake isn't she? Like she's all orange with fake tan and it don't look right.

Vanessa: But like, in 2008, she's all pale. They're moaning that she's pale...

Tasha: That (2008) must be fake though, no one's that pale.

Vanessa: Oh that's, I'm not that pale, no way.

Tasha: No one can be that pale though, look how pale she is, that's gotta be fake isn't it?

Mel: No she looks like a ghost!

Vanessa: She looks ill.

Mel: She looks like an albino.

Vanessa: And anorexic.

Mel: What's that film, Me, Myself and Irene, they call her whitey or something like that don't they?

Tasha: They call her whitey?

Mel: Look at her right, she looks too fake by there (2004), and she looks too fake there (2007a), and she looks too fake there (2007b), and there (2009) she looks tidy...

Tasha: I think she looks better in 2009.

Vanessa: 2004.

Julia: I like her hair in 2007(b).

Tasha: 2009.

Kelly: Why do you think she looks better in 2004 Vanessa?

Vanessa: She looks better there, I think it's the hair.

Tasha: I like her best in 2009 definitely she looks much better, she looks natural, she looks pretty I think.

Julia: They used to call her the ugliest one didn't they? They still do I think, but I don't think she is, like yeah, in 2009 she looks naturally pretty.

Tasha: She was writing about it in Sugar magazine, that like, she used to hate it, so by going natural it sort of makes her feel more comfortable or something, and you can tell coz she looks really pretty in 2009. But that white is not natural at all.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

In the extract above, the complexity of the discourse of natural beauty becomes apparent, as well as the narrow definition of beauty it encompasses. The girls' objection to the images of Nicola in 2004 and 2007 are based on their perception of this look as 'artificial'; however, interestingly, none of the young women describe the image of 2002, before she became a star, as natural, instead choosing the image of 2009 as her most natural look. Until this time, Nicola is perceived as 'faking' her image through fake tan, fake 'whiteness', hair dye, and too much makeup. Her shift in 2009 to allow her 'natural' beauty to shine through is constructed through a moral framework by the young women, who judge her current look to be 'tidy' and 'pretty'. Furthermore, Tasha's comments about Nicola being more 'comfortable' in her recent natural look is in keeping with the magazines' description of Nicola in 2002 as

‘awkward’, and once more reinforces the discourse of authenticity upon which natural beauty is predicated. This aspect of natural beauty interlinks with the discourse of neo-liberal individualism, and implies that each individual has a predestined look that is natural to *them*, and in doing so constructs this natural look as ‘effortless’ and authentic to that particular individual.

The ‘effortless’ implication of the ‘natural’ beauty discourse serves to disguise the constructed nature of the look. The young women’s negotiation of the discourse of natural beauty within the magazines validates it as applicable to themselves and their own beauty practices, as the extracts below demonstrate:

Kelly: Ok, on page 98, this is like a makeup trend, do you like this look?

Julia: Yeah, it looks natural.

Tasha: Yeah, it’s natural, so that’s good.

Vanessa: I prefer my makeup to be natural anyway so...But I do like red lipstick I do.

Julia: No it’s too bright, it don’t look natural...

Tasha: Like, you should keep it natural, like this, this is exactly what you should do.

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Kelly: So what kind of look do you try and achieve when you use makeup?

Sian: Natural, definitely, I don’t think loads works. But I don’t like to, I like to go out and have like, the flawless look, but without looking like I’ve piled on a load of makeup, so quite natural. But I like accentuating my eyes when I go out. I like to achieve as well, a look for the day and look for the night. Coz otherwise you’re stuck in the, ‘this is what I always look like’.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over dinner in a pub)

Above are just two examples of the young women's discussion of the trend of natural-looking makeup: they demonstrate the girls' moral negotiation of the discourse of natural beauty as 'good', and as something that young women 'should do'. As such, features on 'natural' makeup are met with enthusiasm by the young women in this study who, as young working class women, are perceived to lack the cultural capital needed to make-up in a socially acceptable way. The 'immorality' associated with the representation of working class beauty cultures as excessive and overly sexual, or insufficient and lacking, is countered by the framing of natural beauty as morally right, decent and respectable. Skeggs (1997) has argued that working class women are aware of the judgements made of them by middle class women regarding their appearance: it is therefore unsurprising that these young working class women attempt to distance themselves from these representations, and wholly embrace the sophisticated version of working class beauty on offer in celebrity magazines. The way in which natural beauty is positioned in opposition to fakery and artifice has particular resonances with working class women, given the discourse of authenticity through which these young women can be understood to make wider identifications with celebrity magazines and in their everyday lives and peer cultures (see Chapter Four). Natural beauty is positioned as authentic within the working class habitus, presenting a 'real' and unpretentious form of femininity through which young working class women are able to distinguish themselves from pathologised working class femininities.

Furthermore, the popular feminist discourse that surrounds the discourse of natural beauty within celebrity magazines suggests that this version of feminine beauty brings success, wealth and adoration, using the aspirational tool of celebrity to suggest it is

through the embodiment of 'natural' beauty that particular female celebrities have achieved success. As such, it is also possible that the discourse of natural beauty has particular resonances with the lives of some working class women aspiring to be upwardly socially mobile, as some of the young women in this study are. McRobbie has argued that the whole arena of the 'makeover' (and I argue, the 'make-under') is concerned with 'the improvement of life chances through the acquisition of forms of cultural and social capital' (2009:99). Within this context, natural beauty can be understood as a way of regulating working class femininity as a means of making young working class women more 'employable' in the new global labour market, by presenting natural beauty as an alternative source of cultural capital to young working class women.

Creating natural beauty, whilst primarily achieved through beauty labour, is also achieved through consuming 'luxury' and 'elite' beauty brands, particularly for the older young women in the sample the Tinsworth girls and some of the Molefield Mums. The Tinsworth girls are all in full-time employment, yet all still live at home with their parents and pay very little or no rent payments. As such, this group had significantly more disposable income than the other groups, and chose to buy many of the products the magazines listed that the other groups considered to be too expensive:

Sian: Has anyone ever tried Bobbi Brown makeup?

Rachel: I got the moisturiser.

Sian: Is it good, coz you always hear that it's supposed to be really good, but I just, coz it's quite expensive, I just think, it's a splurge not knowing whether or not you're going to get something great from it.

Sam: You should have it done though, shouldn't you?

Rachel: Yeah, if you go to Bobbi Brown in the House of Fraser, say what you want, and they give you lots of testers, try them all out and then go back and get what you wanna use, that's what I do.

Sian: Yeah coz I like to buy the better products, as I've gotten older I've realised you get what you pay for when you buy Benefit or YSL or Bobbi Brown compared with Rimmel and Collection 2000.

Sam: Oh yeah, the products are so much better than that tat, because they look more natural and they don't come off as easy, so you don't have to put as much on.

-Tinsworth Girls (Having lunch in local pub)

The young women in this group saw high-end beauty products as an investment that they would 'get something' from: namely the face of a 'natural beauty' and the identity of a sophisticated beauty consumer. In the extract above, the young women indicate that these designer beauty products produce a more natural look than cheaper beauty brands, and it is for this reason the young women consider these expensive products as an investment. The Tinsworth girls appear to aspire to consume products that signify 'sophistication', and are seen as producing a more 'natural' look than cheaper, typically working class beauty brands.

The young mums also aspired to consume high-end beauty brands, yet found it hard to justify the expense. Jane was in the process of starting her own mail-order beauty

business selling designer beauty brands: the other mums would all look at the catalogue in group sessions and express their desire to consume these products. However, they rarely consumed these products as regularly as the Tinsworth girls did, as they could not justify the money and time being spent on their body rather than that of their child.

Hidden Labour: Pleasure and 'Me' time

Despite the implication that natural beauty is 'effortless', this beauty look is a form of 'making-up' and, as such, requires significant labour to achieve. As in the construction of the body, my analysis revealed that celebrity magazines both present beauty as natural and effortless, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to its constructed nature in their features that provide step-by-step instructions to the reader on *how* to achieve the look. Whilst the young women describe some celebrities as 'naturally pretty' without makeup on, the constructed nature of their own looks are revealed through the young women's talk about their own beauty practices, as in the extract below:

Sian: It takes me half an hour to put my makeup on.

Sam: Yeah and me.

Ceri: Does it?

Sian: Yeah, I wear a lot though, I don't know if it always looks like I do, but I do wear quite a lot of makeup, so I get up at 7 and I gotta be in work at 9.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over lunch in local pub)

The young women's talk across all groups revealed that 'natural' beauty involves 'hidden' labour, and that labour is precisely hidden to avoid those judgements of excess and vanity that the evidence of labour (in the form of 'too much' makeup) signifies.

It is in their narrative accounts the extent of the beauty labour they perform is revealed, often framed not in terms of 'pain' or 'bother', but in terms of pleasure and self-fulfilment:

Kat: But I think that my favourite thing has got to be mascara, because I just love using that. I literally can spend 10 minutes in the mirror just putting my mascara on coz I love it.

Ashpool Girls (Having coffee in café)

Holly: But I do really love putting on makeup, having a bath and exfoliating and moisturising and all that, painting your nails, it just makes you feel so good afterwards. Just making yourself up to look really good, and it gives you a bit of confidence then that you take pride in how you look.

-Molefield Mums (Coffee morning)

Above are just two examples in which the young women entwine beauty labour with 'pleasure'. These accounts clearly resonate with the postfeminist and late-modern approaches to the construction of the self, which regard the self as a continual project to be worked on in a playful, inventive and creative way, and to which particular attributes can enhance the overall value of personhood (Skeggs, 2004b).

Whilst the discourse of ‘pleasure’ ran through most of the young women’s accounts of beauty, this was particularly apparent in the accounts of the young mothers. This is surprising since, in a group context, the young mums claimed not to have the ‘time’ for beautification, and were also relatively uninterested in many of the beauty features within the celebrity magazines since they felt they were not applicable to their everyday lives. Their individual accounts of themselves revealed a clear division in their beautification practices before and after having children, and this division reveals how integral beautification is to the construction of the self:

Holly: I don’t get time to myself very often, but when I do get some ‘me time’, I like to have a bath, exfoliate, put a face mask on, put some fake tan on, do my nails and stuff, you know, stuff for me.

-Molefield Mums (Holly’s Narrative Interview)

Jane: You just wish for a couple of hours for somebody to take ‘em away so you can just, chill out and have some me time, you know, paint your nails and put some makeup on and shave your legs or whatever, but erm, no, it doesn’t happen very often any more so I never look polished, I always look rough [laughs]. I would murder a day just to have some me time.

-Molefield Mums (Jane’s Narrative Interview)

In these accounts, ‘me-time’ is inevitably constructed around performing beautification: the mothers spend most of their time ‘looking after’ other people (children and partners/husbands), yet looking after *themselves* is almost always constructed in beauty terms. Dellinger and Williams (1997) also noted the way in which makeup is self-indulgent, as it is here in the mums’ accounts. To care for your

self is to perform beauty labour; however, the pervasive postfeminist message conceals the 'duty to beauty', and transforms it into a pleasurable element of self-construction with particular positive affects, such as confidence and happiness. However, within the young mums' accounts there is a clear contradiction: beautification is both an entitlement, in keeping with postfeminist, neo-liberal discourses, and a source of guilt, in keeping with traditional discourses of 'selfless' motherhood. As such, as in Kathy's account below, statements of what she should do as a *woman*, and what she should do as a *mother*, appear to constitute two separate parts of the self in her account:

Kathy: You can't be selfish anymore, all your time has to go on looking after your child. So I guess you kind of fade into the background and you don't look after yourself anymore... and doing all that sort of time for yourself, and that's not, that's not selfish, but it's still your time isn't it, your time isn't your own. That's all had to go now. But then that's quite sad really, coz I suppose there's no need for that, I mean my mother would have the kids if I wanted to go and have my haircut, but I can't justify it, I'd think of the time, and if you've got people looking after your children when you're in work, then I can't just, like on a Friday I don't work on a Friday so I could ask my mother to have the kids while I pop to the hairdressers and have a manicure and she would, but I think well she has him all week and this is my day really that I should spend with him, so I shouldn't really, you don't sort of, er, you can't justify pampering yourself, and you should. You should, because at the end of the day you should. But that changes. They come first.

-Molefield Mums (Kathy's Narrative Interview)

Kathy's account was typical of many of the mums, whose sense of 'self' was lost in the critical moment of motherhood. Kathy's assertions that she *should* spend time on herself through beautification to construct her identity as a woman, are counteracted by the belief that all her time should be spent on her children, since the identity of 'mother' is primarily a 'selfless' one. As a result, the mums' narrative accounts of their lives and identities contained a sense of 'nostalgia' for the selves they possessed prior to motherhood, which were primarily constructed via beautification. The 'loss' of the self in their accounts is constructed through the 'loss' of beautification and body work more generally, which further emphasises the link between beautification and the construction of female subjectivity.

As Radner (1989) highlights, beautification as feminine pleasure is represented as no longer solely rooted in heterosexuality, but in self-fulfilment. This 'pleasure' women take in the process has become packaged in a postfeminist discourse of 'empowerment', where making up, albeit in a 'natural' way, is indicative of a strong, empowered, and successful neo-liberal feminine subject. Whilst their accounts of the pleasure and confidence the young women take in making up might seem unproblematic, it is important to consider these accounts in relation to the accounts of their 'unmade' faces previously discussed, which were constructed as unattractive, unhealthy, and shameful. In light of this, it is problematic to consider beautification as an autonomous and free choice, given their accounts of the social consequences of *not* wearing makeup. Thus, although the young women express their pleasure at making up in their accounts, they also describe their compulsion to beautify, and a shame in their unmade faces that makes their expression of pleasure problematic. As

Skeggs (1997) argues, femininity is both a site of pleasure *and* fear, and as such making-up makes them feel both good *and* bad about themselves simultaneously.

Healthy faces and the 'glow'

Just as the cultural and social constructions of the shape of the female body were interwoven with discourses of health, as is the construction of the discourse of natural beauty. I have previously explored the way in which the unmade face is interpreted as 'unhealthy', and as such, the validation of natural makeup is premised on presenting a 'healthy' face to the world. Makeup is legitimately used to correct signs of ill-health, such as spots, dark eye circles and pale cheeks. In the same vein of the discourse of natural beauty's alliance with the postfeminist discourse of pleasure, its alliance with the discourse of health serves to conceal the labour involved in the process of beautification. As such, beauty labour done in service of the natural beauty discourse is not 'beauty work', but is constructed as 'health' labour, something currently prized and normalised in British culture (Evans *et al.*, 2008).

All of the young women used one particular term to describe the effect of 'natural' makeup: it provided women with a 'dewy glow' that looked natural, but also made the face look healthy and 'alive'. Negra (2009) also notes the greater emphasis on beauty products to improve the health of the skin and its appearance. Below is just one of many examples where the young women use this term:

Sian: Oh, look, it tells you how you can get dewy skin. 'To get dewy skin on your face, you put your foundation on and then you warm your palms and then press onto your skin for ten seconds for a dewy natural finish'. I'll try that tomorrow.

Sam: Oh yeah, that's definitely a lovely natural look, just to have that nice glow, I tell you what's good for that is that Benefit moon beam highlighter, that just put under there makes your whole face glow so you look really healthy and awake.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

The term 'dewy' connotes 'freshness' and 'youthfulness': this 'dewy glow' is directly linked to the discourse of health, with a 'glow' connoting good health and an aura of well-being. However, part of the glow is also 'flawless' skin, and the young women all claimed to use makeup to produce a 'flawless finish'. To not have any flaws is to have 'perfect' skin, something which few women have, but is constructed as attainable through natural beauty's discursive link with authenticity, and its intersection with discourses of health. Below, the young women describe their feelings about their faces when wearing natural-looking makeup and cosmetics:

Holly: I must admit, I love the way my face looks with the right amount of makeup on.

My skin just has this glow, my eyes sparkle and I just look so much more alive.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Sian: Oh I had my spray tan, I thought it was awesome, I loved it, yeah... Steve [her boyfriend] liked the tan, and coz I always feel like I'm too pale, I never catch the sun if I go anywhere, but erm, Steve was like that, 'I'll pay for you to have it done every week' and I was like 'nice you're offering, but you're not supposed to say that you prefer me with a tan'. I would love to be dark, and well, this is me naturally, and I

just don't catch the sun, so, I need to have a spray tan because they look more natural than doing it yourself. But everyone at the wedding said I looked great and really healthy.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sian's Narrative Interview)

Kat: I mean, you don't just look better with makeup on, you feel so much better with it on, coz you look in the mirror and you look healthy with glowing skin and bright eyes and stuff, which just makes you feel so much better and like you've got more energy, like when you haven't got it on you just feel tired and gross because you look it! Like, you look normal and healthy, like everyone else.

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in café)

The importance of using products to produce the illusion of healthy looking skin was present in most of the young women's accounts. Their descriptions above of 'bright eyes' and 'glowing skin', and the affects of feeling 'alive' and 'great', reinforces the argument suggested earlier in the chapter that makeup is seen as life-affirming in the everyday lives of these young women. Through its intersection with the powerful, omnipresent discourse of health (Evans *et al.*, 2008), natural makeup is represented as the 'normal' face of feminine appearance within celebrity gossip magazines in its juxtaposition with the abnormal faces with too much, or too little, makeup. The recent trend for 'permanent' and 'semi-permanent' makeup embodies women's desire to constantly present a healthy, naturally beautiful face, free of the signs of significant labour. It may also represent the desire to rid themselves of the front stage/backstage contradiction that was so apparent in these young women's narrative accounts as problematic for their sense of self and self-confidence.

This section has demonstrated that natural makeup is a highly constructed discourse of beauty that serves to conceal beauty labour through its intersection with discourses of individualism, female empowerment, and health. As such, it is important to note that the 'natural' face is still a 'masquerade', something constructed as problematic in the young women's accounts given their moral objection to fakery, and their dedication to the discourse of authenticity. However, adopting a mask that could pass for the 'real' self provides a sense of self-confidence that enables these young women to receive validation, avoid shame, and participate in social life by adopting feminine identities legitimised by the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). For these young working class women in particular, 'the natural masquerade' promises success, and even social mobility, besides the basic function of distinguishing themselves from problematic working class femininities. Furthermore, I argue that the 'masquerade' is performed not just for men, but more so for other women: a natural mask of femininity still contains the threat successful women pose to men and patriarchy (McRobbie, 2009), yet also contains the threat women pose to one another. For these working class young women, this may serve to contain the threat to social order the excessive, vulgar, tasteless working class woman is considered to be (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Tyler and Bennett, 2010) in wider society.

The Social World of 'Making-up'

The young women's narratives contained stories of *how* they learned to makeup, which included accounts of other women in their lives, be it mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, friends, or peers. This section will explore the role of making-up within their accounts of feminine relationships and feminine culture, and examine the links to

those moral judgements made by the young women of the beauty practices of female celebrities. This therefore enables those discourses of beauty within celebrity culture to be placed within the context of everyday female peer cultures through the accounts of the young working class women in this study.

Learning to Make-up: Cementing female relationships

Magazines were a significant part of the process of learning to make-up, and several of the young women's narratives described their 'imitation' of the techniques outlined in the beauty features:

Diana: I think I learnt a lot of how to put makeup on from magazines actually, because like they show you a look of a celebrity and show you how to copy it don't they? I remember doing that a lot.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Sam: The other day they had this really good feature in Heat I think it was, and it was showing you how to use bright colours on your eyes without looking like someone's hit you [laughs]. I've always liked the makeup features for showing you how to do new things with makeup.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

However, more significant was the presence of other women in their accounts of learning to make up: not only did their initial exploration of beauty include stories of other women, but their routes out of the topic of beauty also led on to stories of these relationships. As such, making-up is a significant part of female relationships that has

gone relatively unexplored in the analysis of women's lives. For example, in many of their accounts it is other women that showed them how to apply makeup properly, and corrected the 'common' mistakes we have seen celebrities fall foul of within gossip magazines:

Diana: Well I remember when I was younger every time my mother used to go out on a Friday night I used to sit and watch her in her bedroom doing her makeup... My mother used to buy, well, she's got a file, and you used to buy them in the shop, it comes with makeup every, erm every week, and it tells you how to use them and everything and she used to teach me like that, so it's gradually come on then, so that's like how I've learned to put my makeup on and everything. But if I hadn't blended it right or I'd put too much of something on, she'd show me how to do it right, so I think I learnt from her really.

-Ashpool Girls (Diana's Narrative Interview)

Rachel: I remember my mother telling me, 'you look like a state' [laughs]. Which isn't nice, and I think she then encouraged me, actually it was probably her who encouraged me a bit more in terms of skin, like put me onto products to say 'this is what you need, this is to get rid of your spots' which was always quite nice, and she would help me cover up a spot properly so you couldn't see it, and help me with how much to put on and stuff.

-Tinsworth Girls (Rachel's Narrative Interview)

Julia: I remember the girls in school all wearing makeup, and Vanessa was like, do you want some? And I was like, 'yeah, alright then' and then she put some on me and stuff, and I've been a bugger for it ever since. Vanessa's fault, it is. But my sister

used to put it on me too, and show me how to do it natural like, when I started getting into it.

-Ashpool Girls (Julia's Narrative Interview)

Above are just a few examples of the role other women played in encouraging, teaching and correcting the young women's use of makeup: mothers played a significant role in many of their stories, but also friends and sisters demonstrated the art of 'natural' makeup to the young women in their transition to adulthood, as well as policing the use of too much makeup as previously discussed.

Furthermore, makeup played a double role as both a source of female bonding, and a source of competition between women. In terms of makeup's cohesive function, stories of their female friendships were often told, emphasising the link between makeup and female friendships:

Rachel: It used to be funny when we were in Magaluf, coz we used to go in to get ready about 10 'o' clock, like hair and all, and we were all sitting around, and all the girls used to take the piss because I used to put rollers in my hair to get ready, and I used to sit on the balcony with a bottle of wine quite happily, and they'd be like, 'what the hell do you look like?' [laughs], and we were all just sitting round getting ready and drinking and chatting, and Sam used to do everybody's makeup bless her, she loves doing things like that. Yeah, we all used to sit around and get ready, and that was really nice to do, all get ready together.

-Tinsworth Girls (Rachel's Narrative Interview)

Holly: Me and my best friend used to get ready together every Saturday night, and that was also part of the night as well, you know, chatting, doing each other's hair over a glass of wine and some pizza, and she always used to do my makeup for me because she worked on a makeup counter so she was really good at doing it. The other thing was that I always knew I looked nice when I got ready with her, because she wouldn't let me go out looking a state [laughs].

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Most of the young women's accounts contained these 'getting ready' stories, which demonstrate that not only is making-up a 'group' activity, but is also a way of cementing female friendships. The phrase 'getting ready' is interesting in itself, and reinforces the argument made in this chapter that making-up is a form of social survivability for young women, as it appears in the narratives as a process or ritual that *must* be performed before a woman is 'ready' to face the social world. Their descriptions of getting ready are reminiscent of the 'bedroom culture' described by McRobbie and Garber (1976), which it would appear from these young women's accounts extends beyond adolescence into young womanhood. It also relates to the way in which the self was constructed in relation to makeup: the 'real' self was located inside the house, and the made-up, performed self was located outside the house in the social world.

Whilst narratives of this process are primarily constructed in terms of the pleasure it brings, 'getting ready' with other women also serves to ease the anxiety of the process and provide them with validation that they look socially acceptable, as in Holly's account above. Skeggs (1997) also notes that the creation of the performance of

femininity is often done on a collective basis, and that this can be understood as young working class women learning to 'pass' as feminine together. My findings would suggest that this is the case, and that these young women got ready in groups in order to ease the anxiety that constructing a natural-looking performance of femininity creates for working class young women in particular. These anxieties create and reinforce social bonds between them since, as Skeggs notes, 'femininity is very much a public performance dependent upon the validation of others' (1997:107). The term 'anxiety' here can also be understood as offering psychosocial interpretative purchase: as Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) point out, concept of 'anxiety' is central to psychoanalytic theorisations of the emotional development of the individual. At the level of the unconscious, 'anxieties continue to wield their considerable power beyond the recognition of language' (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001:90), and the young women's desire to create femininity together can be understood as revealing their unconscious 'anxieties' about doing so.

Jealousy and competition: Making-up as divisive

Just as some celebrities were validated and some critiqued, the same division is reproduced in the girls' accounts of their peer cultures. Critiques of other women in the girls' accounts and in everyday social settings highlight a culture of competitiveness between themselves and other young women. The 'eyeing' up of other women on the basis of their ability to 'make-up' was a feature of many of the young women's accounts of their relationships with other women, known and unknown, as demonstrated by the extracts below:

Rachel: Yeah we all used to sit around and get ready and then we all used to pile into one room for a drink, and our one friend would go, 'you look nice' [Rachel looks me up and down] [laughter], and you'd be like, 'thanks, the dirty look really went well with that, I'm clearly looking very pretty today' [laughs]. Hmm, she did, just do that, like I think it must have just been a jealousy thing, because, it still cracks me up today, because she did that to everyone, and it was just a 'why do you look like that and I don't?'

-Tinsworth Girls (Rachel's Narrative Interview)

Sam: Like the girls on the counters in the shop, they're really bitchy, like if I've sweated all my makeup off or something, they'll just look at me really bitchily and snigger because they're all glammed up.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sam's Narrative Interview)

In these extracts, Rachel and Sam demonstrate an awareness of the way *they* are looked at and judged by other women on the basis of 'making-up'. Rachel's account highlights her perception that other women think they are in competition with her, and are jealous of her ability to make-up appropriately. Sam's account demonstrates the way in which *not* making-up appropriately also elicits the gaze of other women, the same gaze that the unfortunate 'rough-looking' celebrities without makeup in the magazines received. Furthermore, as I discovered from my time with the Ashpool girls in various social contexts, the division between the group (as discussed in Chapter Four), and one half's 'dislike' of Diana, was partly based on the way in which Diana made-up. Their objection was on the basis that she made too much of an 'effort' with her hair and makeup, which led them to label her as 'fake' and 'up herself'. The way in which the young women bitchily critique the appearance of

female celebrities with such cultural competence can be seen as a 'skill' they use in their everyday negotiation of their peer culture. As such, their use of this resource in their negotiation of celebrity culture can be understood as a way in which these wider discourses concerning young women's moral judgements of one another become visible.

The competitive element discussed by Rachel in her extract above was also reversed in some of the other young women's accounts, in which *they* were the ones actively competing with other women to make-up. For the Ashpool girls in particular, the dinner and dance was the source of much 'competitive' making-up, as this extract highlights:

Vanessa: Like, we all put so much effort in for the dinner and dance, we spent literally all day getting ready. All of us said that we wanted to make sure we looked better than all the other girls in the year, and when we got there all we did was pretty much talk about who looked good and who didn't! Silly really, but it was really important to us to make an effort and try and look better than everyone else, coz everyone else was going to look really chavvy.

-Ashpool Girls (Vanessa's Narrative Interview)

For the weeks before and after the dance, the products they were going to use, the beauty labour and preparation to be undertaken, and how they were going to style their hair, were their key topics of conversation. The competitive element of making-up for the event was apparent in their critique of other girls' appearance and their accounts of themselves: receiving validation and avoiding critique was their main

objective, reproducing the same moral judgements of making-up we have seen in their negotiation of celebrity culture. Securing their place at the top of the beauty hierarchy (Ferguson, 1983) in the eyes of other *women* was what was important to the girls on this night, not attracting or receiving validation from *men*. This reinforces existing literature that suggests women demonstrate a wariness of one another on the basis of appearance (Wolf, 1991) in everyday life, particularly in young female peer cultures (Hey, 1997; Ringrose, 2008a).

Social visibility: Celebrification and self-editing

The data gathered for this study demonstrated that young women make-up not only for themselves, but also to be *seen*. As Chapter Two highlighted, young women are particularly visible in contemporary popular culture (Hopkins, 2002; Harris, 2004a; Gill, 2007; Kehily, 2008; McRobbie, 2009), and as my analysis revealed, particularly visible within celebrity culture and celebrity gossip magazines as signifiers of feminine 'success'. The visibility and success of female celebrities is expressed primarily through the presentation of their bodies as authentic. The young women in this study can also be understood as attempting to make themselves *seen* by producing the same visual aesthetic as those 'successful' celebrities.

For the younger Ashpool girls this was particularly apparent in their use of social networking sites: their accounts of everyday life all included their *Bebo* pages, in which there was a sense of intense personal investment. Their *Bebo* pages can be understood from their accounts as a way of 'celebrifying' themselves and being *seen*,

and validated, by others. Tasha's dream to be a singer (through being on the *X Factor*) forms a large part of her visibility on social networking sites:

Tasha: I put videos of me singing on You Tube I did, and on my Bebo... and then I thought, I just sent it to some friends, the link for them to have a look at it, and then they sent it to their friends, and everyone was looking at it then. Like the most views I've had is about 155, but I've deleted that video now anyway, so, now the most views I've had is 70 on one of my videos. And erm, just everybody seems to comment, they don't comment the videos, but they comment me on MSN or Bebo or something, telling me that I'm good at it, so. And like, I tend to take requests of people as well, so if they ask me to sing something I'll sing it.

-Ashpool Girls (Tasha's Narrative Interview)

For Tasha, social networking sites were a way of gaining approval from others for her singing ability. However, her emphasis on *how many* people had viewed her videos also implies that social networking sites allowed Tasha to achieve a small amount of 'fame', to be a 'mini-celebrity', within the community in which she lives.

However, the other young women in this study used social networking sites primarily to display themselves and their bodies. Unlike the images of celebrities within celebrity magazines as unkempt and unready (Holmes, 2005), social networking sites allow the young women to edit and censor the images of themselves that they place on their Bebo sites. As Ringrose (2010) notes, the display photo is particularly important for girls, and in their accounts of social networking sites the presentation of

their face was particularly important. In these extracts, the young women describe their profile pictures and the way in which they were selected:

Julia: All the pictures of the dance are on Bebo, loads of close-ups of our hair and makeup too. Obviously I only put the nice ones up [laughs], not the ones where I'm pulling a funny face or my makeup has run, but everyone has been commenting on them, saying how lush we looked.

-Ashpool Girls (Over lunch in café)

Jane: Like my profile picture on Facebook looks nothing like me [laughs]. Its back when I had blonde hair, a nice tan and I was all made up for a night out. It's funny because loads of people I used to know are like, wow you're looking gorgeous, and I'm like, ha ha, if only you knew [laughs].

-Molefield Mums (Coffee morning)

Sam: I will only put pictures with 'beauty shot' up on Facebook now, coz the camera like covers any spots or flaws in your skin and gives you a nice glow, it's amazing.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over lunch in local pub)

As Ringrose (2010) also notes, stories of 'self-editing' and the altering of profile pictures were common in many of the young women's accounts of themselves. Sam's account above demonstrates the way in which 'airbrushing' images of themselves is acceptable, an obvious contradiction of their attitudes towards airbrushed images of celebrities as 'fake' and immoral. This contradiction reveals the pressure young women feel to embark on a regime of self-perfectibility (McRobbie, 2009), and to be in constant control of the face they present to the social (and now, virtual) world. Social networking sites, such as *Bebo*, can therefore be understood to create and

reinforce normalised visual expectations of idealised femininity (Ringrose, 2010) and, as the quotes from Julia and Jane above demonstrate, are also a space in which their performances of femininity are validated by others. These young women's desire to be *seen* in a particular way on social networking sites could possibly be understood as a way in which the 'luminosity' of successful, middle class girls (McRobbie, 2009) is achieved by working class girls, whose only source of capital they have is their bodies, in their own cultural arenas within the working class habitus.

Their visual presentation of self on social networking sites is particularly pertinent for the Ashpool girls' accounts of their interaction with others on social networking sites. Whilst the other young women in the study used them to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances, the Ashpool girls revealed that many of their 'friends' on *Bebo* are actually strangers, and that the site is a way of forming new relationships, particularly with boys. This finding is in contrast to other research on young people's use of social networking sites that indicate they are mostly using them to communicate with their school friends (Ringrose, 2010). In this sense, the presentation of the face in their profile pictures is even more important to these young women, since it is the initial avenue through which unknown boys request to be their 'friend'. Below, Julia describes the way in which numerous boys have added her on *Bebo* on the basis of her picture:

Julia: I've had loads of people on Bebo, all boys, and Vanessa was like, 'I'm so adding those boys off your Bebo onto mine, it's charming like, get your own like, innit?! [laughs]. And they've all been like 'oh, I love your picture, you're really pretty' and asked me out, like, 17 boys, and I literally do not know what to do! I met

my last boyfriend on Bebo see, and I started going out with him straight away, so I'm gonna hang out with these ones first.

-Ashpool Girls (Julia's Narrative Interview)

Relationships are formed purely on the basis of a 'photo', and the Ashpool girls do not actually 'know' many of the boys they meet up with from the site. However, *Bebo* creates a sense of intimacy that means the girls feel that they know enough about them on the basis of their photo and the contents of their page alone. The literature on celebrity culture explored in Chapter Two outlines the 'illusion of intimacy' as a characteristic of star-audience relationships (Horton and Wahl, 1993). One can understand social networking sites as suggesting and creating the illusion of intimacy, to the extent that there is no real distinction between the virtual social worlds of *Bebo*, and the 'real' social worlds the young women inhabit in their everyday lives. In both of these worlds the face, and the way in which it is made-up, acts as the primary symbol of self (Synott, 1989) that the young women present to others.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complex relationship between the dominant discourse of beauty within celebrity culture, the young women's negotiation of this discourse, and their everyday beauty practices and peer cultures. Celebrity magazines present a contradictory discourse that undermines and mocks an 'artificial' look, whilst simultaneously demonstrating that what lies underneath the mask is not 'naturally' beautiful. The young women in this study also reject signs of 'artificial' beauty, and

value naturalness and authenticity in their beauty practices. This can be understood particularly in relation to their position as young working class women and their desire to defend against being positioned as excessive, 'slutty', tasteless and unknowing. Embodying the contradiction within celebrity magazines' discursive construction of beauty, the young women's narratives also elicited some emotional accounts of dissatisfaction with their unmade faces and bodies, on the grounds of femininity, undesirability, and ill-health.

Natural beauty has been explored here as a 'myth' in the sense that it implies *everyone* possesses it when, in fact, it is highly constructed and requires significant consumption and labour to achieve. While the magazines themselves gloss over this contradiction, it is particularly apparent in the young women's accounts of their own beauty practices, which reveal the extent of the labour they feel compelled to perform in order to achieve what they think they should 'naturally' possess. This beauty labour is normalised in the young women's accounts via its construction through the discourses of postfeminism and health. The discourse of natural beauty can be understood to hold particular resonances with the lives of working class women due to its focus on authenticity. In rejecting representations of excessive working class beautification, and offering a respectable and sophisticated version of working class femininity that is authentic and in keeping with the working class habitus, the natural beauty discourse within celebrity magazines enables young working class women to 'make-up' without being perceived as a 'drag act' (Skeggs, 2001), or as 'stuck up' and fake.

Finally, this chapter explored the way in which making-up is lived in the everyday lives of young working class women. Beauty is both a source of pleasure and anxiety within the young women's accounts of subjectivity, and the role of the peer group in both these respects emerged as significant. Beauty practices can be a form of female bonding, and stories of getting ready *en masse* revealed the way in which getting ready together perhaps eases the anxieties working class young women may feel about performing femininity in a natural and authentic way, given the social consequences of not doing so. However, my data also revealed the way in which beautification was also a source of competition and jealousy amongst young women, reinforcing the way in which beauty continues to create and maintain distinctions *between* women. This was evident in the young women's accounts of their use of social networking sites, and the important part that making-up played in their presentation of self on such sites. Their presentation of their faces in particular reinforced the way in which femininity is highly prescriptive, regulated and idealised in everyday life.

However, I would argue that the discourse of natural beauty needs to be placed within its wider social, cultural and economic context: this discourse is part of a multi-billion pound industry that many feminists have critiqued as enslaving women to conform to images of 'impossible' beauty (Wolf, 1991). As such, the contradictory nature of the discourse of natural beauty is necessary in order to compel and shame women into consuming and performing beauty as a marker of success and social mobility, and as a means of avoiding working class beauty pathologies, for working class young women in particular. This will be explored further in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven

'Real' Style: Fashion, Femininity and Class

Introduction

This chapter's focus remains on the body, yet turns its attention to the way in which the body is *clothed*. As Zaslow (2009) points out, the main focus of the study of girls' lives has been on weight, dieting, body shape and body dissatisfaction, particularly in light of the moral panic in the media, highlighted in the previous chapters, which expresses concern about young women and their bodies. However, fashion has been largely under-theorised (Entwistle, 2001; Zaslow, 2009) in the study of girls' lives, and whilst 'style' and fashion have been previously explored in the context of femininity (McRobbie, 1994), very few studies have explored the link between celebrity, fashion and identity, particularly with a view to the way in which this process is 'classed'. Some critics, however, have explored the influence of celebrities on contemporary female fashion (Epstein, 2000; Pringle, 2004; Feasey, 2008), highlighting that young women take pleasure in emulating the fashion choices of celebrities to demonstrate a sense of equality with particular stars.

This chapter aims to build on this small pool of research, and to explore the way fashion, dress and style are lived and experienced by the young working class women in this study. In doing so, I will argue that the construction of 'style' within celebrity gossip magazines through the discourse of individuality allows young women to take up various (classed) positions, positions which can also be seen to reflect the circumstances of their everyday lives (i.e. in school, employment or as a mother).

The young mother's group in particular take up a different position to the other young women in this study, and as such, their specific engagement with style and consumer culture will be considered separately at the end of the chapter.

Star Style: Celebrity, Class and Individuality

As Feasey (2008) points out, celebrity gossip magazines, such as *Heat*, are not fashion texts in the same vein as *Vogue*, but instead offer 'a range of star styles and celebrity wardrobes for the reader' (2008:694), with the distinction being *who* is modelling the clothing. Indeed, many of the young women in the present study claimed that looking at what celebrities were wearing was their main reason for reading celebrity magazines. Feasey (2008) claims that readers see something 'special' about a celebrity look, with the image of a particular celebrity bringing specific qualities, such as glamour, to an outfit, a sentiment also expressed by the young women in this study. As such, celebrity magazines identify particular 'style icons' or 'style queens' for readers in the same way Hollywood cinema did for viewers in the 1950s (Stacey, 1994). Similarly, they also identify 'style disasters' and celebrities who do not conform to the magazines' view of 'style', who are ridiculed and shamed by the magazines for a variety of fashion *faux pas*, including 'granny knitwear', mismatching accessories and tin foil jackets. Highlighting and ridiculing these misjudgements of style can be seen as an example of the 'cosmic justice' Hermes (1995) identifies taking its toll, as readers gain pleasure seeing things go badly for famous people.

Style Queens: Standing out and fitting in

The fashion element of celebrity magazines sits in the wider context of a plethora of television ‘makeover’ (and ‘make-under’) programmes and self-help books, which focus on fashion as the route to self-improvement, better self-esteem, and improved sexual relationships (McRobbie, 2009). Furthermore, McRobbie (2009) argues that fashion makeover television encourages women to ‘step forward’ and be visible both within the labour market and consumer culture. As such, fashion is constructed as ‘aspirational’ in these kinds of programmes, and as a route to upward social mobility (McRobbie, 2009). Combine these arguments with the aspirational discourse of celebrity culture, and you have a powerful tool to shape the interpretation of fashion cultures by young working class women in particular.

Within the magazines, the same celebrities are repeatedly heralded as ‘style icons’ based on their ability to build outfits creatively, and to present a glamorous and sophisticated result. These celebrities include Cheryl Cole, Colleen Rooney, Victoria Beckham, Sienna Miller, Kate Moss and Fearne Cotton to name just a few, and are praised by the magazines for being simultaneously ‘different’ *and* following fashion trends. This contradiction pervades both the magazines’ and the young women’s construction of style, along with the notion that the construction of these stars’ styles is ‘effortless’ (and not just because they have a stylist to do it for them). The young women’s group talk about the style of particular celebrities reinforces this argument:

Diana: Like, I don't think it really matters what Cheryl Cole wears, she'd look good in anything really, wouldn't she?

Kat: Yeah she would look good in a bin bag. And Alesha Dixon, I love her style too. Dead sophisticated, like.

Diana: And their style's their own, they don't change it all the time so it's obviously just the style that's natural to them, so they don't have to try too hard I guess.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Kelly: What is it about Fearne Cotton's style that you like?

Ceri: Erm, she seems quite normal, and, I think she's pretty, and I like that she dresses differently. And you can tell it's her.

Sam: Yeah, but that look that, whatdoyoumacallit, Fearne Cotton's got, like, they've all kind of got it though, haven't they? Like Cheryl Cole, I will admit, she is out there on her own, she always looks nice and stylish in her own, individual way, but I think Fearne Cotton, I dunno, she just looks a bit odd sometimes.

Ceri: That could possibly be what I like about her.

Sian: Yeah, she just doesn't care, she'll just wear it if she likes it.

-Tinsworth Girls (1st Reading Group)

In these extracts, the young women can be seen to express admiration for those celebrities who are 'different', and who don't care or try too hard to please others in the fashion stakes. A study by Zaslow (2009) of girls in New York found that they expressed similar sentiments: they praised stars who seemingly 'didn't care' about conforming to particular stereotypes of fashion, and had control over their own individual style. Having this control is what Sam refers to when she says 'they've all got it', this natural, effortless style that is possessed by an individual from within. It

is in the cultural and social construction of style that the discourse of individualism can be seen as particularly at work. In previous chapters I argued that individuality was a contributory factor in the young women's social construction of the body, and also their perceptions of 'natural beauty'. However, 'style' is where the discourse of individualism shines through as the principal way in which these young women negotiate and construct the female body.

Whilst the star fashions within celebrity magazines are there to be 'imitated' (Feasey, 2008), this imitation is constructed by the young women in this study in a negative way. They did express the desire to consume the same items that particular celebrities wear, but they also defended against the assumption that they were merely 'copying' the individual style of that celebrity. Instead, the young women would invoke the discourses of individuality and authenticity to claim that they would incorporate the item into their *own* individual sense of style. As such, expressions of their desire to dress like stars sit uncomfortably next to their negative attitude towards merely 'copying' the looks of particular celebrities, as the quotes below demonstrate:

Julia: I love to see what clothes the celebrities are wearing, that's mostly why I bother reading these magazines. Coz then like, I know what kind of things to wear myself.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Sian: I like this 'best dressed' thing though, because it makes me think, 'if a magazine thinks they're the best dressed, maybe that's what I should be wearing' [laughs].

Ceri: Oh see, what I do is, I look at what the celebrities are wearing to the parties, so then I know what kind of things I should wear.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Tasha: I'd never base my style on what I see in a magazine. You can tell when people have done that, and I just think that's sad. I wear what's unique to me, coz my style is quite flowy and flowery, see.

-Ashpool Girls (3rd Reading Group)

Amy: Yeah, if I see a style of something I like then I might go for it but I wouldn't like, say Rhianna or somebody, say if they change their style I wouldn't like change just to be like them, even though I do like her style, but my style's a bit more 'urban'.

Katie: It's like some people what they see, they do the same innit? Like Chanelle, with Victoria Beckham... She was dressing and trying to be the same with everything. Like, I would buy something I saw them wearing if I liked it, but not change everything about my style just to copy them.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

In the first two extracts above, these young women demonstrate their awareness that fashion is about following 'trends' and having a certain level of knowledge about what is and isn't currently acceptable. Celebrities and their representation within magazines are the principal way in which these young women gain that knowledge, which can be used as a form of cultural capital to construct their own socially acceptable style. However, in the last two extracts, these young women demonstrate a rejection of 'imitation', and assert themselves as individuals with a particular sense of style. For example, Tasha claims her style is 'flowy and flowery', and Amy claims hers is 'urban'. In fact, most of the young women were able to put a 'label' on their particular sense of style, and construct this as 'individual' and 'unique' to them.

The young women can be seen to demonstrate this ability to use fashion as a form of cultural capital in everyday life. 'Standing out' from the crowd is a significant component of postfeminist, 'girl power' discourses contained within celebrity magazines, and is a significant component of the empowered successful female subject. For these working class women in particular, fashion is a cultural tool that has the potential to advance them over other groups of working class young women who are seen to lack this cultural capital, those who we have seen these girls work hard to distinguish themselves from. Since these young women have little in the way of academic qualifications, fashion and style could be understood as one way of making themselves 'stand out' from other working class women, and perform the role of 'successful individual' in a world where everyone is aspiring to be 'on the up', as embodied by celebrity culture.

What were you thinking? When individual style goes wrong...

The quotes above also demonstrate the way in which the construction of individual style, being the discursive minefield that it is, requires adherence to particular shared codes and categories, as outlined by the magazines. Thus, whilst my analysis revealed particular female celebrities are hailed as 'style' queens, there are also celebrities who are hailed as 'fashion disasters', who take individualism 'too far', and ignore the unspoken fashion rules. Whilst 'different' and 'quirky' are positive style attributes, 'strange' and 'bizarre' are not, and in the centre of this continuum lies a complicated discursive space the young women must constantly negotiate in the construction of their own styles.

Several celebrities are critiqued by both the magazines and the young women for taking ‘individuality’ too far, particularly American singers Lady Gaga and Katy Perry, as in the extracts below:

Kat: Like, yeah, I respect Lady Gaga because she is trying to be different, but sometimes she is just crazy and just looks weird more than anything, like with a teapot on her head, and her lipstick done like that and stuff.

Diana: Yeah, I will admit, sometimes she looks like she’s trying too hard to be different and wacky and it’s all gone a bit wrong.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Tasha: Katy Perry, what the hell is with her clothes?

Vanessa: She got no taste in fashion, Katy Perry.

Tasha: She tries to do crazy things just to get attention, she’s crazy that woman.

Julia: My god, she looks like she’s going to bed. She looks like she belongs in an asylum with that thing on.

-Ashpool Girls (1st Reading Group)

Nicole: Oh god could you imagine wearing that? God I don’t like that. There’s nothing wrong with different, but...

Jane: Ah she’s nuts she is [Lady Gaga]. She’s definitely got issues!

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Here, the young women ridicule celebrities who try *too hard* to be different, in a similar ‘ironic’ and comedic style to that of the magazines themselves. Whilst the young women respect and admire these celebrities’ dedication to the discourse of

individualism, it is on the grounds of taste and 'good' fashion knowledge that these celebrities fail to embody successful, sophisticated style.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the representation of 'car crash' or 'train wreck' femininity within celebrity culture, and my analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that style often acts as a signifier of the mental state of the individual. In the extracts above, Lady Gaga is described by the young women as 'crazy', 'weird', 'wacky', 'nuts' and as having 'issues', and Katy Perry is described as having 'no taste', doing 'crazy things' with fashion, and dressing like she 'belongs in an asylum'.

Furthermore, during the period of the 'mental breakdown' of Britney Spears, her 'scruffy' style, in the form of tight slogan T-shirts and ill-fitting jogging bottoms, relegated her back to her working class roots, with her style described in the magazines and by the young women themselves as 'chavvy' and 'trailer park'.

Britney's loss of style was constructed as a signifier of the deterioration of her mental health within celebrity magazines, in a similar way to the ways in which the girls interpret the styles of Lady Gaga and Katy Perry as indicative of their mental instability. These cultural representations link working class female style identities with psychological instability, and a lack of restraint and self-control.

The young women in this study sought to defend themselves against this representation of working class style as this extract highlights:

Amy: I can't stand those slogan T-shirts Britney wears, they look dead chavvy, I'd never wear one of those.

Katie: She looks a state, Britney does. She just needs to make a bit more of an effort, coz like, she started dressing badly when she went nuts, didn't she?

Amy: Yeah she did, I think she's always been a bit chavvy though.

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

'Chav' is currently one of society's ultimate insults (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010), and one that is thrown at the style of female celebrities with working class backgrounds, such as Britney Spears and Cheryl Cole, in gossip magazines. As young working class women, the girls' close proximity to representations of 'chav' style means that they must repeatedly defend against, and distinguish themselves from it. In order to do so, they identify with the 'sophisticated' style outlined in celebrity magazines to signify their difference from this representation and the 'respectability' (Skeggs, 1997) of their working class styles.

As such, the young women's talk about their own fashion tastes reflects their desire to dress 'up' in line with celebrity fashion cultures, and reject casual, 'lazy' styles:

Mel: I like smart clothes, see. I used to be a bit of a tomboy, but I'm not anymore, I like erm, blouses with frills and stuff, you know? Like, I think all this stuff from Dorothy Perkins is dead sophisticated, like.

Julia: Yeah, you gotta dress classy, not all scruffy and chavvy like Anne [laughter]. Coz she don't look lady-like at all, which ain't sexy, is it?

Tasha: Yeah and you can't dress like a slag neither, with your boobs and legs out and everything too tight.

Mel: What like Shannon, you mean? [laughter]

-Ashpool Girls (Having lunch in café- Anne not present!)

In the above extract, the girls attempt to align themselves with sophisticated and feminine fashion tastes, distinguishing themselves from 'chav' style, as well as the stereotypical representation of working class female fashion: the under-dressed, over-exposed, and garish style of the 'tarty', unrespectable working class woman (Skeggs, 1997). As Skeggs (1997) points out, clothing is experienced intimately, and as such signifies the moral worth of the person. The young women's classification of their friend Anne (who is not present) as 'scruffy', 'unladylike', 'chavvy' and 'not sexy' serves to distance themselves from the representation of working class women as lazy and unkempt. The dress code attached to the category 'slag' (as embodied by their friend Shannon) is understood by the young women as unrespectable and immoral, and as something to clearly distinguish themselves from through the construction of 'sophisticated' working class style identities.

Once more, the 'make-under' phenomenon in celebrity and popular culture, typified by BBC3's *Snog, Marry, Avoid*, contributes to the regulation of 'hyper-sexy' working class style: the focus on 'classiness' and 'authenticity' shames working class women into adopting 'respectable' styles of dress. However, I will discuss further below how working class women can never really 'get it right' (Skeggs, 1997:87; McRobbie, 2009), since they lack the inherent knowledge of what this really means. As such, reproducing 'sophisticated' working class style is a source of much anxiety for these

young working class women. The moral judgements of celebrities who don't 'get it right' play on this fear of not looking good (Skeggs, 1997), and show young working class women how to avoid it.

Moreover, critiques of this nature only regulate the 'hyper-sexy' representation of working class style, and not the other stereotype of working class fashion, as 'scruffy' and 'unkempt', which the young women also distinguish themselves from in contrasting themselves with group member, Anne. Anne is confined to working class fashion cultures by Julia due to her 'tomboy' image, which does not comply with the *subtly* sexy, sophisticated image of style within celebrity magazines to which these young women aspire. As such, Anne's 'tomboy' style is confined to 'childish' styles of dress, and seen as lacking in the required amount of erotic capital (Hakim, 2010). Whilst scantily-clad styles of working class dress are associated with promiscuity and sexual excess (Skeggs, 1997), scruffy styles are categorised as 'unfeminine' and 'unsexy'. Here, we see the importance for young working class women of being both 'appropriately sexual' (Hey, 1997) *and* the object of male desire: they can be seen to internalise the male gaze and enforce this upon themselves and other women (Bordo, 1993). This highlights the challenges of performing 'sexy' style for young working class women in particular, who risk being labelled as 'slutty' (Walkerdine, 1991) or 'chavvy' (Tyler, 2008) if they fail to perform this perfectly. In the section below, I further explore the complex negotiation of this restrictive discursive space by these young women, and its affects in relation to their classed backgrounds.

Lived Contradictions: Fashion and Classed Anxieties

It is important to explore the way in which these young women negotiate the contradictions of performing femininity that can be seen as a result of their classed dispositions. My analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that they create a continuum of style ranging from 'crazy' to 'safe' to 'unique': as Feasey's (2008) research with readers of *Heat* magazine demonstrated, readers are likely to consider fashions within the magazine as 'tried and tested' by celebrities in their everyday lives, and also as validated by the magazines as 'safe' and 'wearable'. This gives the reader the confidence to try that look knowing they can rebuff criticism on those grounds.

Pulling it off: Confidence and Class

Whilst this was indeed the case for my young women, the discourse of individualism permeated their negotiation of the styles on display in the magazines, as they attempted to create their own 'individual mix' from the trends on offer that they felt would suit *them*. In the extracts from the group sessions below, the young women discuss their ability to 'pull off' certain looks:

Sian: Every time I wear my skinny jeans with a pair of high shoes I think I look ridiculous.

Sam: Why?

Sian: I just can't pull that look off. Like, I like it and everything, and I think it looks great, but just not on me.

Ceri: And I think that is part of the problem, if you think, 'I can't pull that off' then you won't...

Sian: But then if you don't, like if you wear it and then you don't feel comfortable, it looks worse, because they reckon you're supposed to walk around like...

Sam: Yeah, unconfident.

-Tinsworth Girls (Having Lunch in local pub)

Holly: See I love them ruffly tops, but I could never pull that off coz I'm not the right shape, so I'd look stupid in them, I just wouldn't get away with it.

Nicole: Yeah, that's like me with them trousers, I love them, they just make my arse look huge [laughs].

-Molefield Mums (2nd Reading Group)

Here, the young women can be seen to recognise these styles (skinny jeans and ruffle tops) as being 'safe' and 'wearable'; however, Sian and Holly question their ability to 'pull it off' in comparison to the 'effortless' style of the stars on which these looks are modelled. Confidence is the key that enables a young woman to perform 'different' and get away with it; the stars have this confidence and are able to walk the discursive line between standing out and fitting in. These young working class women, however, do not possess the level of cultural and symbolic capital that yields this confidence. The constant surveillance and judgements of the fashion choices of female celebrities in gossip magazines, particularly the damning critiques of those celebrities who have tried 'too hard' to be different, is evident in the young women's expression of fashion as 'risky' in the extracts above. A significant element of this 'risk' in appropriating these seemingly validated and legitimised styles pertains to their anxieties about their own bodily failings. Holly feels that she is not the right

body shape for the ruffle top, and my fieldnotes from a shopping trip with Sian recall that Sian felt that she was too short to wear skinny jeans. Thus, whilst celebrity magazines crown 'style queens' for young women to emulate, these young women do so with caution, and with dedication to their perception of their own 'individual' style, and the moral values of the working class habitus, in mind.

The contradiction within celebrity magazines' construction of style, that fashion should be different, unique and individual yet not crazy, bizarre and 'out of fashion', can be seen in the young women's repeated need for group validation on items or looks they perceived as 'risky'. Below are just some examples of where the young women sought reassurance that they were the right side of 'different':

Mel: What does everyone think about all this 70s stuff coming back in? Coz like, I think it would just look stupid on me.

Tasha: I quite like it, but I don't think I would wear it.

Julia: I'd probably wear bits of it, but that's just me, we all got different fashions.

Vanessa: We could get away with that if we lived in Cardiff, not round here.

-Ashpool Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Sam: Do you know what I didn't like coz I thought they were a bit weird, but like now? Tulip skirts. It's taken me quite a while to get into them, but I quite like them.

Rachel: Yeah, they're not weird at all.

Ceri: I love them. They're different to a normal skirt, but they're not crazy, and they're flattering too.

Sam: Oh that's OK then that everyone else thinks they're nice. I'll get one, then.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Thus, whilst the magazines' approval or disapproval of a particular item or look is clear, in group sessions the young women repeatedly felt the need to establish their own norms about them, which sometimes contradicted the 'style' in the magazines. Whilst Mel and Tasha accept that the 70s look is validated within celebrity magazines as wearable and safe, they question their own ability and willingness to wear the look themselves. Interestingly, Vanessa claims that one of the reasons the look is not wearable is their expectations of what is deemed acceptable within their local, predominantly working class community, which she contrasts with the more 'fashionable' urban environment of Cardiff. However, Sam receives validation from the other girls that tulip skirts are acceptable within her social environment: the Tinsworth girls, being slightly older, tend to visit the nearby cities of Newport and Cardiff more often than the Ashpool Girls, and for different kinds of social occasions. The Tinsworth girls often go out clubbing in these cities since they claim there is little nightlife where they live, whereas the younger Ashpool girls tended to stay in Ashpool to go out on a Friday and Saturday night. As such, what the Tinsworth girls legitimise as a 'wearable style' is likely to be different from that of the younger Ashpool girls who do not go clubbing in the cities.

Skeggs (1997) notes that clothing was highly valued by the young working class women in her study as one of the few alternative sources of cultural capital they had. As such, fashion involved dedication, commitment, labour, knowledge and friendship (Skeggs, 1997:104). Within celebrity magazines, it emerged that style is constructed both as 'effortless', in terms of its focus on individual, 'natural' style, and laborious, in terms of the abundance of features that demonstrate *exactly* what needs to be consumed in order to 'get it right'. This complex contradiction was evident in the

young women's discussions of the way in which individual styles are constructed, as these extracts show:

Tasha: Like I think with fashion, even if you're not sure, you can work at it, anyone can...

Vanessa: Yeah, but I think everyone's got their own style that is natural to them so it doesn't really take much work, it's just finding it, I guess..

-Ashpool Girls (Having coffee in the middle of shopping trip)

Sian: Like, I worry about what I wear a lot, like I really work hard to try and make sure I don't look stupid, like I've tried too hard, but I want to look sophisticated..

Rachel: I like to make an effort with how I dress, like dress up and keep up with the trends, other people in my work make no effort at all, they look like right chavs and there's no excuse to look scruffy.

-Tinsworth Girls (Over dinner in city centre pub)

Here, the young women provide an account of the physical and emotional labour that they invest in constructing style. Whilst Vanessa implies that style is natural to an individual, and therefore doesn't require much 'work', she acknowledges that this style needs to be 'found' in the first place. The other young women focus on the labour involved in the construction of style: like beauty, Tasha describes style as a quality *everyone* possesses, but requires labour to unearth. The anxiety this labour causes can be seen in Sian's statement that she worries about what to wear, and fears the repercussions we have seen 'trying too hard' elicits. However, Rachel reveals that true 'effortlessness', in the form of a 'scruffy', 'unkempt' look, is also unacceptable.

Their anxieties over constructing an appropriate working class style can also be seen in the way in which they construct their own styles. As previously highlighted, the young women are keen to distinguish themselves from the working class positions of ‘slut’ and ‘chav’, and in doing so position themselves within sophisticated and respectable styles. However, as highlighted in Chapter Four, the performance of sophisticated working class femininity also carries the risk of being labelled ‘stuck up’ by other working class women who might perceive them as trying to ‘pass’ as middle class. As such, some of the Tinsworth girls described their discomfort at dressing in the sophisticated styles hailed by the magazines within their predominantly working class work places and communities:

Sian: I don't know if it's because of where we live, and like, if you wore it round here, or even in Newport, you'd get people like thinking, 'where the hell does she think she's going?', whereas if you're in New York...

Rachel: Yeah, I think I know what you mean...

Sian: Like there are some styles, like I think that [Miranda Kerr] is OK, but if you walked through Tinsworth town, people would look at you and think, 'what the hell have you got on?'

Ceri: See that's what I used to be like, 'I'm going out in Newport, so I'm not gonna dress up', but in the end I was like, well, 'fuck it, someone needs to teach them some style'! [laughter] do you know what I mean? It just annoys me, because just because Newport is full of chavs, I don't need to be one of them...

Sam: We'd all end up dressed in poppers¹ and Airmax² otherwise!

Ceri: Yeah.

¹ A type of casual tracksuit bottom that has poppers fastening it up the outside of each leg, associated with ‘chav’ style.

² A model of Nike trainer that is associated with ‘chav’ style.

Sian: Sometimes when you go to work, you just, like I think I'm dressed really dowdy [laughs], and I'm like, 'I really wanna wear a skirt', but I just can't.

Ceri: You do, sometimes you walk in and I know that everyone in the office is like, 'where does she think...', but I don't care if I'm in Bridgend, and I don't care if none of you have read a fashion magazine before!

Sian: I worry too much about what other people think...

Rachel: Dress nice to go to work, don't worry about it...

Sam: Wear a dress tomorrow.

-Tinsworth Girls (2nd Reading Group)

Here, the young women can be seen to take different positions in relation to 'dressing up' and the social reprisals from other working class girls. Sian expresses the way in which her fears of dressing 'up' for work are predicated on this being considered 'out of place' and acting 'above her station'. In Chapter Four, I explored the young women's categorisation of celebrities and other working class girls who 'acted up' as 'stuck up', and it is this categorisation that Sian is attempting to avoid from other working class young women in her workplace. Thus, whilst young working class women must constantly defend against the representation of chav styles, as in Sam and Ceri's assertion that everyone in Newport dresses in 'poppers' and 'Airmax', they also must not alienate their working class peers who may view their performance of sophistication as 'stuck up', and them as 'up themselves'. The quote below from Skeggs (1997) also highlights this predicament:

'Trying to pass as middle class, to be accepted into another group, to know how to be accepted, generates considerable anxieties for those who hope to pass. And passing

may not get any support from others because it is an implicit critique of those from whom distance is being drawn and who do not want to engage in passing' (1997:86).

The young women in this study are not trying to 'pass' as middle class, but to 'pass' as a sophisticated version of working class style that distinguishes them from the working class positions of 'slut' and 'chav'. However, Skeggs' (1997) point that this can be interpreted as an implicit critique of those from whom distance is being drawn (i.e. those 'scruffy' people in Ceri's office) is particularly relevant in understanding Sian's anxieties.

However, Rachel expresses an alternative attitude towards dressing up: she likes the attention and doesn't care what others may think. Ceri also resists the pressure to dress down, claiming that 'someone needs to teach them some style!' Sam's position in relation to dressing up is more ambivalent: she acknowledges it is necessary to disassociate from 'chav' styles, but also that there might be consequences in the way in which Sian's peers 'would all bitch together' about her. The way in which the discourse of style is constructed in celebrity magazines, via individuality and authenticity, allows these young women to take up these different positions in relation to the discourse, whilst remaining 'true to themselves' and their working class roots. The way in which the sophisticated style of celebrity culture is juxtaposed with historically working class representations of fashion, allows these young women to legitimately 'dress up' and escape those traditionally working class fashion cultures, without necessarily being labelled as 'stuck up'.

Who Wore it best? Fashion and Bitch culture

As a result of the implicit critique dressing 'up' imposes on other working class women who do not engage in the practice, it is unsurprising that fashion elicited the most competitive and 'bitchy' talk from the young women. As Ringrose (2008a) notes, we inhabit a culture where young women are incited to compete in all areas of everyday life. Guendouzi defines 'bitching' as a sub-genre of gossip 'that involves comparative competition for social capital based on hegemonic images of femininity' (2001:34). She argues that since 'bitching' reproduces the heterosexual matrix, it also serves to restrict the options of gender identity available to women in the so-called '*post-feminist world of choices*' (2001:48). Indeed, celebrity gossip magazines are a part of the wider 'bitch narratives' within celebrity culture (Fairclough, 2008). The 'Who Wore it Best' features in the magazines compare celebrities in the same outfit, and can be seen to compare women in the spirit of 'bitching' Guendouzi (2001) describes above. For example, when comparing Katie Holmes and Ashlee Simpson in the same dress, *Heat* says 'Uh-oh, Katie has broken a golden style rule: namely, if a dress can accommodate a final-month pregnancy bump, it's not going to be flattering on a skinny lady *not* with child' (issue 519, p.29).

Guendouzi (2001) notes that 'bitching' is typically private domain talk that relies on a 'safe' discursive environment: indeed, bitching about celebrities and what celebrities were wearing was considered by the young women as a 'safe' practice precisely because there were no social repercussions of doing so, and there would be no risk to the instigator's positive self-image (Guendouzi, 2001). As Katie tells me:

Katie: It's fun to have a good bitch about what celebrities look like and what they're wearing and stuff. Like you know if I say she [Holly Willoughby] looks a bit fat in that dress, she's not gonna come and have a go at me for saying it [laughs].

-Molefield Girls (1st Reading Group)

In everyday life, 'bitching' is less safe; however, the display of competitiveness, particularly on the basis of fashion, was felt very strongly by these young women in their everyday lives. This involved actually 'bitching' about others, as well as being aware of the way in which you are 'bitched' *about* by others, as Sian described her fear of earlier. The way in which we have seen the young women 'bitchily' critique the style of female celebrities in magazines also applies to the way in which they see themselves as competing with other young women in their everyday life. The competence with which they are able to compare and critique the styles of celebrities could be regarded as a way in which this practice in everyday life can be known and understood.

For example, using a multi-layered methodology (as discussed in Chapter Three) also allowed me to witness these same critiques of other women as I shopped with them, and below is an extract from my fieldnotes detailing one such episode:

Whilst we were shopping in New Look, Tasha holds up a checked top and shouts 'Diana's got this!', to which Julia responds 'I'm not surprised, that's bloody awful, and so out of date, but then again she does wear stuff like that, coz she thinks she's so cool'. Vanessa turns to me and says that Diana always tries to dress in better stuff than them to show that she's better than them. Mel then says 'did you see the state of

her the other day?', and all the other girls laugh. Julia tells me she had too many accessories on and was trying too hard, so they were all pointing, talking, and laughing about her from across the sixth form common room.

-Ashpool Girls (Fieldnotes from shopping trip)

This episode of 'bitching' directed at Diana and the way she dresses reveals the way in which competitiveness is significant to the way in which the girls talk about other girls. There were many other examples throughout the course of the fieldwork of similar episodes: some of the mums used to 'bitch' about Kathy and Holly, saying they were 'too dressed up' when they went to baby club or to collect their children from nursery. Thus, 'bitching' can be understood as a device that attempts to regulate those working class young women who are judged to be 'acting up', reinforcing the moral value of 'anti-pretentiousness' and authenticity with regards to fashion. At the same time, attempting to elevate yourself above others is also *necessary*, and so appears in some of the young women's accounts without the shame you might imagine would be attached to it. In the extract below, Julia describes the way in which she considered the dinner and dance the Ashpool Girls all attended as a 'competition' to look the best:

Julia: I did think that as a group, we looked the best at the ball. We all wanted to make sure that we looked better than the other lot [Diana, Rhian and Kat]. We had the nicest dresses, everyone else's were a bit shabby. And all my friends said that I looked the best, and that I didn't even have to try with my hair and makeup because my dress was the most gorgeous.

-Ashpool Girls (Julia's Narrative Interview)

Not as confident as Julia in their ability to compete with others, Holly and Rhian describe below the way in which competitiveness on the basis of style, and the 'bitching' that went with it, was a source of anxiety for them:

Holly: I remember when I first started working there and coz it is a fashion shop and we got to wear the clothes as well, and it was always a massive competition everyday in work about who could look the nicest, and I just didn't have the time half the time to make myself look nice and you'd worry about being judged when you got there and stuff, so yeah. Some of them were right stuck up though, and I could tell they were looking down on me and bitching about me behind my back because of what I was wearing, and that felt kind of shit.

-Molefield Mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

Rhian: Everyone's always trying to wear the most fashionable stuff or the most expensive stuff at school, and I sometimes feel like I look rubbish and scruffy next to everyone else. But the other girls [Julia, Mel, Tasha, Vanessa and Anne] act like they don't want to know, and are always taking the piss out of what we wear. And the boys all go for those girls, so you feel like you have to dress up to get a boyfriend.

-Ashpool Girls (Rhian's Narrative Interview)

Here, these young women do not 'enjoy' competing with other girls in the style stakes, as Julia appears to above. Holly and Rhian describe feelings of inferiority compared to other girls, with Rhian claiming she feels 'rubbish' about the way she looks in comparison, and Holly claiming the 'bitching' about her style made her feel 'like shit'. Both young women highlight the way in which they perceive their performance of sophistication as lacking, and as such are at risk of being labelled

‘scruffy’ and ‘chavvy’, since making too little effort is as reprehensible as making too much. Whilst as Skeggs (1997) notes, working class young women are aware of the judgements made of them by middle class women, my data highlights that they are also very aware of the judgements made of them by other working class women.

Consuming Style: Peer Cultures and Identity

However, whilst fashion fosters a significant element of competition between young women, it also has the ability to create bonds between them, and acts as a positive element of identity construction in their accounts. In a similar way to beautification, fashion, and shopping in particular, has a ritualistic function that enables young women to create shared norms and attach shared moral meanings to certain looks or trends. As Taft (2004) points out, the most pervasive meaning of ‘girl power’ is as ‘consumer power’, which suggests that without consuming particular commodities, a girl is not powerful. Indeed, postfeminist drama, such as *Sex and the City*, emphasise fashion consumption as a means of female bonding and self-reflexive identity formation, and is able to embody ‘style’ in its characters (Arthurs, 2003), in the same way as celebrity magazines. As such, postfeminist media culture eschews men as a source of emotional satisfaction in favour of an ‘empowering’ feminine culture of gossip and shopping (Arthurs, 2003; Hermes, 2006).

Shopping: Creating bonds of intimacy

Shopping has become a compulsory component of pleasurable feminine culture (Radner, 1995): my analysis of celebrity magazines revealed that the consumption of

fashion is repeatedly emphasised through their emphasis on style, and their recommendations for 'must have' items. These items were framed within the discourse of pleasure: for example, the feature 'Let's go shopping!' in *Heat* magazine shows the pleasure young women can gain from consuming particular fashion items (also see Feasey, 2008). Most of the young women described the practice of shopping as one of the main social activities in their everyday lives:

Vanessa: I love going shopping with all my friends, going in all the shops trying things on and giving each other help and stuff. We do it at least 3 times a week. We went yesterday and, well, I bought some shoes yesterday, Julia liked them, Natalie Davis didn't like them, and they came out with it they did. That's what I like though.

-Ashpool Girls (Vanessa's Narrative Interview)

Holly: I love it when I go on a shopping trip with a couple of the girls. You know, go shopping, have coffee, more shopping, then a nice lunch somewhere, maybe get your nails done, and then more shopping! That's my perfect day, it's so nice.

-Molefield mums (Holly's Narrative Interview)

For most of the young women, shopping is a pleasurable activity rarely conducted alone, and almost always in the company of other women. In fact, many of their accounts explicitly highlighted the importance of shopping for group solidarity, as Rachel's account below demonstrates:

Rachel: Like with the girls, we try to go to London like, once a year, October November time, for Christmas shopping, which of course means spending all the money on us [laughs], we say it every year, and we come back with a load of bags

and say, 'did anyone buy anything for anyone?', 'no', like maybe a packet of sweets, and I think last year we must have spent four hours in the TopShop, like, by the time everyone picked something up, then try it on, then wander back round again, and then we all went, 'I'm really hungry', so we all had to go out for food and then go back [laughs] and we were just like, 'right are we all happy that we've spent enough time in TopShop? Yes, so can we please go somewhere else?!' But it's nice to get all of us together and go to London shopping for a girlie trip.

-Tinsworth Girls (Rachel's Narrative Interview)

Stories about particular memorable shopping trips were a common narrative in most of the young women's accounts, and shopping was the principal way in which young women spent time with one another, as Rachel's account highlights. During the period of fieldwork, I went shopping with the young women (apart from the mothers group who did not go shopping together) to experience the process. In a similar vein to the way in which they validated particular looks and items featured in celebrity magazines, the young women all commented upon everything one another picked up unprompted and sought things out for one another based on their perception of their friends' individual styles. The shopping trips of the young women served to create and affirm shared judgements of taste in fashion, and bond the group together as stylish and powerful young women consuming *en masse*.

Narratives of occasions where judgements in taste have not been shared reinforce the importance of shared style values when shopping with other women. In the extract below, Sian describes the experience of shopping with her twin sister Jodi:

Sian: Every shopping trip with Jodi just turns into a nightmare because she thinks that I'm pointing things out because I want her to look stupid, or she doesn't shop in the same shops that I shop in, so erm, she likes to go into like, Select and things like that, cheap shops for chavs [laughs], so I'm just stood there, thinking 'this is all just tack³, and I'm finding it really hard to point things out to you because I don't like any of it', so it's really hard, and we usually just end up getting into a blazing row, because she thinks I'm pointing out stuff to make her look stupid, coz she doesn't dress tidy. That's the main reason I refuse to go shopping with her.

-Tinsworth Girls (Sian's Narrative Interview)

Here, the importance of shared values when shopping can be seen, and rather than producing social bonds between the two sisters, shopping is a cause of conflict because the young women do not share the same judgements of taste and style. Classed discourses can be seen to operate in this episode between Sian and Jodi, in Sian's judgement of her sister's favoured shops as 'cheap', and the clothes within them 'tack'. Indeed, Sian's derisive statement of her sister's taste as 'tack' could be interpreted as an attempt to elevate her taste above her sisters as more 'sophisticated', and distinguish herself from 'chavvy' working class representations of style. Thus, in order for bonds to be formed through clothes shopping, young women must also share the same moral judgements regarding acceptable ways of dressing-up whilst retaining 'authenticity'.

Anne's narrative, the self-identified 'tomboy', also demonstrates the importance of shared judgements of taste, and furthermore highlights the 'compulsory' nature of

³ Meaning 'rubbish'.

shopping within young women's friendships, even for those young women who are not heteronormatively 'feminine':

Anne: I love to go shopping with all my friends...to buy tracksuits and 'bling'⁴. Like Vanessa and shopping is a nightmare coz she's like, 'let's go in this shop, let's go in that shop', ah and she looks at all the clothes, and you can't get her out the shop for about an hour then. They're all into shopping, more than me though, and all that, so it's not really fun when you're going in and out of girly shops like River Island and Dorothy Perkins and that, coz they don't sell the stuff I wear. Sportsworld, I like.

-Ashpool Girls (Anne's Narrative Interview)

Despite Anne's statement that she loves to go shopping, it is the consumption of tracksuits (stereotypical working class 'chav' dress that distinguishes her from the others in the group) not the practice of shopping *with* her friends that she enjoys. Consumption is a principal way through which Anne creates a sense of self-identity (Featherstone, 1991), and as Bourdieu (2007) highlights is inextricably bound up with the way in which class is configured. Anne explicitly cites her 'bling' jewellery and tracksuits as signifiers of her 'alternative' identity. Whilst the other young women are keen to distinguish themselves from the position of 'chav', Anne can be seen to actively appropriate those signifiers of 'chav' style as a symbol of her empowered status as a consumer. Consumption can also be seen as a way in which Anne seeks to integrate herself into the friendship group, despite her opposing judgements of taste.

⁴ Bling refers to heavy metal chains that are culturally associated with 'chav' style.

With each group of young women having different amounts of spending power at their disposal, the level to which they were able to perform their status as empowered consumers varied, with the Tinsworth girls able to wield significantly more spending power than the other groups. As such, the narratives of the Ashpool girls, Molefield girls and Molefield mums highlight the difficulty of consuming ‘sophisticated’ fashion on their limited budgets:

Tasha: I like it when the magazines have these ‘steal versus style’ bits, so it shows you where you can get it cheaper, coz I wouldn’t pay the prices they have in there. But then, the shops round here, there’s New Look, but the rest are all like chavvy shops or cheapy shops so we can’t really get stuff anyway. And in Cardiff they’ve all the posh shops, but they’re all too expensive. So I’m often in cheap stuff, because it’s all I can afford. Like, Primark is great, but it’s a bit chavvy isn’t it?

-Ashpool Girls (Having lunch during shopping trip)

In the extract above, Tasha refers to the way in which celebrity magazines feature a similar item for a range of budgets, from cheap, to mid-range, to expensive. In this way, celebrity magazines can be seen to cater to a range of different ‘habitués’, seemingly allowing young working class women to fully and legitimately participate in consumer culture, from which they may previously have been excluded or pathologised. However, the ‘cheap’ options also come with the social stigma of being ‘chavvy’, as in Sian’s earlier classification of the shop *Select* as ‘cheap’. Since most of these young women actively defend against this label, the difficulty of participating in celebrity style culture on limited budgets becomes clear.

Thus, shopping as a practice can be seen as a source of considerable pleasure for the young women in this study, as well as a process that creates and reinforces shared moral codes of good taste creating group identity and solidarity. However, their narrative accounts reveal the difficulty their position as working class women brings to their construction of consumer identities, and the significant affective labour consuming style entails. With limited spending power at their disposal, many of the young women risk being labelled 'chavvy' in consuming 'cheap' clothes in a bid to participate in celebrity/consumer culture. The Tinsworth girls, who had more disposable income, were able to consume the 'sophisticated' products and brands on offer as a marker of their success, and a way of distinguishing themselves from 'cheap' styles. This, however, carries the risk that other working class women who are unable to fully participate in consumer culture may consider their consumption patterns as 'snobby' or 'stuck up'.

Motherhood and fashion

Whilst it is clear from the young women's appropriation of the discourse of individualism that fashion and style are clearly tools with which they create a sense of self-identity (Featherstone, 1991) and self-confidence, the degree to which young women were able to take up an 'empowered' position in relation to the discourses of Girl Power and neo-liberalism varied. This was not just in relation to economic capital, as discussed above, but also in terms of their positions as mothers and non-mothers. The young mothers group, whilst engaging with the discourses of the magazines in terms of individual style and aspiring to sophisticated consumption, were reluctant to translate these desires into everyday practices as the other groups

did. Below, Jane describes the way in which her identity as a consumer has changed since becoming a mother:

Jane: If you see something for the baby or something for yourself like a new top, you know you gotta put your child first and you do, you want to give your kids everything, so you tend to sort of, not neglect yourself, but, you're no longer first, whereas I was really selfish you know, if I wanted something I would have it with no kids. Before I wouldn't hesitate about going down to Cardiff, going to Oasis and Topshop and buying hundred pounds worth of clothes, wouldn't think twice about it. Knowing that I would get the opportunity to wear them if they were fashionable, because there was always a night out, or go to the pictures, there was always something, every week. So yeah, then you wouldn't think twice. But now, I'll fancy loads of clothes and I'll try them on and think 'oh that looks nice', and then I'll always double question myself, you know, yeah it's nice, but where you gonna wear it? So you don't really dress like yourself anymore.

-Molefield Mums (Jane's Narrative Interview)

Whilst the young mums' non-participation in the consumer culture part of celebrity magazines could be understood as an active refusal to engage in the 'trivial', 'shallow' world of fashion consumption, their accounts reveal a sense of loss and mourning for their old 'consuming' selves. Jane's account above is typical of the accounts of the other mums, in which they describe a break with the 'old' self through the critical moment of motherhood, and a consequent loss of that old, *authentic* self constructed via consumption. When the mum's fleetingly return to their previous 'stylised' selves, on a rare night out for instance, this is constructed as the 'real' them

which has now been succeeded by the identity of mother. Below, Holly demonstrates this in her account of a recent night out:

Holly: I went out three weeks ago for the first time in months with my friend and it was amazing. I bought a new outfit for it, one because it was nice to do for a change but also because I didn't have anything to wear that was nice enough, and we went shopping and tried on loads of dresses and thought about the right bag and jewellery and stuff, just like the old days. I miss being able to get dressed up, it's like that part of me has gone and I'm stuck in 'comfortable', mumsy clothes all the time. Not like I doss around in tracksuits all the time, but it's hardly stylish!

-Molefield mums (Holly's Narrative Account)

Here, Holly describes the way in which consumption and dressing 'up' were central to her construction of self prior to having children, and expresses her dissatisfaction and frustration at feeling compelled to wear what she calls 'mumsy' clothes. In narrating her failure to construct a fashionable identity, she also feels compelled to defend against the opposite representation in light of her position as not only a working class young woman, but also a young working class mother. Within cultural representations, young motherhood is now indicative of failed femininity (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001; McRobbie, 2009), and Tyler (2008) notes that the figure of the young working class 'chav mum' has become the most reviled figure within the popular media. Holly's insistence that she does not wear tracksuits, one of the cultural signifiers of the 'chav mum', is there precisely to avoid this categorisation. Class is repeatedly configured within celebrity culture, and within the young women's everyday lives, through a discourse of self-improvement through consumption (and

the body). Consumption is primarily what enables the young women to distinguish themselves from other working class women who could not improve (Skeggs, 1997). This status as a 'defective consumer' (Bauman, 2005) is strongly felt by the young mums, who are unable to use consumption as a marker of their success and to construct the feminine self. In Chapter Four, I demonstrated the way in which the young mums considered the figure of the celebrity 'yummy mummy' as unrealistic, which within celebrity magazines is primarily constructed in relation to 'style'. The young mums' inability to access the subject position of 'yummy mummy' through consumption may be one reason for their rejection of it. The only way of 'saving face' and to retain some degree of cultural capital is therefore to differentiate themselves from the figure of the 'chav' mother, who could not improve even if they tried.

Skeggs (1997) notes that those working class young women who claim not to invest too much effort in their appearance may do so on account of their occupying public space less frequently than other women. In the case of these young mothers, their identities as often full-time mothers did entail less time in public space. As such, fashion would not seem to be the same strategy of social survivability and status for the Molefield mums as it is for the other young women in this study, who do occupy public and often professional and institutionalised spaces more often. Furthermore, Skeggs (1997) notes that the investments changed for some of the mothers in her study: just as Jane and the other mum's describe, their investments are transferred to their children, to whom they pass on all the cultural capital they can transmit (Skeggs, 1997) in the form of popular clothing and designer brands. Indeed, in this extract

from my fieldnotes from attending one of the mother and toddler groups, I was struck by the way in which the children were dressed:

The children were all, to my surprise, immaculate, and very fashionably dressed. Jane had Daniel dressed in a trendy little denim waistcoat with a red long sleeve T-shirt underneath and dark jeans. His trainers were Adidas, and Jane was telling the other mums about how she had just had Daniel's hair cut at the hairdressers (Jane has told me before that she doesn't even go to the hairdressers herself). Holly's little girl was dressed in a patterned top and leggings and 'Lelli Kelly' shoes (apparently they're all the rage!), and her hair was tidily tied back in a pretty matching bow. Holly, on the other hand had a plain old T-shirt with stains on it, jeans and worn-looking trainers on: the contrast between the mothers and their children could not be more marked.

-Molefield Mums (Extract from Fieldnotes)

The transference of their investment from their bodies to the bodies of their children was therefore not only seen in their accounts of subjectivity, but was also visible on their bodies and the bodies of their children. The way in which this transference can be understood will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way in which celebrity gossip magazines construct 'good fashion sense' through the discourses of individualism and authenticity, and the way in which these discourses can be seen to operate in the construction of the young

women's own style identities. As a result of the young women's position as working class, the difficulty of 'standing out whilst fitting in' is doubly risky for these girls, who must avoid the categorisations of 'slapper' or 'chav', whilst performing sophisticated and *appropriately* sexy. Performing 'sophisticated style' (or 'pulling it off' as the girls say) is a minefield for these young women, whose accounts of dressing-up reveal a range of positions taken up by the young women in relation to the discourse. These positions primarily involve avoiding the twin dangers of being categorised as a 'chav' or a 'stuck-up' social climber, and the moral consequences of being perceived by others within their own class habitus to occupy these positions. The competition that fashion fosters between female stars in celebrity culture is also clear in the young women's accounts and the data gathered through observation, in which 'bitch' culture on the basis of fashion is a significant aspect of the young women's competitive peer culture, particularly those classed judgements of being 'stuck up' and 'fake'.

However, fashion and the practice of shopping also creates and fosters a sense of intimacy between the young women in this study. It allows for shared group norms and moral judgements of style to be created, validated, and maintained, and acts as a pleasurable social activity that bonds friendship groups together, as well as acting as a lifestyle practice that signifies a successful, neo-liberal, consuming feminine subject (Negra, 2009). The young women's construction of self is clearly heavily reliant on their ability to signify their individual personality traits and status (Zaslow, 2009) through clothing, which is further reinforced by the young mothers' expression of a loss of the authentic self constructed through fashion and style. The young mums' retreat from consumer culture may suggest that, for those younger working class

young women in this study who may go on to have children in their early 20s, their membership of this culture of self-display through fashion may be a transient period of consumer-oriented identification (Bauman, 2005), rather than a life-long aestheticisation of the self, as it is configured in the work of Featherstone (1991).

However, consumer culture's fusion with celebrity culture, with its rhetoric of 'ordinariness' that resonates with the working class habitus, acts as a way in which working class young women are legitimately invited to partake in consumer culture, and defend against cultural representations of working class style. Celebrity culture and celebrity magazines can be understood as one way in which the femininity of working class women is regulated, which can also be seen in the way in which these girls regulate their styles and the styles of others. The consumption and construction of individualised style as a marker of success can be understood within the broader social and economic context: the normalisation of style within celebrity magazines as 'ordinary' encourages young women from a working class habitus not just into consumer culture, but also facilitates their movement into the labour market. As McRobbie (2009) notes the prominence of working class young women as wage-earning citizens is managed in such a way that it complies with the new requirements of individualised subjectivity. The sophisticated styled body within celebrity culture can also be seen within this context; as a way of regulating working class femininity so as to facilitate their movement into the broader global economy as wage-earning citizen's whose buying power can be exercised within consumer culture.

Chapter Eight

Reflections and Conclusions

This thesis has examined the ways in which young working class women negotiate discourses of celebrity culture, and the ways in which particular classed subject positions are taken up or avoided in relation to these discourses. It has taken a unique approach to audience research that has brought together an analysis of texts and everyday lives through an ethnographic framework, which facilitated an exploration of the way in which these discourses are negotiated and lived. In doing so, this thesis has argued that the way in which these young women talk about celebrities is a way of communicating to others who *they* are, since the discourses within celebrity culture allow for different positions to be taken in relation to them. The discourse of authenticity, also strongly present within the magazines, was used by the young women in this study to position themselves in relation to these discourses, which I argue draws upon wider working class values and morality relating to ‘anti-pretentiousness’ (Skeggs, 1997, 2004a), and being seen as ‘real’ within the working class habitus.

Indeed, this thesis has argued that the moral value of authenticity within the working class habitus can be seen to be expressed and signified through the body. In exploring the construction of the body through body shape, beautification and fashion, this thesis has demonstrated the ways in which these young women complexly negotiated their bodies so as to avoid pathologised representations of working class femininity, whilst simultaneously performing an ‘authentic’ working class femininity that was not considered to be ‘fake’ by other working class women. The chapters that focused on

the body demonstrated that these young women were preoccupied with presenting their bodies, and therefore their *selves*, as ‘real’ and ‘authentic’, and this chapter will consider the ways in which this preoccupation can be understood and theorised. It will also consider the broader implications of the research findings in terms of the operation of these discourses within society, and how these findings could be developed through further research. Finally, I briefly reflect on the process of the PhD, and the way I have been forced to consider who *I* am, and how these discourses inform my own subjectivity, through analysing the ways in which they operate in the lives of *other* young women.

A Brief Review of the Study

This study has used an ethnographic approach to consider the place of celebrity culture within the subjectivities and everyday lives of young working class women. Specifically, celebrity magazines were used as a stimulus to explore the way in which celebrity discourses were negotiated by the girls, and how these operated in terms of the construction of their own selfhood and subjectivity. This thesis argues that any consideration of the place of media discourses in everyday life and subjectivity must be carried out within an ethnographic framework that foregrounds the way in which these discourses are subjectively *experienced* by women. As such, a multi-sited, multi-layered ethnography was designed in order to explore the relationship between media discourses and subjectivity. This allowed an exploration of the ways in which young women positioned themselves in relation to these discourses in everyday life, and how these discourses operated in the telling of the self and subjective experience. Integrating the different data from the various ethnographic sites allowed me to

explore the complexity with which young women take up classed positions in relation to these discourses in particular social contexts and settings, and to identify particular contradictions that this may reveal.

Whilst this research was carried out with only 20 working class young women, the methodology of this study has sought to provide a valid account of the way in which discourses of celebrity magazines operate within everyday subjectivity through foregrounding the voices of these young women and their experiences. As Skeggs argues, 'research that listens to others rather than making assumptions about their existence is...more plausible' (1997:33). As such, this qualitative, multi-layered methodological approach revealed a nuanced and complex picture of the ways in which young working class women position themselves in relation to celebrity discourses. Primarily, these discourses were taken up through the ways in which they were perceived to be authentic and ordinary. As such, this can be understood in relation to the young women's working class habitus and its moral configuration of the 'real' discussed in Chapter Four, which is most clearly manifest at the site of the body and its social construction.

Authenticity: Ordinariness, Value and the Body

An analysis of celebrity magazines revealed the way in which working class femininity is set up through the highly valued discourses of authenticity and ordinariness, only to be simultaneously knocked down, shamed, ridiculed and pathologised in terms of excess, vulgarity and lack of taste. The main question this thesis sought to explore was how discourses within celebrity magazines, particularly

those that are used to culturally construct the female body, are interpreted and negotiated by young working class women. As the previous four chapters have demonstrated, authenticity was the primary discourse through which the self and the body were culturally and socially constructed. The young women in this study could be seen to use the discursive rhetoric of authenticity in order to position themselves in relation to discourses of the female body within celebrity culture in a variety of complex ways that can be considered in relation to their position as working class.

Working class femininity and the 'Masquerade'

In Chapter Two, I discussed McRobbie's (2009) notion of the 'postfeminist masquerade', which she argues involves women adopting a mask of 'hyper-femininity' which 'makes reference to its own artifice... [and] draws attention to its own crafting and performance' (2009:66-67). In McRobbie's (2009) argument, the 'masquerade' serves to re-establish the terms of heterosexual desire, and to contain the threat posed to men and patriarchy by middle class young women's increasing success in symbolically masculine terrains. Indeed, this thesis has demonstrated the way in which femininity is particularly hetero-feminine and highly regulated.

However, the analysis presented within this thesis can be seen to build on the work of McRobbie (2009) and the 'masquerade', highlighting the way in which this 'crafting' is *naturalised* in the cultural, and performed in the social within the working class habitus. Chapter Four highlighted the importance of being 'ordinary', 'real' and 'authentic' for these young working class women; it was through this moral configuration of class that young women came to judge celebrities, other young women, and themselves and their bodies. The 'crafting' to which McRobbie (2009)

refers can therefore be understood to take a different form within the working class habitus, as opposed to the middle class habitus to which McRobbie's (2009) 'masquerade' refers.

Therefore, it is important to highlight that the young women in this study are not the young women in McRobbie's (2007; 2009) 'postfeminist masquerade'. As Hey (2009) notes, it is the middle class 'top girls', participating successfully in symbolically masculine terrains, who are represented as the main victims of the 'masquerade' due to the loss of their feminist voices as a part of the 'new sexual contract'. Whilst the masquerade may indeed affect distress for some middle class young women, in the form of the 'postfeminist melancholia' McRobbie (2009) describes, Hey argues that more is likely to be at stake for those 'unsuccessful losers' (1997:18), i.e. working class girls. This study contributes to an understanding of precisely what is at stake as a result of the 'masquerade' for this group of working class girls. As such, McRobbie's (2009) 'postfeminist masquerade' is arguably more complicated than she suggests owing to the class-based discourse of 'authenticity' so prevalent within celebrity culture. Her theoretical focus on the 'top girls' (2007; 2009) neglects the lived experience of the 'masquerade' as it is experienced subjectively by different women with different, and unequal, resources.

McRobbie (2009) suggests that the young woman who adopts the hyper-sexualised aesthetic of the 'postfeminist masquerade' is making a point that this is her 'freely chosen' look. The analysis presented here suggests that, for young working class women, this 'choice' is made more complex by the range of pathologised feminine subject positions that invoke classed discourses within celebrity culture. Historically,

working class femininity has been constructed as a fabrication and artificial performance (Skeggs, 1997): as such, the young women's avoidance of this moral judgment may be at work in their emphasis on authenticity in their negotiation of celebrity discourses and accounts of bodily subjectivity. Whilst authenticity may be used to avoid being positioned as 'problematically working class' by the middle class other (Skeggs, 1997), the analysis presented here also suggests that the focus on the 'authentic' may be used to perform 'ordinariness' and 'unpretentiousness' to other working class girls.

The 'crafting' of femininity therefore takes a different form for working class young women, who are unable to take up the hyper-sexualised, hyper-feminine 'postfeminist masquerade' for fear of signifying their bodily labour and being labelled as 'slappers' and 'sluts' or 'fake'. This is in contrast to the way in which the middle class girls that are McRobbie's (2009) focus are able to inhabit these subject positions in a positive, ironic way. This reflects the differential amounts of 'erotic capital' (Hakim, 2010) to which middle class and working class girls have access: this thesis has shown that whilst working class girls are able to perform 'sexy' through appropriating a 'sexy' (authentic) body, the other elements of Hakim's (2010) notion of 'erotic capital', such as beauty, social presentation (dress), sexuality and social skills that present this 'sexy' body are problematic for working class girls, and must therefore be crafted in an authentic way, as opposed to an overtly sexualised way, in order to avoid being judged as 'excessively sexual'.

Therefore, performing 'authentic' femininity is a way of performing a 'respectable' female working class identity through their work on the body. However, the young

mothers, who claim not to regulate their bodies, are doubly excluded from the performance of femininity of the 'masquerade'. Whilst the young mothers may not have the same time to invest in their bodies as the other girls in the study, there may also be unconscious processes at work in their failure to perform femininity. In light of the way in which the young working class mother is categorised as overly sexually active in cultural representations, such as the 'chav mum' (Tyler, 2008), these young mothers may be unconsciously resisting any signs of sexuality in order to avoid the signs of excessive sexuality that resulted in their status as 'young working class mother' in the first place. This is reinforced by the way in which they construct their lack of bodily management as a signifier of a 'good', 'selfless' and 'real' mother.

In line with McRobbie's (2009) argument that the 'post-feminist masquerade' serves to contain the threat posed to men and patriarchy by young women's 'success' in symbolically masculine domains, I argue that the regulation of young working class women's bodies through a dedication to authenticity may also serve to contain the threat to social order posed by the figure of the hyper-sexualised working class young woman. The girls' performances of authenticity can also be understood to contain the threat of judgement from middle class discourses of working class 'otherness', 'disrespectability' and 'artifice'. This thesis has reinforced feminist arguments concerning the 'gaze' and the way in which women are the objects not just of the male gaze, but of the gaze of other women (Coward, 1984). This relates to other studies which also highlight the way in which girls and young women police one another's bodies (Wolf, 1991; Hey, 1997; Ringrose, 2008a). The analysis presented here suggests that performances of femininity are crafted as 'authentic' in order to

avoid being positioned as ‘stuck up’ and ‘fake’ by other working class *women*, not by men.

Thus, the ‘postfeminist masquerade’ serves to perpetuate existing class inequalities between *women*, and not just between women and men as McRobbie (2009) suggests. Working class women must ‘perform’ authenticity with their bodies in order to obtain cultural capital, whereas middle class women effortlessly embody it (Skeggs, 2004a; McRobbie, 2009). A young woman is only able to ‘pull off’ the hyper-feminine, hyper-sexualised femininity of the ‘masquerade’ if she can also signal the appropriate amount of cultural capital, which these girls do not possess. This performance of authenticity that working class young women must adopt in their avoidance of working class subject positions of bodily excess, such as the ‘slut’ and the ‘chav’, marks them as working class, and excludes them from adopting the hyper-feminine, ‘hyper-sexy’ ‘postfeminist masquerade’ that facilitates young women’s ‘success’ in the labour market and new global economy. As such, these working class young women will never be able to legitimately enter symbolically masculine domains due to their inability to perform the ‘masquerade’: the requirements of working class young women are that they perform an authentic femininity based on sophistication and respectability, not sexuality.

Performing ‘authentic’ working class femininity

In light of the way McRobbie’s (2009) analysis neglects both lived experiences of performing femininity and the way in which this is classed, this thesis has therefore highlighted the way in which performances of authentic femininity are lived by

working class girls in relation to the way in which it is culturally constructed in celebrity texts. Moral worth, through being perceived as real and authentic, is able to be signified through the body for these working class girls. As such, parts of the working class female self must be regulated, corrected or left behind (Walkerdine, *et al.*, 2001) in order to perform a respectable and sophisticated femininity that is also authentic and acceptable within the working class habitus. This thesis has demonstrated the complex way in which authentic bodies are constructed and subjectively experienced by the different groups of young women in this study, and the way in which the regulation of their bodies is normalised and naturalised in their accounts as a signifier of their authenticity, and thus their moral worth.

Chapter Five highlighted the way in which celebrity magazines both pathologise and normalise the female body: skinny and excessive bodies are rendered ‘out of control’ and ‘fake’, and the slim, curvy, ‘sexy’ body is normalised through the discourse of authenticity. Bordo (1993) also highlights that the focus on bodily pathology in the form of going ‘too far’ can obscure the normalising function of the technologies of diet and body management. The naturalisation of this curvy body can also be seen in the way in which the young women in this study construct their own bodies, and the bodily labour that goes into them, as ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’, rather than as regulation or discipline. Bodily discipline was therefore constructed by the young women as ‘health’ labour, not aesthetic labour. Their accounts of subjectivity revealed the extent and affects of bodily labour for these working class girls, who can be understood as avoiding being categorised as lazy and excessive in their performance of this labour in the first place, and as avoiding being perceived as ‘stuck up’ in their concealment of this labour. As Hey (2009) notes, young working class women

understand the cost and impossibility of being anything other than themselves; as such, excessive displays of bodily labour are judged as 'fake' by the young women in this study, and the young working class woman that displays such labour as trying too hard to be something she is not.

However, non-conformity to this hetero-feminine version of the body could be seen to produce particular affects for some of the young women in this study who did not possess the slender, 'curvy' female body. For example, 'tomboy' Anne appeared to be content with her 'unfeminine' appearance, and saw femininity itself as a 'fake' performance. Thus, Anne used the discourse of authenticity to construct herself as 'real' and others' feminine performances as fake, which for Anne embodied the disposition of being 'stuck up'. Authenticity was also used by the young mothers to construct their own bodies, yet their construction of 'authentic' differed from that within the magazines. They constructed their own bodies as 'real', and the bodies of slender celebrity 'yummy mummies' as 'fake', and in doing so could be seen as having legitimate relief from the highly regulated body. Yet the young mums also expressed the most dissatisfaction about the way they felt about their bodies, implying that this relief comes at a particular cost to the self.

Chapter six explored the way in which the 'masquerade' is lived by these young women in relation to the discourse of natural beauty within celebrity magazines. The 'crafting' of the performance of femininity within celebrity beauty cultures is naturalised through the discourse of natural beauty, which requires women to make-up whilst presenting the illusion they have not. This thesis argues that the discourse of natural beauty pathologises and regulates working class beauty cultures through

positioning itself in contrast to the 'slutty' working class woman who wears too much makeup, and the 'lazy' working class woman who wears too little. The categorisation of the 'slutty' look as 'fake', and the 'natural look' as 'real', resonates with the discourse of authenticity through which these young working class women can be understood to morally judge others and construct themselves. This discourse therefore allows working class women to make-up without their performances being perceived as a 'drag act' (Skeggs, 2005), as well as demonstrate to other working class women that they are not 'fake' and 'stuck up'. Therefore, natural beauty is normalised so as to retain the moral value of authenticity within the working class habitus.

A similar argument was proposed for the way in which these young working class women construct 'style' through the discourse of authenticity. However, the young women's accounts reveal that they must work hard to avoid being positioned as 'slags' and 'chavs' by others, and as such attempt to perform a sophisticated, appropriately sexy, authentic, style. However, the way in which these performances are read in relation to their authenticity means that some performances are constructed as 'fake', and the performer 'stuck up' for trying to 'pass' as middle class. These young women do not want to 'pass', and can be seen to display the anti-pretentiousness stance that Skeggs (1997, 2004a) describes towards other working class girls who they perceive as attempting to 'pass'. These young women's performances of sophisticated and respectable style, whilst seeking to avoid problematised working class femininities, are conducted in keeping with the working class habitus' moral dedication to authenticity and ordinariness that is so prized within the young women's accounts and celebrity culture.

The young mothers, however, were once more seen to position themselves differently in relation to this discourse. Sophisticated ‘style’ was not seen as an authentic component of working class motherhood by these young mums, who considered dressing-up as ‘fake’ and as a signifier of a ‘bad mother’. Yet, once more, their rejection of sophistication came with particular affects, and many of the mothers felt they had ‘lost’ their real self, which was constructed primarily in relation to work on the body, particularly dressing-up. Their lack of body and style work, and the consequences this was seen to have on the self, reinforces the argument that work on the body is compulsory if one is to be recognised, and recognise oneself, as a heterosexually feminine, empowered female subject.

These differences that were drawn out between the groups demonstrate the difficulties associated with considering the ‘working class’ as a homogenous group. Whilst some of the girls in this study were seduced by the appeals of ‘getting on’ and ‘getting out’ (Lucey *et al.*, 2003) through accruing cultural capital via signalling their authenticity, all of the mums and some of the younger girls (whose trajectories can be understood broadly to be that of the mums or that of the Tinsworth girls) were not. It is to the configuration of the body as a marker of ‘success’ I now turn.

Working Class Girls’ Routes to Success

This thesis has argued that the primary way in which young female stars achieve success within the field of celebrity culture is through the body, reinforcing the arguments explored in Chapter Two which emphasised the physical visibility of young women in the media. Whilst within popular culture bodily transformations are

represented as the key to upward social mobility (Walkerdine, 2003; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008; McRobbie, 2009), many of these young women do not appear to aspire to upward social mobility, nor have the Tinsworth Girls (who aspire to it) achieved it. Hey notes that some working class women may produce an 'ironising stance towards education, middle class 'taste' and the lure of middle class career trajectories' (2009:20) in a similar vein to Skeggs' (1997; 2004a) identification of an 'anti-pretentiousness' critique, one of the elements of authenticity discussed in this study. Hey (2009) suggests that young working class women's rejection of 'aspiration' in the educational sense is a result of their pursuit of more 'realistic' and 'realisable' ones. This thesis argues that for working class girls, they regard the body as the site through which these aspirations may be realised.

Fame, Success and the Body

'Success' within celebrity culture is associated with the appropriation of the sexy, slim, curvy version of the female form, along with a 'naturally beautiful' face, and effortless individual sophisticated style. Some critics argue that celebrity culture and its increasing focus on 'ordinariness' has led to increasing numbers of young working class women in particular regarding 'fame' as a viable career option. Indeed, a survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in 2008 revealed that many teachers were concerned about the type of career aspirations pupils have as a result of their engagement with celebrity culture, and the way in which celebrity culture impacts on pupils' progress within the education system. According to the survey, teachers felt that too many pupils believe that academic success is unnecessary because they will be able to access fame and fortune quite easily through a reality TV show.

Furthermore, teachers expressed concern about girls in particular and the way in which younger and younger girls present their bodies in a sexual way as a form of mimicry of their favourite stars, rather than investing in education as a route to success.

The proliferation of 'ordinary' people on television through reality TV and magazines such as the ones studied here, and the resulting 'democratisation' of fame, has meant that it has increasingly been constructed as 'ordinary' to want to be a celebrity (Littler, 2003). Indeed, 'ordinary' people are often working class people, and as Biressi and Nunn note Reality TV stardom is often structured within discourses of class, with working class subjects becoming iconic through their 'newly found social mobility' (2003:44). Indeed, feminist analyses of the media also emphasise the pull of fame for young women: as Hopkins argues, 'fame has replaced marriage as the imagined means to realising feminine dreams... fame is the ultimate girl fantasy' (2002:4). Fame promises the girl 'visibility' and a voice above all others (Hopkins, 2002:4), which arguably has particular resonances with neo-liberal discourses of social mobility. Walkerdine (1997) argues that the 'lure of fame' (particularly singing and dancing) 'offers working class girls the possibility of a talent from which they have not automatically been excluded by virtue of their supposed lack of intelligence or culture' (1997:50). The girls' complex processes of identification involved in their negotiation of working class female celebrities shown within this thesis, such as Katie Price and Cheryl Cole, reinforces the extent to which fame continues to present a route to social mobility and success open to working class girls in a way in which 'academic' routes are not.

In fact, out of the twenty girls that participated in this study, six expressed a desire to be famous. Interestingly, all of these were from the younger groups of the Ashpool girls and the Molefield girls, meaning that over half of the younger girls wanted to be famous. Julia and Tasha had both applied to go on the *X Factor*, Lilly wanted to apply to go on *Big Brother* or be in *Eastenders*, Katie wanted to be a model, Vanessa wanted to be a famous fashion designer, and Mel wanted to be a celebrity makeup artist. Each of these girls planned on using their bodies (and the bodies of others) to achieve success in their chosen celebrity niche. These girls' investments in their bodies, within the broader context of the body as a site of social mobility, can be seen as an investment in their only source of cultural capital- their *bodies*. Celebrity magazines value the condition of 'ordinariness' and its 'authenticity', which supposedly grants working class young women in particular a form of cultural capital on which to draw. However, in order to capitalise on this opportunity, young working class women must invest in their bodies in a particular way, performing femininity in a way that means they must avoid pathologised working class subject positions, and thus reject elements of their working class selves (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001).

This is because, as Tyler and Bennett (2010) point out, working class female celebrities and their 'excessive' attributes are only briefly granted positive value, after which time they are reviled since, as Lawler points out, 'the only position for them to occupy is one of pathology' (1999:15). Whilst Kerry Katona and Katie Price may have acquired 'economic' capital through their bodies, their cultural capital is repeatedly called into question in their categorisation as excessive 'celebrity chavs' in the popular press (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). For Tyler and Bennett (2010) the figure of the 'celebrity chav' reminds us of the difficulty and desirability of transgressing

class boundaries: celebrities such as Kerry Katona are kept 'in their place' and denied upward social mobility through the way in which they are represented through moral configurations of class within celebrity magazines. They argue that 'what makes figures such as Kerry Katona and Jade Goody both comic and poignant is their conviction that it is possible to escape rigid class origins through highly visible careers in entertainment' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010:389).

This complicates the way in which working class young women are able to 'legitimately' use their bodies to facilitate success in the field of celebrity culture, since they are always at risk of being categorised by their class 'otherness'. The cultural capital 'ordinariness' and 'authenticity' may offer working class girls is unlikely to ever be legitimated and turned into symbolic capital. Drawing on Adorno and Horkheimer (1997), it could be argued that the ideology of 'possibilities' and the promise of the reward of stardom to a random few, such as Cheryl Cole, serves to perpetuate the myth of potential universal success (Marshall, 1997). Yet this thesis argues that young female working class celebrities, pathologised by bodily and dispositional excesses, act as a warning to working class girls to regulate their bodies in an 'authentic' way in order to avoid such categorisations and achieve success, as in the case of Cheryl Cole. Indeed, Penfold (2004) suggests that celebrity culture can be understood as a mode of 'spectacular performance' in which individuals are 'punished' not just by the media, but also by the audiences of celebrity culture. Involving young working class women in the punishment of working class celebrities in the way this study demonstrates can therefore be understood as a way of regulating the excesses of working class femininity at the level of subjectivity.

The Body and Success in Public Space and Everyday Life

For the older girls in the study who did not express a desire to be famous, their investment (or lack of) could also be understood in terms of the discourse of 'success'. The Tinsworth girls' investment in their bodies was often discussed within the context of their employment environments: particularly poignant is Rachel's investment in clothing her body as a way of distinguishing herself from the other 'non-aspirational' working class women in her workplace. Within their workplaces, these girls used their bodies (particularly the clothing of them) as a marker of their superiority over other working class girls, and as a signifier of their status as economically active, empowered subjects who were 'ready' to embrace upward social mobility. As McRobbie (2009) argues, the media and popular culture reprimands the habitus of white working class women so as to facilitate their movement into the labour market in a way that keeps the corporeality of working class women in line with requirements of the new global economy.

However, the mums' lack of investment in their bodies can also be seen to reinforce this argument. This can be understood as an expression of their acceptance of their working class position, and their rejection of the neo-liberal ideal of upward social mobility: many of the mothers did not work, and those that did regarded their jobs in purely economic terms and did not seek to acquire promotions within them. As such, the young mothers do not need to invest in their bodies in the same way as the young women in this study without children. This may account for the way in which the construction of the body within celebrity culture is not taken up in the same way by the mothers as it is by the other girls who are either economically active or anticipate

entry into the labour market in the near future. This is further discussed later in this chapter.

The Body and Success in Consumer Culture

Some have argued that celebrity magazines can be regarded as 'training manuals' for fame (Hopkins, 2002); further to this, I argue that they can also be regarded as cultural tools from which young working class women can learn *how* to invest in their bodies as a form of cultural capital in order to facilitate their upward social mobility through participation in the new global economy. However, the extent to which their investment results in an increase in economic capital is questionable, since avoiding the working class body of excess and adopting an 'authentic' performance of femininity may mark their bodies as 'working class', since they are unable to legitimately perform the hyper-feminine, hyper-sexualised criteria of the 'postfeminist masquerade' (McRobbie, 2009).

However, in order to perform 'authenticity', the young working class women in this study seemed to consume things for the body to erase the signifiers of the working class body. Thus, young working class women's investment in their bodies should also be understood in the context of their participation and success in wider 'consumer culture'. As well as participation in the global economy, another condition of the postfeminist subject is as an active consumer (Taft, 2004; McRobbie, 2009).

This thesis has demonstrated the way in which the young women in this study consume things for body, and use them to erase the signifiers of working class femininity, which are in keeping with the way in which celebrity magazines grant

particular bodily forms and styles value. In this sense, this thesis argues that celebrity culture's focus on 'ordinariness' can be understood as an address to working class young women in particular to involve themselves in the consumer market, which, as McRobbie (2009) points out, is eager to tap into this demographic on the basis of their rising incomes.

The use of celebrities to endorse products is well-documented (Pringle, 2004); however, I argue that the discourse of authenticity within the celebrity image appeals to young working class women in particular, encouraging them to participate in consumer culture with the 'promise' of social mobility and economic capital in return. This is not achieved overtly, but by invoking moral categorisations of class and the ethos of the natural and authentic. The way in which Cheryl Cole's consumption of things for her body has been constructed within celebrity magazines as central to her transformation from 'chav' to 'style queen', serves to promote the wider ideology that links consumption with social mobility. This thesis argues that the high visibility of the discourse that links consumerism with social mobility within celebrity culture is one way in which the operation of this discourse within the lives of working class young women becomes known.

Success and Individuality

Finally, it is useful to consider the way in which individualism, expressed through the body, can be understood as an alternative route to success within celebrity culture. The work of Marshall (1997) articulates the discursive and ideological connection between the construction of cultural identities and celebrity in terms of its focus on

individualism. It is through celebrity culture that society's wider focus on individualism becomes manifest (Dyer, 1986), and, I argue, the way in which it operates in the lives of young women becomes known. The three sites of the body this thesis explores, body size/shape, beauty and fashion, were all in part socially and culturally constructed in relation to the discourse of individualism. Having a body that is natural to *them*, and dressing-up and making-up in their own particular 'individual' style was paramount in celebrity culture and the young women's accounts of their own bodily subjectivity and experiences. This thesis argues that the focus on the authenticity of the body involves a level of performance which the young women's accounts reveal to produce particular anxieties about their ability to 'pull it off'.

Whilst treading the fine discursive line of 'standing out whilst fitting in' is arguably difficult for all women, this thesis argues it is particularly difficult for working class girls, who must also avoid particular pathologised categories and representations, as well as repercussions from other working class women. As such, their critique of women who take their quest for individualism too far (being fat, wearing no makeup, wearing crazy outfits *a la* Lady Gaga), and their categorisation of them as working class in their lack of cultural capital, is also reflected in their own anxieties about standing out whilst fitting in. This thesis demonstrates that being 'excessively individual' in celebrity culture is a signifier of deviant working class femininity, and argues that the complex way in which women are required to both stand out and fit in everyday life is embodied by celebrity culture.

As such, the wider context of neo-liberalism is particularly useful for exploring the discourse of individualism as it relates to understanding young women's lives. Critics of neo-liberalism have noted the costs associated with its reliance on individualism and the promotion of social mobility (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001; Walkerdine, 2003). As such, any failure by young women to achieve success is based on individual criteria, agency and personal failings (Skeggs, 2004b). Therefore, given the focus of late modern theory on social actors as 'individualised subjects' (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991), and the supposed irrelevance of the old social moorings of class, gender and ethnicity, neo-liberal ideology places responsibility on individuals for the active production of their own selfhood and success.

This study has demonstrated the ways in which the girls invested in *themselves* and conceived of themselves in actively engaged in self labour (primarily at the site of the body) precisely so as to produce an individualised subject. For some of the girls in this study, individualism was one of the ways in which they could regard themselves as 'successful' and worthy of upward social mobility. This thesis argues that the investment the young working class women in this study place in their bodies can also be understood as an attempt to mark 'individuality' on their bodies as a visible sign to be read by others as a form of cultural capital. In particular, the young women used fashion and style in order to construct a sense of individuality: the way in which this was also constructed in terms of 'respectability' by the girls also confirms the link between discourses of individualism and upward social mobility.

Ringrose and Walkerdine explore how 'psychological discourses prop up this neo-liberal subject, creating the conditions for practicing a "reflexive selfhood"... through

the internalization of the right sorts of expert knowledge to sustain an endlessly adaptive and reinventing self' (2008:227). Thus, celebrity culture, with its focus on individuality and authentic selfhood, can be seen as one of these sources of 'expert knowledge' that young working class women wishing to be upwardly mobile must acquire. Indeed, the very presence of working class female celebrities, such as Katie Price and Cheryl Cole, are hailed within celebrity culture as 'proof' that success for working class women is possible through using individuality as a cultural resource. The failure of any working class woman to achieve success can therefore be read as individual failure under neo-liberal conditions, which the findings of this study suggest may lead to the increasing polarisation between women according to the differential resources they have to adequately signify 'individuality' with their bodies.

Resisting Success: Celebrity, Class and Motherhood

In light of the differential ability of women to take up the subject positions this thesis has argued can be considered as routes to success for working class girls, I would now like to consider the ways in which the very notion of 'success' was taken up differently by the different groups of young women in this study. Throughout the analysis of the data, I have been concerned to present a nuanced account which highlights the complexity of the identifications young women make with the field of celebrity culture and the ways in which these are taken up in accounts of subjectivity and everyday life. This has demonstrated that the young mums in particular position themselves very differently in relation to the discourses of celebrity culture, often actively resisting particular invitations on the part of celebrity magazines to consider themselves in particular ways, for example as a 'yummy mummy'.

Motherhood and Domesticity in Celebrity Culture

In all three sites of the body discussed here, the young mums' negotiation of celebrity discourses, and the way in which these were involved in their construction of bodily subjectivity, was significantly different to that of the other girls in this study. Early second wave feminist thought highlighted the role of male-dominated ideology in shaping the social institution of motherhood and emphasised its potentially oppressive conditions (for example Rich, 1977; Firestone, 1979; Friedan, 1992). These initial explorations legitimised the study of the experience of motherhood as a crucial analytic theme in feminist analyses of women's lives.

However, Negra (2009) notes that motherhood has acquired a new meaning in postfeminist culture: motherhood is celebrated across postfeminist cultural forms, including celebrity culture. Indeed, Negra (2009) notes that motherhood acts as a form of salvation in celebrity testimonials of former 'wild chills', such as Angelina Jolie and Britney Spears. However, it is important to note that the postfeminist narratives through which motherhood is currently 'celebrated' are narratives of 'adjusted ambition' (Negra, 2009). Analysing various genres of postfeminist media culture, Negra (2009) charts the phenomenon of 'retreatism', in which the female protagonist realises that her 'professional' ambitions are misplaced and retreats to the more fulfilling world of motherhood and domesticity. Furthermore, other feminist analyses have revealed the resurgence of discourses of domesticity in film and television: for example, Brunsdon (2005) explores the postfeminist 'domestic goddess' that is Nigella Lawson, and the link between domesticity and glamour within postfeminist culture.

However, the postfeminist media culture described above relates specifically to representations of bourgeois femininity, and as Negra (2009) notes, arguably celebrates the white, affluent, stay at home mother. Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted literature which argues working class young motherhood is stigmatised and pathologised within both popular culture (Tyler, 2008) and wider discourse (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001). My study with this small group of young mothers indicates that they feel alienated by the postfeminist representation of motherhood and domesticity, which they feel doesn't speak to the lived reality of their position as working class young mothers. The subject position of 'yummy mummy' within celebrity culture, embodied by celebrity mums who look glamorous, slim, and groomed after having a baby, was not taken up by the young mothers in this study; in fact, they actively distanced themselves from this position. Through the use of the discourse of authenticity, the young mothers position the figure of the 'yummy mummy' within celebrity culture and the wider postfeminist cultural field as 'fake', and the realities of their own lives as 'authentic' and 'real'.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates that the representations within popular culture that pathologise working class motherhood (Tyler, 2008) are avoided by the young mothers in their negotiation of celebrity culture, and defended against their accounts of lived experience. As Skeggs (2004c) and Tyler (2008) note, young working class mothers are represented as 'bad' mothers: whilst this thesis has not explored this theme in detail, the young mothers in this study consistently used the binary of good mother/bad mother to structure their negotiation of celebrity culture and accounts of subjectivity. Indeed, the 'inauthenticity' of the celebrity 'yummy mummy' position

was constructed as an example of 'bad' mother by the young mums, and used to position themselves as 'good' mother.

Whilst I have made use of some psychosocial concepts in interpreting my data, it would benefit from a deeper psychosocial lens which may reveal some of the unconscious processes at work in the position the young mothers take up in relation to celebrity discourses of motherhood. This may involve exploring the extent to which the subject position of 'yummy mummy' is constructed as 'bad mother' by young working class mothers to ease their own 'anxieties' about being positioned as such by others. In this sense, their critique of the 'yummy mummy' may act as a psychosocial defence against the status of 'bad' mother which, as Lawler (2004) highlights, is one of the main axes around which working class women are characterised as abject.

Physically and socially marked by the very status of young motherhood as 'working class', these young women are unable to achieve upward social mobility or attempt to 'pass' as middle class (Skeggs, 1997), nor do they try to do so. As such, their only cultural resource is to employ strategies of resistance to representations of deviant working class young motherhood in order to avoid being further pathologised by the 'chav mum' (Tyler, 2008) discourse.

Working Class motherhood and the Body

Whilst this study showed the young mothers engaging in the minimal amount of body labour so as to resist the 'chav mum' (Tyler, 2008) position, it also highlighted a particular lack of investment in their bodies in comparison with the other young women in the study. The young mothers' lack of investment in their bodies can be

usefully understood in light of Skeggs' (1997) argument that young working class mothers occupy public space less frequently than other women. Indeed, the other young women in this study occupied public and institutional space daily in their educational and work environments, and as such were constantly 'on display' in a way in which the young mothers were not. McRobbie (2009) argues that young women are invited to step forward into the labour market and consumer culture, and uses Deleuze's concept of 'luminosity' to explore how young women are becoming *visible* in a certain kind of way. However, these young mums are not 'visible' in public space. Therefore, their economic inactivity may explain their different investments in their bodies than the other young women in this study: the non-mothers all used the body as a strategy of social survivability and a way of demonstrating their cultural capital to others that was not present in the mums' accounts.

In this wider context, the 'invisibility' of the young mums within public space, the wider labour market and the economy may account for their lack of investment in their bodies. Instead, as Skeggs (1997) also notes, these investments can be seen to be transferred onto their children, to whom they pass on all the cultural capital they can transmit: their children were always dressed fashionably and always well-presented. Their lack of investment in themselves, and their investment in their children, also functioned in their accounts of a way of demonstrating that they were a 'selfless' and 'good' mother, not a 'selfish', 'bad' one represented to them by the celebrity 'yummy mummy'. Once more, we can understand these insights in relation to the possibilities a psychosocial analysis can offer in considering their investment in their children and neglect of themselves and their bodies as a defence against the representation of

working class young mothers as ‘bad mothers’. The data elicited from the young mothers therefore presents several important avenues for further research.

Moreover, the neglect of their own bodies and their investment in the bodies of their children can also be understood using Reay’s (2004) notion of ‘emotional capital’.

Reay (2004) describes emotional capital as one which is all about the investment in others rather than the self, and notes that this type of capital is particularly relevant to the experience of motherhood, since it is the mother who is most involved in the generation of cultural capital. Emotional capital is constructed by Reay (2004) as a particularly middle class phenomenon and as something that is difficult for working class women to acquire. Reay (2004) uses the concept particularly in relation to the emotional involvement of mothers in the education of their children, and as such its characterisation as a middle-class form of capital is understandable. However, at the level of the corporeal, the young working class mothers in this study can be understood as acquiring emotional capital through the investment in their children’s bodies rather than their own.

The Discourse of Health: Healthy bodies, healthy minds

This thesis has also demonstrated the ways in which a wider discourse of ‘health’ is used to discursively construct the aesthetics of femininity. With regards to body size and shape, this thesis has argued that there has been a clear discursive cultural shift within celebrity magazines from the ‘skinny’ female body to the ‘curvaceous’, toned body. This finding can be located within the wider media debate about the body shape and size of women represented in the media. The ‘size zero debate’ considers

whether images of impossible female skinniness are responsible for high levels of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction amongst young women. This popular debate, frequently played out within the pages of celebrity magazines, can be understood as an example of the way in which feminism has been taken into account (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Bordo's (1993) arguments concerning the representation of the skinny body as 'out of control' are used to pathologise the skinny female body, and render the skinny woman 'unhappy' and 'unhealthy' within celebrity culture. Celebrity magazines' negative construction of the skinny body is in contrast to McRobbie's (2009) argument that popular culture 'normalises' bodily expressions of 'illegible rage' such as anorexia, bulimia and self-harm. Indeed, this thesis has explored the way in which the skinny body plays a significant role in constructing the 'train-wreck femininity' that is pathologised within celebrity culture, as in the case of singer Amy Winehouse. Thus, from an analysis of celebrity magazines alone, it would appear that skinny bodies and the methods of producing them are pathologised as 'unhealthy' and inauthentic forms of female corporeality.

Feminism and the Body: Health and Hidden Labour

Whilst feminist-sounding, libratory arguments are indeed incorporated into the 'size zero debate' and the moral objection to the skinny female body, I argue that this can be seen to obscure the normalising function that representations of the 'curvy' body within celebrity culture hold. Following Bordo (1993), a focus on pathology conceals the labour that is involved in the production of what is represented within celebrity culture as a 'normal' woman's body, i.e. a body with 'controlled' curves. As Chapter Five discussed, the size and shape of the representation of a 'normal' woman's body

within celebrity culture and a 'normal' woman's body in the real social world are many dress sizes apart. The technologies of bodily management are concealed within this representation, which is reinforced by the young women's public declarations of their lack of exercise, and assertions that they do not deny themselves the fatty or sugary foods they desire. In their individual accounts of the way in which this 'authentic' body is lived, they reveal not only the significant physical labour that goes into producing the body, but also the (often painful) affective labour that can be understood as a part of their classed subjectivities.

Furthermore, there were times in which the 'don't care' attitude to their bodies was contradicted: confessions by the younger girls that they had on occasion made themselves sick in a bid to lose weight is an example of the normalisation of the bodily expressions of what McRobbie (2009) characterises as 'illegible rage'. These confessions in a group context were tentative, since they contradicted the 'empowered' discourse of the magazines and postfeminist culture more widely; yet in individual interviews the endless pressure to 'diet' and exercise was present in their accounts of bodily subjectivity. It was also observed in particular social settings, such as the foods the young women chose to eat when we went out to lunch or dinner.

Whilst all young women can be regarded as having to conceal their bodily labour, for working class women this is particularly significant in terms of the wider construction of working class female bodies in popular culture. As Skeggs (1997, 2004a) notes, the working class female body is marked by 'excess', and within the world of celebrity, these bodies can be seen as having no value, or comical value at best.

Biressi and Nunn (2003) note that *Big Brother* contestant Jade Goody was marked by

the media as working class since she displayed the bodily and dispositional excesses that clearly labelled her as such. More recently, Tyler and Bennett (2010) have explored the way in which the excesses of Kerry Katona's body, with her large surgically enhanced breasts and overly reproductive body, along with her vulgarity, also signified working class female celebrity. Bodies of excess are therefore just as pathologised as skinny bodies and, due to the class connotations of these bodies, are actively defended against by the young women in this study. For some of the larger girls in the sample, losing weight emerged as a preoccupation within their individual interviews, whereas in group settings they spoke the language of popular feminism in their assertions that they don't care and that there should be bigger women in the media on the basis of promoting images of 'healthier' women. For the smaller girls in the sample, the focus of their interviews was ensuring they did not put on weight, and thus the girls were clearly trying to avoid inhabiting a body of 'excess' which is rendered doubly deviant by their class position. It is only as a result of the multi-sited ethnographic approach this study adopted that these contradictions were made visible.

The way in which magazines pathologise 'skinny' and 'fat' female bodies serves to normalise the slender, curvy version of the female form, which should be considered in terms of the wider discourse of health within broader culture and employed by governmental policy. Rich and Evans (2005) draw attention to the 'obesity crisis' that is supposedly both ever increasing and sweeping across the western world, arguing that little evidence of the obesity epidemic actually exists. Furthermore, they argue that the anti-obesity discourse can be seen as an attempt to create certainties around the confusing site of the body, which may be 'ethically' problematic, not least because it can lead to forms of size discrimination and oppression that, ironically,

may propel some people towards ill-health via disordered relationships with food, exercise and the body. Incorporating Skeggs' (1997) arguments about the way in which working class bodies are marked by excess into these arguments about health discourse, means it is possible to understand the 'anti-obesity' discourse as targeted at the working classes. Indeed, Jagger (2000) notes that the middle class body is often represented as fit, toned and athletic through its signification of discourses of health and fitness.

Thus, constructing the body through both the discourse of health and the discourse of authenticity serves to pathologise the bodies of working class young women in particular, and construct them in relation to the wider 'anti-obesity' and 'anti-pathology' discourses that are a part of the wider social preoccupation with the 'health' of young women's bodies. Rich and Evans' (2005) argument that the anti-obesity discourse may in fact propel some people towards unhealthy relationships with their bodies is particularly relevant to the young working class women in this study. From my empirical research with young working class women, it could plausibly be suggested that the emotional labour involved in avoiding 'fatness' as a signifier of their working class femininity may have propelled some of the larger girls into disordered relationships with food. Indeed, the compulsion to avoid 'fatness' also led some of the smaller girls to embark on highly disciplined exercise regimes and skip meals in the guise of 'healthiness'. Thus, the anti-obesity health discourse within which the discourse of the body within celebrity magazines is more broadly situated has particular resonance with working class girls and their avoidance of 'fatness'.

Some Possible Implications for Policy and Practice

The complex way in which these young working class women negotiate celebrity discourses in the construction of their bodies may also have further implications in terms of wider public and governmental health discourse. In the wider media, the moral panic over the representation of women's bodies has led to a populist call for 'body confidence' to be taught as part of the national curriculum in PSHE sessions. Indeed, celebrity stylist Gok Wan ran a petition last year to lobby for this proposal through his programme *How To Look Good Naked*, which seeks to make women *feel* good about themselves and their bodies through transforming their fashion and beauty practices. This call has been taken up by (now in Coalition Government) political party The Liberal Democrats (2010), who in March last year launched their 'Campaign for Body Confidence'. If body confidence were to find its way on to the curriculum in the UK, the findings of this study may in some small way be able to contribute to the form it should take, and the way in which it should take into account the classed and complex nature of young women's relationships with their bodies in light of cultural representations.

Future Research

Many of the themes discussed in this chapter form a useful basis for conducting future feminist research. In considering the direction of 'third wave' feminist inquiry, Baumgardner and Richards (2000) argue that historically, women's narratives have been the evidence of where the movement needs to go politically, and that there is a need for the movement to continue to move forward. I hope that in foregrounding the

experiences of young working class women, this study highlights the need to continue to consider class as a fundamental category of femininity on the basis of the work of others such as Skeggs (1997; 2004a), Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) and Tyler (2008). The possible directions for this research in light of the findings from this study are considered below.

Firstly, this research has focused on young working class women; however, the highly classed nature of the discourses within celebrity culture, particularly that of authenticity, necessitate an exploration of the place of these discourses within the peer cultures and subjectivities of middle class girls and young women. Furthermore, whilst this study has taken an ethnographic approach, a deeper and perhaps psychosocial lens could be applied to the exploration of this topic across a broader range of social settings. In particular, the way in which young working class women invest in their bodies in workplace settings as a means of cultural capital and social mobility is one potential avenue for further research highlighted by this study. Similarly, the complex way in which young working class mothers invest in their bodies (and the bodies of their children), in light of the discourses of celebrity culture which pathologise the figure of the working class young mother, also warrants further attention since this was not the sole focus of this study.

Furthermore, given the media's 'moral panic' about the investment of younger women and girls in celebrity culture, and their view of fame as a viable 'career' option, more research could be conducted into the desire 'to be famous', which emerged from this study but was not the central focus of the research. Using a broader sample of working class women from a variety of working class backgrounds

would facilitate a more nuanced understanding of fame discourses in the aspirations of young working class women more generally. Whilst Skeggs and her colleagues (Skeggs and Wood, 2008; Skeggs, Wood and Thumim, 2008) have conducted some useful initial explorations around class and ‘watching reality television’, the young women’s preoccupation with ‘performance-based’ reality TV, such as *The X Factor* and *Britain’s Got Talent*, and their personal investment in it may yield some useful insights into the way fame discourses operate in the aspirations of working class girls.

Moreover, working class girls’ investment and engagement in ‘gossip’ within celebrity culture, and in everyday life as lived practice, also emerged as a theme which warrants further analytic attention. An analysis along these lines would usefully connect with the body of work that seeks to understand the phenomenon that pathologises and normalises girls as ‘mean’ (Ringrose, 2006; Wiseman, 2002; Simmons, 2002; Gonick, 2004) and ‘bitchy’ (Guendouzi, 2001). Just as an analysis of celebrity culture highlights the way in which particular discourses of the body are at work in the lived realities of young working class girls, a closer analysis of celebrity gossip and young women’s negotiation of it may shed light on some of the ways in which gossip operates in female peer cultures and the production of heteronormative femininities. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to explore the way in which lesbian young women identify with these discourses which, as I have outlined, are hetero-sexualised representations of femininity.

Importantly, specific attention should be paid to the way in which these discourses operate in the lives and subjectivities of other ethnic groups of young women, both working and middle class. I concur with McRobbie (2009) who notes that

contemporary culture can be seen as a celebration of 'whiteness', particularly given the lack of representations of other ethnic groups of women within celebrity culture. However, given the nature of my sample and the desire to produce a complex and nuanced understanding of celebrity discourses in everyday life, I was unable to explore this aspect of celebrity culture within this thesis. However, future research could usefully apply this kind of ethnographic approach to understanding the way in which Black and Asian girls, who are 'othered' in a different way to working class young women by the discourses of celebrity culture, negotiate celebrity discourses in lived, subjective experience.

Most significantly, this study has highlighted that feminists should continue to focus on the way in which the body is a site of power and inequality between women. An analysis of the cultural construction of the body within celebrity culture can be a way in which those discourses that can shape the lived experience of the body for young women become known and understood. In foregrounding experience, this thesis demonstrates that feminists can more usefully understand the relation of young women to these discourses and their bodies. As such, this thesis aims to have provided some initial insights into the way in which celebrity discourses are subjectively experienced, upon which future research will be able to build a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and the part it plays in everyday life.

Personal Reflections

This thesis is the product of significant physical, intellectual and emotional labour. As such, the process has had a profound effect on me and my own subjectivity, which

I would briefly like to reflect on in light of the analysis I have presented. Firstly, there has been a considerable *physical* transformation from the beginning to the end of this endeavour: I weigh just over three stones lighter than I did when I began this project (and I wasn't overweight before the weight loss). Unfortunately, it wasn't the 'stress' or the absorption in my studies that resulted in my weight loss (although I was, at times, stressed and absorbed), but my own preoccupation with losing weight and obtaining the kind of body not unlike the 'curvy' celebrities in *Heat* magazine. As a result of my weight loss, I have become aware of the way in which other women apply the same concerned rhetoric applied to the 'skinny' female body as discussed within this thesis. I am not saying that my consumption of celebrity magazines 'caused' me to want to lose weight, but the specific and close attention I have been paying to the way in which women scrutinise their own and other women's bodies may indeed have played a part in my preoccupation with regulating my own body.

Furthermore, I have become more aware than ever of the sanctions that can be applied if you wear 'too much makeup'. My own biography resonates with the accounts many of the young women give of the humiliation involved in wearing too much makeup: each morning when I sit at my dressing table to apply my makeup, the words of the girls reverberate around my head reminding me not to put too much on. When I go for a spray tan I always ask for a 'healthy glow', and I am extremely vigilant at ensuring few people witness the 'unhealthy' face I have without makeup on.

Thinking about femininity and class critically has made me aware of the ways in which I am restricted and constrained in ways I had never considered. Before carrying out the empirical research with young women and analysing their accounts, I

had considered 'making-up', 'dressing-up' and body management as an empowering process. Inspired by the 'girl power' rhetoric in popular culture, I had always thought being 'girlie' was a sign of rebellion (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000) and personal agency. However, speaking to other working class young women about how femininity is subjectively experienced has led to my thinking on the matter changing: as Skeggs succinctly notes, 'questions of who are 'they' informed who 'I' was' (Skeggs, 1997:34). Now I desperately wish I could leave the house to go to the supermarket without putting makeup on, straightening my hair, and changing out of my jogging bottoms. I wish I could eat a box of chocolates without worrying about developing a 'Buddha Belly' and commanding the same reaction that the girls had to Britney Spears' midriff.

Essentially, I have discovered the power of these discourses on my own lived experiences of performing femininity, and become aware of my own class-based anxieties of doing so, particularly within an academic environment. Whilst I have 'escaped' my working class position in a similar way acknowledged by Skeggs (1997), I am more conscious than ever of the ways in which I could be marked as 'working class' within an academic environment. I wear far more makeup than is generally the norm, dress like I stepped out of the very magazines I analyse, and can often be overheard talking about what was on TV last night or what I think of Britney Spears' new song. It's reassuring to see that Hey (2003) synthesises the wealth of feminist auto-biographical accounts that precisely explore these ambiguities and intense contradictions associated with the position of the feminist working-class academic this study has illuminated within my own subjectivity. The next challenge I will face in relation to this is the 'anxiety' of making-up and dressing-up for the viva.

It is down to the openness and insights of the girls in this study that I am able to critically reflect on these issues and anxieties, and use these insights as part of my future career, and for that I want to express my appreciation: it is your honesty and openness that has given this research its integrity.

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Who am I? My name is Kelly Buckley and I am currently completing my PhD at the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. This project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and has received ethical approval from the Social Science ethics committee.

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
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E · S · R · C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

What is the research about? The celebrity and its dedicated media are ubiquitous in contemporary society, as are the arguments about the supposed effects such representations have on young women. This research seeks to explore young women's use of the celebrity media in everyday life through exploring the group reading cultures that are involved in their consumption, and the young women's individual interactions with the celebrity text. Furthermore, this research will explore participants' relationship to 'feminism' through celebrity icons.

Why this institution? As part of my PhD research, I am looking for a group of 16-18 year old young women to participate into my research into celebrity culture and femininity. Although much of the research will be conducted outside your institution, access to the group of young women I am interested in is best achieved through an educational setting such as this.

What will it involve? Participants will be observed in a group setting to explore the interaction between young women in their interpretation of celebrity culture, and will also participate in reading groups. Individually, I will talk to participants, and ask them to make audio diaries, or written diaries if they prefer, of their consumption of celebrity texts such as Heat magazine.

What will take place in school? I am contacting your institution simply to obtain access to a group of young women to participate in my research. Inside the school, I would observe and interact with participants at break and lunch times only during the school day, and I may ask to use a room to conduct the reading groups after school if that would be possible. The remaining aspects of the research would not take place in school, and would be during the summer so as to cause minimum disruption to their academic work.

Who am I looking for? Firstly, participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time if they so wish. I would like to informally talk with a group of your female students to see if a small group would be willing to participate in the research, and to provide them with information about the study. Although this project will be enjoyable for participants, it may also provide a beneficial learning experience for your students to be part of a piece of social science and media research, and to engage in the practicalities of completing a research project.

Thank you for taking the time to read about this research. If you would allow me to talk with some of your students I would be most grateful. If you have any further questions, I would be happy to come in and discuss my project with you. My contact details are: Kelly Buckley, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff, CF10 3WT. Email: BuckleyK1@cardiff.ac.uk. Tel: 02920 456404/07504957465. **I look forward to hearing from you.**



heat

OK!

Closer

Reveal



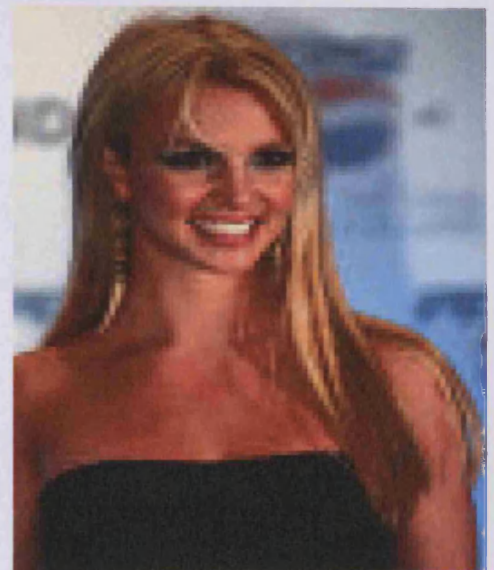
My name is Kelly Buckley and I am looking for a group of friends to take part in a study exploring your use of celebrity magazines and celebrity culture. If you and your friends wish to take part in the study, here's what you need to know...



Why? This study is being carried out as a PhD funded by the ESRC, which seeks to explore young women's interest in celebrity culture, and how they read celebrity magazines. I love all things celebrity, and buy *Heat* religiously every Tuesday, and want to talk to other young women about celebrities, gossip magazines and your everyday lives and opinions.



What do I have to do? Taking part in my study is really easy. There are two elements to the study: how you talk about celebrities as a group of friends, and how you think about magazines and celebrities individually. So I would just observe, and maybe at times record, you and your friends chatting and talk to you about celebrities and your interest in them. If you would like to, I would like you to individually do an audio diary for me when you're sat reading your favourite magazine- telling me what you're reading and what you're thinking. So really you don't have to do much out of the ordinary: just get together with your mates, talk about celebrities and have fun!



Thank you for showing interest in this study and taking the time to read this information sheet. Should you have any further questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me and I shall be happy to provide further information.
Email: BuckleyK1@cardiff.ac.uk
Address: Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff, CF10 3WT.

What will happen to the information? Any information and data you and your friends give will be completely anonymous, and will only be used for the purposes of my PhD and any academic publications resulting from this, to which you are welcome to copies. Any transcripts of conversations or your audio diaries will not identify you by name, and you also have access to copies of them if you so wish. If any of you wish to withdraw at any time you can as participation in the research is on a voluntary basis.

This project has received ethical approval from the Social Science ethics committee; however, if you have any concerns about this research, please contact Professor Søren Holm via the address for the School of Social Sciences given opposite.



Dear Parent,

Your daughter has been invited to take part into a study being carried out by myself, a PhD researcher from Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, into young women's interest in and readings of celebrity culture. This ESRC funded project will also explore how young women relate to celebrities and what it means to their sense of self and their everyday lives. Participation in the study would simply involve chatting in a group and individually with me on a few occasions about celebrity gossip and celebrity magazines, as well as how they feel about them. I will also ask them to read a magazine, and to annotate the magazine with their thoughts and opinions. The research will not take place within school time or on school premises: I will take groups out locally for coffee or lunch, which will be paid for by myself along with any travel expenses they may incur. As an extra thank you for taking part in the research, I am able to offer a £10 gift voucher and a goodie bag as a token of my appreciation.

All the information participants provide will be confidential, and any transcriptions will not identify any participant by their real name. The data collected will only be used for the purposes of my PhD research and any academic publications that result from which, to which participants are welcome to copies. Participation in the project is entirely voluntary, and should they wish they may withdraw their consent at any time. I will also obtain consent from participants in the initial meeting with them once I have informed them of what is involved in the study. This project has received ethical approval from the School of Social Sciences ethics committee; however, should you have any concerns regarding the ethics of this research you may contact Professor Soren Holm, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff, CF10 3WT.

Yours Sincerely,

Kelly Buckley
PhD Researcher,
Cardiff University School of Social Sciences
BuckleyK1@cardiff.ac.uk

Parental Consent Slip

I have read and understood the above information, and give consent for my daughter _____ to take part in the research project should they so wish.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study into celebrity culture. I hope you find it an enjoyable experience. You will have read the information sheet, and I just need to confirm that you have read and understood the following:

- I have read and understood the information sheet for the study: I understand the purpose of the research, what is required of me and how the resulting data will be stored and used.

- I understand that my participation in the study is entirely voluntary. I do not have to take part in activities I may have an objection to, and may withdraw my consent at any time in the study.

- I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I might have about the research, the research process and the use of the resulting data.

- I understand that any information given by me is confidential, and all details will be anonymised in storage and reporting, to which I have access along with the researcher and her two supervisors.

Finally...

- I agree to take part in the research.

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Dated: _____

Thank you.

To contact me:

Kelly Buckley

**Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, Glamorgan Building,
King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff, CF10 3WT**

Email: BuckleyK1@cardiff.ac.uk

