Research into Women’s Magazines and the Social Construction of Womanhood

An investigation into the readership of women’s magazines, with specific focus upon the nature and reception of the ‘weekly glossy’ genre created by Grazia magazine.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MA in Media Industries Institute of Communications University of Leeds September 2011

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nancy Thumim and the Institute of Communications Studies at Leeds University. Special thanks go to Matt, Dad, Mum and Nic for their support and encouragement.
Abstract

Women’s magazines have been described as one of the most ‘resilient’ print medias, with an enduring popularity and vast array of titles on offer (Saner, 2010). Despite this, they have occupied a ‘less central and prestigious space’ in media and cultural research than other media genres (McRobbie, 1999). This research aims to investigate the relationship between women and magazines today, occupying the significant gap left in this area of study in recent decades. Building on this foundation, this research also aims to specifically examine the form and content of the ‘weekly glossy’ hybrid genre created by Grazia magazine.

Launched in 2005, Grazia is a new development in the field of women’s magazines in its combination of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture within one title. Not only does it contain fashion, celebrity gossip and lifestyle features, it also incorporates more serious weekly news stories. This research examines how this combination is received by female readers and the implications it has in terms of the magazine’s construction of womanhood. Using a combination of textual and reception analysis, this study demonstrates the positive reaction from participants to the notion of greater variety in women’s magazines, their complicated relationships with magazines in general and the significance of magazines today, which needs to be reflected more strongly in the academic world.
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1. Introduction

Women’s magazines are everywhere. From the large sections devoted to them in newsagents, to their frequent advertising on billboards and television, to hairdressing salons and the tearooms in the workplace, even the least frequent of readers are aware of their ubiquity.

Market research has pointed to a ‘fraught’ 2009, in which the rise of digitalisation and the ready availability of online content threatened the stability of print media in general (Mintel, 2010), yet Douglas McCabe, of the research company Enders Analysis has claimed that ‘the women’s space is a lot more resilient than almost every other print media that we can think of’ (quoted by Saner, 2010). In a report in 2010, Mintel estimated that 530 million copies of women’s magazines would be sold that year and in the same year The Guardian stated that ‘although some individual titles have suffered [in 2009], overall the last ABCs saw a huge year-on-year growth of 14.6% in circulation: we buy – or rather consume if you take into account the launch of the free magazine Stylist - nearly 7 million fashion and lifestyle magazines every month’ (Saner, 2010).

The enduring popularity of women’s magazines should correlate with a significant body of research into their role in the media industries from both a political and economic perspective. Unfortunately, as Angela McRobbie has suggested, ‘in media and cultural studies, scholarship on magazines has occupied a less central and prestigious place than scholarship on other media’ (1997: 192). Yet, while the place of women’s magazines in the overall field of media research is less central than, for example, film or television, the small body of research that has been conducted has asserted their significance in ‘the social construction of womanhood today’ (Gauntlett: 2002: 187).

While they are often discussed as a generality, to speak of ‘women’s magazines’ actually encompasses a complex variety of different genres. These range from weeklies (which may include fashion weeklies such as Look, celebrity weeklies such as Heat or real-life weeklies such as Pick Me Up) to glossies or monthlies
(which may include lifestyle, fashion or specific-interest titles such as *She*, *Vogue*, or *House and Garden*). Furthermore, in recent years there has been a perceptible shift in the market of women’s magazines towards more hybridised genres.

It is the absence of research into these newer titles that has made the dearth of studies of women’s magazines in the last decade more noticeable. With the shift towards hybrid forms, there is a need for fresh research, building upon previous studies, to investigate whether these new titles have contributed to a change in the reception of women’s magazines by audiences.

One such new title is *Grazia* magazine, which launched in 2005 as a self-proclaimed ‘weekly-glossy’. *Grazia* created a hybrid between the ‘higher’ culture of monthly glossy and the ‘lower’ culture of weekly magazines, combining high fashion and lifestyle with celebrity gossip and also more serious weekly news stories. Essentially, it has blurred the boundaries between the sub-genres of women’s magazines, encompassing a new brand in which a variety of interests are merged into one package. The magazine has proven incredibly popular: it reaches ‘204,060 AB (38%) women every week’ in the UK and has ‘the highest loyalty of any other weekly or glossy lifestyle monthly’ in the UK (Bauer Media).

This research will explore how *Grazia*’s choice to combine a more serious level of news with glamour and fashion is received by magazine readers. Does the combination lower the status of the news stories it produces, or raise the status of the fashion culture it also promotes? Is it acceptable to readers that the magazine reports on issues such as the plight of women in the Middle East, while simultaneously encouraging western women to spend thousands of pounds on designer clothes? How does the combination affect the kind of womanhood constructed in *Grazia*?

Questions relating specifically to *Grazia* cannot be fully answered without an insight into the nature of female readers’ relationships with magazines in general. This study will therefore build upon the previous body of women’s magazines studies as a basis for investigating the kind of womanhood constructed in *Grazia* through its hybrid genre. Furthermore, not only should it contribute to the small but significant field of research into women’s magazines, it will also participate more broadly in the
field of feminist audience studies. Critical issues relating to feminist research will be addressed with the intent of gaining an understanding into the reasons for the limited amount of women’s magazines research conducted up until now. As will be further discussed in Chapter Three, a combination of textual and reception analysis will be used to gain the broadest possible insight into both the product and its audience.
Research Objectives

Main Objective: to investigate the nature and reception of the sub-genre ‘weekly glossy’ as created by Grazia magazine.

1. How do women interact with magazines and what is their relationship to them?

2. How significant is the concept of genre for women when they are choosing magazines?

3. How is the ‘weekly glossy’ received by female readers in terms of its amalgamation of news, fashion and celebrity?
2. Literature Review

1. Researching Women’s Magazines – the background to the study

Angela McRobbie has suggested that ‘in media and cultural studies, scholarship on magazines has occupied a less central and prestigious place than scholarship on other media’ (1997: 192) and this remains the case over a decade later. However, the studies of women’s magazines that have occurred, though limited in number, have demonstrated a sense of complexity and a field fraught with debate. Disputes have arisen not only regarding the nature and importance of women’s magazines but also how exactly they should be studied. Unsurprisingly, it is mainly female critics who have engaged with the study of women’s magazines, but this lends itself to difficulty. A sense of conflict arises throughout many studies wherein the female author must weigh their personal sense of self and their relationship to women’s magazines against an academic and feminist perspective.

Gayle Letherby has discussed the issue of ‘the self’ in feminist research, describing how feminists ‘insist’ that the researcher cannot separate themselves from their ‘emotional involvement’ in their work and that subjectivity must therefore be embraced (2003: 68). Consequently, the author must use ‘I’ to ‘take responsibility for what we write’ (7). Yet, Letherby argues, this personal style of writing challenges traditional academic modes and, enforced by the fact that feminist research nearly always raises emotional as well as intellectual issues, it lends itself to ‘accusations of ‘un-academic indulgence’ (7). Stanley and Wise (1993), on the other hand, assert that feminists should ‘make ourselves vulnerable’ by ‘presenting ourselves and our understandings of what is going on’ in the research process, so that the reader can support any conclusions reached with an understanding of the researcher’s personal history (163). They argue that this serves to support, rather than to undermine, the academic process.

Mary Maynard argues that feminist research is distinctive in its ‘insistence on its political nature and potential to bring about change in women’s lives’ (1994: 16). Feminist studies have the capability to ‘make visible a social issue’, through which
their research can be empowering, or even transformational (17). The researcher, particularly as a woman, is not immune from such empowerment, nor indeed are they immune from any negative feeling that may arise when research raises issues to which there is no obvious ‘solution’. With such a high level of association on the part of the researcher, it is very difficult to present feminist research from an entirely objective point of view.

In her study Inside Women’s Magazines (1987), Janice Winship has discussed the ‘double-edged’ nature of researching women’s magazines, which she claims prevented her from engaging with a serious study of the genre for a long time, most notably in giving up plans to write a PhD on the subject. As a feminist, she felt a ‘simultaneous attraction and rejection’ towards women’s magazines; on the one hand finding pleasure their escapist quality and recognising their mass popularity, but on the other, feeling a strong sense that to be a feminist, one must reject the construction of womanhood put forward by most popular women’s magazines:

‘Many of the guises of femininity in women’s magazines contribute to the secondary status from which we still desire to free ourselves. At the same time it is the dress of femininity which is both source of the pleasure of being a woman […] and in part the raw material for a feminist vision of the future’. (Winship, 1987: xiii)

This conflict of interest is something that I too have experienced when it comes to women’s magazines, and it is no easier for modern women to weigh up the dilemma today than it was decades ago. There is a certain sense of duality to women’s magazines, which can seem to encompass both an old fashioned gender construction (certainly when one considers the titles of some magazines, such as Good Housekeeping or Ideal Home, which seem to hark back to a more domesticated time for women) while simultaneously offering more in terms of career advice, the suggestion of disposable income and the assumption of independence than ever before.

In a study of magazines dating as far back as 1880, Damon-Moore suggests that the ‘contradictory consciousness’ (Gramsci, quoted by Damon-Moore, 1994: 196) that many female readers feel towards magazines is grounded in the ‘gendered commercialism’ that historically encompasses the genre:
Gender analysis of both a women’s and a men’s magazine has revealed that a nineteenth-century gendered division of labor – consuming for women and earning for men – was institutionalized in magazines conceived primarily as vehicles for advertising […] The consuming/earning pattern institutionalized in these middle-class magazines helped to maintain the male-dominated status quo throughout most of the twentieth century. (1994: 196)

With advertising being the primary focus of many early magazines, women in particular were targeted as consumers. However, this structure was understood by readers and advertisers alike and at the same time as women were aware of their position as targets, advertisers acknowledged the shrewdness of their consumers. Yet Damon-Moore describes how, over time, magazines became increasingly driven by advertising, which delineated their editorial content to a greater degree, and advertisers shifted their view of the consumer from one of respect to the view that consumers were ‘overgrown children’ ruled by materialistic impulses (196).

Modern magazines still rely heavily upon advertising (75% of their revenue according to Barrell and Braithwaite (1988: 117)) and it is common to see ‘features’ placed in magazines by specific corporations, who essentially sell products under the guise of editorial content. The sense that women are ruled by ‘materialistic impulses’ remains embedded in the content of most women’s magazines, yet the suggestion today is that women will purchase for themselves and have moved on from the gender based consumer/earner pattern discussed by Damon-Moore, to become earners in their own right. However, the discomfort, or ‘contradictory consciousness’ felt by the reader – particularly those who have ‘studied’ women’s magazines – remains in place. Damon-Moore explains it thus:

A critical component of this contradictory consciousness is one that critics of popular culture have often ignored […] consuming was – and is – a largely pleasurable experience […] In addition, in the early years of the mass media middle-class women did indeed gain some autonomy through increased consumption, giving them further cause to support gendered commerce. Thus it is the case that many readers and consumers in the past saw, and many today see, little reason to change the gendered, commercial contours that characterise popular culture. (1994: 196)
Herein lies the trouble with the study of women’s magazines. In what is contestably thought of as the ‘post-feminist’ era (McRobbie, 2009: 11) we cannot help but be aware that magazines have long been at the heart of much feminist debate. As Van Zoonen asserts, the media has ‘been at the centre of feminist critique’ (1994: 11) as ‘representation has always been an important battleground for contemporary feminism’ (12) and women’s magazines have been no exception. Significant feminist texts such as Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* derided women’s magazines for cultivating the idea that ‘women do no work except housework and work to keep their bodies beautiful and get and keep a man’ (1963: 18). Friedan acknowledged that magazines placed women in the role of the consumer and that this led to a false sense of autonomy while in fact further domesticating women and subjugating them to male authority. Other notable feminist texts, including those by Tuchman (1978) and Wolf (1991) similarly condemned women’s magazines for these reasons. Hence, for modern women there may be a sense of discomfort in the idea of reading women’s magazines, yet as Damon-Moore and Winship have pointed out, there is a definite sense of pleasure to be derived from them too.

Joke Hermes, in *Reading Women’s Magazines* (1995), has discussed at length the difficulties that have arisen from this conflict in terms of the study of women’s magazines, in that many critics have taken the viewpoint that it is only they who feel a sense of conflict when reading magazines. She condemns critics who, citing themselves as feminists, show concern rather than respect for those who read women’s magazines. Many critics, she claims, engage with ‘modernity discourse’ (Joli Jensen, 1990, quoted by Hermes, 1995: 1) when discussing women’s magazines, which essentially depicts the media as an ‘agent of alienation, anomy and despair in the powerfully seductive guise of entertainment’ (Hermes, 1995: 1) and deems readers incapable of seeing this for themselves:

The worry and concern in older feminist media criticism lead to a highly unequal relationship between feminist author and ‘ordinary women’. The feminist media critic is prophet and exorcist, even while being, as many claim, an ‘ordinary woman’ too. Feminists using modernity discourse speak on behalf of others who are, implicitly, thought to be unable to see for themselves how bad such media texts as women’s magazines are. (Hermes, 1995: 1)
All too often, a sense of conflict arising from women’s magazines is ascribed solely to the critic, while the everyday reader is a passive victim, unable to see both of the sides necessary to provoke this conflict for themselves. Because of this, there have been few studies of readers of magazines, as the readers are often seen as ‘unenlightened’. Instead, there is an excess of textual analysis of women’s magazines, provided by feminist critics. Hermes argues that it is ineffective to simply consider magazines from a critical point of view and instead it is ‘more productive to respect the choices and uncritical acceptance of [women’s magazines] than to foreground a distancing criticism or concern towards them at all’ (1995: 2). Hence, Hermes’ study is largely constructed around reception analysis and she interviewed readers of magazines within the context of how magazines are ‘made meaningful’ through readers’ interactivity with them (7).

While Hermes’ study is an excellent demonstration of the merits of reception analysis she is perhaps too quick to dismiss the merits of textual analysis, citing the ‘moralising voice of the author’ (4) as undermining to the everyday nature and value of women’s magazines. This can be avoided, as in Winship’s text-based study (1987), which is particularly self-reflexive as she discusses her struggle to find a path between criticism and appreciation. By writing of herself as an individual, rather than an ‘everywoman’ she is able to negotiate between the pleasure she feels when reading magazines and her personal sense of morality, rather than ascribing a sense of moralism, or lack thereof, to the everyday reader. Winship chooses which magazines to analyse based on their being her personal favourites, which again emphasises her self-reflexivity, a quality that has been deemed vital to avoid the notion that she is preaching and position her as an equal to the women her research affects (see Letherby, 2003; Maynard, 1994; and Stanley and Wise, 1993).

In a much drier, less personal textual analysis of women’s magazines, Ellen McCracken explores the ‘codes’ employed by women’s magazines in order to provide pleasure, while simultaneously ‘naturalizing social relations of power’ (1993: 3). Unfortunately, McCracken inadvertently demonstrates the danger of ‘preaching’ about women’s magazines, by placing the reader in a position of disillusionment:
Readers are not force-fed a constellation of negative images that naturalize male-dominance; rather, women’s magazines exert a cultural leadership to shape consensus in which highly pleasurable codes work to naturalize social relations of power. (1993: 3)

McCracken tackles the ‘coding’ of women’s magazines in an almost mathematical method, with an emphasis upon the commercialism mentioned by Damon-Moore and women being placed in the role of consumer. While her in-depth analysis offers a host of interesting ways of ‘de-coding’ magazines, her suggestion is that certain fixed meanings are denoted by magazines and interpreted by readers, leaving no room for a more fluid relationship.

In what Gough-Yates describes as a demonstration of ‘postmodern scepticism to notions of ultimate truth’ (2003: 12), Ros Ballaster et al (1991) attempt to draw a path between the ‘fixed’ nature of textual analysis and a more ethnographic approach to studying magazines. Rather than focusing solely upon texts, they interviewed groups of women and found them to be very much aware of the particular conventions, discourses and codes of women’s magazines:

When talking about magazines, women endlessly, and delightedly, parody and mimic them, displaying their own literacy and mastery of its generic conventions. (Ballaster et al, 1991: 35)

Through their actual presence in the text, readers are allocated more shrewdness in this study than in McCracken’s fixed meaning interpretation, yet unfortunately here the combination of textual and reception analysis does not function fully successfully, as the authors tend to lean towards their own interpretations, favouring their academic understanding of magazines over the information gleaned from readers. For example, although their respondents demonstrated a critical awareness when reading magazines, Ballaster et al limit their ability to ‘reshape or destruct’ (131) what is presented to them and instead suggest that they can merely respond to it insofar as the magazine allows them to:

While we reject any straightforward causal relation between representation and behaviour, or the idea that these texts simply ‘brainwash’ their readers, we would argue that certain readings are privileged and that frequently the terms
of our criticism can only remain within the terms of the magazine discourse itself. (Ballaster et al, 1991: 131)

Though in theory their intention to explore the everyday interpretations of magazines by readers is admirable, unfortunately Ballaster et al maintain what Hermes refers to as an ‘older feminist position of concern’ (1995: 3) which ultimately undermines the readers by returning them to a position of disillusionment.

On the other hand, another study which combines textual and reception analysis is that of Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (Making Sense of Men’s Magazines, 2001), which gives a far greater sense of balance between academic and audience. In what could also be described as a rejection of ‘notions of ultimate truth’, Jackson et al state their preference for confronting the ‘messiness’ of research (158) in combining a variety of methods in order to gain the broadest possible outlook upon the subject matter. When completing their textual analysis, Jackson et al incorporate comments gathered from their focus group participants to endorse their own academic suppositions. Even their lexical choices demonstrate an effort to negotiate a balance of power, as they refer to their interviewees as ‘participants’. Letherby has argued that to attempt to establish a ‘reciprocal relationship’ with respondents through language highlights the researcher’s ‘possession of the power to define and redefine’ (2003: 7). Yet, by referring to their respondents as ‘participants’ rather than ‘subjects’, Jackson et al establish that their own academic authority should be no more influential in shaping their research than the actual information provided by those whom they are studying. Furthermore, they acknowledge that although this should be the case it is not always easy to maintain this balance and that this use of language is not a fully realised solution. To balance their role further, they incorporate themselves into the study through personal histories, essentially marking out their subjectivity through self-reflexivity, which, as has already been emphasised, is important when ‘making visible a social issue’ (Maynard, 1994: 17).

Bearing in mind that many of the studies I have researched took place between one and two decades ago, there is certainly room for a new study to take place regarding women’s magazines, as magazines and their readers are constantly evolving. Furthermore, we have reached a new political context to that which shaped
previous research, if we can be said to be in a ‘post-feminist’ era. As has been discussed, the conflicting elements of feminist concern, respect and appreciation for the everyday readership permeate previous studies of women’s magazines. Those published during the height of what is known as the ‘feminist’ era portray a much greater level of concern for the unenlightened reader, while later studies contestably show signs of post-feminism in their hesitation to limit the reader’s autonomy. Post-feminism is a highly volatile term in its suggestion that feminism is somehow no longer needed (see McRobbie, 2009), yet to others it can emphasise the realisation of the benefits reaped from the feminist movement in terms of educational and professional opportunities, freedom of choice and sexual empowerment (Tasker and Negra, 2007: 2). This study is located as a feminist study, acknowledging both the shifting political context and its implications in feminist media research in terms of the methodological debate of reception versus textual analysis (which I discuss further in Chapter Three) and the need for self-reflexivity.

I expect to have to navigate through many complexities within this study, due to the unpredictable nature of dealing with qualitative research, the conflicts that have already arisen in previous studies and the fact that I am venturing into unchartered territory through Grazia and the new genre of women’s magazines it encompasses. However, in preparing for my study, this range of previous research has been invaluable. I will now proceed to discuss further points of interest found in this research, which relate to my own study.

2. Genre and the Women’s Magazine

A major factor in my decision to specifically study Grazia as part of my research was the fact that it has created a new sub-genre of women’s magazines in what it terms the ‘weekly glossy’. On a personal level, I have long felt that Grazia sits outside the usual classifications of women’s magazines, as it both encompasses elements of magazines from across different genres (for example, it is unusual to see ‘high’ fashion in a weekly magazine, as it is usually reserved for upmarket monthly titles, while up-to-the-minute celebrity gossip is often reserved for weekly titles and would not be found in an upmarket monthly) and also introduces new elements which
have not previously been associated with women’s magazines as a genre in itself (such as news stories). From an academic perspective, this new kind of hybrid genre has not yet been fully acknowledged, and taking this new development alongside the significant gap in research into women’s magazines in general, there is much to be explored. Not only have women’s magazines developed in terms of form and content, the relationship between women and magazines now takes place in a different political context to that which shaped previous research. This begs the questions, how significant is a new style of form and content to readers’ relationships with magazines, and what was the incentive for the change of style?

Genre has not played a major role in previous studies of women’s magazines, as disappointingly much of the time ‘women’s magazines’ are referred to under an umbrella genre with little attention paid to its sub-divisions. However, some studies have taken it into greater consideration than others. Hermes has stated that genre can be understood as ‘a collection of conventions, an agreed code between communicator and audience that shaped both the production process and the expectations of the readers’ (1995: 7). Essentially, genre is important across all media; for example, in choosing a film one knows what to expect from a romantic comedy or a horror title and the same applies to magazines. Winship has noted the significance of genre in the arrangement of magazines in shops, where women’s magazines are allocated their own section, headed ‘Women’s World’ and separated from ‘Leisure’ or ‘Hobbies’ or ‘Music’ etc. ‘Women’s magazines’ as a genre in itself is highlighted by the fact that there is no ‘Men’s World’ section. Essentially, as women’s magazines are marked out so explicitly, the implication is that all other titles (including business, leisure, politics etc) are for men (1987: 6-7).

It is arguably because of this generalization that from within the genre of ‘women’s magazines’ as a whole, sub-genres have been created to give depth and a wider range of meaning to the very limited suggestion of the ‘women’s world’. I know from experience that in discussing women’s magazines generally, readers are quick to define what they read by genre and that certain titles are held in very low, or very high esteem. Hermes found that, in studying readers of magazines, it was practical to form her study around different sub-genres of women’s magazines, as genre is ‘how women accord meaning to the magazines they read’ (1995: 7). The
categories she chose were based upon definitions accorded to her by her informants and consisted of domestic weeklies, glossies, gossip magazines and feminist magazines. Apart from ‘feminist magazines’, which readers struggled to define, informants were fairly definite about categorizing different titles. Of course, ‘the odd ones out can prove to be goldmines because they can help to clarify on what grounds some magazines are called women’s magazines and others are not’ (Miles and Huberman, quoted by Hermes, 1995: 96). This should be the case with Grazia, which, as a new genre and therefore an anomaly, should provide information from informants about the nature of categorization and the importance of genre in relation to magazines in general.

Unfortunately, little work has been done to further probe the importance of genre in terms of women’s magazines, although consequently this is an area where my research will be of particular value. Genre is an element of women’s magazines that has already proven to be often considered by readers, as they can so quickly categorise various titles. I hope to demonstrate in this research that degrees of value, or lack thereof, are placed upon women’s magazines according to genre as a whole in itself (in terms of Winship’s concern for separation of the ‘women’s world’) and as a collection of sub-genres.

3. The Unpredictability of Women’s Relationships to Magazines

Another aspect of research which I came across and which needs to be carefully considered is the unpredictability of women’s relationships to magazines. To return briefly to the points made in section one about the status of the reader versus the academic, arguments have been made as to whether readers are disillusioned about the ‘codes’ set out in magazines in terms of their feminist significance and the importance of the academic not ‘preaching’ concern for the reader by suggesting that they have knowledge the reader does not. However, even when attempts have been made to place the reader in the higher position of significance to the academic (see Jackson et al, 2001), the readers’ shrewdness, or lack thereof, when it comes to interpreting magazines can only be understood within the context of how significant magazines are to the reader in the first place. Essentially, if readers are found to be critical of magazines, or in fact uncritical, the significance of this must be weighed
against how important they see magazines in their everyday life. Jackson et al (2001) described how some of their participants felt that, as academics, they were ‘reading too much into’ their responses to magazines (180). While they hoped that magazines would be thought of as meaningful, many of the readers felt that they were ‘mundane’ (170).

There are several factors to consider here. Primarily, it would be a mistake to ignore the fact that in inviting readers to respond to my interview requests, the very context of being interviewed will cause them to consider magazines more deeply than they perhaps ordinarily would. Furthermore, as Hermes has suggested, academics are often drawn to ‘fans’ in their research, as those who are known to already appreciate that which is being studied are likely to respond articulately and with enthusiasm (1995: 15). I must not engage with the ‘fallacy of meaningfulness’ (16) in my research. For example, I must not ignore the fact that a large number of my respondents will be recent university graduates, who may still be in academic mode and therefore prepared to give deeper consideration to the subject in an interview than they would in their daily lives. Hermes has stated that, from her research, she gathered that ‘women’s magazines are read with far less concentration and much more detachment than other popular genres’ and that in interviewing many women she was disappointed with their inability to articulate much on the subject matter (14).

In fact, throughout much research it is often stated that the trivial nature of women’s magazines means that they contribute little beyond frivolous value to female readers. In light of this, I feel strongly that Grazia, in it’s attempt to go beyond the trivial in terms of its inclusion of news stories, may occupy a new place in the minds of its readers and may be responded to differently. Having said that, as a fan of Grazia myself I have to be very aware of the ‘fallacy of meaningfulness’ for although it may be significant to me, this does not mean it will be to others. I must be careful in interviews not to sway my respondents into articulating opinions based upon my own enthusiasm (this is further discussed in Chapter Three).
4. ‘Fragmented Lives’: magazines for women in their 20s and 30s

Again returning to the fact that not much specific research in the field of women’s magazines has occurred on a major scale in the last decade, it is interesting to look at the status of women’s magazines in the latest studies available. In 2003, Anna Gough-Yeates produced Understanding Women’s Magazines in which she looked specifically at the state of the magazine industry at the time of her writing. She quoted an article by Olga Craig in the Sunday Telegraph, in which Craig claimed that women’s magazines were losing readers as they were ‘becoming disenchanted with magazines that […] assume their interests begin with shopping, sex and cellulite’ (Craig, 1998, quoted by Gough-Yates, 2003: 132). In contrast, just over a decade later, women’s magazines are one of the few print medias still thriving despite the ongoing struggle against the digital revolution (Saner, The Guardian: 2010). What makes this particularly interesting in the context of my study is that in looking at the dwindling popularity of women’s magazines in the late 1990s, Craig spoke to Bridget Rowe, former Editor of Woman’s Own, who declared that ‘a lack of innovation’ was the reason behind it:

From reading [magazines] you would never believe women drive cars or buy stereos or laugh. Or that they have any interest in current affairs or news. (Rowe, quoted in Craig, 1998 in Gough-Yates, 2003: 132).

Furthermore, Gough-Yates pointed to the fact that in order to revive interest in women’s magazines, publishers were looking into a previously untapped market, the twenty to thirty year olds. This market was generally less targeted due to its ‘fragmented’ nature in that women in their late twenties to thirties may be married, single, divorced, parents etc and it was notoriously difficult to appease such a wide range of lifestyles (132).

Two years after Gough-Yates’ study was published, Grazia launched in the UK (2005); a magazine specifically targeting the twenty to thirty age range and addressing the issue of current affairs and news. Today, Grazia reaches ‘38% women every week’ in the UK and has ‘the highest loyalty of any other weekly or glossy lifestyle monthly’ in the UK (Bauer Media). It seems hard to ignore the fact that
Grazia responds so tangibly to the market needs expressed by Gough-Yates, nor to reject the significance of its emphasis upon increased ‘intellectual’ content in light of Rowe’s comment. Certainly Grazia has occupied a new and innovative space within the genre of women’s magazines and its popularity speaks for itself. This points to a need to better understand the significance of this development in terms of how women see magazines today, for it certainly emphasizes the change in the market since the last bout of research into the genre was completed.
3. Methodology

The Research Method

1. Textual Analysis and Reception Analysis: Combining Two Methods

In constructing a plan for my research, I turned to previous studies and found an array of opinions regarding methodologies for the study of women’s magazines. Largely there was a divide between research that favoured textual analysis and that which favoured reception analysis. Hermes has stated:

The small but steady stream of publications about women’s magazines has, until recently, hardly ever taken the perspective or the experiences of the reader into account […] It seems highly probably, therefore, that we know more about the concerns and views of the researchers than we do about the actual practices of women’s magazine use. (Hermes, 1995: 10)

Of course, in that my study was to be largely focused upon Grazia magazine specifically, a degree of textual analysis would be vital. However, to avoid my research becoming intellectually biased, or without enough grounding in everyday reality, I felt that a combination of both textual analysis and a more ethnographic approach, which Radway calls a ‘multiply-focused’ approach, would be necessary (1984: 5). Essentially, I wanted respondents to my ethnographic research to become ‘participants’ in the process of investigating Grazia (Jackson et al, 2001).

As ‘texts acquire meaning only in the interaction between texts and readers’ (Hermes, 1995: 10), I realised that it would be beneficial to bring copies of Grazia into my ethnographic research and present them to my participants in order to witness their interaction with it. However, not all of my participants would be familiar with Grazia, thus I decided that extended focus groups and interviews would be necessary in order to gain an understanding of their relationships to magazines in general, before focusing them upon Grazia specifically. I wanted participants to consider Grazia for themselves in order to gain a natural reaction to it, and so did not inform them that Grazia was the main focus of my study. Instead, we discussed magazines in general and when I brought out Grazia for them to consider, I asked them questions relating
to topics we had already discussed and allowed them time to browse the magazine and consider it informally.

This turned out to be particularly successful, as I had found that participants often found it difficult to articulate narratives for themselves and I felt that, at least to begin with, I had to lead the dialogue with a series of questions. I followed a structure whereby I opened with a series of short, non-threatening ‘behavioural’ questions (such as ‘what was the last magazine you read?’) in order to relax participants, before moving on to broader ‘belief’ and ‘attitude’ questions (such as ‘do you relate to what you read in magazines’, ‘do you feel they send a positive message’ etc) (Deacon et al, 2007: 64-84). I was aware that ‘aspirational impulses’ may affect responses, such as participants feeling they should be better informed, and that recall would be a problem. The act of questioning in itself can set an agenda, so I was also careful in question phrasing to not lead participants into a response (2007: 75). I found that in using this structure, by the time I brought out Grazia for their consideration, most participants had relaxed and gave a more natural and informal response to it.

2. Structuring Interviews and Focus Groups

My original intention had been to conduct a series of medium-sized focus groups, which would have been divided by age categories. Focus groups are particularly useful in highlighting the ‘social context of media consumption, and the agency and discernment of audience members in the decoding process’, thus they were the ideal source of data for my research into the social construction of womanhood through magazines (Deacon et al, 2007: 57). However, after various attempts to bring the necessary women together in groups, this turned out to be difficult as the older women in particular were constrained by time with family or work commitments. Instead, I decided to take a different approach and conduct focus groups with women linked together by their social groups and to interview women who were unable to attend these groups separately. This turned out to be far more fruitful in terms of organising groups to get together and also in terms of the flow of conversation between them. Women who had expressed apprehension about attending a focus group with other women, who, despite being in their same age-category may have been strangers, were far more eager to attend a group comprised of their friends.
I conducted most of the group discussions at my house, inviting the women over for lunch or drinks in order to recreate a ‘normal’ social situation. After a casual conversation and time to relax (see Kreuger and Casey, 2000: 103-104), I turned the attention of the group to the specific discussion of magazines.

I quickly learned in conducting focus groups that despite my attempts to recreate ‘normal’ social environments, as soon as I began recording and the ‘discussion’ commenced, the women were initially nervous and hesitant to talk. After the first group, in which I found to my lack of surprise (see King and Horrocks, 2010: 45) that as soon as the recorder was turned off, the women relaxed and continued to discuss magazines among themselves, I decided to falsely end the discussions after a certain period of time and pretend to turn off the recorder. As expected, the conversations continued to flow, this time with a more natural feeling to it and in my second focus group, the women said that it was a shame that I had turned the recorder off as the discussion had developed so much afterwards. When I told them that I had actually continued recording they were pleased and said that they thought it had been a good idea to keep recording them without their knowledge. Of course, I told them that as they had been unaware that they had been recorded I would need their permission to include this discussion in my study and they willingly gave it. This was risky, but it paid off.

When interviewing individuals, the conversation flowed much more freely. It was much easier to develop a conversation between myself and just one other than it was to encourage a discussion between multiple participants. With every interview, group and individual, there was a level of ‘personal digression’ in which I would give either an affirmation of an opinion, or an opinion of my own. This was because I felt it important to emphasise my position as an ethnographic researcher and a participant, rather than an observer (Hermes, 1995: 11). I made sure that this only happened in relation to behavioural questions, however (such as ‘yes, I subscribe to … as well’ or, ‘I think they’re quite expensive too’) as I did not want my position as researcher to present my opinion as the ‘correct’ one. However, by and large, due to my personal relationship with my participants, this was not perceived to be the case.
3. Selecting a Sample

In selecting a sample of *Grazia* magazines for my textual analysis, several factors came into play. Primarily, the issue of anomalous events was of concern, as I knew that the Royal Wedding was to occur during my research and that it would dominate news coverage in *Grazia* for some time. I tried to take predictable events such as this into consideration in order to gain as standard a sample as possible, although of course the news cannot be predicted at any time. I gathered five consecutive issues from 7th February to 14th March 2011, which provided a large enough size to determine a degree of standardisation, while being small enough to study in detail. As I planned to bring copies of the magazine to my interviews and focus groups, I gathered another sample, this time far more random, from issues I already had stacked at home. I selected these without looking inside them to prevent subjectivity in terms of my looking for elements that would promote specific discussion. These happened to be all from the same month (4th, 11th and 18th April 2011).

4. Production Analysis

Initially when planning this study, I had hoped to include qualitative research into the production process of *Grazia* magazine, in order to gain understanding of the development of the ‘weekly glossy’ from the source. However, I quickly came to discover that this was highly ambitious and unlikely to come to fruition. Firstly, I noticed a trend emerging on the social networking site Twitter, where editors of women’s magazines were ‘tweeting’ to state that they could not answer research questions by academics, as the demand was too high. They referred not only to Twitter specifically, but also to email and telephone requests. Then, in March 2011, I attended a seminar at *Marie Claire* magazine titled ‘How to Get Into Women’s Magazines’ which was hosted by the Editor-In-Chief and a panel of Sub-Editors. During the seminar I witnessed a number of students ask questions of an ideological nature in reference to the magazine, such as ‘is *Marie Claire* a feminist magazine?’ The panel were very vague in their answers and seemed hesitant to answer these academic questions in detail. Afterwards, I spoke to some of the women who had raised questions, who told me that they were conducting academic research and upon
receiving no response to fieldwork requests from *Marie Claire* had decided to take a chance upon the seminar. They were disappointed with the outcome.

Following this up in my research, I noticed a similar trend. Anna Gough-Yates discussed her intention to carry out fieldwork in the women’s magazine industry, which were thwarted by time (in that scheduled interviews were often cancelled at short notice, and those which occurred were so limited as to enforce a certain formality) and mistrust of her intentions:

Within the women’s magazine industry I encountered attitudes of both mistrust and disdain towards academic media research – a negativity that was frequently enforced by calculations about my political investments based upon a knowledge of previous academic studies in the area. As a woman and an academic, it was assumed that my intellectual stake in studying the women’s magazine industry must have its roots in what was perceived to be a ‘retrograde’ form of feminist politics. (Gough-Yates, 2003: 23).

Apart from Ferguson’s (1983) ‘behind the scenes’ study of women’s magazines, which was largely afforded by her previous experiences as a journalist in the field, few production studies have been carried out in the area. For myself, the financial strains of getting to a magazine office could not be justified against the risk of an interview being cancelled and that from what I had witnessed at *Marie Claire*, research conducted could not be that fruitful. I felt further justified in this analysis after carrying out interviews with magazine readers who, from prior knowledge of my background in feminist study, expressed concerns that I would ‘judge’ their opinions against my own political convictions in a similar manner to what Gough-Yates experienced in her interactions with magazine workers. Thus, I decided to maintain a reader-orientated approach to my study.
4. Findings and Discussion

Section A: Focus Groups and Interviews

Analysing the Transcripts

When it came to interpreting the transcripts of the interviews I had gathered, I drew upon the methodologies used by Jackson et al (2001) and Hermes (1995). Hermes coded her transcriptions according to what she terms ‘interpretive repertoires’ (1995: 25):

Repertoire analysis […] consists of going back and forth through the text, summarizing interview transcripts according to different criteria […] One looks for statements or manners of speech that recur in different interviews. (Hermes, 1995: 27).

Similarly, Jackson et al accorded ‘discourses and dispositions’ to utterances made during their interviews. Their approach differs from Hermes in their distinction between labelling ‘discourses’ which are the ‘discursive repertoires’ used by participants to ‘make sense’ of magazines and ‘dispositions’ which participants adopt to ‘describe the degree to which each of the discourses is adopted, rejected, ironized and so on by different individuals’ (Jackson et al, 2001: 110). This approach leaves their analysis rather fragmented due to the sheer number of discourses and divisions noted, yet they argue that it avoids promoting readings that individuals ‘identify’ during interviews, but may not ‘personally endorse’ (131).

In my analysis I have spent much time with my transcriptions, listening to them frequently and making annotations as I searched for common utterances and themes, in the same manner as a repertoire analysis. However, in my study I am researching specific themes (as laid out in Chapter Two) and thus have not found it necessary to divide my findings into ‘repertoires’ as such, but rather to take a thematic approach in order to maintain clarity and keep on-topic. While an awareness of Jackson et al’s emphasis upon disposition alongside discourse is necessary, spending time frequently listening to, as well as reading, my transcripts and including as much detail as possible in my discussion, has ensured that I maintain an awareness of the
disposition of the individual throughout, without the need to complicate my analysis with too great a number of divisions.

I shall begin with the most commonly occurring utterance across all of my transcripts, which is ‘just because they’re there’, which I shall take as a theme. Subsequent themes to be discussed are as follows:

- Genre
- Aspiration
- Consumerism
- Expectation and Disappointment

‘Just because they’re there’

Throughout the interviews, the utterance which occurred with the most consistency was ‘just because they’re there’, or something similar:

‘I read them coz they’re there’ (Brenda referring to celebrity magazines left in the house by her daughter)

‘My mum gets those and like I will read them if they’re there but I don’t think I would ever set out to buy one I read it if it’s there’ (Stephanie referring to celebrity magazines Hello and OK)

I haven’t bought them myself really but if it’s there and you’ve got a spare few minutes (Sarah)

Interestingly, when I initially made arrangements for conducting the interviews, many participants were quick to declare that they were not ‘regular’ or ‘dedicated’ readers of magazines and that they might not have much to say on the subject. Often, this declaration was repeated early on in the interview itself, alongside the assertion that when magazines were read, it was simply because they were there. At first I took this to be an indication that my interviews would yield a similar result to that of Hermes (1995), who argues that magazines are seen as ‘putdownable’, with little significance to readers other than for the purpose of ‘filling empty time’ (32). The basis for this
assertion was Hermes’ participants’ inability to articulate much on the subject. However, as is obvious from the transcripts, my participants turned out to have plenty to say regarding magazines, indeed, much more than I ever expected. Although initially hesitant, the fact that most were able to talk at length, even recalling specific examples of articles read across a wide range of magazines, suggests that magazines may carry more significance to the women I spoke to than simply ‘filling empty time’. This is in the sense that they are not limited to providing meaning only in that ‘empty time’, as they can be recalled, discussed and allocated meaning outside of the time of reading.

More tellingly, I found that once conversation moved away from simple behavioural questions to more in-depth belief and attitude questions, participants would often muse that it is ‘interesting’ to consider magazines on a more in-depth level than they usually would. This also frequently occurred after the interviews, as participants would state that they enjoyed themselves and the opportunity to think and talk about the subject. In their study of men’s’ magazines, Jackson et al (2001) found that participants would often hesitate to assert themselves as regular readers, or deny that magazines had much significance to them. Jackson et al suggested that by emphasising the lack of importance of magazines, their participants were attempting to ‘distance themselves from […] what many of the participants clearly regarded as a futile search for cultural meaning or political significance’ (114). This can be linked back to Hermes’ argument regarding the ‘fallacy of meaningfulness’ (1995: 16) and the role played by the researcher in pushing ordinary readers into giving more significance to the subject through the act of interviewing.

However, I did not sense that my participants were ascribing more meaning to the subject than they felt necessary, more that they were expressing opinions they had already formed, but until the interview had no outlet to discuss. Statements such as ‘I was thinking about this the other day’ (Rachael) often occurred throughout the interviews.

Interestingly, a number of women (including Brenda, Karen, Jean, Margaret and Julie) subscribe to one or more magazines, while others (including Stephanie, Rebecca and Rachael) regularly read one or more titles. Thus, when they referred to
magazines which they read ‘just because they are there’, they were describing the titles they read on top of their customary intake. There seemed to be a division between those which they deemed acceptable to read on a regular basis, which they actively choose, and those which they consume additionally. Often, those which they read ‘because they are there’ were celebrity weekly magazines and when describing them, they used words such as ‘trash’ or ‘rubbish’. In light of this, ‘just because they are there’ is an excuse for reading magazines which they deem ‘lower’, rather than a statement covering magazines in general. This highlights two points, the first being the quite wide exposure to magazines which many participants experience and the second being what Brenda described as an ‘intellectual snobbery’ when it comes to certain magazines. Many participants referred to hairdressing salons as an environment where they are exposed to a variety of magazines which they would not usually read, but which they do since they are offered to them. Furthermore, some participants (Brenda, Susan, Stephanie and Sue) asserted that in the hairdressing salon there is a lack of choice when it comes to the magazines offered:

E: And do you tend to get there ones you wouldn’t normally pick up or buy for yourself? Say like a Hello if it’s there?
B: If it’s there – they tend to bring them to you half the time don’t they – yeah I mean there are none that I wouldn’t flick through […] yeah I think that’s probably in hairdressers exactly that’s when you tend to read Hello and all the rest that you wouldn’t necessarily buy

This is interesting because the ‘excuse’ of the hairdressing salon offers women a chance to read magazines which they would not buy for themselves, which they enjoy but deem inappropriate for reading outside of this context. Susan asserted that she would be ‘embarrassed’ to be caught reading the magazines she reads in the hairdressers in her own home. A similar suggestion was made about tearooms in the workplace (Stephanie, Rachael and Margaret) as another environment in which it is acceptable to read ‘trashy’ titles. Time spent at the hairdressers etc is essentially ‘empty time’ that must be filled, as there is no possibility of an alternative activity other than to sit and wait. However, magazines that are read outside of this context do not necessarily fill ‘empty time’ as this time could be allotted to other activities. ‘Just because they’re there’ acts as an excuse used in the same manner as the hairdressers in that the participants distance themselves from their guilt over reading ‘trash’ by suggesting that it was placed there for them, as it is at the hairdressers. They have not
chosen the material; therefore they are passive as readers. Yet, there is more guilt in this of course when the time is not necessarily ‘empty’.

**Genre**

Genre is important in terms of how women see various magazines. It is apparent that women look to different genres for different purposes and have little trouble expressly dividing magazines into different genres. Older women seemed to be more ‘targeted’ in terms of looking for specific genres, for example Brenda and Susan both read fitness magazines and Margaret and Karen read food magazines (though these were still considered under the general blanket of women’s magazines as a genre). Though Margaret and Karen are interested in reading recipes in more general women’s magazines, they would be more likely to cut out and keep recipes from specific food magazines. Similarly, Brenda and Susan may look at diets or fitness advice in general magazines, but Brenda said she considers them ‘trashy celebrity diets’ rather than useful advice. Younger participants did not mention specific interest titles, such as fitness or food magazines but were quick to divide magazines into sub-genres, generalizing various titles with phrases such as ‘those are all’ or ‘they are like’ and grouping titles together.

In light of this, I was surprised to find that both younger and older participants were very much in favour of a cross-genre magazine such as *Grazia*, as they seemed to turn to different titles for specific purposes. Yet younger participants in particular felt that in bringing a variety of elements together, a magazine could suggest that it was ‘o.k.’ to be interested in both lower celebrity culture and higher culture (Stephanie and Rebecca), with Rachael even going so far as to suggest it would be ‘post-feminist’:

[With] *post* feminism we don’t have to battle it’s women can be women and embrace you know as what they are and so part of that embracing is that you’re not fitting into one identity.

This notion of multiple identities relates back to Gough-Yates’ suggestion of the ‘fragmented lives’ (2003: 132) of modern women requiring a new kind of magazine in which multiple elements are brought together. It also relates to the more positive
side of post-feminism described by Tasker and Negra (2007), which emphasises the benefits of feminism that have led to greater levels of freedom and choice for women, allowing them to have such ‘fragmented’ lives. Criticism of women’s magazines has, as discussed in Chapter Two, often derided them for their limitations in terms of how they ‘construct’ women (‘you would never believe women drive cars or buy stereos or laugh’ (Gough-Yates: 2007, 132) yet it seems from the response of my participants that Grazia has moved beyond these limitations into a more varied and therefore more positive construction of modern women. It was interesting to note how recipes and diets in Grazia were seen as less ‘trashy’ as those in celebrity weeklies by participants who read food and fitness magazines, because Grazia was seen as having more ‘substance’ to it. It appears that the presence of ‘higher’ culture within a cross-genre magazine actually elevates the whole magazine to a higher status, despite the presence of ‘lower’ culture within the same magazine.

**Aspiration**

One of the most interesting points to come from discussions with younger participants is that many younger women and girls read magazines which are aimed at an older age group than their own. Stephanie and Rebecca discussed how Cosmopolitan, which they read now, is aimed at women in their late twenties to thirties (they are both twenty-two). Stephanie remarked that she has been reading magazines aimed at older women since she was about sixteen or seventeen and a similar discussion occurred with Claire, Rachael and Sarah. In each interview we discussed the implications of this and frequently words such as ‘aspiration’, ‘interesting’ and ‘inspiration’ came up. Across the board, it was determined that reading above your age group can be a positive thing, despite the fact that it was also agreed that much of the time it created limiting factors in terms of how the magazine could be read (such as being unable to afford the fashion, or unable to directly relate to the subject-matter of various features). However, this does not deter participants from enjoying the magazines because, as put by Sarah, it offers the opportunity to ‘research into your life’:

> ‘Thinking back to when I was younger like Shout like J-17 and stuff like that […] I always felt a bit like clasping for it – they would talk about like […]'
periods and stuff when you maybe hadn’t quite started and when you moved onto teen magazines it was kind of like boys or fashion that’s beyond you […] so maybe it’s kind of the same thing like obviously I would never read J-17 now so I’m reading Glamour and maybe it’s the same kind of thing in terms of I don’t quite have the money for that and I’m not ready to get married but maybe magazines are kind of like you look at fashion for inspiration and you look at the rest to maybe like mould where your life will go – research into your life’ (Sarah)

The magazines that were discussed in this manner were always monthly magazines (with the exception of Grazia which was also included by Claire and Rachael) and participants usually had no trouble referring to specific examples where they felt that they were reading above their age but still enjoying the articles or fashion. Both Rachael and Sarah suggested that they feel influenced by magazines in terms of how they want their life to be in the future and that in this way magazines are positive encouragement for them in terms of prospects such as pursuing a career and earning money:

R: […] In a way it’s the lifestyle you’re always buying into – you might see even in the fashion section for example an Alexander McQueen dress and that might be in a style that you think ‘oh I could do that myself’ you know or even – as I said it’s the lifestyle it’s the idea of it you can sit and read and it’s saying ‘oh go to Barcelona’ and things and I’m not necessarily going to go to Barcelona

E: Mmm so do you think being young it can be more like an aspirational thing?

R: Yeah you know it promotes this career woman sort of

In this light, younger women are not necessarily looking to magazines for practical information or knowledge that they can use now, but for inspiration or, to some extent, fantasy. In other words, not to relate but to emulate.

In an opposite way, older women tended to stress that they were looking to relate to the content of magazines: ‘[I look for] something that you can relate to in your own lifestyle ‘oh yes I feel like that too’ or I’m you know – that’s someone who I feel like that too or I know people who feel like that’ (Brenda). Margaret and Karen mentioned that they found stories intending to be ‘inspirational’ to be formulaic and irrelevant, citing weight loss and career changes as the two most frequent topics:
‘Every magazine now there must be three or four of these huge articles about ‘I set up my own business’ and you look at it and think ‘well I’m not going to do that – I’m not going to set up my own business’” (Margaret)

The older participants were also much more aware of reading ‘suitable’ material for their age groups, with many stating that certain magazines were ‘too young’, ‘too old’ or ‘about right’ for their age. They placed a much greater emphasis upon practical information - what to wear, what to watch, where to shop – as opposed to the level of fantasy entertained by younger participants.

**Consumerism**

An element of fantasy also related to the idea of purchasing products in magazines, which links to Damon-Moore’s argument about the ‘contradictory consciousness’ (1994: 196) derived from magazines placing the reader in the position of a consumer. As I’ve stated, younger women tended to feel less bothered by products being out of their reach in financial terms due to their sense of aspiration when it came to magazines. However, older participants were keen to discuss the number of advertisements in magazines and how they did not relate to them as consumers. When products were advertised which were outside of their financial means, older participants felt annoyed and disappointed that so much of the magazine was taken up with these advertisements. They also tended to be suspicious of advertising:

‘To me that’s a more subtle form of selling – because you’d read that and think ‘oh that’s a really good idea that’ and […] they’re expecting you to go out and buy these products that they’ve achieved that with – and there’s as much chance of any of us looking like that as pigs flying’ (Jean discussing an article that was ‘sponsored’ by a beauty product)

Brenda, Eileen and Jean used the word ‘targeted’ to describe their attitude towards buying products from magazines, saying that they would only seek out specific ideas or products and only when they wanted to buy them. While many younger women were happy to admit that they simply enjoy looking at products even if they won’t buy them, of the older participants only Margaret and Karen said this, whereas the
rest tended to agree with Brenda and Jean. Margaret and Karen were annoyed by the
number of advertisements but said that they still enjoy looking at them.

Damon-Moore has noted that many critics of popular culture have ignored the
fact that buying or even simply reading about products can be pleasurable and show
too much concern for the supposedly passive reader who is a victim of
‘domestication’ via ‘gendered commercialism’ (1994: 196). I would suggest that this
applies not only to critics but also to some of my participants, who wanted to assert
their activeness as readers in seeing through magazines’ attempts to persuade them
into purchasing products. They used ‘targeted’ to suggest that they are autonomous in
that they know what they want to buy before opening a magazine. Karen called Jean
‘cynical’ for showing too much concern over ‘subtle’ advertising, saying ‘I wouldn’t
even notice that’. Yet, Karen was not suggesting that she was unaware of this kind of
covert advertising, merely that she was not concerned enough by it to look for it. Both
Karen and Jean demonstrated a familiarity with the popular criticism of women’s
magazines as placing women in the position of ‘mindless consumer’ (196), as did
many other participants. In light of this, the question is not, as older feminist criticism
might have us believe, whether or not readers notice the codes of consumerism
disseminated by magazines, but how they respond to them. This is an important
aspect of previous researchers ‘underestimating readers’ ability to be selective and
critical’ in response to magazines (Gauntlet, 2002: 206). On the other hand, one might
just as easily argue that it is because of such older feminist criticism that modern
readers are on the look out for ‘codes’ in magazines.

**Expectation and Disappointment**

Younger women were very articulate when it came to describing their feelings
regarding expectation and disappointment, linking it to the business side of magazines
as opposed to a more ideological outlook. Often younger participants described their
feelings of disappointment with magazines, using words like ‘annoying’,
‘hypocritical’ and ‘conflicting’ but at the same time were very pragmatic about the
reasons why magazines are this way. Most stated that if they feel disappointment or
even annoyance, it is limited because they realise that when content may be
conflicting or formulaic it is due to the fact that in business terms, magazines must appeal to the widest range of women possible:

‘They’re trying to address the general woman and there’s never going to be one woman that’s everything’ (Rachael)

‘You can’t really criticize a magazine coz it’s offering the elements of what you might want to read about what you might be interested in’ (Sarah)

However, this pragmatic outlook was slightly undermined by the fervency with which participants discussed their disappointment with magazines, particularly Stephanie, Rebecca, Sarah and Rachael, all of whom gave specific examples of times when they had felt annoyed or disappointed and discussed them quite lengthily, for example:

‘I think they’re quite conflicting in their content because on the one hand – like for example Adele they’ll try and portray the fact that she’s not a conventional celebrity stick thin perfect […] but then at the same time they have weight loss things and they have all these fashion things that obviously you can only wear if you’re a certain size […] very conflicting’ (Rebecca)

The discussion continued for some time, moving into other examples, many of which were reflected in conversations with other participants and included magazines giving advice on getting into relationships alongside promoting being single and advice on being ‘individual’ while simultaneously encouraging conformation to fashion.

Although Brenda was the only one of the older participants to state outright that she often feels ‘disappointed’ with magazines, others such as Margaret and Karen stated that they often feel that they are ‘formulaic’ and can even be ‘depressing’. Their disappointment seemed to be related more to value for money and time spent reading magazines, which was thought of as wasted if the magazine was too formulaic, or, as I have previously discussed, it was too full of advertisements. Younger women looking for a sense of aspiration from magazines feel disappointed or frustrated when magazines are ideologically conflicting, i.e. set out unattainable goals such as being an ‘individual’ while conforming to ‘fashion’. Older women on the other hand feel disappointed as they often use magazines in a slightly more
practical way – either to seek out practical information such as recipes or products, or as a ‘treat’. I refer to a ‘treat’ as a more practical usage as younger participants were less likely to describe a magazine as a treat, often seeing them as more integrated into their lives than older participants. Describing something as a ‘treat’ implies a desire for it to be in some way special, therefore if a magazine is formulaic or advertising overshadows its content, it is no longer special.

Margaret, Karen and Jean discussed the fact that they feel magazines are a ‘treat’ as not only could they not afford them until their mid-thirties, they were also less available to them until that time. They discussed the fact that for younger women today, magazines are far more available and cheaper therefore they are not seen in the same way as they are by older women, for whom the choices have always been relatively narrow and expensive. In this way, it would seem that magazines are quite often taken for granted by younger women, with younger participants reluctant to see them as a ‘treat’. However, despite the fact that their presence in their lives may be taken as inevitable, for younger women, magazines are still in some ways disappointing.

* * * * *

To conclude this section, magazines have thus far been shown to carry more significance to modern women than has perhaps been asserted before. This is in large part due to their being ideologically loaded, both in terms of the ideologies placed upon them by younger readers in terms of their own aspirations, and also the ideologies disseminated by the magazines themselves in terms of consumerist values and their construction of womanhood. Readers are very much aware of the kinds of ideological codes within magazines, demonstrating a familiarity with popularity criticism of magazines and a self-reflexive awareness of how they are affected by them. It is pertinent here to return again to the notion of academic ‘concern’ for the reader. Hermes argues that feminist critics in particular tend to see readers as ‘unable to see for themselves how bad such media texts as women’s magazines are’ (1995: 1) which, as evidenced by the responses of my participants, is not the case. However, there is certainly an odd juxtaposition demonstrated so far of readers’ ability to take pleasure in magazines while simultaneously questioning that pleasure.
While magazines largely invoke pleasure, they also invoke a sense of guilt, particularly those considered ‘lower brow’, which mostly include weekly celebrity magazines. Participants often have quite a large intake of magazines across different genres and in different contexts and they get different values from each. Interestingly, magazines which incorporate elements that seem low-brow (such as celebrity gossip) alongside elements that seem higher-brow (such as career advice) are generally elevated to the higher status as a whole.

In the next section, I will proceed to look more closely at Grazia magazine within the context of my findings so far.
Section B: Textual Analysis of Grazia magazine

In line with the qualitative data already collected for this study, I decided it would be preferable to examine a few elements of Grazia in detail, rather than to provide a more quantitative summary of the magazine in this section. However, I did carry out a brief quantitative analysis to provide a general sense of context to the textual analysis.

The table below shows a basic division of the content of my sample of Grazia into the categories of celebrity, fashion and beauty, adverts and other (which may include news items, topical commentaries or common magazine features including travel, cookery or horoscopes):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content in total (no. of pages)</th>
<th>07/02/11</th>
<th>14/02/11</th>
<th>21/02/11†</th>
<th>28/02/11</th>
<th>07/03/11</th>
<th>14/03/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fash/Beaut</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverts (32%)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>(42%) 64</td>
<td>(44%) 84</td>
<td>(33%) 43</td>
<td>(35%) 48</td>
<td>(34%) 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In quantitative terms, advertising is allotted on average 37% of the magazines’ total content, although it should be noted that this percentage only includes actual advertisements and does not account for products ‘advertised’ within features and other editorial content. Fashion and Beauty comprises the second largest number of pages after advertising, while relatively few pages are allotted to celebrity.

This is where a limitation of quantitative data is shown, as based upon this crude analysis, Grazia could hardly be labelled a ‘celebrity’ magazine. Yet, the majority of participants in my interviews who were unfamiliar with Grazia said that at first glance they would have placed it within that genre. My interviews invariably pointed towards the front cover as the most important feature of a magazine in terms of choosing a title and several participants noted that they would reject Grazia based

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1 The issue 21/02/11 was entitled 'The Big Fashion Issue', which accounts for the slight anomaly in terms of total page numbers, and larger number of fashion pages.
upon its cover (‘To me the front of this doesn’t look any different to the front of Heat’ (Jean)). Within my sample, every cover page has between four and five headline stories on the front cover, of which over half are always celebrity stories, usually accompanied by photographs. Clearly, the cover does not accurately represent the distribution of content within the magazine.

Many participants said that if they saw the inside of Grazia before looking at the cover, they would be likely to pick it up but the cover put them off. They did not feel that the cover reflected the genre of the magazine. As discussed in Section A, ‘celebrity’ weekly magazines were generally considered to be of lower status than monthly magazines and context was important in terms of when it was acceptable to be seen reading them. The cover is of great importance as it is the primary indication of the content of the magazine. As McCracken states:

The code of genre affects one’s self perception during the experience with a magazine; when one’s use of the magazine enters the public sphere, the cover serves as a label not only to the magazine but the consumer who possesses it. (1993: 19)

It is inconsistent that the cover of Grazia is coded as a ‘celebrity weekly’ (and participants were able to point out exactly how this is so, using words like ‘crowded’, ‘frenetic’, ‘lurid’ and ‘trashy’) when it describes itself as a hybrid genre. More importantly, it is disappointing to see how the cover alone deters potential readers, who were shocked to find far more ‘meat’ inside than they expected. Yet they may still be put off reading the magazine in some contexts, as they do not want to be ‘labelled’ themselves by being seen holding the cover.

In terms of advertising, in relation to many other magazines, the amount in Grazia is quite small (see McCracken, 1993: 302-303), as advertising can often comprise as much as 45% of the content (Jackson et al, 2001: 71). Of course, Grazia is a weekly magazine and therefore has fewer pages in comparison to the monthlies that are usually studied; yet it is interesting to note how, when the number of pages increases, the percentage of advertisements increases also. There is no standard percentage of advertising space allocated, thus one might speculate that in larger issues advertising is presumed to be less noticeable to the reader. Many of my participants berated larger magazines for their vast number of advertisements,
particularly those at the front, which must be passed through before reaching any of the magazines’ actual content. However, Karen, Margaret and Jean noted that *Grazia* did not have as many advertisements as they expected.

McCracken refers to the placement of advertisements at the beginning of magazines as the ‘advertising bracket’, which is the ‘lens through which we see the magazine’ before we reach the editorial content (1993: 99). *Grazia* does not usually place more than two advertisements before the editorial body is reached, therefore there is a less obvious frame of consumerism working within the magazine (unlike some larger monthly titles). However, the first ‘feature’ within the magazine is always ‘The Fashion Charts’ which presents the fifteen ‘best’ items to buy that week. Although Margaret suggested that these items must have been ‘sponsored’, this feature was deemed more acceptable than an advertising bracket, or at least it was not commented on in the same way as straightforward advertising. Participants were often distracted by this feature during interviews as they viewed the products on offer, whereas they would deride advertisements as they quickly flicked through them. The ‘pleasure’ of consuming to which Damon-Moore has referred (1994: 196) was tangible during these moments, while the participants’ rejection of too much advertising supported her statement that women feel a ‘contradictory consciousness’ (196) between enjoyment in looking at and *potentially* buying products and feeling targeted as ‘mindless’ consumers. As part of a feature, the products in ‘The Fashion Charts’ are there to be perused and the reader has the autonomy to pick and choose what they like, whereas advertisements placed in large quantities at the beginning more overtly place women as a uniform group of consumers.

A rejection of being treated as part of a uniform group of women was something that was discussed throughout many interviews. As was discussed in Section A, most participants, particularly younger women, did not expect to ‘relate’ to everything in a magazine, as they felt that they were targeted to the widest possible range of women. Some noted that when magazines make gender based ‘stereotypes’ they felt annoyed by such generalization. When it came to discussing this issue in *Grazia*, the feature most frequently referred to by participants was ‘Ten Hot Stories’. 
In each issue, *Grazia* presents ten brief articles as a list entitled ‘Ten Hot Stories’. The feature comprises of a variety of stories, largely comprising of fashion and celebrity but often also one or more topical or serious articles. Below is a brief quantitative summary of the ‘Ten Hot Stories’ featured in each issue in my sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten Hot Stories (no. of stories)</th>
<th>07/02/11</th>
<th>14/02/11</th>
<th>21/02/11</th>
<th>28/02/11</th>
<th>07/03/11</th>
<th>14/03/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Articles defined in the above table as ‘serious’ included those which could be classed as ‘news’ and were reported on in the press (including the sexual assault of CBS reporter Lara Logan, a report on Colonel Gaddafi and a report on an earthquake in New Zealand). Articles defined as ‘topical’ included those which, while usually sombre and always current to the week they were printed, were not ‘news’ (including a debate regarding social networking site Twitter, a debate regarding stay-at-home mothers and a report on Gypsy women). The articles are each given a number within the ‘Hot Ten’, although this does not overtly suggest that they are ranked in any kind of order. Usually, the articles are mixed up, so that fashion stories are interspersed with celebrity and serious stories. In most magazines, articles that could be defined as ‘serious’ are generally placed separately to fashion or celebrity stories, under the title ‘report’ or ‘feature’. While *Grazia* usually incorporates longer ‘serious’ articles at later points in the magazine, under separate headings, it is unusual in combining such a mixture of articles as part of one feature in ‘Ten Hot Stories’.

In reference to *Grazia’s* use of ‘Hot’, Olateju describes it as a ‘graded adjective’ in that it can refer to something desirable or exciting and therefore positive, or something controversial, ‘that no one wants to deal with’ (2007: 273-274). In this sense, the contrary connotations of the use of the word ‘Hot’ suggest a self-reflexive awareness on the part of the magazine of the unusual, even controversial combination they invoke in this feature. Certainly it is controversial to refer to the sexual assault of a journalist as a ‘hot’ story under the same umbrella adjective as a new brand of ‘hot’ jeans, yet it can also be read as a bold move to equalise the relevancy of the articles.
and therefore suggest a greater multiplicity of interest on the part of the reader. In most magazines, ‘serious’ stories are relegated to the middle, while fashion and celebrity dominate the front section. This effectively ranks the dissemination of information by precedence and therefore prioritises the trivial. By combining the many elements together under one feature, placed at the beginning of the magazine, Grazia implies that their readers have less of a graded interest. If ‘hotness’ implies ‘relevancy’ and ‘immediacy’, should serious stories not also be considered ‘hot’ to the reader? Furthermore, Grazia might even be raising the status of the fashion and celebrity stories by implying that their reader does not have to be either ‘serious’ or ‘trivial’ but can be interested in both at the same time, neither to the detriment of the other. To take this reading, however, requires one to ignore the grading of the individual articles within the ‘Hot Ten’, which adds another connotative layer as fashion and celebrity invariably dominate the first one or two, while ‘serious’ or ‘topical’ stories rarely rank higher than three or four.

The response to the ‘Ten Hot Stories’ was largely positive from my participants and the combination largely appealed across age ranges:

I do I think it’s one of the attractive things about the magazine […] because there’s more stuff of interest in it but I still think that I’m going to turn to it later on and find other things that are to do with fashion and high street and people […] I think it’s good for that (Brenda, age 56)

I quite like it because there’s more variation rather than just like sex or beauty or fashion - sometimes I like to read something a bit more intellectual […] like you don’t have to go and buy a newspaper its just in there together so maybe convenience as well (Stephanie, age 22)

Margaret and Sue’s responses, on the other hand, were less positive:

I think there’s something almost offensive about having the number one article about who Jennifer Anniston’s going out with and the second one about something absolutely unspeakable that’s happened to a woman in a Muslim country I think it’s a bit of an odd combination (Margaret)

Sue’s main objection was to the ‘ranking’ of the articles, rather than their combination within one magazine, although she agreed when Susan responded that ‘mixing it in [might] encourage people to look at stuff they wouldn’t otherwise look at’.
Predominantly, other participants suggested that they would not have noticed the numbers assigned to each, rather just their headlines.

Despite a general approval of the combination of articles within ‘Ten Hot Stories’ and across Grazia as a whole, older participants mostly objected to referring to articles in Grazia as ‘news’. Although they would discuss them as ‘new stories’, when it came to a discussion of what they consider to be news, older participants rejected the idea that Grazia prints news and said that they would never look to a women’s magazine for news. Younger participants were much more willing to accept this use of language, although most admitted that they rarely watch or read the news in other formats thus they felt pleased to be kept up to date with world events in a format they would read on a regular basis. The idea of ‘looking at stuff they wouldn’t otherwise’ (Susan) was therefore much more strongly felt with younger participants. This also links back to the ‘aspiration’ element of magazines relating to younger participants, as they felt guilty about being less aware of the news than they thought they should be and suggested that when they were older they expected to be more informed. Reading ‘news’ articles in Grazia would allow them to feel more informed although this would be limited, in a similar way to how reading about designer clothes allowed them to feel that they might one day afford them, while they were presently out of their grasp.

Articles featured in ‘Ten Hot Stories’ are never explicitly referred to as ‘news’ in Grazia, which often incorporates another feature entitled ‘News Report’. The ‘News Report’ often spurred objections from participants, as the sample shown during focus groups included ‘News Reports’ on Facebook, women with cancer and women who hope to marry Prince Harry. These were not considered to be news and their labelling as such confused participants. Julie suggested that articles in ‘Ten Hot Stories’ should be referred to as ‘news’, while the ‘News Report’ was usually more of a ‘Hot Story’. Grazia often incorporates a variety of feature titles into different issues, which change every week and include ‘Interview’, ‘Debate’, ‘Real Lives’ and ‘Persona Grazia’. These are seemingly interchangeable, for example interviews with celebrities or prominent women may be titled as either ‘Interview’ or ‘Persona Grazia’, while ‘News Reports’ are often replaced by ‘Real Lives’, although the two maintain a similar format. The suggestion is perhaps that Grazia itself has not quite
established a solid format its hybrid genre which is both new and, as has been discussed, often controversial.

Clearly the most problematic element when discussing *Grazia* is the notion of ‘news’ and what defines it. Participants felt some difficulty in doing so, as they would describe articles as ‘news’ and then later reject that same label. News’ was a word adopted in discussion by many participants for the ease of describing ‘serious’ stories, rather than because they actually felt they were discussing news. Some referred to articles they had seen in monthly magazines that were similar to those in *Grazia*:

*Good Housekeeping* has kind of news stories in – like they’ll have people being attacked and stuff like […] so that’s kind of news. (Julie)

Yet, at the same time Julie later suggested that this was not really ‘news’. The difference between *Grazia* and a monthly title like *Good Housekeeping* is that, as a weekly, *Grazia* prints stories with much more immediacy. What may be considered topical at the beginning of a month may not be by the time a magazine is printed at the end of the month. Participants were familiar with the kinds of ‘serious’ stories printed in monthly magazines, although conceded that they were not news as they were not immediate and instead usually comprise of long-term or ongoing issues, often relating to the plight of women in foreign countries (an article in *Grazia* about a woman who was raped in Libya was cited as likely to occur in a monthly title).

In terms of these kinds of stories printed in monthly magazines, McRobbie has seen them as problematic as she argues that they set a ‘discourse of Western enlightened values […] in contrast with seemingly less advanced countries of the world’ (2009: 27). When magazines print ‘news’ stories, they often focus upon the plight of women in the Middle East, for example, which is then set against the fashion, celebrity and sexuality discussed in the rest of the magazine. This makes it harder for readers to examine the values disseminated to them by the magazine as a whole (essentially what has been discussed in this study: commercialism, gender stereotypes etc):
Our young women are encouraged to conceive of themselves as grateful subjects of modern states and cultures, which permit such freedoms unlike repressive or fundamental regimes. (2009: 27)

The basis of this is the female gaze: reporting on ongoing political issues from an entirely female perspective therefore providing a direct contrast between the women who are the subjects of the articles and the women reading about them. The female gaze is certainly present in Grazia, as Susan says; it depicts a ‘womanly take on the news’. When stories are reported, such as a flood in New Zealand, there is generally a female subject who becomes a focal human presence in the article. However, the fact that Grazia is weekly and therefore provides the most topical subjects of the given week means that the female gaze is less calculated than in monthly titles. The news cannot be demand driven thus what is most topical may not always be relevant to a specifically female gaze. Furthermore, when the female gaze is deployed it may only be to humanise the story. The report on the New Zealand flood, for example, could not be said to have an overarching political meaning in terms of setting Western values against a repressive ‘other’, it is simply a newsworthy story. As told from the point of view of a female subject, it becomes more relatable to the female reader. Grazia is less at risk of the kind of criticism McRobbie discusses as its requirement of regular topical stories leaves it far more embedded in unpredictability.

I would argue that McRobbie’s criticism leads back to the issue of feminist concern for the reader, as her interpretation does not allow enough autonomy to the reader for them to separate magazines into different elements to be considered. It suggests that the presence of fashion, lifestyle, celebrity and politics in one genre means that these elements must somehow interplay with each other. However, as my research has shown, participants were able to separately process and evaluate different parts of magazines and appreciate their different meanings or connotations, while rejecting the notion of an overall set of values or codes.

Interestingly, in an earlier study, McRobbie stated that research she conducted into women’s magazines in the 1970s ‘wrongly assumed that ideology worked in a mechanical, even automatic kind of way’ (1999: 50). McRobbie is one of very few
academics who has studied women’s magazines over a significant period of time, from the early feminist context of the 1970s up until the last decade. In 1999 she proclaimed that ideology of magazines is not absorbed in one direct way by readers, which fits in with the wider research context of the time, including that by Hermes (1995), Winship (1987) and Gough-Yates (2003) which all rejected ‘notions of ultimate truth’ (Gough-Yates, 2003: 12) when it came to interpreting women’s magazines. By incorporating a more broadly reader-orientated approach to their studies, these researchers attempted to change the field of research from that of feminist concern to a broader minded approach and a focus on the autonomy of the enlightened reader. Yet, ten years later, in 2009, McRobbie described the ‘discourse of Western enlightened values’ which permeates magazines (2009: 12) since the rise of more serious journalistic content in women’s magazines has become apparent. Seemingly, this returns to a notion of an overall ideology being disseminated by magazines as a whole and influencing readers in a negative way. This highlights the unwieldy nature of feminist research into magazines in terms of balancing the reader and the academic. As the form and content of magazines changes, along with the broader political context in which they are produced, there is always a need for fresh research into its significance. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the introduction of new elements into women’s magazines (including the move towards more serious journalism as has been studied here) denotes an entirely new ideological meaning for magazines; it is not that straightforward. My own research has shown that the ways women receive and interpret meaning from magazines are vast and varied and they do not acknowledge the presence of one over-arching ideological output.
5. Conclusion

The process of carrying out this research has been filled with highs and lows. From my initial enthusiasm for the subject, to a rising sense of pessimism in finding that previous studies yielded only marginal enthusiasm from their participants, to a renewed sense of vigour when conducting my interviews.

To summarise, while previous studies have found participants unable to articulate much on the subject of women’s magazines, this study found participants to be both articulate and interested during the course of discussions. Certainly there was a high level of self-reflexivity from participants, most of whom also demonstrated a familiarity with feminist critiques of the women’s magazines genre, citing consumerist values and ‘conflicting’ ideologies as negative aspects of modern magazines. On the other hand, most participants were keen to dismiss these ‘passing annoyances’ as anything other than trivial, attributing them to the need for magazines to appeal across to a broad range of women. This suggests that readers are able to be far more selective and critical when it comes to processing women’s magazines than much previous research has asserted. There is therefore a need for academics to move away from the ‘older feminist position of concern’ (Hermes, 1995: 3) towards a broader minded view of modern readers as having the autonomy to negotiate with magazines without being subjected to one definitive ideology. While, as Chapter Two indicated, there has been an effort on the part of some studies to move towards reader-orientated approaches to research, this must be maintained as magazines continue to develop.

Women’s magazines are developing, as this research has shown. Participants were both surprised and pleased by Grazia’s inclusion of more ‘meat’ in its content, although clearly the hybrid genre has not been perfected. There is not yet an ideal format for merging the broader political world into the genre of women’s magazines, as responses from participants and my textual analysis have demonstrated, yet clearly a widening of what is known as the ‘Women’s World’ is welcomed. This returns to an important point made by Winship regarding the placement of ‘women’s magazines’ as a genre, which is separated by the fact that there is no ‘Men’s World’ section.
Essentially, as women’s magazines are marked out so explicitly, the implication is that all other titles (including business, politics etc) are for men (1987: 6-7). This sentiment has been echoed by other critics who have seen women’s magazines as narrowing the women’s world to gossip, beauty and sex, with no interest in current affairs or politics (Gauntlett, 2002; Jones, 2009). Grazia is beginning to dispel some of those criticisms, with its status as the magazine with ‘the highest loyalty of any other weekly or glossy lifestyle monthly in the UK’ attesting to its success (Bauer Media).

Interestingly, after the launch of Grazia in 2005, two new weekly women’s magazines were launched in the UK; First and In the Know, both of which were described as ‘more serious and news driven’, ‘eschewing the celebrity diet of many weeklies for more topical news and lifestyle content’ (Farey-Jones, 2007; Holmwood, 2006). Both magazines were shut down less than a year after they launched, due to poor sales (Andrews, 2008; Press Gazette, 2007). This points to the fact that, as my research demonstrates, for all there is a desire to broaden the women’s world portrayed in magazines, there is an equal desire to maintain the basis of the genre as a form of entertainment and a resource of female-orientated knowledge. This could be practical knowledge, from being ‘in the know’ about celebrity gossip or fashion trends, to where to purchase specific items, or, particularly for younger participants, more abstract knowledge into their aspirational impulses for the future. This knowledge was often acknowledged as fairly trivial, yet it speaks to the core purpose of magazines, which is entertainment. For all their ideological implications in their representation of women, women’s magazines are ultimately a form of leisure.

This ‘contradictory consciousness’ (Damon-Moore, 1994: 196) when it comes to women’s magazines makes the research process difficult. When researchers attempt to ‘look’ inside people’s heads they ‘rarely find coherent ideas’ because we are all subject to ‘multiple and conflicting ideologies’ (Frazer, 1987: 409). Furthermore, as this research has shown, magazines themselves denote multiple and conflicting ideologies. Yet, it is the very fact of these complexities that makes research all the more important. There is not yet an ‘ideal’ women’s magazine, but to suggest that there could or should be one would be to suggest that there is a formula for an ‘ideal’ woman. As Winship has stated, ‘my ideas for reading magazines, like
my desires for the kind of woman I want to be, are perversely contrary’ (1987: 5). Magazines will continue to develop, as will the political context that shapes the women who read them, thus carefully considered, ‘sophisticated, productive and sympathetic’ research must continue to be conducted (Gauntlett, 2002: 207). My own research has attempted to further the study of women’s magazines, taking into account the changes that have occurred since the last bout of research was conducted and hoping to bridge the gap that has been left in the field. I hope that in the future, the gap will begin to narrow.

Word Count: 16,118
6. Bibliography


Ytre-Arne, B. (2011) ‘‘I want to hold it in my hands’: readers’ experiences of the phenomenological differences between women’s magazines online and in print’, *Media, Culture & Society*. 3(3) 467-477.
7. Appendices

Appendix 1. List of Participants

1. Margaret Norval (Fifty-Six)
2. Jean Ramsbottom (Fifty-Three)
3. Claire Ramsbottom (Twenty-Two)
4. Karen Beardwood (Forty-Seven)
5. Eileen Keaney (Seventy-One)
6. Brenda Cross (Fifty-Six)
7. Julie Orton (Fifty)
8. Susan Maire (Forty-Three)
9. Sue Smith (Thirty-Nine)
10. Rachael Pratt (Twenty-Two)
11. Rebecca Law (Twenty-Two)
12. Stephanie Jennings (Twenty-Two)
13. Sarah Warburton (Twenty-Two)
Appendix 2. Transcripts of Interviews and Focus Groups

Transcript A.

Date of Interview: 06/06/2011
Length of Interview: 00:65:43
Location: My House

Information about Interviewees

Name: Margaret Norval  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age: 56
Occupation: Pharmacist (Full time)

Name: Karen Beardwood  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age: 47
Occupation: Housewife (with one child still at home)

Name: Jean Ramsbottom  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age: 53
Occupation: Housewife

Name: Claire Ramsbottom  Marital Status: Single
Gender: Female  Age: 22
Occupation: Shop Assistant (Full time)

E: Ok so if we start with a kind of general conversation about people’s relationships with magazines what kind of magazines you buy how much money you spend on them and just generally your day to day relationships with magazines so if we start with Mum

M: Ok

E: Coz you’ve got some subscriptions to magazines

M: I do I subscribe to a lot of magazines actually – I it sounds I subscribe to a lot of specialist magazines (laughing) I can’t tell you any more than that – no (laughing) they’re all things like Patchwork and Quilting but amazingly there are two magazines about patchwork and quilting that come out every month and I also subscribe to travel magazines Lonely Planet and Sunday Times mainly because when you have a subscription it’s ludicrously cheap in comparison coz I buy She magazine coz it’s only a pound per copy but I wouldn’t buy it if I had to pay standard prices and I like magazines coz I don’t have a lunch hour so when I’m eating a sandwich at work I quite like to not be thinking about work so I read a magazine if I read a book I’d get involved with it so I’d rather read a magazine
E: So do you—do you take the ones in you subscribe to or do you tend to buy more?
M: No I tend to—well sometimes I buy new ones—sometimes I buy something else but um most of the time I take the magazines that I subscribe to in
E: Yeah—does anyone else have a magazine subscription?
J: Yes I do yeah—as we said before—my mother in law pays for it as a Christmas present—we started off with *Ideal Home* so we did a year of that—when we finished doing the house up—but that was sister in law’s suggestion to her mum for me for a Christmas present so I had that for a year and it was quite—it was handy coz I ended up handing them onto someone else who was doing her house up and she found it useful—then I changed it last Christmas to *Good Housekeeping* rather than cancel it coz it’s easier for my mother in law rather than having to think of a new present every year and I do look at the *Good Housekeeping* ones and I do pick the recipes out—but I wouldn’t have subscribed to it myself—it’s the present issue that’s done that
E: And the fact that it keeps arriving as well you don’t have to think about it
J: Yeah don’t have to think about it and never ever when I go into the supermarket I don’t even look at magazines I go straight to pick the newspapers up and if I get a magazine at the weekend it’s the *Mail on Sunday* magazine—always read that—um
E: Do you think that there’s a reason why—specifically that you don’t read them? Are you just not generally interested in […] or is it the cost or […] is it just like a routine thing you’ve not really done it?
J: Well it’s the routine to start off with coz I’m not in the habit of going in and opportunistically buying a magazine—I just don’t do it because then I compare the price to a book and I think well £3.50 for a magazine £3.50 for a book—if I go in and get three for the price of two on a book I get a better value out of it than a magazine and I don’t think I should spend that much money on adverts coz you’re not paying for the adverts in the *Mail on Sunday* magazine—you’re buying the newspaper the magazine comes with it—I always start from the back and go to the front—don’t know why I do that but there’s a lot of adverts in the front so maybe that’s why I start at the back and the recipes are at the back so I always work back to front and that’s the only magazine I make a real effort to say ‘we have to have the *Mail on Sunday* this week will you keep the magazine for me’
E: Right—so Karen what about you?
K: Ooh I have a list of them (laughing) I like magazines—I mostly like magazines because I like books and I like reading books but I think generally—as I’ve told you before (speaking to Margaret) I fall asleep—so I don’t get very long so I like magazines coz you just get a snippet
M: Yes I think so too
K: So I just read an article and then fall asleep you see and um—don’t really look at them much in the day funnily enough—um I have well I quite like—what do I like trying to think […] *Good Housekeeping*-*Ideal Home*—I’m really typical of my age group aren’t I?
M: | So am I |
J: | Aren’t we all |
K: I love food magazines—*Olive*—um *BBC Good Food* um *Sainsbury’s Magazine* um and—I don’t buy them all the time—I’ll buy—I don’t even buy one a week—I would buy maybe if we were going away or something like that—I might buy an *OK* if we were going away or something like that which
is something I buy very rarely but I buy to go away – um – but no sometimes I’ll go in and buy a couple at once and I won’t buy any for a few weeks because it does take me a while to get through them which sounds ridiculous but
M: No me too it takes me ages to get through them actually if you read them – a lot of them
K: Well some that I’m reading at the moment – I think it’s Red – I think it is and I don’t like Cosmopolitan but I don’t think that’s our age group
M: No
J: Yeah if there’s any that I would pick up at an airport it would be Red which I have bought occasionally
K: I like Red I like the articles in Red
J: Yeah coz you can read something in that
K: Yeah
E: What is it about that has it got better features?
K: It’s got good articles I’d say
J: Yeah something you can get your teeth into
K: Yeah and I think probably if there are adverts they’re more relevant than – they’re not just –
C: Pictures
K: Yeah they’re a bit more relevant to what you could afford or – I don’t know its just more user friendly I think
J: Yeah coz by the time you’ve gone through the Chanel and the Gucci and all the rest of it which there’s so much at the beginning of a magazine and finally got to the contents page – you’ve lost the will to live
M: Yeah
K: I question it as well
J: Um it’s more relevant to what we would – you know rather than buying a pair of Jimmy Choos which we wouldn’t it’s more in a price range which we think we might go out and look at those
M: Yes
J: Like French Sole – something like that
K: Something that you think like I could go and buy those
E: (To Margaret) coz you do that with me don’t you – you tend to pick out things and go – you’d actually look at that in a shop
M: Yeah – I quite like the pages where they have things that are actually to – to buy it’s not an advert – well I suppose it is in that it must be sponsored by somebody but there’s pages of you know here’s
K: Ideas for outfits
M: Yeah – or you know – if you’re going on a picnic you can take these things – I like when you can see lots of things and comparing stuff so you don’t have to go to the shops and do it yourself I quite like that
E: So stuff that’s more relevant to
M: To the things I might want to buy yeah
E: So what about with um – stuff like the features then is that kind of important if they’re relevant because obviously you get these stories that are like completely bizarre or – do you look to relate what you see in the magazine to what you experience – coz like you say Cosmopolitan it’s not for our age group so like you look for things in magazines that are more
K: I suppose so I mean not ridiculously stupid things I dunno – I mean if you look at like some of the magazines you pick up in the hairdressers I’m like this (miming covering the page) because it’s full of really rude articles (laughing) and that’s definitely your age group and that’s really rude but I can’t put it down and I’m terrified what the hairdresser’s going to think (laughing) no I don’t buy those but um I don’t know what sort of articles they’re just interesting – about really – no they’re not about people who have got big problems and stuff like that I can’t stand all that sort of thing you know it’s more interesting about people’s lives or famous people or women inspiring people things like that um

M: There’s an awful lot of articles in things like Women and Home which is kind of – I suppose targeted at our age group

K: Yeah

M: They’re often women – some great crisis has happened in their lives and then their lives have been transformed because of it – like they’ve lost eight stone or

K: | Gosh there’s too many of them |

M: Well actually I like them

K: | There’s pages and pages of them is it Women and Home? And there must be about four or five of them |

M: | Yes |

K: And you just can’t count them

M: Well actually I used to quite like them but you’re right every magazine now there must be three or four of these huge articles about ‘I set up my own business’ and you look at it and think ‘well I’m not going to do that – I’m not going to set up my own business’

K: I think it’s – is it Woman and Home that does that?

M: Yes I think so

K: About six pages of it

J: | Yeah | It’s very repetitive after a while |

M: | It is very repetitive |

J: Like there’s just one template you can use

K: You need to get a cookery one you see Jean

M: Coz it is only ‘I started my own business we got divorced I lost enormous amounts of weight’ and it’s the same people – I mean they’re different people but it’s the same problem every time and eventually you get

K: Yeah I’m not really into real life stories – I’d rather read about interesting people and things but yeah – and then as I say I like food – but you bought me Olive didn’t you (talking to Margaret)

M: Yes well I love magazines

K: I usually buy and then Mags bought me Olive as a gift and that was really nice I mean I love that one

M: Yes I like it too and Delicious

K: Yeah Delicious

M: And that’s another thing I like to see just new things and different things

E: So from the way it sounds then it sounds like you guys don’t tend to sit down and just read the whole thing then and there’s bits that you know you’re going to read like the recipes but then you don’t read the whole thing cover to cover

J: No

K: No
M: Well I – oddly enough I do and I bookmark it like a book coz I (other participants are laughing) yeah I know what is the matter with me? I feel compelled to read it all like that’s why I only read the newspaper on Saturday coz I feel compelled to read it and I get halfway through an article sometimes and think ‘I have no time and I’m absolutely uninterested in this but I absolutely feel I have to read this article’
K: I have to look at every page but I don’t necessarily read it all
J: No
M: Well I’m finally getting into I don’t have to read it all but it’s like a book if I start a book I have to finish it even if it’s – I’m not enjoying it and I do find that with magazines which is one of the reasons why it takes me so long
K: Do you read the adverts?
M: I do
K: I like to look at those
M: I might be transformed one day if I keep looking at adverts (laughing)
J: I actually ended up chucking out about forty magazines which my sister gave me in dribs and drabs over a while and I’ve bookmarked certain things in them and I’ve thought oh I’ll do this I’ll do that and I thought ‘I’m not going to have time to do this’ so I went through each one – figured out why I’d bookmarked it – think ‘no I’m not going to make that – bin’ so I spent all this time reading it bookmarking it and I wasn’t going to do it – which is another reason I didn’t start buying magazines myself coz if I’m chucking away the ones that I’ve been given I’ll be chucking away the ones that I’ve bought
K: Yeah but I hate the old ones
C: Oh I hate old magazines
K: Yeah I can’t be doing those I don’t know why – coz it doesn’t feel as though they’d be relevant I can’t stand it if somebody passes them onto you although I don’t say I hate them I just never seem to look at them really
C: Some of them they had in my house were like a year old and falling apart – not even together anymore (laughing)
K: Yes
E: Do you think that’s more with like um celebrity ones coz with we were saying other women’s ones there’s a template for them so like really if you read last October’s say Good Housekeeping it’s probably not that say dissimilar to – in terms of like it’s not
J: No it isn’t but especially the – if you feel objective not subjective about it’s
K: I suppose it’s not |
J: not very easy I mean I’ve found myself in a waiting room and looked at it and though ‘oh that’s a good idea’ and looked at it and it’s been June 2006
K Yeah or you think ‘oh I like those curtains’ and then you turn it over and it’s from two years ago
J: And you couldn’t even go out and find the fabric anyway coz it’s
K: Yeah
M: They are quite seasonal magazines as well so you know if you were reading last October’s in October you might not notice but if you were reading some other month you’d notice coz the foods are slanted towards the things that are seasonal and also the fashions I think you’d notice I mean I’m not at all interested in fashion but I would notice
K: It’s just the articles isn’t it – you see picnics in summer or something like that
M: Yes
But we would actually keep magazines that were on like recipes and what have you whereas the ones that you were talking about Claire where the celebrities have broken up or they’re going out with someone else you’d chuck them because you know within a month it’s completely changed

Yeah

I don’t really like ones that at all – gossip

I think that’s your age group

I’m on those all the time I follow them

So do you buy magazines then?

Yeah coz if I buy a magazine it’ll be like Look or Grazia – Heat or something like that – I do read a lot more than I used to

So more like the weekly ones?

Yeah

What monthly ones do you tend to buy?

I don’t really buy the monthly ones it’s too think – I dunno I just don’t think I’d read them all – I sometimes do – I like Elle that’s quite a good one and Glamour

Well you went through a long period of always getting me to buy Heat

Yeah I do like the gossip ones but I do get it online like Perez Hilton

But you’re doing it online rather than buying a magazine?

Yeah I get it online just coz it’s quicker

Do you think it’s the same kind of content online then pretty much? Like if you buy a magazine do you feel – coz I stopped buying Heat magazine coz I felt like if I got it on a Tuesday I already knew everything that was in it anyway

Yeah you do get it all on the Internet

Do you mean the magazine on the Internet you’re looking at or is it just gossip?

Gossip

Yeah just in general

Especially like Heat all the pictures go online

But don’t you just love the paper?

I like the paper

And like the glossiness

I love the feel of it but you see I’m like that with everything like books I love the feel of

But some stuff I have to have the paper like university stuff I printed it all off coz I couldn’t take it in but mindless stuff it doesn’t matter if it’s all on the screen – yeah it’s not as important as like university stuff or whatever

(talking to Claire) But you answered that question on the job applications about the difference in magazines and what was – I can’t remember what the question was but you came up with the difference between the likes of Vogue and Elle and like
C: Yeah I put like Vogue and Elle and the things that have got more articles in rather than just like trashy stuff in it couldn’t – I don’t think work online but the gossipy stuff does work online a lot
J: So you’ve actually got two different
C: Types of magazines
M: | Yeah |
J: Attention modes
C: Yeah
J: Because you’ve got
C: When I sit down and do read it I look at the pictures and like you’ve got the captions underneath I don’t very often sit and read the whole article online but if it was a more important – like a life story I’d read that in a magazine
J: But with things like Vogue most of it is high fashion pictures so you’re looking at it in a totally different way than you are something like Heat
C: Yeah
J: And it’s the difference in the attention span what you’re doing at the time what you’re actually looking for
E: Yeah – see this is the thing that’s interesting about Grazia because they have branded themselves as a weekly glossy so they are trying to become or to be sort of a mixture of Vogue and Elle and like almost like Heat magazine they’re trying to do everything
C: | Yeah |
E: Which is what makes it particularly interesting
K: What age group are they aiming at?
E: It’s 25-45 I think is the specific one but I’m not sure coz I think a lot of people I mean you used to read Grazia (talking to Margaret)
M: I did a lot – well I used to read it all the time but I used to buy it for you then I bought you a subscription and you don’t bring it home anymore so I don’t – I read them when you bring them home but not
C: I like Grazia coz there’s stuff in it that you don’t get online
E: Coz you get like what Jean was saying you get the adverts and stuff there are a lot of adverts here but like here’s a celebrity story (showing copies of Grazia) they always start off with the fashion and then they do ten hot stories so like Lily Allen and Kate Moss are getting married
M: To each other? That’s amazing
E: No Mum – but they’re getting married so number two hot story is about designer jeans and then number three is about this woman who was gang raped in Libya
C: It’s a lot more hard-hitting
(Surprised reactions from other participants)
M: It’s quite a mixture isn’t it really?
E: Grazia is an interesting one
C: Yeah
J: It’s a very eclectic mix isn’t it?
(participants are each looking through copies of Grazia)
E: So it kind of covers all of the bases
J: That must be unusual because I wouldn’t have even considered picking that up
K: I wouldn’t have picked it up
C: I would get it
J: That would turn me off completely (indicating the cover) coz I’d assume it wasn’t for my age group
K: Yeah the cover – that’s what I would say
J: I couldn’t give a hoot what happens to Britney Spears
K: No
J: Um – I’m not really interested in the Cheryl Cole thing which to me is the same template
K: I’m not really interested in the stars and what they’re doing
M: No
J: I’m more interested in living my own life than watching or reading what that lot are doing and that’s the attitude I have
K: | And I think that’s definitely an age thing
C: I quite like reading it coz it’s got longer stories like you get the background of what’s going on what people think is going on rather than just like oh they’ve fallen over – or like – the cause – how it’s all developed I quite like that
E: So I mean if you saw that on a shelf (holding up Grazia with the front cover) you wouldn’t buy that
J: No
K: | No |
E: But then if you saw it like that on a table (holding up Grazia opened to a page with a story about a woman in Libya) what would you think?
M: I think it was more of a serious magazine – I quite like it because I never read celebrity gossip magazines and I never go online I almost never use the Internet for any kind of information and because it has these top ten stories it kind of tells me what everybody else at work – all the people who are younger than me are likely to be talking about so I sort of – it kind of gives me a quick way of keeping in touch with what they’re interested in
J: Yes you get the headlines without knowing what the subject is
M: | I get the headlines without having to go on Perez Hilton which I think is not for my age group really (laughing)
J: See this would just annoy me because to me it’s just sensationalist
K: Yeah
M: Although it’s not actually written Jean – it’s not written like that
J: It’s not written like that but that’s the way it’s presented
M: Yeah
J: Coz you know top ten stories and you come up with ‘I was gang raped in Libya’
E: I guess you go from jeans to – there’s one about Gadaffi there’s all kinds of things in here which are actually quite serious
J: Yeah
E: Like here’s another one and here’s a big advert
K: They’re all being raped aren’t they?
E: Well this sample happens to be all about rape – but I mean – you know – um it’s kind of an interesting mixture of stuff
C: Yeah
E: But do you think if you I mean like Claire you read this do you ever sort of think about that would you be aware as you’re flicking through it? Coz I was never until - coz it was you actually Mum who said do you not think this is a bit strange
C: I wouldn’t think it was strange – yeah - I knew they were a bit more – more depth to the magazine than something like Heat or Look coz they do have more stories in and more words
K: Doesn’t get that impression from the front of it though do you?
C: No – but I’d rather read a story about Britney Spears like that (indicating to Grazia) rather than the back of Heat magazine’s got like an interview
K: See nothing on the front tells you that it’s more serious than any of the others does it – coz it’s just about Katy Russell - Angelina Brad and the twenty-three year old co-star you know and fashion – so nothing tells you it’s more serious
E: What age group would you say it was for if (phone ringing) hang on I’ll pause it for a second

(Gap in interview)

K: I mean I don’t really wanna know about her life
J: Oh – well isn’t she the one who does very raunchy things on television?
C: Yeah she’s a bit controversial
J: (flicking through Grazia) so i’m not interested in that – I’m not interested in diets coz I’m sick of diets – coz if you can’t sort your own out – you wouldn’t go to this to sort out a diet you’d go and do it more seriously on your own
M: Yeah
J: So what the celebrities are doing for their next diet craze whether it be pineapples or whatever it is that would switch me off – um I recognise that so I might look at it to see what she’s up to but i’d flick through it in the […]
K: Shop?
J: Supermarket or the shop
K: I’d never do that! (laughing) I’ve read it then! I’ve had all the fun
J: And – well there’s only that much I’m interested in – if there was anything more I’d look at it
K: I do like the home book you know like looking through a kitchen or something like that
J: But they’ve stopped you doing that now they’re all in plastic
K: Oh yeah they are
J: Um and – I don’t know who that is – I think I ought to know who she is and I don’t - so I just think it’s
K: I just think it’s just slightly younger than us I mean what am I forty-seven and I would say that I would be very much on the borderline for that I would say it would be – what would you think maybe thirty
M: I think mid to late thirties?
J: Say for argument’s sake Max was a ten-year-old girl (referring to Karen’s son) you might buy it to see what they were reading
K: I wouldn’t want my ten year old to read that
J: Exactly but you wouldn’t know what goes on inside the playground or what they’re looking at
C: I don’t think you’d buy that if you were younger
K: No they wouldn’t be interested in that
C: I feel like it’s a lot older than a sort of
E: Well this is I mean this is meant to be older than us (referring to Claire) coz there’s no way we could afford
K: | No I would say late thirties – I would say I’m forty-seven and I would find it I’m a little bit old for it – I mean I’m not a little bit old for it but what I mean is looking at it on a shelf I would think I was
M: Yes
K: I wouldn’t think it was targeted to me – I’m not saying coz I haven’t actually read it so probably when I read it I would feel differently and actually when you flick through it there are fashion things that I think ‘oh yeah I quite like that’ you know I like that I shop at M&S I shop at Next so yeah it would be the front
J: | The front is inappropriate for the content
K: Yeah it doesn’t give off what’s obviously inside it – I never would have looked at it
J: And also all these magazines they’re very highly coloured trying to get your attention but the problem is when you’ve got a whole wall of them all coming at you they all look the same
K: Mmm
M: Yeah
K: You do read what’s on the front though
J: I have a glance – I look at the names and think do I recognise them no I’m not bothered but that’s what if I go to pick up a paper in a supermarket – if I go the newsagents I go in buy the newspaper and I walk out – in fact I haven’t bought the newspaper today because I knew I’d read it instead of doing what I had to do that’s why I don’t read a magazine because I’m sitting here reading a magazine when I need – I’ve got a list this long
E: So do you think – what is it about the covers that you think – do you read the
M: I think it’s always got the celebrity names on which actually puts me off
J: Yeah
K: | Yeah |
M: I tend to be switched off by like Hello or stuff like that
C: Yeah coz I nearly bought this (referring to an issue of Grazia) but I saw ‘Katy and Russell on the rocks’ and thought ‘oh that’s just a headline’ I didn’t bother reading it coz I just didn’t think
J: To me the front of this doesn’t look any different to the front of Heat
K: Yeah it doesn’t
J: The content might be different
M: It is quite a different magazine
E: Well what about something like Ideal Home which you guys do read – do you think the cover makes a difference to that?
K: Yes because if I’m doing something – say I’m doing a room in the house I’d probably – if I was going to buy a home magazine I’d choose something which was relevant to what I was doing so if it was all on kitchens and bathrooms and I’ve got my kitchen I wouldn’t bother with it
M: No I think that’s right I’d only buy them if I was going to do up a room
K: I don’t really buy it other than that – if I’m going to do up a room I’ll buy one – Good Housekeeping I sometimes get a bit bored with but – you know I buy it from time to time
M: I think you know the covers of magazines for people more my age aren’t quite as
K: Frenetic
MA Media Industries

M: Frenetic and so lurid covers they tend to be – they’ll be you know it’ll be all yellows or all – and there’s only one person one picture
K: | It’s more classy isn’t it Mags?|
M: Yes (laughing)
K: Not trashy (laughing)
J: This (referring to Grazia) just looks like instant reading like you would read it like Claire does whereas the magazines that we tend to pick up like you said you would actually go and target pick something that would be interesting for what you were trying to do as a project for home or if you get bored with the food that you’re making you think I’ll go buy some magazines to see whether there’s an idea so it’s a much more targeted
K: | Yeah you go and buy magazines |
J: I think you’re right coz I’ll go in one week and think well I want a food magazine but then I wouldn’t buy any of the other magazines we’ve talked about I’d just buy that - that week you know and then another week I’d do something else but I never buy the same one all the time
E: And does it tend to be monthlies that you buy rather than
K: Yeah
M: Yeah and the monthlies do – it’s almost they sort of last longer coz they’re not meant to be topical I mean they have somebody on the cover who is sort of topical I suppose but they’re not as instant as these things so they take longer to read – I would read Grazia in one sitting but I probably wouldn’t go back to Grazia whereas another magazine like a monthly I would probably read it over a lot of days rather than in one long burst
K: Yes I’d probably sit in the hairdressers and they’d have something like that whereas I’d only be on the second article of that other magazine
M: Yes me too – yeah
E: So it’s different it kind of depends on the time and place
M: It’s a different thing – I used to – the reason I used to buy it when I started buying it for you is that it actually is about long enough for a lunch hour you can read it in a lunch hour and then I wouldn’t go back to it whereas a lot of the other magazines I’d maybe read two articles in a lunch hour
J: So would you buy this one? (Talking to Claire)
C: Yeah I’ve bought that one yeah – it’s like when we were at Uni Grazia and Look were the two that we always had
K: I’ve never even heard of Look
E: They’re quite similar weren’t they?
C: Yeah Look is slightly less articley than Grazia I think it’s just it gives you a bit more than just – gossip but even the celebrity stories they’re more
M: | They are much more about – yeah|
C: about like say the relationship will have more what it’s about not just
K: Cheap gossip
C: Yeah I think it’s a bit more about them – yeah
J: Right you’ve also got the price tag here of £1.95 now I suspect that is more expensive than Heat but cheaper than Red
C: Heat’s more expensive isn’t it like £2.35?
J: I don’t know what was the one I used to buy for you every week?
C: *Heat* was £1.45 when I was in Sixth Form it’s gone up a lot since then
J: Right
C: I think it’s about the same price as the other weeklies – whereas monthlies are like £3.50 aren’t they?
M: Yes
J: You see again I think that £1.59 that’s £2.00 – that’s four *Daily Mails* and they’ve got magazine articles in the *Daily Mail* so certainly on a Tuesday they’ve got the health one and Thursday they’ve got the fashion one so I feel
K: Do you feel it’s the same? I wouldn’t feel – see I think it’s a treat when I buy a magazine and I don’t think so with the paper I just get that every day but a magazines a treat
M: I think a magazine’s a treat
C: Yeah
J: I treat a book as a treat – whereas a magazine I’m thinking ‘hmm £1.95’
M: | Mmm – well I do too |
E: How come a newspaper’s not a treat? Is that coz you feel you have to have the news have to know what’s going on?
M: Yeah
K: I just – yeah
J: Coz you’ve got another situation now that the *Times* has gone behind a pay wall
C: Yeah online yeah
J: Yeah so you actually get more online with the *Times* but you have to sign up for it so I would only actually buy the *Times* newspaper – um – I wouldn’t buy the *Times* and the *Mail* because I start adding it up and think ‘that’s £10.00 a week – that’s £40.00 a month - £480.00 a year’ for something very transient
C: Yeah
J: And that’s where I end up to I start multiplying it up and think well – is this weekly?
C: This is weekly yeah
J: That’s £8.00 a month and for £8.00 a month
K: Yeah but don’t you enjoy it?
J: No because I’m not really interested
K: | (laughing) I’m not really like that | because you could just go and have a couple of cups of coffee and think you know
M: Yeah
J: I’d more likely go and spend the money having a couple of hours with a friend and have a coffee and a chat I’d feel like I’d had a more positive
C: Yeah but I can close off and think about it on your own it’s quite nice just to – be like read something to read
J: I can close off with the *Daily Mail* its 50p
C: Yeah
K: It doesn’t do the same for me (laughing)
E: So what makes it a treat do you think it’s the content or just the fact you’ve got the time on your own?
C: It’s the content
K: | It’s the space |
M: | It’s a bit of me time I think I can switch off from other things
K: I think it’s the time don’t you – and the shiny paper
M: The pictures!
C: Yeah

E: Well this is the thing because in the research that’s be done about magazines
the one thing that people find it hard to get to the bottom of is why people read
magazines in the first place because it’s always been

K: | I thought you were gonna say it’s because of the shiny paper!

E: Yeah well maybe – but its always been people say oh they’re very formulaic
always kind of the same and you go why do you read them then and people go
‘oh I don’t know’ its like that

C: Yeah

M: I don’t like reading newspapers – I get all the news I listen to the today
programme driving to work I listen coming home so I get all the news I need
to know on the radio – I don’t – I really don’t like looking at newspapers and I
can’t read a book at work because I get so involved in a book that I wouldn’t
want to read a chapter and then have to stop I want to read a bit more of it so
magazines are a sort of halfway house I suppose between something that’s
completely factual and something that’s

C: Yeah I reckon that

K: | You can pick it up and put it down and with a book sometimes you
think ‘where was I and you have to re-read it

M: | Yeah you have to re-read some

K: Whereas a magazine’s very easy – its just easy gratification really I think

E: But what about news and magazines I mean coz with Grazia putting news in
there its supposed to be like all encompassing you get your news and you get
your fashion and you get your everything

C: I wouldn’t say that was news though

K: Is it current gossip news or is it news like what’s going on in the world news?

E: Its a combination – it’s a combination of you know what’s going on in Libya
what’s going on in the Middle East and what’s going on with Brad and
Angelina – I mean its kind of a mixture of everything but if there was one that
was – I mean if there was one aimed for – ladies of – your – age

M: Mature age

E: I mean would you – turn to a magazine to get news do you think?

K: No

J: No

K: Because its escapism isn’t it

J: You (talking to Margaret) listen to Radio 4 for the news and because you’re in
the car that amount of time you get all of it if I’m in the car I’ll

M: | Yeah I’m half an
hour each way |

J: listen to the headlines and when they start pontificating I think right well I’ve
heard what’s going on

K: You hear what’s all going on on the radio anyway

J: So I wouldn’t go to a magazine to get news

K: No

C: I look to a magazine to get a little more of a story that’s current rather than the
news – if that makes sense

M: Yeah

J: I just don’t – that story about that woman that’s current but it’s not news

C: | It’s a story isn’t it |
M: it’s not news | it’s not today’s headline
J: Yeah it’s relevant to what’s happening in Libya on a personal individual level as opposed to what’s happening to Gadaffi now politically it’s a different take on the same thing which is current yes but not quite as
E: It can also be I guess like a week old if it comes out once a week – you couldn’t have the news just once a week
C: No
M: No - I used to really like Grazia but I find it a bit strange now this mixture of these top ten things and it’s a mixture of these quite –
K: Trivial
M: Trivia and really trivial gossip about people and they’re obsessed with um Jen – Jennifer Anniston
C: Yeah they are
M: And actually quite in depth and really – and I think there’s something almost offensive about having the number one article about who Jennifer Anniston’s going out with and the second one about something absolutely unspeakable that’s happened to a woman in a Muslim country I think it’s a bit of an odd combination
E: But then why is that ok in something like Good Housekeeping which does do celebrity stories and they’re quite
M: It does but
J: It’s not as sensational though is it
K: It’s not – yes it’s not as hyped up I don’t think is it
J: There’s no top ten stories so they’ll put something on the front
K: And I have to say you don’t usually get a gang rape do you
M: No – and they’re a bit more in depth really it might be a two page article as opposed to a page or half a page with a picture which they usually have in Grazia
K: They usually cover three pages
M: Yes there’s usually a lot
K: Quite a bit of substance
M: More information than in that (referring to Grazia)
E: Ok - so what about – we’ve said Jean you tend to get magazines from other people do you guys tend to pass them around between people – once you’ve read it do you throw it away or pass it on to someone else
J: I pass them on
C: | It goes on the coffee table | and um sits on there
E: In your student house?
C: Yeah
J: I’ll pick up a load that I’ve got – in fact I’ve just handed some through to my friend and whether she’s gonna give them on put them on Freecycle I don’t know – I’ve certainly just given her all of last year’s Ideal Homes so there’s a full set of twelve and I’m quite sure she’ll Freecycle those as a set of twelve but I’d rather do that than give them into a doctor’s surgery where people will rip out the articles that they’re interested in and my mother in law has paid for them – so if all twelve go and she says right that’s fine they’ve gone they won’t end up in a land fill – they’ll be passed on I’m happy with that – but I think that (referring to Grazia) is trying to be jack of all trades and master of none it’s – it’s dippy
M: Mmm – it is a bit of everything
K: What do you do with your old magazines? (To Margaret)
M: I either leave them in the tea room at work so there’s – potentially another fifty people could look at them or we put them in – we do put them in our waiting room but we – so if they’re this month’s or last month’s I put them in the tea room and then after that we put them in the waiting room
K: See I rip mine apart so I couldn’t do that! (Laughing)
M: (Laughing) That’s true actually
K: Well you see the thing is if there’s some nice food ones I rip the page out
M: I do cut out recipes
K: So what I do is I fold over the page coz I can’t be bothered going through again and then when I get to the end I rip them all out and then throw them away coz I think who’d want that with all those pages ripped out? And my mother in law I’d give – if I bought an Ideal Home I’d give that to her but she’s eighty so we – I wouldn’t give her other ones I mean certainly she wouldn’t be interested in something like that (referring to Grazia) um – I just bought an OK after the wedding to see the dress and stuff
C: Oh I did as well
K: Yeah – and I gave her that so – but other than that I don’t really pass them on no
J: Coz you destroy them (Laughing)
K: Yeah – I do
E: What about talking about stuff coz (speaking to Margaret) I know we talk about stuff all the time ‘have you seen so and so in Grazia’ or ‘did you read so and so’ – um – do you think you talk to other people about stuff you’ve read in magazines?
K: Yeah sometimes – yeah – not really about stars
E: No – no just generally stuff
K: Yeah I’d say I do – yeah I do
M: My deputy Dave is actually bizarrely very interested in food so if I buy something like Olive I’ll pass it on to him and we’ll often have conversations about one or two of the recipes so – but generally I don’t
K: Would you photocopy a recipe then?
M: I never do I always tear it out like you
K: Yeah
M: But then I don’t cook as much as you do coz I only cook the same things all the time so I (Laughing) tear out one recipe whereas you probably tear out fifteen!
J: Well I’ve done that I’ve actually got two box files full of recipes
M: Yes – well I put them in a scrapbook
K: Well I very rarely but cookbooks now because I’ve got so many good books that I could wrap round the kitchen twice and now all I do is buy food magazines and I use those
J: Well I’m desperately trying to get to the stage where I simply throw both boxes away without going through every recipe that’s in there
K: See I have to make them all Jean – I have to make them all and then I say whether they’re rubbish and I get rid of them
J: So – I don’t know (referring again to Grazia) I don’t know that this is something that I would ever go out and buy – if there was an alternative that had recipes in it
M:  Mmm
K:  Are there recipes in this?
E:  Yes
J:  Yeah but see again does it tell you
K:  Does it what?
J:  It doesn’t tell you that it does recipes on the front does it?
M:  I think there’s only usually one or
E:  And there’s like lifestyle bits in
K:  See I like this handbag
M:  They have very nice handbags
E:  There’s the culture bit which tells you what’s coming up on TV and what’s interesting this week
M:  I quite like that actually – but I really like Lauren Laverne – I think she’s very nice
J:  Who’s Lauren Laverne?
E:  This lady here she has her own column
M:  She was on the culture show for a bit as well
J:  Ah right - well again
M:  It’s about things that are coming up
J:  Do we come back to the fact that again the front page doesn’t
M:  Doesn’t really tell you |
J:  Doesn’t give information as to what’s in it
M:  There’s always film reviews and there’s always book reviews and they don’t really tell you – there’s usually a specific one
J:  Coz I’m always lost for film reviews – I end up getting onto Vue website to ask what films are
M:  This is actually very good – strangely enough it’s very good for films coz they review them all and tell you what the top ten are that are out at the moment and then they give you a little snippet to remind you what they’re all about
E:  They do holidays as well – places to go on holiday
M:  Yes they do
E:  So – what about new magazines if there’s a new magazine coming out – um – coz it seems like you guys pick magazines based on you know what’s gonna be in there so what about picking up news ones?
J:  It would have to be free for a couple of issues and then I’d look at it
C:  Yeah
K:  Well Red I don’t think – how long has it been out? Coz I didn’t buy that for ages and then suddenly I thought well I’ll try that
M:  A few years now I think
C:  That’s coz it was established on the shelves though so you knew it was part of the same ones you read
M:  Yeah I think that might be it
K:  Yeah if it’s always up with the same ones that you – coz they tend to group them the same things together don’t they
M:  Yeah from the same age groups
K:  Or the same topics – gossip ones – I mean where does that Grazia sit on the shelf? Does it sit with the gossip?
E:  Yeah – well it sits with the weeklies
K:  Yeah
M: So – and sometimes new magazines are cheaper – for the first few issues so I might buy it then because the first issue’s often half the price it’s going to be – and then I’ll see if I like it or not – but – I like magazines for travelling as well – when we’re going on holiday it’s always part of the holiday isn’t it
K: Oh I do – yeah I think so
M: Go to the airport and pick up magazines
K: Well we would get those in the airport
M: Yeah you always do go and buy magazines
C: [ Yeah I always get some in the airport ]
M: And then swap them round
C: Grazia always seemed popular when I was in France they always left them - it was like nobody bought any other magazines – weird
M: That is weird although I suppose it is something you’d pick up in an airport it’s got loads of different things in
C: Well we barely got the bigger thick ones coz you know if you’re on a flight – but it was Grazia that we got rather than Heat or the other ones
E: Well we even do – when we go to the airport (referring to myself and Margaret) we won’t buy any magazines for that month
M: That’s true
E: And save up and buy a whole stack of them
K: I do that – coz whenever I’m going away I think I won’t buy that I’ll save it until I go
E: So it is like a treat coz you save it
C: Yeah
K: Yeah – definitely
J: (Has been reading Grazia during conversation) I mean something like that (referring to Grazia beauty section) is too young for us
M: I think you’d look good with your eyes like that (laughing)
K: (Laughing) I don’t know who would though!
J: (Laughing) Well I’m just looking to see what they’re trying to sell me! Because to me that’s a more subtle form of selling – because you’d read this and think ‘oh that’s a really good idea that’ and
M: Yeah I must admit I would look and see
K: Yeah I would look and see
J: Well you think ‘ah right that’s why they’ve done that article’ coz they’re expecting you to go out and buy these products that they’ve achieved that with – and there’s as much chance of any of us ever looking like that as pigs ever flying (laughing) coz they’re actually selling a lifestyle almost or an idea that – is not reasonably achievable – like you come back to the clothes again – if
they’re like – I’m coming back to French Sole because I like their ballet pumps – I’d buy one whereas it’s not – this is not relevant to our way of life

M: Yes – well I think that the clothes in Grazia are more reasonably priced and they’re more from high street shops than sort of designers

E: Although having said that I mean in the actual fashion spreads there’s thousands of pounds

M: Yes that’s true but often they have pages of the top ten things this week on the high street and stuff and then they’re always quite reasonably priced

J: They are I mean I’ve seen adverts for these before and as soon as you see Smythson you think you’re on the wrong side of £200 – which is – anyone who’s gonna buy that for a belt – Smythson Sam Cam and the rest of it – but I’ve actually started looking and you know you’ve got a straw hat and some ASOS glasses for £12 I mean we wouldn’t wear them but we’d look at them

M: I like the satchels and things

E: You just like an across-body bag

M: I do – anything across body gets my vote!

J: The satchel’s only £48 so you’ve got a nice mix here because the shoes are £400 but the cricket jumper is £24.99 from New Look which is you know you go in and have a look round

C: They just do it all as a mix don’t they

J: There’s a reasonable mix

E: What do you think about the presentation of the inside? Do you think you’d read that you know if it didn’t have the cover and you just started flicking through it?

J: If I ignored that (the cover) and saw that (inside page) I think yes

K: I think that’s ok

M: They have nice pictures – see they do have nice pictures nice layouts but they also have a lot of space which not all magazines do – it’s not dense text – they do have really good photographs don’t they – the individually photographed items are nice but also the way they put clothes together are nice – I quite like the readers comments as well of things that people are wearing

E: Yeah coz you can go online and comment on things that people are wearing and they put it in the magazine

M: But I don’t go on because the pictures are always of people in their twenties and thirties

K: Stars is it or?

M: No just people they’ve seen on the street

K: Oh on the street yeah

J: Yeah I mean I’ve actually started looking at that I mean I’d totally ignore it if I saw Roberto Cavalli kids – not interested – but they actually manage to get two pages here covering totally different interests and the chances are if you don’t hit one you hit the other

M: Yes I think that is its strength that it has a lot of – there’s always something that’s interesting in it even if it’s not at my age group

J: Yeah you know even this – you know

K: What is that even an advert for? Is it clothes?

C: Sweets?

K: Sweets?

E: Err – I think it’s children’s clothes

K: Well you wouldn’t know would you?
J: No you wouldn’t - and this is odd you’ve got make your own bangles for £90 each and a Moschino jacket for two grand
E: That’s another thing I suppose the fact they’ve got an advert for kids clothes implies you would
K: Would have children
E: Yeah – buying clothes for
K: Oh that’s odd
J: I dunno when would we ever go out in a pair of shoes like that?
K: No (laughing) well Jean
J: (Laughing) I don’t know it’s weird it is a very eclectic mix
K: It must fit – it must fit a niche age group mustn’t it? My sister is in her thirties my other sister is in her late thirties and I’d say that’s more for their age group
J: Twenty-five to thirty-five
K: At your age up to about thirty-eight I would say
M: It would be a good magazine to take if you were commuting to work – not in a car obviously but if you were on a train – it’s a bit tricky to drive and read (laughing) actually I could see people reading it on the tube or train to work
K: Yeah – both my sisters have children so I would say
J: There’s a Guess advert there which I would say I supposed to match up
C: It’s for children again
M: Yes
K: And designer kids
J: Yes very much designer kids so you’ve done that but then you’ve actually got an article next to it which is completely different - but still clothes – there’s actually not a double paged advert like – um
C: Yeah the beginning of Elle and stuff there’s a double pages
J: Yeah and you simply go flick flick through – right got through the first eight pages now there’s all the adverts out of the way so what do we look at? Whereas they’ve managed to avoid doing that
K: There are some real – is it Cosmopolitan those sort of ones are all just adverts for pages and pages and pages
J: That’s probably why I start at the back of magazines because again I’d do that with this – start at the back
M: Funnily enough I do with most magazines
K: Do you do that? I just read it through
J: You go to the back
M: It is weird – I’ve never thought about it but it is peculiar
J: I never read a magazine from the front and I’d actually read that because (Grazia) that’s actually more interesting to me than something in Hello – I don’t know why
K: I like the layout
J: It’s nice and clean
C: It’s not squashed is it – you can read it
J: No – but then again I’m starting from the back and then I just ignore that
E: And here’s someone – she’s what in her forties Bibi Lynch?
M: She’s the most depressing woman in the world
K: Is she?
C: | Really? |
M: I bet it’s an article about her Dad dying
E: Well she is yeah – she’s very depressing
K: Who is she?
M: She’s just this woman who just whinges she whinges
K: Oh she writes a column then for this
M: All about how she’s unmarried and her Dad’s just died
K: Very depressing
M: Oh it’s just terrible
E: I think there’s quite a lot of that going on in Good Housekeeping there’s quite a lot of people writing about various things in there
M: Yes
K: I do – I’ve said that before Good Housekeeping can be a little bit depressing
J: Yeah I realised this – I thought Good Housekeeping had more recipes in it so I might get my mother in law to change to a different one this Christmas to one with more recipes in it coz I thought ‘what’
M: Woman and Home has more recipes in
K: Woman and Home and what’s the other one we were talking about – oh Red - Woman and Home I particularly like coz it seems to have more things in it
J: Well there you go that’s what I’m going to change to – there’s a woman who writes for the Daily Mail and she’s equally as depressing – um – she’s got a farm down in
M: Oh Liz Jones
E: Oh god yeah
J: To me Liz Jones is the worst
M: They should put them in a house together and they can just go on to each other instead of affecting the rest of us
K: There’s enough in the papers you don’t want depressing do you?!
C: I’ve never registered that its – I don’t know if I read it I don’t really register who it is
J: Well I couldn’t remember the name I just know I never read her articles
K: But then again if you bought something on a regular basis you’d know
C: Yeah
M: It’s – I can’t help it I feel obliged to read this woman so it can incense me even though I know how annoying she is
E: What about – you know going back to reading magazines for your kind of age range – when did you start reading um Good Housekeeping (everyone laughs) coz I mean you must have – you know – you’d think there was a point when you go ok this is the kind of magazine now – coz I mean you used to read She which you don’t really get anymore
M: I guess – so it must have been
E: There must be a point when you go now I’m a woman with a house and I’m ready (everyone laughing)
M: Probably when I had children – probably mid thirties
E: Did you used to read different ones?
M: Yeah I suppose yeah
K: I didn’t used to spend loads on magazines
M: I didn’t have the money to spend no actually
J: No so that comes back to the treat mentality doesn’t it
K: That’s probably why I did think of it as a treat it would not be something I’d spend any money on – If I did it was probably a weekly maybe – I didn’t really have magazines – the first magazine I bought of that nature probably would be Ideal Home – so probably more when you’ve got a bit more money
M: When you’re looking at – you have a house
K: Yeah
J: Well as you didn’t see me buying magazines when you were growing up (to Claire) what started you buying magazines?
C: I bought Heat in Sixth Form – um – at Uni we all bought different ones we had variations and left them in the living room so I ended up reading like five a week
K: Well they didn’t used to make gossip ones did they – the only weeklies were like Woman’s Own and they were more older age group and they were your weeklies weren’t they really and they didn’t really have all these gossipy things
C: Yeah well we bought like we’d buy the Times everyday because that’s news – so you have to read that
J: They have Times 2 as well on a Monday
C: But then we bought Look or whatever as we’re just going round – something a bit less intense but still not really stupid
J: You see I – a lot of my friends don’t really buy magazines – thinking about it I just know they don’t buy them and they never get passed round because there aren’t any
E: Do you think that is it the cost thing then?
J: No
K: My friends buy magazines (laughing)
J: I don’t know – yeah I don’t know
M: I love magazines! I love books as well I just love reading I think and I’m probably of a generation that would never think of looking online to read things
K: That’s right
C: No I do quite like reading stuff online
K: I don’t – see it wouldn’t be my first thought at all
C: I think its coz we’re used to it
K: Yeah definitely it’s a generational thing
M: I would never read a magazine online even if you could buy a subscription for a magazine online
K: No
J: I don’t actually find it relaxing
K: That would not be relaxing coz where you read a magazine is in bed or in the bath or its with a cup of coffee and you don’t want to get your computer out – you couldn’t have it in the bath could you really or could you (laughing)
M: You can’t use a computer you’d be missing feverishly printing it out (laughing)
E: That’s a good point!
J: See but I take the laptop to bed with me and I sit and watch catch up
K: Do you?
J: Oh yeah now I’ve got a laptop it wouldn’t occur to me not to take it to bed if I’ve missed a programme
K: Oh I couldn’t be doing that it’s a sanctuary my bedroom
M: Me too
K: I won’t have any electrical devices!
J: But that’s the equivalent of my magazine I suppose and it’s strange because I don’t relate that to work on a computer but I wouldn’t read a magazine online
K: It’s weird!
C: I used to read your lipstick one from Leeds
E: What Lippy?
C: Yeah- I used to read that online it was quite nice having it online
J: Well I take the magazine to bed and treat it almost like a magazine or a book because I’m watching what I want to watch
K: But wouldn’t your mind be racing then because I think you need to wind down when you sleep
M: Yeah I always read a book before I go to sleep I couldn’t sleep if I didn’t do that
J: I probably after that I pick up the Telegraph and do the Sudoku before I go to sleep
K: Oh my god Jean! (Laughing)
M: How do you get to sleep? (Laughing) I’d be awake all night
K: Oh dear
J: I’m quite pleased I can do a Sudoku because it’s maths - but I wouldn’t take a magazine to bed because I’d think I was wasting time – it’s weird I think I’ve got a dysfunctional relationship with magazines so I’m untypical (laughing)
M: I’ve never thought about it but I think it is true that I didn’t but them when I was younger because I couldn’t afford it and now I do think of them as a treat really
K: Yeah – definitely
C: When I read online and stuff I’m normally just procrastinating from what I should be doing – but if you just sit down and read the magazine for half an hour it’s just reading and after two minutes I’ll read an article and go back to typing I think it’s a different attitude really
K: That is what your generation do though isn’t it – flip through all sorts of things on a computer procrastinating and don’t do anything – quite what we did to satisfy that I don’t know – go and have a cup of tea probably
M: Probably (laughing)
E: We also do things at the same time coz I can have breakfast and have the TV on and check Perez Hilton
J: But your generation is the first to have been brought up with all this – I could never get how you could do all those things all equally successfully and
K: We can’t
J: But they’re obviously peripheral they’re not asking for a specific attention span whereas I call it mopping floor time – what you ought to be doing
C: I quite often have TV an itunes on and I’m reading something and kind of following all three – ish
E: I can just about eat and read at the same time
C: I’m not doing a lot at the moment – just taking in all this Perez Hilton knowledge (laughing)
J: But that doesn’t actually help you as to why we buy magazines which is the most difficult question you said
K: A treat
M: A treat that’s not got calories in
K: And shiny paper
J: No calories
K: And it’s the feel
J: Yes you’ve got the tactile situation with it but the only thing we’ve all come up with Grazia is that the front doesn’t reflect what the magazine contains […] and whether that’s actually
K: Well they usually do
J: They usually do but this one doesn’t appear to
K: And that must be what sells it
J: Yeah and you see also looking at someone like me in particular who doesn’t have the extraneous information of going – what happens in a work environment – you know I haven’t got the um daily contact with a large number of people on a peripheral level and the odd thing you get a snippet of ‘ok well if she’s seen that in Grazia well I’ll go and buy that next week’ there’s not that – there isn’t the starter to send you off in that direction – and if you’re not naturally interested anyway it comes back to why do the same thing everyday and expect a different result? You have to have something to be the changer and that would be the extraneous contact you have within a work environment where somebody would throw something into a conversation say at lunchtime and it would set you off thinking on it in a different direction – I’ve got nothing to change that
C: But if I bought Grazia and read it and talked to you about it you’d buy it
J: Yes I probably would – coz I’ve done that with a few things
E: You do that in the tearoom as well I guess (to Margaret) like we did in the common room (to Claire)
M: Yeah I’m definitely like that
J: And even within my friendship circle we don’t talk about what’s in magazines
K: Mine does you see yeah so I think then probably I would get that kind of thing ‘have you seen that magazine have you seen that article’
M: Yeah so you might go and see
K: (To Jean) So what’s your main reason for not buying magazines is it the cost?
J: I think it’s the time element
K: Yeah but you’ll spend ages reading the paper and things wouldn’t you
J: That’s the problem that’s why I’ve realised I’ve stopped buying the newspaper in the mornings because it means I can’t use it as procrastination – like Claire was saying she uses the computer well I’ve realised I can’t go out without thinking ‘oh I’ll just look at the newspaper for five minutes’ it’s never five minutes it’s half an hours – two and a half hours a week – you know that’s an extra morning’s work and at the moment I really need that – now when I can relax I’ll perhaps go back to buying the newspaper but there most be something to do with the time robber
C: The cover on it makes it look like not a time waster but more gossipy like you won’t get much content out of it whereas if you looked in something you might look
J: And if I’m having half an hours break and it’s a choice between a magazine and going to the gym and doing ten lengths I’ll do the lengths because I get more relaxation out of that without feeling guilty – I think possibly the guilt
K: Do you feel guilty when you read a magazine (to Margaret)?
M: No (laughing)
J: But think of the amount of hours you put in Mags but because I don’t work I feel guilty
K: Yeah but I don’t read it in the day – you see I wouldn’t – in fact I don’t sit down to read anything in the day like that I wouldn’t do it strangely
E: So you read in the evening then?
K: It would be either the – yeah – the evening – either when I go to bed or very occasionally say we were having a cup of coffee at the weekend but it’s something I associate with being time off at the end of the day I wouldn’t sit there all day reading magazines I would feel guilty
C: I know what you mean
J: Yeah – whereas I’m obviously catching up on the laptop doing a Sudoku so
K: Well you know what I do you see I have the telly on in the kitchen so I can do things – cooking at the same time and working whereas a magazine you have to sit down and read
J: It’s a mixture of treat and guilt
E: Well yeah – great – well I think that’s been great guys thanks that’s been an hour and fifteen minutes
J: (Gasps)
K: Bored you to death
E: No no that’s brilliant – thank you
K: I’ve forgotten what your original question was
M: And we were worried we wouldn’t have anything to say
E: Well no problems then there ladies – thanks – thank you very much
Transcript B.

Date of Interview: 06/06/2011
Length of Interview: 00:26:58
Location: Brenda’s House

Information about Interviewee
Name: Brenda Cross
Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female
Age: 56
Occupation: Psychology Teacher (part-time)

E – Interviewer  B – Interviewee
[ ] - Indicates overlapping speech  - - Indicates a pause of one second
[...] – Indicates a longer pause  ( ) – Indicates an action by speaker

E: Um right so we’ll start with a kind of general conversation about magazines
and um what kind of things you read so um you’re are you a regular reader of
magazines?
B: Um quite a regular reader I would say that I probably buy them if I buy once a
month if that’s regular
E: Mm and do you have any particular ones that you usually read or
B: Well I suppose I’m more likely to buy Good Housekeeping um Woman and
Home maybe She occasionally Grazia
E: Ok so um but you don’t um do you tend to vary it or do you go out and but
you know would you say always go and pick up say She once a month or do
you just kind of pick it up when you
B: It varies mo-mostly occasionally I’ll pick up a different one if I’m attracted by
the headline like a health and fitness magazine or a you know
E: Aha so that’s more of a like so like specialist ones sometimes
B: Yeah sometimes like health and fitness ones or diet ones or something like that Top Sante
occasionally that one
E: Alright ok I don’t think I know that one so um do you get them in like
Sainsbury’s or somewhere or
B: Yeah I tend to get them at the supermarket whilst buying the shop
E: Aha
B: Buying the weekly shop would I would tend to buy a magazine most likely
then or at the train station if I’m going on a journey
E: Yeah airports and things
B: | or airports |
E: Yeah so um when you get magazines do you think you usually tend to I mean
how do you read them do you tend to sit down and read them all in one go or
do you kind of have bits of it or
B: [...] I think I [...] probably read them by I’ve picked by the magazine because
I’ve seen a headline – about something maybe its about a person or an article
about something and so I tend to turn to that article first and read that and then
[...] no don’t read it in any – I read it in order of the things I find interesting –
and some bits I don’t read at all
E: Ok so do you do it’s more of a like um [...] depending on the specific thing
rather than like a habit
B: Yeah
E: Ok so how many do you think you read like in a – or does – varies depending on what you’re doing – in a month say
B: In a month – um […]
E: It’s easier to go by month coz that’s when um most come out
B: Two a month – two no more than that
E: Ok and usually like the monthly ones rather than the weekly ones
B: Yeah
E: Yeah
B: Yeah tend to be – unless I pick up magazines that other people like Nici’s (her daughter) bought and then I’ll read hers
E: Aha ok and do you read them do you read the whole thing or do you tend to just flick through?
B: Um I read – because they’ll tend to be aimed at younger age group probably just read look at bits of them
E: Mmhmm so what kind of things do you read in them?
B: Err – in the ones I buy?
E: Yeah
B: Um what do I read um – err – articles about err how to look younger (laughs) I’ll read those err – I’ll read
E: Say like the more factual the like life stories the err
B: Yeah I read life stories some of the stuff in you know Good Housekeeping you know what do I read the Sandy Toksvig article at the back in the back I read the articles about um women or people who’ve done things – um – I read the some of the beauty and the fashion erm maybe bits on the cooking but I’m not a good cook so but I do read them (laughs) um
E: Yeah so I mean when – it sounds like when you open a magazine you pretty much know what you know you can kind of go that’s the fashion bit that’s the beauty bit you kind of know – do you think they’re quite formulaic in that way?
B: Yes I think they are yes I think the ones I read probably are coz I know where things are yes
E: So when you read them do you if you say you got one from Nici do you tend to talk say like ‘oh did you read that in so and so’ or do you – you don’t really sort of talk about stuff or with friends
B: No I um I don’t tend to talk to other people particularly about magazines – er not so much magazines more likely to be things you’ve seen on TV I think rather than – might be the occasional thing – but er I wouldn’t say I regularly talk to other people about magazines
E: No - what about stuff like um the celebrity ones do you follow any of them?
B: Mmm […] not […]
E: Do you find them interesting? Or not really?
B: Um – I read them but I wouldn’t say I read them coz they’re there I wouldn’t necessarily buy a magazine because of a celebrity that I can think of I suppose it does depend on the celebrity – um –
E: What about something like the Royal Wedding would you have gone out to buy
B: I would never have bought er a Hello or you know or a tribute or the pictures or anything like that magazine coz I think there was enough exposure elsewhere I would never have needed it in a magazine
E: So even – so big events I mean that was just an example but I’m trying to think of other stuff like maybe – I don’t know um

B: Yeah I wouldn’t buy Hello for that reason I think that’s a magazine I wouldn’t buy coz it tends to be all pictures and pictures of events rather than articles about – so it doesn’t attract me that type of magazine

E: so you’d be more interested in the kind of features

B: Yeah of what there is in it yeah

E: Ok so […] what about ok so when you read the features and things do you tend to er be more interested in ones that you think are quite relatable so you said you read someone’s column do you think you read the ones that you go ‘oh yeah I’m familiar with that’ or do you read the shocking stories?

B: Shocking stories – um – probably the more ones that are to do with lifestyle or um not the um not shocking – well I suppose it depends – not ones that are […] um […] I’m trying to think of examples err no I think ones that are probably more related to er something that you can relate to in your own lifestyle ‘oh yes I feel like that too’ or I’m you know – that’s someone who I feel like that too or I know people who feel like that um rather than something that’s outrageous er

E: Do you think that’s why the celebrity ones are probably less interesting to you?

B: Yeah because its not like you know my life and it’s been done before and also I think you get exposure to those through so many other sources through the news and through newspaper and you know Twitter or whatever else that you tend to have heard them

E: Yeah – yeah – so do you read a lot of newspapers? Which newspapers do you read?

B: Yeah – um well that varies a bit as well we The Telegraph and The Independent we tend to get but again if I go on a journey I’ll probably buy an assortment of them so I will still buy The Guardian occasionally The Daily Mail um – an assortment really

E: What about the magazines that come with them do you tend to read those as well?

B: […] no […] well I don’t really I tend to read well occasionally again I look at the front cover look at what the articles are in it and will either completely discard it if there’s nothing interesting I won’t go searching through it I’m a bit quick to dissm them I think and I read through what’s – the content page and probably in most magazines that’s including the ones I get um I don’t read them from cover to cover there’s some bits I just skim over and don’t bother reading and there are other bits where I will read all of it so I […]

E: But you do that based on the contents page rather than just flicking through

B: Yeah

E: Ok that’s interesting so err what about the fashion in magazines do you tend to buy stuff that you see in magazines ever or even in the whole not just necessarily in the fashion in the um you know home bits or the

B: Occasionally – more so in a way now than I think I perhaps used to maybe that’s better advertising I mean some sections of magazines um are outrageous aren’t they and I mean if they’re all designer labels or terribly expensive I mean catwalk fashion type things that might be in er supplements of paper I tend to not take any notice but if there’s magazines Grazia is I think a good
example of that and there’s ones that are sometimes more high street and you see something that’s nice yeah it will lead me to look for it online or look for it in a shop I think that’s prompted me in the past
E: So you do online shopping?
B: Yeah
E: Do you read anything online do you read newspapers and things like that?
B: Sometimes – occasionally yeah if um – you have to subscribe to them now don’t you
E: Yeah you do – so when do you say like with a cup of coffee kind of thing instead of the newspaper or
B: Um – I’ve done it when I’ve come back from work and looked for things from work and then carried on reading them coz occasionally for work I need to find topical articles so in fact last week I was looking for something on eating disorders and trawled through the papers online you know I find it’s a useful way of doing it um – so yeah I do – but again I wouldn’t say I do it all the time you know I might read some articles from newspapers once a week not everyday
E: Yeah […] so what about with shopping coz are you – you enjoy shopping you go to the shops to just look around
B: (smiling) yes
E: (laughs) yes – so do you um coz you know with Mum she doesn’t go to the shops so she sees things in magazines and goes to look for them whereas with you more likely see them browsing around kind of thing
B: Yeah because I go to the shops a lot I’d be probably more likely to see something in a shop – going browsing liking – but – er just occasionally I would see something in a magazine that I think so it says ‘you can get this at M&S’ I might go to M&S and think I’ll go and see what that looks like in real life
E: What about like you know in the magazines you read when they do like the fashion spreads or even just in general they do you know pictures of the clothes and stuff do you think that um they’re quite a good representation of um women that you relate to or do you think there’s the same issues there as with teenage girls magazines where they’re all really skinny and – do you find that’s different?
B: | Yeah | Um well you know if I look at Nici’s magazines or some stuff out of Grazia I think that’s really nice but woah do a check and think I’d probably look – that would be I’m too old to wear that but I think on the whole there’s you know I think there’s obviously some outrageous stuff but there’s some good ideas and beauty products you know – accessories and stuff you think oh well that’s er […] no I don’t tend to think unless its some catwalk fashion model thing that most of the stuff – certainly if you take a magazine like Good Housekeeping I think that sometimes some of the stuff can be quite frumpy looking rather than you know if it says this is fashion for your age 50-60 or something I get alarmed (laughing) is that what I should be wearing coz I wouldn’t be seen dead in it (laughing)
E: (laughing) So do you think they’re quite positive on the whole then or do you think er –
B: Er I think some younger magazines are quite – in particular every magazine is about what size you are what shape you are so there’s ones like
um Now and Best is it or um Reveal you know or Closer – are just obsessed by um by you know showing celebrities being fat or you know or being anorexic or thin in fact that’s where I go to get my sources of you know stuff for anorexia and eating disorder stuff – um I would positively go to those magazines coz I know I’m gonna find stuff in there – um and I think most magazines these days do have articles about ageing and anti-ageing and best ways to look good for your age and I suppose they always have done though I think that’s something they’ve done through the ages there’s a particular focus on it and yeah I certainly look at all those – um

E: When you take them into work what do you do with them – how do you use that in
B: How do I use it?
E: Yeah
B: Um well generally in through teaching psychology we talk about the psychology of eating disorders how one theory about how eating disorders may develop is that not that it would be the sole cause of it but the media contribute to the onset of eating disorders by promoting women and men being a size zero or size two so um using examples of the way fashion has dictated that all models have to be skinny or the obsession with people being the perfect size just I use it in classes to sort of take here’s a cross section of magazines this week look at how they’re all completely focusing on one thing
E: Oh right ok
B: And you know you can pick up a weekly er stack and its easy to find stuff just completely focusing on body shape and what you should be so I think I use it that way as a kind of introduction to – look how we’re exposed to it totally – its too simplistic to say though that you know because of the fact that we all read magazines all the time if it was as simple as that then we’d all be anorexic
E: What do the girls think when you show them do they go ‘oh we recognise that’?
B: Yeah I mean I think yeah they do they’re often shocked still by pictures of men and um boys with anorexia they tend to think of it as being quite a female thing so often I deliberately try to find articles about men and that’s quite easy to find as well now
E: Really? In where – in
B: Sometimes in women’s magazines they’ll have that or easy to get that online
E: So when you were saying before that you go and find magazines for like a diet or for sports things or
B: Yeah occasionally I do |
E: So how come what would it be about magazines as opposed to just going online and finding that is there something in particular about getting it in a magazine is it just having the visible thing there or
B: Yes – I suppose its – well again if I saw if I did that I probably wouldn’t say I must go out and buy a magazine about health and fitness but if – say I’m having a thing – coz I go to the gym and I think oh you know well – for example if I wanted to buy some tracksuit bottoms – gym stuff – I might buy one of those magazines to look for adverts for better sites – or I see the headline and it says you know lose a stone in a week (laughing) or something
ridiculous or look good in your fifties and then I might buy it coz I’ll think its an easier way – that’s how I buy those magazines I think

E: So it narrows down the information in a way
B: Yeah and I wouldn’t probably search for that information online I think
E: Ok […] um right so um
B: I suppose I’m quite targeted really in that sense – I tend to buy stuff looking for certain things – not getting a magazine and being surprised by what’s in it
E: Ok yeah I see ok

[Bringing out Grazia]

E: So this is Grazia which you’ve said you’ve read before
B: Yeah not a lot but I’ve yeah
E: Ok so um but you’d pick that up off the shelf you think?
B: I’d pick it up and have a look what’s in it yeah certainly
E: Ok so you wouldn’t be I mean you think the cover looks
B: Too young?
E: (laughing) No no I didn’t mean that!
B: Well I would I mean what with Grazia my immediate thing with it is and it’s the same when Nic’s got it I think it’s a magazine that sits in between sort of Good Housekeeping very much that I would think anyone would have to be a certain age to get anything out of Good Housekeeping and the trashy celeb diet overload – there’s more in it that’s why I quite like it and I think the fashion in it is good it’s certainly I would say targeted I might be completely wrong but by its presentation at people younger than me but then so are lots of things it doesn’t stop me picking it up though
E: Ok so what do you think about (opening magazine) they start off with the fashion and it’s interesting someone pointed out yesterday there’s a lot of adverts for children’s clothes
B: Maybe targeting the twenty to forty kind of age – yeah I suppose that’s what I kind of think it does target the twenty to forties

[Looking through pages including ’10 hot stories’ and magazine in general]

E: When you flick through this magazine do you think there’s anything unusual about the kind of content of Grazia I mean you said you think it’s got more in it
B: I think – yeah I think its got more meat in it more substance in Grazia because it – there are articles exactly like that (referring to Libya story) that are aimed at all sorts of interests and er its not all fashion celebrity its got some articles that are more interesting and that people of all ages can read for example that type of article that is – can be of interest to women of all ages its not targeting a particular […] mm
E: Do you think it sits well in the kind of context of
B: I do I think it’s one of the attractive things about the magazine yeah its what somebody my age becomes more attracted to it for because there’s more stuff of interest in it but it’s I still think that I’m going to turn to it later on and find other things that are to do with fashion and high street and people so I think it’s got yeah – I think it’s good for that
E: What about Nici’s magazines I mean do you - coz my Mum’s always like ‘I’d rather you read Grazia than Heat’ kind of thing do you
B: Yeah – yeah I do – well I don’t care what she reads coz I think she’s old enough to make up her own mind but in terms of value for money or content then if you take those magazines Heat I think Closer is one or is it Reveal or – those in a group together um I can flick through those in a minute and for me find really nothing to read in it because to me they’re just entirely about photographing celebrities in good or bad moments a lot of the time – being about shape and diet and there’s nothing very much or maybe a gossipy story but nothing – that’s what doesn’t attract me about them I just think there’s nothing in here for me really that I haven’t read before
E: What about the cost of them does that put you off?
B: Um – shamefully I wouldn’t have been able to tell you what the cost of the magazines are […] um – because I’ve added them to a shopping basket rather than actually – but I know now having looked through them individually say at Good Housekeeping and saying ‘oh that’s quite a considerable amount of money’ and the thought has even crossed my mind that I shouldn’t be doing what I’ve shamefully sometimes done which is taken a magazine and you know read the bits I want to read on a train and dump it in a litter basket when I get to Euston I think ‘oh that was actually quite a lot of money I should maybe’ read the bits that I’ve been reading but that’s the way I’ve done it and maybe I suppose I should think more about it but to be honest I couldn’t tell you what the price of Grazia is exactly I guess it’s slightly cheaper – how much is it?
E: £1.95 but it’s a weekly one so I mean that’s you know every week – um so I mean would you ever pass them on to someone else I mean if you thought more about it would you
B: Yeah I well – if I’ve got them at home I do I leave them here and Carol and Paula who come in once a week and clean I always say do you want these or well they know now if there’s one in the bin they can take it out so yeah and Nici and I will swap but I think the difference is that if she comes home with Grazia then she’ll leave it for me but if I have Good Housekeeping she won’t take it (laughing)
E: She won’t take it yeah (laughing) I’ve read Mum’s Good Housekeeping before |
B: There’s very little in it! (laughing) | I don’t know why I buy it actually – I used to buy it for recipes but now they’ve gone a bit – quirky – and um there’s not really – there aren’t as – well just as we said before there’s not a huge amount I probably would find as much in Grazia for me as I would in Good Housekeeping although I kind of think marketing wise I probably shouldn’t
E: Yeah well I think that’s the interesting thing about them is that I find stuff in She magazine – I even find things in Ideal Home and I don’t have a home
B: (laughing) true
E: But er yeah what I said before about the magazines that me and Nici might tend to read you know the Closers and the Heats and all they get a bit of the eye roll thing do you think er do you ever feel like you – coz you were saying you should be reading – do you feel like if you were on a train would you rather be sitting there with a Red or a She than a
Yeah yeah do think there’s a sort of an intellectual snobbery about I shouldn’t be reading this like I shouldn’t be seen with a tabloid newspaper

Yeah

Um yeah I think I’d be lying if I said I didn’t think that a bit that I wouldn’t feel a little self conscious reading Closer or […] um I guess I would if I was on my own on a train journey I don’t think I’d care at all but perhaps with a group of other people you know I might be more self-conscious of it

(laughing)

Yeah

But I think that entirely depends on the context and the people you’re with but yeah I think there is an element of that

What about in a waiting room or a hairdressers or something do you tend to flick through magazines then?

Yeah I do

And do you tend to get there ones you wouldn’t normally pick up or buy for yourself? Say like a Hello if its there?

If it’s there – they tend to bring them to you half the time don’t they – yeah I mean there are none that I wouldn’t flick through – there are some I mean Country House and Garden that I mean because I’m not interested in gardening particularly or – country homes that much then I wouldn’t probably choose to pick that up I’d go for similar ones again but yeah I think that’s probably in hairdressers exactly that’s when you tend to read Hello and all the rest that you wouldn’t necessarily buy

Yeah coz you know then – there must be some kind of awareness of what’s in these magazines to kind of go ‘no I wouldn’t buy that’ and know – so there is the exposure there somewhere

Oh yeah definitely oh yeah I think over time there are probably few magazines – I can’t think of any magazines that I um you know averse to then again Vogue I mean the same I’d look at Vogue but I wouldn’t buy it probably because I think its not necessarily again it’s fine to flick through but there’s less likely to be fashion in it that I would buy

So do you think magazines are kind – I mean why do you think magazines are – I know it’s a big question do you think you can isolate any particular reasons why you buy

| Why I buy them? |

I think specifically buy them because we’ve said you pick them up in a hairdresser as something to do or

| Yeah [...] I think I buy them because they’re an easy read you know if you’ve got – if there’s a book I should be reading for work maybe like some sort of textbook or something and I might have that to go on the train I might also pick up a magazine because I think well if I’m bored of reading that or I don’t want anything as heavy as that or I’m tired or a magazine is easier to read then it’s more recreational I think I tend to think of you know – I think easier being the thing – I can sometimes read a magazine as well before I go to sleep at night sometimes when I find it hard to keep awake reading a book half the time then I will maybe take a magazine up and read that because I’m you know I’m flicking backwards and forwards and I think the fact that I might buy it is because I rarely read a magazine and um in one – although I’ve said if I’m on a train I’ll maybe read it in one go and put it in the litter bin or something but if I buy one here say among the shopping I
might read one article and then it’ll be lying around for a week so I don’t read it cover to cover I read it for a while until I think oh I’ve read all that now and I put it – so I think that’s why I probably physically like the presence of it because again you can pick it up and – I think it’s largely recreational – and maybe […] and I’m often disappointed in a magazine I think I think I Grazia again I say is good for that but with some magazines especially now I think oh I’ll read this and then I’m disappointed with it when there are only two or three things in it that I think oh – wasn’t really […] but why

E: | But you still go back |
B: Yeah I still I suppose you’re attracted by the marketing and the fact that maybe you’re missing out on something that’s topical if you’re not reading it you know read the latest on something or other it’s an easy way to think oh I’ve read the latest on such and such

E: | Yeah I’ve got the |
B: New beauty products you know is there anything then you know oh well it’s an easy way of getting that information – there are lots of other ways of getting it but its an easy source I think – but otherwise I can’t think of any other reason I don’t know […]

E: No? Well is there anything else that we haven’t covered that you would like to –
B: Share with you? (laughing)
E: | Like to share? (laughing) | Like to tell me about? No? Well great thank you very much Aunty Bren that’s very helpful!
Eileen described how she doesn’t usually purchase magazines for herself, but often receives them from her daughter-in-law, whose family owns a newsagents. Magazines tend to be passed around the women in her family and Eileen is often the last to receive them, but she does not mind as she is not interested in buying things she sees in magazines, she prefers to look at the pictures and occasionally read the articles about celebrities, but usually only the royals. She is also interested in the horoscopes and TV guide sections of the magazines she reads. If she is interested in buying something specific, for her home or her garden, she will pick up a specific magazine, but this doesn’t happen very often. She sometimes gets Home and Garden magazine from her daughter-in-law who has a subscription to it.

She rarely reads magazines in one sitting and prefers to leave them out in the kitchen to flick through when she has time. Often, she likes to have a magazine ‘out’ when she is reading a book, as she usually reads historical books which can be quite heavy going and likes to have something ‘easy’ to read in conjunction with them. She considers reading to be a ‘treat’.

E: So what impressions are you getting of Grazia are you finding it interesting?  
EK: Yes it is yeah – well there’s – I was interested in that Gadaffi story and what I was interested in – I find with um Kate Middleton and William – I’ve got the same interest in them as I had in Princess Diana um […] and I’m not a follower of the royalty – I – there’s quite a lot of the royalty that I don’t particularly like

E:  
EK: I think the Queen’s always done a good job and I quite like Prince Phillip actually but i’m not keen on them

E: But you buy like - you were saying you bought Hello magazine was it after the Royal Wedding  
EK: I bought it on the run up to the Royal Wedding
E: Oh right
EK: Oh yeah um and Gina actually bought me a magazine that one there Wills and Kate coz she knew I’d like that she bought me that – um – but yes I went and I saw them and I thought I’ll flick through it first coz sometimes – what I find with magazines – on the front it’ll say – you know – it’ll just have one piece and it’ll have a big splash about a certain thing and if it’s something you’re interested in you could pick that magazine up pay for it and when you get home there’s nothing in it
E: Yeah
EK: I’ve actually taken a magazine back – to Sainsbury’s and I can’t remember but there was somebody on the front and I thought ‘oh yeah I’ll have that’ and when I got home there was nothing – it was a wedding – and there was nothing in it so I took it back and I said to the girl I’ll have my money back – I said see that front I said there’s nothing in there she said I know she said it’s awful isn’t it – so now on the odd occasion when I buy them I check them
E: Right – before you
EK: Even the – with the Kate and William – I check inside to see if there’s a reasonable article and then I would buy it but if there wasn’t a reasonable I wouldn’t buy it
E: So is it for the pictures and things or
EK: It’s for the story and the pictures – coz they’ve got quite a good story if everything that’s printed is true and I would think with him being who he is – I don’t think they could afford not to print the truth – because if they were to print silly things it wouldn’t be allowed would it?
E: No
EK: He certainly wouldn’t have it – so yeah to read like he lives in um – he lives in Anglesey in a little farmhouse and they do all their own cooking. They don’t do all their own cleaning do they? You can’t see them going around with a mop and bucket can you - so you put two and two together right you think they live there they’ve got a cleaner and whatever
(Off-topic discussion of William and Kate’s house)
E: So what would you do with the magazines do you keep them then? You know the ones that you’ve got for the royal wedding or
EK: Oh no the royal wedding ones I would keep them and I’ve got newspaper upstairs (laughing) remember when Prince Charles and Diana um – split up – no you wouldn’t remember of course you’re too young but when they split up – it was horrendous – the things that were said about her in the papers by his friends – it was horrendous – and I’ve got quite a lot of those papers upstairs
E: Oh really?
EK: Yeah – and I’ve got papers of when Fergie – when that chap was sucking her toe (laughing)
E: (laughing) ok
EK: Now – and I’ve got them upstairs and the reason I kept them I thought – now – I wonder when I die and my children come to empty the house I thought I bet they’ll find that interesting won’t they?
E: Yeah
EK: Would you find it interesting? You would wouldn’t you! (laughing)
E: (laughing) I’d probably be thinking why has she got this with Fergie and the toe!
EK: Because – I’ll tell you the reason I kept that – because wherever they were abroad they’re on sun loungers and – and he’s sucking her toe – and just round the corner were her children
E: Oh right ok

EK: So the children were kept separate from them but there was no building they were just round the corner I thought ‘oh I don’t think I’d have done that’ would you? If you had your children there – you know
E: Probably not – no

EK: No – even if it was your husband that you were living with – no you wouldn’t want your children to see that would you
E: So how much – um – how much money do you think you spend on magazines in general?

EK: Not a lot - no
E: Do you think they’re expensive for what they are?

EK: I – well for me they are – probably not for some people but for me they are
E: Well see this is nearly £2 and that’s every week

EK: Well that Formula One magazine was £3.60! That’ll last me till I die (laughing) £3.60! I couldn’t believe it! Yeah!

E: So you’ve still got the Formula One magazine?

EK: Oh yeah – well it’s got everything in for this season – um whether it was the magazine for the season I don’t think it comes out every week this particular one so as it’s for the whole season £3.60 isn’t bad really is it?

E: Yeah – how long does it last for?

EK: Well it lasts quite a while I think it’s right – October it could be
E: So do you think you’ll get it again next season?

EK: Well I’d think about that – I might because it’s quite a good magazine – it’s got all the information in about Formula One that I need to know – it’s got all the venues and tells you a little bit about all the countries that you go to – um so yeah it’s quite interesting
E: It’s got pictures in and stuff??

EK: Oh loads of pictures of the cars and um – I like the pictures of the cars actually - can see the difference – coz I’ve been a Formula One fan since – I suppose the very early sixties so when you see the way the cars change it’s absolutely unbelievable!

(Off-topic discussion of Formula One cars)

EK: …But yeah it was quite a good magazine if you like that sort of thing
E: And it was nice to have to keep then I guess as well

EK: Yes nice and shiny and glossy – which makes you look at something and you think that’s nice and shiny and glossy I’ll have a look at that – I don’t like things that are dull and miserable – I like something that looks nice – and the colours were lovely the colours were really bright and I like that yeah

E: So what about you know when you were saying you um – you and Helen and Gina you all pass these magazines along - do you – you must get them a bit after they come out then

EK: Yes
E: Does that not matter?

EK: No not to me – doesn’t bother me – no – I always say to Helen I’m not in a hurry to get them – but if I were younger I would like them – you know I’d like to see the fashions […] I dunno whether that’s true I’ve never ever been – I don’t know how to explain this – I’ve never ever been the type of person
because something is fashionable I’ve never – I don’t have to have it – I’ve always been the type of person if it suits me I’ll have it – same with hairstyle and the same with clothes – I won’t wear it because it’s fashionable – because it might not suit you might it?

E: No

EK: And the same with a hairstyle you know its in fashion but if it doesn’t suite you I wouldn’t have it – no

E: So do you think in magazines it’s more about what’s fashionable?

EL: I think so yeah – and the thing is when they – people say oh this is fashion it’s only someone else telling you what to do isn’t it? (laughing) And so when you get older you think why should I have some twenty year old telling me what to do that I knew fifty years ago! (laughing)

(Off-topic – discussion of Princess Beatrice’s hat at Royal Wedding)

E: So did you read about a lot of these in magazines then – about what happened in the wedding? You picked up magazines after the wedding as well?

EK: I got a couple of them yeah – I did – when I went out I went in the shop and thought oh yeah it’ll be something on the wedding so I’ll have a quick look through and if it’s a decent length article I’ll buy that

E: And then other than that you tend to find them around – when you’re at the hairdressers and things? Do you read magazines at the hairdressers?

EK: Yes if I’ve got to wait - which isn’t very often I’ll go through the celebrity magazines what are they called? You know when you buy a magazine now and it’s got three or four in?

E: Oh what do you mean like Hello magazine

EK: Close is it?

E: Closer?

EL: Yeah – so if you buy a mag- they’ve got three other ones inside they tend to be in our hairdressers

E: The ones from inside or the ones with all of them in?

EK: I dunno just Closer is it? And they’re the ones that have what’s her name – Kerry Katona

E: Kerry Katona? Katie Price

EK: And Katie Price – and they’re really – um – oh and that other girl that’s on the loose women Denise Welsh – she’s done a terrible thing she’s cheated on her husband and I think oh – and I close it quick – I thought I don’t want to know – no – no – how must he feel that she’s spouting about that

E: So do you think it’s too personal?

EK: I don’t like that at all – don’t like it whatsoever and don’t want to read about it – no – and when it was on um – (pointing to recorder) is that working?

E: Yes it is yes

EK: Ah well I won’t go into that then – but there was a recent one on – now I’m telling a lie – I bought that paper yesterday for a reason

E: Which one?

EK: I bought the Daily Express yesterday for a reason – I bought it because on the front it said Ryan Giggs had an eight year affair with his sister in law and that was why I bought that paper

E: Why coz you were interested in that story or

EK: Well I just thought – I knew coz it’s been all over the news coz Ryan Giggs tried to – what’s the

E: The super injunctions
EK: Yeah – um – and when I went into Sainsbury’s yesterday I thought I’ll buy a newspaper and go home and sit down and read it and when I saw that I immediately thought it was his wife’s sister - but it wasn’t it was his brother’s wife

E: So you saw the headline and you thought

EK: But I was going to buy a paper anyway and that really I thought ‘oh I’m going to have a read of that’

E: But you don’t usually buy that paper?

EK: No

E: Which one do you usually buy – the Mail?

EK: The only reason I buy the Mail is for the magazine – I don’t buy it because it’s the Daily Mail

E: Oh right ok

EK: If it didn’t have the magazine I wouldn’t buy it – if I want to buy a paper just for a read I would buy the Daily Express

E: And the magazine is the one with – I’ll just say it coz we didn’t get it on record before – it’s got the home bit and the horoscopes in the back

EK: It’s got – it’s got quite a few bits in that magazine in the back it’ll have the – um – the gardening bit and it’ll also have a bit of fashion in it and it’s things you can buy through the magazine and it’ll also have a celebrity – it could be a newscaster and then it’ll have a little picture of when they were at school

E: Oh really

EK: Yeah – I find that interesting – so say it was Mary Nightingale who reads the news – I quite like Mary Nightingale – there’s a picture of her now and then a picture of her when she was at school and then it gives you a – the text is about – you know – yeah I quite like that because I think you get people on the television who come across as though they’re very nice reasonable people and so you might be interested in reading a little bit about them – you don’t want to know all the ins and outs of their life but you might be interested in reading little bits about them – but then you get the likes maybe on the next page of Kerry Katona and her children and her drug habit and her husband’s taking so much money and I don’t want to know – about that – I really think there are much more important things going on that could be in the magazines – I don’t want to – I just don’t want to know about them – Peter Andre don’t want to know about him

E: So when you say more important things like in magazines what would that kind of be?

EK: Well more interesting things that – and the age thing comes in here you see because what I would find interesting now I may not have found interesting when I was younger – certainly wouldn’t have found them interesting if I was your age but now I’m so much older – well I look at life differently don’t you – well you wouldn’t know but you do – you – everything changes doesn’t it – you think look at that stupid woman taking her drugs because I think all people who - take drugs should be put on an island and left there on their own – yeah

E: Well great – yeah – so I think we’ve covered (looking through notes)

EK: Well I didn’t expect all that to be in there (referring to Grazia again)

E: Do you think well because you were saying you find it interesting to read things like the Gaddafi story in there – do you think coz you were saying
before you find it hard to trust what people say in magazines do you think you trust that - because it’s a more – it’s quite a serious story

EK: I know what you mean yeah – I know what you mean – um – I would think if it’s anything that serious they would have to get it correct - I don’t think they would chance saying things that were untrue about things that were that serious especially when we’ve got our own people going in there risking their lives I don’t think they would be that silly – would you?

E: No so the seriousness of the story - um

EK: I tend to – if it’s a serious story I tend to - believe it more – but I wouldn’t believe all of it - I’d still be a bit – you know think I don’t know whether all that is true

E: But I guess you’d see it on the news too and that would confirm it for you– you wouldn’t just take something you see in a magazine

EK: I like listening to the – I’m trying to think of his name – he’s the political chap – Tom Bradby – I like listening to what he has to say and I always think when I watch Tom Bradby when he’s been asked any questions I tend to believe what he says – so I suppose really there are certain journalists that you have found through your – to be telling the truth – and I find this with your friend

E: Who?

EK: Andrew Marr

E: Andrew - oh yeah

EK: When he comes on to do a programme you know you can trust him and believe in what he’s telling you

E: Yeah

EK: Coz you know he’s done it really well – and I’m the same with Tom Bradby he’s the political – what do you call it – journalist isn’t he – a political journalist – and I believe what he says – now whether I’m right I don’t know but I do tend to believe him – there are certain – like Mary Nightingale reading the news I think – yeah – I can believe what she would say

E: Ok – um - what do you think of the pictures in the magazines of the celebrities – you know and the fashion people do you think it’s good that we have all these pictures

EK: Well it does attract attention doesn’t it – you know especially if you’re female –I don’t suppose the male population would be that interested would they? Um – I’m not interested because they think she’s copying her (referring to a Grazia article) I’m just interested because it’s Kate Middleton – I think ‘oh she looks nice in that’ you know or ‘she doesn’t look nice in that – that doesn’t suit her’ which doesn’t happen very often but she had a hat on the other day at the races and I thought ‘that doesn’t look nice on you Kate’ no – that was in the paper I think – yeah – but when they start comparing them I’m not really into that – it’s a bit petty isn’t it – seems sort of stirring – causing trouble isn’t it – I don’t like that - I - no don’t want to know that

E: Coz with the young girls as well looking at you know the models and things

EK: Oh the ones that are really thin?

E: Yeah

EK: And – and don’t wear much – no I don’t agree with that at all – and these shops that make clothes for tiny little people – suggestive clothes – I don’t think they should be allowed because by the time they’ve grown up they’ve got nothing left have they – you know – they’ve got all the jewellery they’ve got their ears pierced they’ve got their toenails fingernails painted – they’ve
got flimsy clothes on – so when they reach a certain age they’ve got nothing left to do have they?

E: Hmm – but do you think these magazines encourage that – you know for the younger girls coz they see these images all the time?

EK: I think so – yeah – certain magazines do – not all of them

E: Do you think it’s different now from when you were my age?

EK: Oh totally different – we didn’t have anything like this – we had Woman and Woman’s Own and that was bought every week by my mother - there was nothing suggestive in them they were left there for anyone to read whereas if you buy a magazine now you think best not leave that out – I mean I wouldn’t buy it but um – the newsagent on Woodchurch road – I stopped going into his shop because when you went into his shop – on the counter – was I can’t even think of the name – Daily Sport – and on the front page there’s a woman on the front page and her boobs are abnormal

E: Abnormally big?

EK: Just abnormal - and so there’s the counter and the little people standing next to me and this is a family man who runs it and his wife and I thought – oh no – and I should maybe have said something

(Off-topic discussion about the man who runs the newsagents)

E: Anyway – I think maybe we’ve covered everything we can on magazines – so thank you very much – is there anything else you want to say that we haven’t talked about or anything

EK: Not really – no – not really

E: That’s fine – thank you very much!
Transcript D.

Date of Interview: 09/06/2011
Length of Interview: 00:41:33
Location: My House

Information about Interviewees
Name: Julie Orton  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age: 50
Occupation: Pharmacist (Full time) (Two children at home)

Name: Susan Smith  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age:
Occupation: Pharmacist (Full time) (Two children at home)

Name: Susan Maire  Marital Status: Married
Gender: Female  Age:
Occupation: Pharmacist (Full time) (Three children at home)

E – Interviewer  J – Interviewlee 1  SS – Interviewlee 2
SM – Interviewee 3
[ ] - Indicates overlapping speech  - – Indicates a pause of one second
[...] – Indicates a longer pause  ( ) – Indicates an action by speaker

Note: The first 15 minutes of this interview failed to record. Accordingly, I made notes regarding this first portion of the interview and attempted to go over some of the same points again in the second half once the issue with the recoding device had been resolved.

Questioning began with a discussion about which titles are read and how many are read/purchased per month. Julie said that she has a subscription to *She* magazine, which she reads every month. She subscribes because it is so much cheaper although she could not recall how much the magazine would normally cost without a subscription. Susan has three subscriptions to various fitness magazines as she takes part in many triathlons but she feels that she should cancel at least one or two, as she doesn’t always have the time to read them. She has not cancelled them yet as they are paid for by direct debit and she can’t work out which one is which from her bank statement. She said that feels guilty and she *should* get round to it, but she doesn’t know when she will. Sue said that her friend often gives her copies of Hello magazine, but she doesn’t have any subscriptions, nor does she often buy magazines. When I said that we would be discussing *Grazia*, Susan was quick to state that she “hates” *Grazia* but we joked that she should save her opinions for later in our discussion. I started to ask Julie about *She* magazine and why she chose to subscribe to it and what she likes specifically about it. She said she feels that is it appropriate for her age and that she has read it for a long time. She said that she usually reads it all and that it could be quite similar in general content from month to month but that often they are quite varied when it comes to special occasions such as winter and Christmas. Before she had a subscription she made a special effort to purchase
the magazine during the festive season for this reason (this is where the transcription begins).

E: Yeah sorry it’s done this before (stopped recording) – but anyway sorry so you say its festive at Christmas
J: Yeah so that’s why I used to get it and – I just thought it’s kind of got articles that – who was in this months? It’s always the same people – Lulu and Julie Walters and Melanie – Mel C sporty spice was in She this month just people that you kind of read about and
SM: They’re so – I think they’re so cheap when you subscribe – magazines – that actually I don’t feel particularly burdened with having to read them coz actually when you look at how much I spend on them compared to how much I spend on other things then I think well if I only read a fraction of it then it’s no big deal
J: They always have fashion and I think – you know I don’t think most people will be spending like £300 on a coat – you know I always think there fashion seems to be a bit over the top – they always have nice present ideas they’ll have mother’s day and father’s day and Christmas and valentine’s so they have gift ideas
E: So – with the fashion do you think if it was more affordable do you think you’d look in a magazine to buy something from it? Coz you were saying that you look at the
SM: Gear – yeah and frequently
E: So would you almost like a catalogue look in and then go and look for the stuff
SM: Not necessarily because it tends to be the newest thing – the newest inventions – um – and I’ll look at those just out of interest to see what’s happening but if I was gonna go and buy a pair of cycle shoes I tend to keep my old copies and I would tend to go back through and see what had been reviewed – or more often I tend to think oh I know they’ve been reviewed and I’ve already bought them I’d better go back and see what they said
E: But you buy stuff that you see in a magazine? (To Julie)
J: Yeah sometimes I do yeah and some clothes you think oh that looks nice I might go and see what that looks like – they often this time of year have what shape are you what swimsuit suits you best
E: Yeah
SM: And they do – that is valid I would read that and think yes I shouldn’t wear one of those
J: Yes – that one would suit my shape better than that
SM: Yeah
E: Ok – so do you think that they’re quite relatable then what you see in a magazine coz you were saying you think ‘oh yeah that’s true’ like its quite generally
J: Yeah coz I would say what I read is probably appropriate for my kind of age I’d say the fashion in She is probably a bit younger but Good Housekeeping is probably more
SM: It’s older though I would have said for you I would have had you more
J: No but in fact in all of them they kind of have – er – they do go across age range people in their twenties thirtyes forties fifties so they do fashion bits for
different people and if they’re interviewing people who have made career changes in their lives they go for people of different age groups and things

SM: Yeah
J: So they’re obviously marketing it at a wide range
SM: *Good Housekeeping* is a little bit synonymous with – like my Gran used to read it but I know having seen it since it’s not like that anymore
SS: Probably quite a few people things it’s still
J: Coz that’s how they try to market it coz that’s why they’ll do – cover all ages and things like that
SM: Yeah coz I remember reading it and thinking it was more interesting than I thought it was going to be
E: So what about um new magazines what makes you buy – well do you buy magazines ever even though you’ve got subscriptions do you go to the shop and pick them up off the shelf?
J: When I went into hospital Marie bought me a whole load of magazines I’d never read before and – *Red* was one of them – that was very bizarre it kind of didn’t have anything in at all really that related to me – I can’t really remember what it was but I remember at the time thinking ‘what is all this about?’
SM: When I was ill one of my friends bought me as a bit of a joke psychology weekly – or psychology something like that
E: *Psychologies*?
SM: Yeah – and she sort of bought it a bit tongue-in-cheek but because I was in bed I thought I’ll have a read and there was quite a lot of interesting stuff I thought it was going to be awful but I thought I’d better have a look because she’s bought it and bought it round to the house and there were a few things
E: What kind of stuff? Is it like a general kind of?
SM: It was kind of positive thought improving your life kind of stuff rather than – it was less deep than I thought it would be – more superficial – um – I haven’t bought it again or ever been tempted to
E: Do you think that magazines in general are quite superficial – would you say?
SM: Uh
J: Generally – generally – but like I wouldn’t buy OK – I mean I discovered on Saturday that Katie Price has got a new boyfriend who speaks Spanish and she can’t speak Spanish and he can’t speak English!
E: This was in *OK*?
J: Yeah
SM: But I do love reading *OK* at the hairdressers – I wouldn’t buy it
SS: | It’s a good escapism | isn’t it you’re reading about all these people and really it is tittle-tattle
SM: Yeah I love all the photos though
SS: It is quite – it’s addictive reading isn’t it?
E: Do you think there’s something about – being in that environment at the hairdressers it’s kind of like a – would you think rather than you wouldn’t read it on a train or
SM: Well you know I’ve bought it thinking ‘well if I enjoy reading it at the hairdressers maybe I should try reading it at home’ (laughing) to relax with something different
E: So you don’t think its like a context thing?
SM: Yes that’s what I was saying I think it is coz I love it at the hairdressers but at home I was like what am I reading this for
SS: But at the hairdressers you’re just away from everything aren’t you there’s no kids around there’s nothing to do whereas I suppose if you sat reading trivia about stars and your kitchen’s a mess you think oh I’ve got better things to do than this but at the hairdressers you have to sit for a
J: couple of hours
SS: But at the hairdressers you’re just away from everything aren’t you there’s no kids around there’s nothing to do whereas I suppose if you sat reading trivia about stars and your kitchen’s a mess you think oh I’ve got better things to do than this but at the hairdressers you have to sit for a
SM: I think I’d be embarrassed if I was caught reading OK at home whereas at the hairdressers that’s what they give you
SS: (Laughing) you have no choice! Ok I’ll read it!
SM: It becomes this real guilty pleasure that it’s fine isn’t it – they’ve not given you a copy of the Pharmaceutical Journal which we’re all subscribed to
E: (Laughing) You are subscribed to
J: But it’s – Marjorie used to always walk into the tea room every week when Hello came out she’d always buy Hello and I used to think god what a waste of money
SM: I can’t stand Hello either like it’s all very – beautiful photo of her majesty blah de blah and you think ugh
SS: It kind of goes through like – from ones my friend’s given me – like someone’s whole house (laughing) a photo in every room and I suppose it is a bit interesting – but it is trivial
J: But would you buy it yourself?
SS: No – waste of money
J: Yeah
E: So you don’t buy any magazines then? (To Sue) Or do you buy occasionally but just not on a regular
SS: Hardly ever I’d say – it’s bad that isn’t it for this interview (laughing)
E: What about um if you go on holiday or something do you buy them at the airport or like on a train or
SS: Yeah probably if I was going on a train journey and I thought – I didn’t have a book with me or something – probably buy a magazine
SM: I’m always really bad at buying Grazia because I thought it’s not quite so rubbish
E: You’re itching to say something about Grazia! (Laughing)
SM: Uh well I don’t know I thought it wasn’t quite as rubbish as OK because it has got news stories and I felt slightly like I wasn’t dumbing down – and actually I decided I really didn’t like it but I don’t know whether you want me to say or not yet (laughing)
E: No so how come – what is the thing about Grazia that you don’t like?
SM: Well I didn’t notice it but Andy – I bought a few copies of it and I must have bought it for a few consecutive week thinking that it was ok and Andy (referring to her husband) started looking at it and saying that he thought it was really quite – I don’t know whether he used the word evil – but he said that he thought it was a really bad influence on women because it – there’s so many articles normalising cosmetic procedures that he thought it was actually really really […] making women feel inadequate – which I thought coming from a man that was a really interesting point of view and I’d not noticed it um but he said you know just look through and there’d be one about I had my boobs done and I felt great or you know I had my nose – and then I started
looking at them myself and thinking actually it’s true and I started to feel quite
cross coz I’d bought it thinking I hadn’t been dumbing down completely and
maybe I was being brainwashed into thinking I was ugly and needed surgery
(laughing)
E: Well – do you think that’s more obvious in Grazia than in other magazines
then?
SM: Bearing in mind that I read Triathlete’s World (laughing)
E: Yeah but you’re familiar with – with other magazines
SM: I think it’s far more prevalent in there than in OK I think in more magazines –
other magazines that I’ve read are about embracing who you are or what you
are whereas I did start to feel like that was empowerment through changing
yourself
J: I suppose She’s got a lot of articles on that but – I’ll need to go and look again
now and see – I just think well that’s information on it but then you need to
look at is it encouraging people
SS: Do you think it just makes good stories though? And good photos – look ugly
face – pretty face do you know what I mean? It’s like ‘wow’ – even if you
don’t do it yourself it’s like
E: Yeah – interesting to see other people
SS: | It’s just interesting to look at | isn’t it – why did they think
they needed to do that or
SM: I think Andy’s take – and I mean I do really admire him for picking this up –
coz I think for a man to pick it up is quite unusual – he was just saying that
women are becoming much more you know having botox and surgery and
fillers is just becoming – you’re gonna end up in a situation where it’s wrong
not to and he felt that Grazia was promoting that point of view rather than the
you know
J: But you know tomorrow – cosmetic surgery is here to stay and I can’t get over
the numbers that come in for facelifts fillers boob jobs and I think ‘why’ – god
is there something wrong with me should I be bothered – should I be doing
something?
E: Coz these are just normal women aren’t they who can just have one
J: Yeah
SM: And I think I’d rather read a magazine that was maybe how to dress more
appropriately I think Good Housekeeping how to dress is like in thirties forties
fifties and how to put makeup on so that you look good for your age but I then
don’t want to read I have to spend ten grand on having my face filled with –
you know silicone or whatever in order to do it and I – it made me feel really
angry coz I started to feel women shouldn’t have that obligation and that’s
why I get quite vehement about it because I felt like it’s one of those
magazines that was undermining the ageing process for women
J: But there’s other magazines that – has Katherine got some other (referring to
her daughter) – Closer and some other ones that really – and some of them
you think well – what’s it called – take – oh
E: Take a Break?
J: Take a Break they’ve just got total dross in haven’t they! ‘I slept with my
Uncle’ and you know
E: ‘I went to the toilet and gave birth’ (laughing)
SS: Yeah (laughing)
And I know that happens but (laughing) but the stories are how outlandish on the titles

But don’t you think that’s a better thing to be reading than having young girls reading magazines and feeling constantly like unless you’re physically perfect you’re not good enough

But that’s how you read – see I don’t read them and think like that

No – maybe that’s coz we’re a bit – are we different? I don’t know – I mean I don’t care but I do care when I look in the mirror and think ‘god you look old’

But I don’t look and think I want that done but I don’t know whether younger people would read it and feel pressured

But clearly a lot of people do feel pressured because more and more people are having procedures I mean I just avoid looking in the mirror when I feel like that but then

But do you think that’s more to do with magazines like this that are sort of saying you know here’s all the procedures that you can have and these are normal women or the ones – maybe a combination of both – like the celebrity magazines that are showing all these images of like the skinny girls and the pretty girls – do you think it’s more

I think people are more taken with celebrities now coz we didn’t know what people did when we were young did we?

No

We didn’t have any of what’s in the news now

The scandal

There was nothing was there? Hardly anything

You know you’d heard that somebody had got divorced wouldn’t you coz it would become a legal matter but you didn’t hear that they’d got pink eye shadow on

You know everything of what people are up to

Well yeah it’s possibly the obsession with celebrity but I think magazines like Grazia and it’s not alone is it – I think they’re kind of selling this view that you too can become like this whereas there’s a difference isn’t there in saying that Katie Price has done this and then leading that into normal women can do this too

I think sometimes it can alienate people coz Katherine looks at magazines with Cheryl Cole in and hates her

Yeah

She cannot abide Cheryl Cole but like she loves Dannii Minogue so just the way they present themselves I agree with her they present themselves differently but if she sees a magazine with Cheryl Cole she thinks ‘ugh I can’t stand her’

Right

And lots of other girls will think she’s lovely

Well what about um – you were saying when you picked up Grazia you thought it had better content in – more information

Yeah

Coz what about – Grazia does have news stories in it so it has like um – for example it does the top ten stories of the week (showing Grazia)

Why is that number three to jeans (referring to Libya story in Grazia)

Well I don’t know (everyone laughing) so I mean what do you think about that if you were flicking through Grazia what would you think about that?
SM: I’d find that confusing that’s in the middle with jeans
SS: | Yeah a rape story in the middle of that |
SM: I think I could cope better with that if it was the top ten news stories followed
by the top ten fashion celebrity stories but I find that a bit – if I was the
woman who’d been raped and I found that I was one behind coloured jeans
(laughing)
E: If it wasn’t ranked do you think that would make a difference do you think coz
there’s a serious story in there and it’ll get a lot of exposure to people who
hadn’t perhaps watched the news
J: Is that – are there only ten?
E: Er – well I mean in general it does more I don’t know what’s in (leafing
through magazine) they’ve got like um debates so they usually do readers and
stuff write in and things on twitter so this one is ‘are we old before our time’
but there was one about the super-injunctions – generally more serious stories
and then there’s also things like – kind of typical real-life stories and the
culture stuff so it’s kind of a combination of everything it’s got celebrities and
it’s got – you know – but do you think that’s a good thing to put news stories
in this context?
SM: Yeah
SS: To be honest I’ve never read Grazia but as a […] I think I’d prefer to see it as
Susan said in sections
SM: But would people then read it if there was a news section and a celebrity
section would people just ignore the celebrity section and does mixing it in
courage people to look at stuff they wouldn’t otherwise look at – I don’t
know
SS: I know what you mean but then like you say that story kind of gets
SM: Put in with jeans
E: Yeah – then they also do a news report – they’re often quite serious stories but
this is one about women who are specifically going out to find – Prince Harry
– but there’s been – I mean that’s news report and this is a hot story
J: See I don’t think that’s news I think that’s celebrity gossip
E: Yeah so like – this story about Gadaffi is a hot story
SM: That’s more of a hot story (referring to Prince Harry article) and that’s more of
a news report (referring to Gadaffi article) […] that’s weird terminology isn’t it
J: I think that’s a celebrity kind – I don’t think that’s a news report
SM: Yeah it’s just gossip isn’t it whereas that’s proper – presumably proper news –
unless it’s about what he wears (laughing)
E: (Laughing) Gadaffi’s secret jeans yeah – but I mean do you think you said
you’ve read Grazia a couple of times would you have noticed this when you
read it?
SM: No I just flicked through and read – I did quite like those articles I have to say
coz they were a slightly different take on the news and a very womanly take
on the news I did quite like that about it
E: Yeah – coz I mean I have a subscription to Grazia I read it every week I’m not
in a position of judgement but it is just an interesting – it’s different and it
brands itself as different coz it brands itself as a weekly glossy so it’s a
combination between the weeklies and the kind of Heat magazine and the
more like Vogue with the fashion but then also like She with the recipes and
the lifestyle
J: *Good Housekeeping* has kind of news stories in – like they’ll have people being attacked and stuff like that and – who’ve been through – you know children being kidnapped so that’s kind of news put in there but how they title them I don’t know

E: I suppose the difference is because this is weekly – if it’s monthly it’s more of a feature maybe than news because it’s like

J: See I think that’s quite a big magazine to read weekly

SS: Is that every week yeah?

E: Yeah – I mean the other thing to talk about is the covers so what do you think what age range would you say that was for if you looked at it on the shelf?

J: I’d say under thirty

SM: Yeah

SS: I dunno I would probably pick it up coz I wouldn’t know any different – it doesn’t look that much different than *OK* or *Hello*

SM: I think it’s a little bit touching on *Heat* though

SS: What the cover?

SM: Yeah

E: Do you think inside matches the outside?

SM: Yeah – um

SS: Let’s have a look at the inside

SM: I also think it’s – because of the cover – I think it’s always quite an element of surprise when you open it and there’s serious articles inside as well

SS: So you say it markets itself as

E: A weekly glossy yeah – a combination

SS: Well I’ve never read it – apart from I’ve heard you talk about it

J: Where is it advertised?

SS: Yeah advertised as something different

E: Oh it’s just no it’s the general brand – general thing it’s – er kind of

J: Right

E: Angle is that it’s a weekly glossy I mean it’s kind of generally it doesn’t say

SM: But when it was first launched

E: I mean if you open that it’s kind of a more of a like high fashion kind of thing and I think the way it’s laid out is meant to be more of a

SS: I suppose from the front cover it doesn’t really say anything about the newsy bits so looking at that wouldn’t make me think it was any different from the others

J: But then I think how do we know about other magazines? I know that *Heat* coz Katherine buys it

SM: I think when this was first launched though I seem to remember it was on television with some advertising and I remember the adverts coz it did very much push itself into the […] I can see it as *Heat* for somebody with a bit of intelligence who didn’t want […] and the other reason I bought it was I started to – I remember this now – I used to buy *Heat* just for sheer – something to look at – and then there was too many pictures of naked people that I had to think if the kids picked it up or if there were headlines and once Thomas started to read I didn’t want him to read because it was very sexual and that (referring to *Grazia*) didn’t have it – it’s a little bit more – intelligent and there’s no nudity in it so that was why
J: How do they – magazines aren’t heavily advertised are they – Take a Break and rubbish like that has some TV adverts but I can’t remember how they’re advertised

SS: Yeah

SM: No I remember that (referring to Grazia) being on the television when it came out but

SS: You know I sometimes feel if I like go into a shop I feel a bit overwhelmed coz there’s a whole – you know in WH Smith’s there’s a whole – so if you don’t normally read one you just end up picking

SM: What the hairdresser gives you (laughing)

SS: You do coz you don’t know do you?

SM: I think the power of what hairdressers buy is actually in marketing terms must be massive coz if you read something at the hairdressers and you like it then it would encourage you to go and

SS: They should almost give them to hairdressers for free shouldn’t they?

SM: Yeah

E: Well stuff like the tea room – coz mum started reading Grazia coz she picked it up in the tea room a couple of times – so yeah I think stuff like that maybe does have a big impact

J: Well I choose to sit in the hairdressers now rather than go around Birkenhead for an hour I think I’ll sit and read – catch up with all the gossip

E: So what – um – as a kind of big point – a hard question to answer is why do women read magazines – so do you guys have any thoughts on that I mean obviously it is a massive question but just kind of immediate

SS: Escapism

J: Easy reading

SM: Something that’s easily digestible that’s – if you’ve got ten minutes in between – that you can – and escapism - lot of escapism

(Break in recording)

(Looking through Grazia)

J: Is this an old one?

E: Yeah quite an old one now

SM: I don’t like magazines either where the fashion things are completely beyond my price bracket I think I’ll sit to look at things and think ‘oh yeah I could afford that’

SS: Yeah like jacket £1,125 I don’t think so!

E: Yeah

SM: £10,000 for a pair of sandals and a pair of jeans for £120 […] didn’t they used to do a feature in here about fashion people were wearing on the street?

E: Yeah – I’ve commented on that online and it’s been in the magazine – it’s right at the back

J: They used to do that in Liverpool

SM: I quite like that coz I think it’s interesting what people wear on the street

J: But I always think they must have got dressed up for that

E: Apparently there’s one road in London that they’re always on and if you go to that road you might get in it

SM: Looking like that – see there’s no way I’d go out

E: I think you’d look great in that
J: On the school run
SM: Yeah when I’m not in my trackies
SS: You know what I didn’t say is I probably read more than magazines is newspapers – not always very high brow newspapers
SM: *Daily Mail*
SS: Well no – sort of
E: Really?
SS: Well you know – I don’t know
E: Well they have magazines
SS: Yeah they do so I probably have read magazines in that
E: Do you read the magazines that come with newspapers?
J: Yeah
SM: No I don’t – sorry – I don’t have time
SS: I do – I don’t read other ones but I probably flick
SM: You know what I absolutely love and I don’t know why – makeup sections of magazines I’m absolutely addicted to them I don’t know why – and it’s not like I own lots of makeup or wear lots of makeup – I just love makeup and I love reading about it
SS: That would bore me
SM: Would it? No I just think I read that and I’d actually read where all those things were from
SS: Why if you weren’t going to buy it?
SM: I don’t know (laughing) but I like that combination of eye shadow there with yellow on the inside and blue on the outside which obviously you’ve never seen me do (laughing)
SS: But you’d never do it would you?
SM: No but I find it really interesting I do really like makeup
E: But what do you think it is about looking at it?
SM: It’s pretty (laughing)
J: Do you think – you’d like to wear it?
SM: Yes – and it reminds me of being a little girl and having my first set of eye shadows and doing things like this because you’d read it in magazines and you’d have to go and buy Rimmel eye shadow and you’d put it on and have to take it off again coz you’d look dog awful and you’d end up becoming a person who only wore mascara and eyeliner – but I’d like to wear more eye makeup I’d wear quite a lot but I wouldn’t ever
J: Experiment like that?
SM: No – but I would look and think oh orange nail varnish is in fashion I might buy some orange nail varnish for my toes – I would do that – it does influence me – but I do always go straight for the make up articles and skin care – I love skin care too
SS: You know interestingly
SM: You need to start recording again now we’re telling you all the interesting stuff
E: Um – I am still recording it actually
SS: You little sneak
SM: You know don’t you when you stop everyone goes ‘oh and another thing’
E: I know well I’ve done a few now so I know if I stop it everyone carries on anyway
SS: Interestingly Andy (referring to her husband) spends more money on magazines than I do – all cycling ones – cycling weekly cycling monthly
E: Why’s that – that’s interesting
SS: Well see I’d think it was a waste of money but he justifies it
E: So why is that? To get the information?
SS: Um – he just love seeing all the new gear
E: Coz the interesting thing about that is – coz if he’s getting all the information in a magazine couldn’t he just get it online?
SS: I think (laughing) don’t tape this (laughing) he likes […] he likes reading on the toilet (everyone laughs)
SM: Oh god I’ve got a guilty secret too now – don’t worry mine’s worse than yours
E: What’s yours?
SM: Well Andy (referring to her husband) subscribes to Classic Motorbike and leaves it in the loo and I’m now completely obsessed with reading it – I can actually spend ten minutes on the toilet reading Classic Motorbike because I love the before and after pictures – they do the bikes up and I started reading it in a sad git kind of way and then I got interested in it – so yeah that’s a little bit
J: We have Private Eye in our toilet [...] Sam (referring to her son) likes the cartoons
SS: Yeah […] so that’s a bit weird isn’t it?
E: No that’s ok
SM: No I think that’s – I think a lot of people have magazines on the toilet coz I remember – do you remember Geraldine from work?
J: Yeah
SM: I remember once having this conversation with her in the tea room years and years ago where someone was saying about
SS: | Can I just go to the toilet? Have you got any magazines in there? - No I was joking! |
SM: Magazines in the toilet and she was appalled that anyone would because of the hygiene element she had OCD about hygiene and I often think of her while I sit and look at the Classic Motorbikes under our cabinet to fish out to read
SS: I think that is quite a male thing more than female just to sit there for ages
J: Well it gets them out of doing jobs doesn’t it?
SS: Yeah then they just re-appear half an hour later – half an hour later they’ll come back
J: Yeah coz I suppose that’s a bit – you can’t really go on at them coz they’re on the loo can you?
E: Hiding in there?
SM: Yeah they do – once you’ve had kids men hide in the toilet (laughing)
E: Oh ok (laughing) um well – yeah – right is there anything else you’d like to say on topic
J: Do our PJs count? They sometimes make it into the toilet
E: Pharmaceutical Journal?
J: Yeah
E: Yeah tell me about the PJ do you guys all read the PJ?
SM: I try to
SS: You always used to read the jobs
SM: There’s never any in there anymore (laughing)
SS: (Laughing) And now there aren’t any coz nobody’s got any jobs!
J: Well no do you not think that’s coz it’s all changed?
SS: Yes well it’s all online
SM: | Yeah they’re all online as well |
J: Coz since the PharmSoc has split it’s gone very thin the journal hasn’t it?
SM: Yeah
J: But I think it’s got more focused maybe
SM: What was that bit that came with it – professional pharmacist I can’t remember what it was called – that gave you fashion advice! (Laughing)
E: No way! Really?
SM: Yeah it was like
SS: And where to go on holiday and things – for a pharmacist! (Laughing)
SM: Yeah and it was things like not to wear bracelets that jingle at work coz it sets a poor impression
E: And it said in the magazine?
SM: Yeah and so you minimize your jewellery to a pair of earrings and a necklace and if you’re going to wear a bracelet make sure it doesn’t rattle whilst you’re at work
J: And it used to have cookery bits in – well that was a total waste of time
SM: | Waste of time |
yeah coz it was aiming to be – and it had this thing about a capsule wardrobe for a female pharmacist and it was ‘accessorize with a scarf’ (Laughing)
SS: (Laughing) Have they stopped doing that now?
SM: I don’t know I’ve not seen it
J: I think they’ve stopped it now – I don’t know who sponsored that – but the jobs are all online now so there’s hardly any jobs in it
E: So what kind of stuff is there in it?
SM: News articles and sort of
SS: | Deaths! |
E: Only of pharmacists?
SS: Pharmacists that have croaked it! (Laughing)
E: Oh ok
J: Um – educational articles really isn’t it?
SM: Yeah news you know new trial on aspirin was shown to reduce this
SS: I sometimes read it but it sometimes goes straight in the bin
SM: I’ve been better since I’ve left work because I feel like I need to be doing something
E: Do you pay for it?
J: Yeah
SS: Well you pay for your yearly (referring to Pharmaceutical Society subscription which used to be mandatory for pharmacists but is no longer)
E: And it just comes?
SS: Yeah

(Off-topic discussion of membership of Royal Pharmaceutical Society)
SS: So I wonder now with the recession how it’s affected magazine sales coz it is a luxury isn’t it
SM: Yeah […] I really ought to cancel my Zest subscription
SS: How much is Grazia
E: £1.95 but it’s – I can’t remember but it’s about twenty quid for a six month subscription – it’s like really cheap with a subscription
J: But the trouble is when you get a subscription – like *She* and *Good Housekeeping* often do free gifts but often when you get it through the post you don’t get free gifts

E: Yeah – yeah

SM: One thing that annoys me if often if you get a subscription offer there’ll be a chance to subscribe and you get this free you know a triathlon thing or whatever and I think just coz I’ve been subscribing – if I stopped it and then waiting six months and then started it I’d get those

J: Yeah

SM: But because – and I think they should send people who subscribe something

J: A discount or

SM: Well yeah

E: Coz you have to renew the subscription don’t you

J: But you tend to I don’t have to do it it’s on – mainly it’s on direct debit so I think a lot of the time they rely on people

SM: Forgetting

J: Yeah

SM: And I can’t work out which of my three is *Zest* so

SS: Are they all the same price?

SM: Probably not but I can’t work it – no – I haven’t spent a great deal of time doing it – maybe I should just cancel all of them and then (laughing) get my free goggles!

J: But – if you rang the – coz it’s the same people that do them all isn’t it?

SM: Yeah

J: (To Susan Smith) Are you going to go home and get a subscription now?

SS: Yeah

J: Hey well you’ve got free ones from your mate

SM: I’ll pass on *Zest*

SS: Yeah – that’s true – I’ll be a scrounger

SM: *Triathlon* um

J: Does *Triathlon* go to someone else?

SM: No I keep that

J: (Laughing) she might lend you it!

E: Just go round and use the toilet!

SM: (Laughing) no that’s *Classic Motorbike*

SS: Does *Triathlon* not make it to the toilet?

SM: No

J: Does it go to Andy is he allowed to read it?

SM: Yeah anyone can read it – it’s on the coffee table – for the last six months left there – yeah – I don’t – he doesn’t read it at all though

*(Off-topic discussion of upcoming Triathlon in which Susan’s husband is competing)*

SS: (Whispering) We’ve gone off topic on magazines a bit

E: It’s ok

SM: What?

E: Sue’s worried coz it’s still recording

J: But it comes to a gradual end doesn’t it so this is it – she told us it was the end before but she knew it wasn’t really

SM: We can all sort of move in circles around
E: No it’s ok – well does anyone have any final comments they’d like to make
coz I’ll stop the recording then and everyone can er
SM: I um – the only – no not really
E: No it’s ok – shall I stop the recording then?
J: Yeah – yeah
Transcript E.

Date of Interview: 09/06/2011
Length of Interview: 00:39:78
Location: Rachael’s House

Information about Interviewee
Name: Rachael Pratt    Marital Status: Single
Gender: Female        Age: 22
Occupation: Waitress (full-time, recently graduated from university)

E – Interviewer        R – Interviewee
| | - Indicates overlapping speech    - - Indicates a pause of one second
[...] – Indicates a longer pause    ( ) – Indicates an action by speaker

E: So what was the last magazine that you read?
R: Probably *Glamour* magazine
E: And that’s a monthly?
R: Yeah
E: So do you read *Glamour* every month?
R: Um not every month [...] recently I haven’t been as much reading it month to month but in general maybe every other month
E: So what magazines do you read most regularly?
R: Probably *Glamour* and *Marie Claire*
E: So monthly ones?
R: Yeah
E: What about the weekly ones do you ever go for them?
R: Err I used to read *Heat* every week but I don’t read that anymore
E: How come?
R: Um – I got – I think – I don’t know if it just didn’t seem as good anymore or if I just got older but um [...] I didn’t really like [...] it just seemed to be more and more tacky to me as I got older and you know the circle of shame and things and it got to a point where I thought this actually isn’t funny anymore whereas with *Glamour* and *Marie Claire* you get your sort of celebrity gossip in that [...] but I don’t know if nicer is the word but do you get what I mean yeah
E: Yeah - so what kind of things do you want to know? The fashion the lifestyles
R: Yeah the fashion the lifestyles the sort of travel information I do quite like I’ve got a few travel magazines recently you know where to buy something – decorative even you know
E: So do you think that’s changed as you got older you developed more specific interests
R: Yeah
E: So do you – quite often buy magazines then?
R: Not as much as I used to coz I’m saving money at the moment (laughing) and one of my things I was cutting back on was magazines
E: Ok so that’s interesting then do you think of them as kind of a luxury item then that you can kind of afford to cut out or have you found them quite hard to cut out?
R: No I found it easy once I started […] um […] but – err – I wouldn’t say it’s a luxury item but I think if you really are cutting down to the basics then I think a magazine is one of the first things to go
E: Ok so what would you say it is if it’s not a luxury item?
R: Just […] something that’s nice to have if you’re not saving for something else you know
E: Say like a treat or something
R: Yeah – say like whenever I’m ill or something mum will like buy Glamour for me and I’ll come home and it’s there and that’s always like a nice thing
E: Yeah so do you tend to buy them more or does your mum get them or you get them off your sister maybe
R: I tend to get them myself but as I said sometimes if there’s something particularly on the cover or something mum might get it as a little surprise for me
E: Ok – yeah my Mum’s the same – so what about you and your sister and your mum do you pass them – do you all read them
R: No just me
E: So does Olivia not really read them
R: Um Olivia and my Mum read the same they read house magazines so they share house magazines
E: Ok so you’re the only one in your house who kind of reads the fashion and the
R: Yeah yeah
E: Ok so what do you think you get out of them when you read them? Do you tend to buy stuff you see in them?
R: Um not necessarily but um – I’m trying to think […] I in a way it’s the lifestyle you’re always buying into – you might see even in the fashion section for example an Alexander McQueen dress and that might be in a style that you think ‘oh I could do that myself” you know or even – as I said it’s the lifestyle it’s the idea of it you can sit and read and it’s saying ‘oh go to Barcelona’ and things and I’m not necessarily going to go to Barcelona
E: Mmm so do you think being young it can be more like an aspirational thing?
R: Yeah you know it promotes this career woman sort of
E: Yeah yeah so what about other magazines you said you used to read Heat what about other weeklies? What about say Take a Break or Pick me Up or something like that?
R: They were terrible! I thought they were all – but if they were around
E: Yeah coz we used to have them in the common room
R: If they were in the common room I’d look at them just to see how dire they were
E: So even when we were like sixteen seventeen you still thought they were
R: Appalling! I remember someone um in our year made a fake of Pick Me Up and it was called Put Me Down and it was they made a copy just to show how bad it was (laughing) and I contributed to a few pages there (laughing)
E: (laughing) But then to do that you must have been quite familiar with Pick Me Up so you must have read it a few times
R: I think – I know this sounds really arrogant now but I saw the stories on the front cover and think sometimes that’s it you just know – I mean sometimes
you would flick through them and just to think is it really – you know you’d see ‘I married my Dad’ on the front cover and a part of you will think ‘what the hell?’ and you’re bored and you’ll read it

E: So who do you think brought them in? (laughing)
R: I always wondered that! (laughing) there was someone in the common room who kept bringing them in and I don’t know coz I’d see a pile of magazines and I’d think ‘oh great’ and I’d go over and I’d be like ‘oh great they’re all a pile of rubbish’ I don’t know there was that – it wasn’t me! Honest! Someone was buying all that stuff and I don’t know

E: Yeah ok
R: Because I would always see it and it would say ‘only 39p’ and I’d think well
E: But do you think that was to do with it though the price?
R: Probably but I never quite got that coz I thought right if it’s 40p and you just saved – the amount of Pick Me Ups I found in the common room you could have got like a really good magazine for that – but someone kept buying them
E: Ok - ok um because we used to buy Heat every week and that was like £1.95 or something
R: Yeah
E: Which was quite a lot for us at the time
R: Yeah
E: So what did you think when you used to buy Heat
R: I think what I liked about it was it seemed to be and I think whether this was something that went downhill or I just got older – was that it did seem to be written by intelligent people who might have had English degrees or something I don’t know you just there was something about it and I couldn’t put my finger on it but it was almost mocking the genre in a way
E: Like an inside joke
R: Yeah it was in a way it was it recognised – it would just make fun of the whole ‘oh my god’ celebrity thing and that’s what I did like about it was – you know you felt that this wasn’t written for imbeciles you know you felt it knows what it is and it was the self recognition things that I found quite funny um and even just stupid things like they’d pick up on grammar – really precise grammar they’d complain about and I thought ‘right these aren’t stupid people that are writing this’ and it did seem to be that bit better – but I don’t know if I just grew out of it or something or it’s less of that now and it’s steering more towards that – you know […] mindless kind of thing but it just stopped being worth it
E: So but then you wouldn’t tend to get weeklies then you get the bigger other magazines the Glamour and Marie Claire are there any others?
R: Not really […]very very occasionally I’ll get something else
E: Do you think that they’re kind of on the cheaper end of the spectrum – Glamour particularly it’s only like £2
R: I think it’s very affordable especially for a monthly – they always come with free gifts as well which some of them I’d actually buy
E: Um so when you get them how do you tend to read them do you sit down and read them all in one go
R: No I do it sort of over a period of time I mean quite a lot of the time I buy one and I just take it to work with me for days you know and then in my break coz it’s quite a nice thing to dip into during work you know
E: So do you think because you’re quite familiar with it that you tend to turn to certain things first or do you start at the beginning and work your way through?
R: I just start from the beginning and work through otherwise I’ll lose where I’m up to
E: Ok but you’re quite familiar with the format of it
R: Yeah
E: Do you think it’s quite repetitive – same things each month or
R: I mean there’s always – I mean to be honest at the end of the day […] yeah you might get something that is a stimulating read but there’s one thing that does annoy me about those magazines and I’ve started to even – well I don’t even cut it out but sometimes unless I’m really bored I just flick past – and it’s the generalization about gender that just really annoys me um you know they’ll say oh women like doing this and men like doing this or whatever and I think well you can’t – I mean I as a woman don’t like being generalised as though that’s what makes me because half the time I disagree with it anyway and I just find it’s essentially whatever the article is about they’ll always somehow bring it back to that’s the theme and I really don’t think it’s necessary – especially about oh men are like this or whatever and I think no man I know is like that
E: So do you think they’re quite unrealistic then?
R: Well there’s nothing – I mean if you’re going to approach something that generally then nothing’s going to be realistic and it’s almost as if it’s just following a formula of what they think that people want to read they like to think of women as in this category and men as in this category and it sometimes feels like it’s just ticking that off and um I think it can be a bit annoying I mean at first you just kind of roll your eyes but then it gets to a point where you think I’m reading this all the time and it’s […]
E: But what do you think makes us keep going back to them then
R: I don’t know I mean to be honest I think […] I said I sometimes skip out those parts that’s the thing that’s annoying almost but […] I think […] I think obviously the thing is there are going to be – there are things like that a lot of women will identify with and so once you have that one thing that you think you recognise in yourself it’s the way they’re trying to address the general women and there’s never going to be one woman that’s everything in that so I suppose they are trying to get a general […]
E: Yeah – with quite a big age group – do you think – um – would you say Glamour is in our age range or do you think it’s slightly older or even maybe younger – I mean what would you say the age range is for something like that?
R: I think with magazines and I think it can be similar with books as well you always read an age that’s above your actual age I mean when we were about twelve we were reading – what was that J –
E: J-17?
R: J-17 yeah and um
E: And Sugar
R: Yeah and by the time you’re seventeen you’re reading Heat
E: Yeah and Girl Talk was like the oldest thing just like how embarrassing to be reading that
R: *Girl Talk* yeah how old were we then (laughing) and so like now – you’re always looking forward and I think maybe that’s a positive thing – so maybe that would explain why my sister’s reading house magazines (laughing)

E: So do you feel like you grew out of certain things – like *Heat* even though that’s probably for even older people

R: Yeah – poss – possibly yes I think um […] one thing that began to really grate me about *Heat* […] was there was almost an element of a lack of aspiration in it and I mean you read *Glamour* and you are almost buying into that lifestyle I mean you know you think they’re saying ‘why not buy this bag this month for your job interview?’ and then you read *Heat* and it’ll be like ‘oh well I nearly choked on my packet of biscuits and my tea’ and I thought I don’t want to be that person – I don’t want to be that reader I want to be slightly the reader who’s going off to the job interview.

E: Ok so – what about stuff like *Hello* and *OK* magazine where do you think that fits in? Would you ever buy them?

R: Not really […] I mean there would have to be something on the front cover that would make me buy it

E: Coz they’re quite events related

R: That’s what I was thinking, I can’t rule out like

E: Like the Royal Wedding or something

R: Yeah I actually nearly bought the royal wedding one just coz I felt like joining in the celebration um – but I didn’t coz I just thought I’ve got to read the rest of the magazine then

E: So would you ever buy something and just read a specific article or would you feel guilty then?

R: I’d feel guilty – I’d feel like I had to read the rest I know it’s weird but when I used to read *Heat* – when Big Brother was on they’d always do loads of coverage of Big Brother and I hated Big Brother but for some reason I’d find I’d read it and I’d be sitting there so bored as I’d be reading it but coz I’d bought it and I had it I felt like

E: So the cost maybe or

R: Subconsciously maybe probably I was about seventeen I don’t know what I was thinking! But for some reason I’d be grumbling to myself and I’d be complaining to my family god I know all about Big Brother thanks to *Heat* and they’d be like ‘why did you read it?’ (laughing)

E: (laughing) as though they’d put it in the newspaper or something

R: Yeah

E: So what do you do with magazines once you’ve finished with them?

R: Um – I tend to keep them for a few months – its as though I think ‘oh I might need that’ I don’t know why

E: I do the same thing I have stacks

R: Yeah and then it gets to the point I look at them in my room and I cant even remember reading it so I just get them all recycled – I think I cant bring myself to throw something away and you know what I do end up using it – I have made things I made something for my sister recently and I did go and find old magazines and cut things out for it so

E: So what about things that annoy you in magazines – say for example the way they portray women for example with fashion how do you feel about stuff like that? Does it annoy you ever?
R: No – I mean […] I mean I find the thing about fashion is it’s so subjective you know they’ll say ‘do this don’t do this’ and I’ll look at it and think ‘why not’ you know I think Helena Bonham Carter looks lovely this week – leave her alone! (laughing) but you know things like that I usually think well actually the person who’s ticking everything off wearing everything you say they’re supposed to be wearing I find it very boring – oh here’s something that annoyed me I was reading – I think it was Glamour actually and it was fashion week in London so going back a while and it was the style editors of Glamour so bear in mind that’s a pretty good kind of thing and they had their list of everything they’d worn for fashion week and don’t get me wrong there’s nothing wrong – but it was so boring – like this is in season wear a denim shirt and I just […]

E: But do you think that’s because of who they are or the fashion was boring?

R: I thought the fashion was ok but if you’re a – I found it hypocritical because if you’re a – coz on the next page they’re going on about how great say Lady GaGa is – um you know for pushing the boundary and then you get – they’re still encouraging women to play it safe because you know then it’s almost like they’re trying to check what’s the right thing and what’s the right side of quirky and because Lady GaGa is sort of considered cool then that’s ok but then someone like Helena Bonham Carter could be wearing the same thing but because you’re not allowed to wear that – and I don’t know I just find it very formulaic in that way

E: Do you think you get irritated while you’re reading the magazines or do you think it’s thinking about it now?

R: I think it’s more with hindsight – I sort of don’t read magazines to completely stimulate myself to be honest it’s me switching off and relaxing and so it’s a mild irritation at most really coz I don’t really care enough

E: Do you think there’s an interesting thing about our generation because we tend to get a lot of things online now like celebrities and fashion do you think you use the internet for that kind of thing?

R: Yeah I mean I’ve been a bit of a hypocrite here because i’ve just remembered I do go on Heatworld.com (laughing) I just remembered that then and Perez Hilton (laughing)

E: But do you think that’s partly why maybe you don’t tend to go for Heat anymore because it’s almost invalid if it only comes out once a week and we get this information constantly

R: Yeah coz to be honest the main thing about Heat was keeping up with the gossip really

E: Yeah coz we didn’t have all this stuff when we were buying it

R: Exactly this was how we knew what was going on and so I suppose now you know what’s going on because you find out – I mean you find out on Facebook I mean I just – I remember when Heath Ledger died I found out coz I went on Facebook I didn’t find out via the news or anything like that I just went on and everyone’s status was about it – so

E: So do you watch the news?

R: Um – not as much as I used to

E: What about newspapers?

R: Yes I like the Guardian – um I’ve got it as an application on my phone – I actually go on it online more than I read it – when I was at university I used to read it a lot coz it would just be around so it was easy to get into but um now –
and in work it’s not one of the newspapers we have but um that’s the newspaper I’d enjoy most

E: Ok – so do you tend to get that for a general sense of the news or do you have particular bits that you

R: I read the arts blog – well I go on that on the internet and things it’s mainly the arts section and all the culture and um especially – it was especially around the election time I was reading all that because I really wanted to know about funding for the arts and I wanted to know about that and read the manifestos

E: So it’s more particular issues

R: Yeah yeah I wouldn’t say I just generally get it I mean I like to know what’s going on but I wouldn’t say I

E: | particularly follow |

R: Yeah

E: So I mean – and this is not a judgement at all but would you say you probably know more about what’s going on the world of celebrity than the you know the real world

R: Yeah oh yeah because it’s almost an escapism

E: Um but I mean do you think that this is something that’s gonna change eventually

R: I was thinking about this the other day and I thought – I know this sounds like I’m trying to justify it but – um - I was thinking about history and how history is boring when you just sit down and learn dates and things and the news is like that at the moment there’s nothing human about it you can’t really engage with it but I’m interested in people and things and it just so happens the news that’s about people is celebrity news – and this isn’t me justifying it now coz it sounds like it is but I was trying to work out well why do people love celebrity gossip and I was thinking well I love any gossip – I like to know what people are doing why they do things it’s not so much the superficial – well it is superficial but with celebrities they’re almost a reflection of our lives but heightened so I think a lot of us are always going to be interested in how other people live because it’s really amazing and fascinating if you think about it

E: Do you think you find it relatable?

R: Yeah – um – I know it’s weird but I’ve always tried to relate myself to famous people – like when we were little and used to watch the Simple Life and I was Nicole Richie and you were Paris Hilton and we used to relate our lives to them like we were them (laughing)

E: If we’d had different lives we could have been them (laughing)

R: With my friends at uni we had a joke that we were all Girls Aloud and we would joke about it and relate ourselves to them

E: So there was like a shared assumption that you all knew what was going on with them then

R: Yeah it was a shared assumption that we all knew what was going on with them and we were relating it to us

E: So it’s kind of integrated then – because we could make a joke about Paris and Nicole and completely know what the other one’s talking about

R: Oh yeah – yeah

E: Ok it’s interesting talking about the differences between the monthlies and the weeklies we used to by – so could you ever see yourself picking up a copy of Heat now for any reason?
R: I think there was something the other day – it’d have to be something that really interested me
E: So you’d have to notice something on the front cover?
R: Yeah probably yeah
E: So would you go to that section anyway coz they’re all grouped together aren’t they the weeklies
R: There would have to be – either I’d glance and I’d see it or um […]
E: What about travelling and stuff coz you get the train quite a lot when you’re at the station do you buy a magazine?
R: I buy a different one for the train – I buy a puzzler (laughing)
E: Ok (laughing) so that’s not really a magazine you’ve found a different way of occupying your time (laughing)
R: (laughing)
E: So what is it about the puzzler you find particularly interesting now? I mean you just turned fifty last week so (laughing)
R: (laughing) I mean [...] I don’t know
E: Do you think it’s a better way to spend your time?
R: Well I mean I think – I’m waitressing at the moment to save up money to travel and obviously this is um I’m not playing down the job but at the same time it is a big change for me having just done a degree and been working constantly and I found myself in a habit you know I’d be at work waitressing and on my break I’d read a magazine to switch off and I just got a bit worried about switching off too much and I’m not saying doing the puzzler makes you clever but it keeps your brain active and I’ve enjoyed it
E: So your quote un-quote leisure time is different now something you want to spend time stimulating your brain whereas before when you were a student or at school you used it in the other way so it’s kind of a reversal
R: Yeah you’re right yeah that is a good point
E: Yeah ok so what about – do you tend to have conversations – coz I know we have before – with people about ‘did you read so and so in such and such magazine’
R: Yeah
E: So do you find them quite interactive say at work you might say ‘have you read this’ on your break
R: Yeah I probably would
E: So they’re quite a sociable thing in a way
R: Yeah I agree I mean you could – me and my friends at university we used to go to the park and we’d sit and read magazines together and the nice thing about that is you can read them out to each other it’s not like books – you can’t be reading a book and read out a paragraph and not – not everyone can relate to a magazine but it is generalized like I said noone’s going to read at least I’ve never met anyone who’s going to read it and agree with everything that’s said but they don’t always seem to want that I mean a lot of the time I’ve often read say Marie Claire I’ve noticed in particular they’ve published in the letters page complaints you know that people have said I disagree with such and such – um which I like you know they do seem to welcome a debate you know they’re not saying this is what everyone thinks necessarily you know if someone comes back with a different view […]
E: Ok
(Bringing out Grazia)

E: So are you familiar with Grazia?
R: Yeah
E: Have you bought it for yourself?
R: Um – a handful of times I wouldn’t say it’s one I’ve bought a lot but I have read it
E: What’s made you pick it up in the past?
R: Probably there’s a story on the front – um I think Grazia is a good one for that as in – I’m trying to remember which ones I’ve bought that would have made me – I’ve a feeling I may have bought the one when Jude Law cheated on Sienna Miller I’ve just got the image of that but there has to be a scandalous story – I quite like it for – I’m trying to remember – quite good for fashion I think I’d always rather read Glamour or Marie Claire though
E: Ok – so where do you think Grazia fits on the spectrum of magazines – say from Pick Me Up to Vogue or something? Just thinking of the two most opposite things I can
R: See my instinct is to say just before – say if we’ve got Pick Me Up first – just before Glamour and Marie Claire so above Heat and OK and Hello and that’s my instinct but I haven’t looked at the price
E: It’s £1.95
R: And how often does it come out?
E: It’s a weekly
R: Exactly I mean that’s how I see it but then hypothetically the richer person – I mean hypothetically you’re spending more money if you’re getting Grazia and so in a way although my instinct was to put Glamour and Marie Claire higher on the spectrum its actually cheaper to read them
E: Do you think there’s anything that sets Grazia apart from other magazines in your experience of it?
R: Um […] I wouldn’t really I think um […] I think the thing with Grazia is um […] it has elements of the Pick Me Up not in that way but the real-life stories I just think about it the way they present the real-life stories is more on that level where as Glamour and Marie Claire will present it in a more journalistic way as I say I haven’t read Grazia for a while but it felt less like the glossy

(looking through Grazia)

R: I think the thing is – not my problem with Grazia but the reason I don’t really buy it […] see I wouldn’t buy it because I think everything you get from Grazia you get from magazines that come out monthly and […] and are therefore cheaper and I think also I don’t want to get back into reading a magazine every week
E: Is that because of the time it takes?
R: Yeah and I think at the end of the day the time it would take you to read that many magazines a month you could read a book and have got something
E: And you’re a big reader as well I mean you read a lot
R: Well yeah and I think at the end of the day when you read a book you do feel like you’ve got through something but when you read a magazine not essentially wasted your time but it’s an indulgence
E: So do you think if Grazia’s putting in stuff that is in the news I mean this is almost kind of journalistic
R: Oh yeah
E: Do you think that that sits well in the whole context (referring to a story about Gadaffi)?
R: No I do I was just thinking that actually – um – no it’s refreshing in a way it does set it apart in that way no that’s a good point
E: But I mean do you think it becomes more worthwhile if it has better content in it or if you thought there was slightly more interesting stuff in Grazia like this kind of intellectual content you’ve been looking for or is it time or price or – coz the other thing is I have a subscription to Grazia which makes it like less that £1 per issue
R: No it’s not so much the price – yeah I think it’s something actually I might buy potentially yeah – I think that I don’t read magazines as often as I used to so it is it’s more of a one off it’s what sells itself to me at the time and so um – sorry I’m just reading this now (looking at Grazia) but no I agree the mix of things does make it more appealing but I don’t know
E: What about the mix – say here’s jeans on one page here’s a woman being raped in Libya on the next here’s Angelina Jolie on the next
R: No I like that mix um I think you know you can’t stereotype you know it’s addressing a different mix and it’s you know um
E: But do you think it accurately reflects the way we probably are anyway as women it’s saying we don’t have to just be fashion or celebrity we can be combinations of lots of things
R: Well it […] I mean the whole thing what I get from post-feminism and what I identify with is that um […] the aspect of the post feminism we don’t have to battle its women can be women and embrace you know as what they are and so part of that embracing is that you’re not fitting into one identity
E: Well that’s interesting isn’t it because that’s what women’s magazines are about now in a way we still have the cooking and lifestyle but now we’ve got career and fashion and
R: Well yeah as I said my mum and sister read house magazines and I sometimes read them after and I love sitting there thinking what’s my house going to be like
E: Yeah and you’re sitting there thinking what’s it going to be like from the point of view of what am I going to buy for my house with my money rather than
R: What’s my husband going to buy me
E: Exactly and my job as a woman is to decorate the home you’re thinking about when I live and not who you’re going to live with necessarily
R: Oh no yeah
E: Yeah – ok – well do you have any other comments that you want to make or anything we haven’t discussed?
R: Um – I can’t think of any right now
E: Ok well I’ll stop the recording for now
E: So you guys both read magazines, right?
B: Mmm Hmm
S: Yep
E: So do you – what magazines do you read like generally?
B: Um – as a rule probably like *Glamour, Cosmo* and occasionally like *Heat* like those kind of ones more gossipy ones but normally I’d go for like *Glamour* as a standard one
E: Ok so like a monthly one
B: Yeah that I’d get every month
E: Every month?
B: Yeah
E: So what is it about *Glamour* that’s like most appealing?
B: Mmm – I think that one more than gossipy ones probably because it’s got like best of both worlds like its got the fashion side and lifestyle articles as well as like – yeah like real life stories and celeb stuff and all kind of thing
E: So what’s like your favourite thing about the magazine do you tend to read the whole thing or do you have like specific bits that you flick to?
B: Um I probably do like flick through and then eventually read it I probably go through like a couple of times and then eventually – like read certain articles
E: So you don’t sit down and read it all in one go then?
B: No – no no I think when I buy it that’s like all I do I flick through it and then suss out what I will read and then eventually get around to reading it
E: So you tend to have them around on the side and stuff – like what I’ve got (indicating to magazines scattered all around my flat)
B: Yeah
E: Um – Steph what about you?
S: Um same as Becca really I’d normally read *Glamour or Cosmo* but I like to read *Vogue* and *Elle Decorations, Country Living* stuff like that just occasionally coz – just to keep up with design
E: So that’s like more a career kind of
S: Yeah mainly so just to look through those really and then I’ve got them so I know what was fashionable at the time
E: Ok ok so what about when you buy magazines do you tend to read them when you get them or is it the same thing you have them lying around
S: Um it depends really it doesn’t like if I buy *Glamour* I’ll always read like the back page you know *Cosmo* has one as well the like ‘Hey it’s ok’ and the ‘ten commandments’ and like the horoscopes and then I’ll start from the front and just like look through
E: Mmm hmm – so you tend to know what to expect then when you look through them – do you think that they’re similar kinds of formats?
S: Mmm hmm
E: What about *Cosmo* what is it about *Cosmo* that you guys like?
S: Um I just like again looking at like fashion who’s wearing what again like beauty I like looking at the beauty pages
E: Do you think that you guys look at them to buy stuff or just out of interest about what’s in fashion?
B: Probably never really to buy
S: | No neither would I |
B: If I saw something in a magazine I don’t think I’d go and search for it in the shop I’d just have the idea in my head of what it was – like the style
S: | yeah what kind of thing |
B: And also kind of yeah *Cosmo* is definitely more like the sex side coz *Glamour* is more yeah but um *Cosmo*’s more like risqué
E: | Yeah like fashion and stuff like that |
S: I never really think of that though when I buy it I just think of it as another magazine
B: | Well *Glamour*’s still | got a bit of an element of that
S: Yeah – I never really buy it for the sex
E: Do you think *Cosmo* is probably known most as the one that’s kind of […] more sexy orientated one?
B: Yeah definitely and also when I was in America I bought *Cosmo* there and it was so much more sex-orientated pretty much the whole magazine was based on that – every article was always brought back to that and you know in American *Cosmo* they had like stories little extracts from novels to advertise novels and stuff and it was pretty much just like erotic literature (laughing) (unintelligible utterance) but yeah it’s a lot different to the English one
E: | What kind of age group do you think *Cosmo*’s in? |
B: I suppose it has quite a lot about career in
S: Late twenties
B: Twen - maybe twenties to thirties?
E: But then have you been reading it since before twenties?
B: Yeah I guess
S: Mm hmm
B: Yeah actually
S: Coz they have like *Teen Cosmo* and stuff and like when I was like a lot younger I used to read that but then I think you reach a certain age where you’re just like proper thing – probably since I was about sixteen seventeen
B: Yeah
But then do you still read stuff in *Cosmo* and think that’s like applicable to you like you recognise yourself in the magazine or do you think it’s more of like an aspirational kind of thing?

I don’t know I think they probably try and reach out to like the female audience [...] so you can relate to it most

So it’s more like for general – I mean it’s not

I mean it has all like I suppose all the celeb stuff that appeals to everybody well coz obviously you buy it coz you’ve got an interest in that but then yeah things like when they’re giving you advice on – yeah things like ‘what to do when you’re living with your like boyfriend or husband’ obviously at this stage it’s not the same coz we’re at uni but then yeah I suppose it’s still interesting coz eventually like we will – like that’s kind of already in your head that life and stuff I dunno

Ok so what about stuff like *Heat* and kind of the weekly ones what is it about *Heat* specifically?

Um I think to be honest I probably only ever buy things like that when I’ve got a long journey or like a holiday

A train station?

Yeah that kind of thing like more as a treat coz it’s like something you don’t need to concentrate on

We have them quite often at work but they’re like really good for just like a lunch break – it’s like ‘oh this has happened this week’ read it for half an hour then that’s it really

Yeah and then you’re kind of done with it then

You’re done with it - there’s nothing like – life changing

So if you bought something like that do you think you’d read it in one go and then that would be it like for that journey and then you’d probably throw it away or something rather than like a monthly which you’d probably keep

Yeah coz that hasn’t exactly got long articles it’s more like little gossipy sections and yeah *Glamour* has real life things like what’s actually going on in the world – uh obviously only to a certain extent but um yeah so *Heat’s* a lot more [...]

Do you think that they’re quite positive like they’ve got a sense of humour about them

What *Heat*?

Um – coz like I would say *Heat* and *Glamour* and *Cosmo* are more like um got like a jokey tone to them

A bit tongue-in-cheek

Yeah – rather than something like *Vogue* which is

Quite serious and it’s about like fashion and art and that’s about it really

So what about stuff like *Hello* or *OK* or anything would you ever read them?

My mum gets those and like I will read them if they’re there but I don’t think I would ever set out to buy one I read it if it’s there

Yeah coz *Heat* is like a small magazine whereas *OK* or I don’t know about *Hello* but yeah just the massive magazines there’s load and loads of gossip but I don’t think I’d want or care enough to read that much so I don’t think I’d ever really buy that but yeah if it’s like in the house or – wherever

What about places like hairdressers do you ever see them there?

Yeah
S: Yeah
E: So again they’d just be something you’d flick through
B: Yeah I think with some of them like OK I don’t think I’d bother even reading the articles just like look at the – coz you can pretty much get what it’s about just by the headlines and the captions
E: Um ok so what about when you go into a shop if you’re going to buy a magazine do you just tend to go for the same ones or do you ever kind of go for other stuff based on – like you (indicating to Steph) said you just bought Glamour for the free gift – does that happen like you buy stuff for the free gift or who’s on the cover or a particular story – or do you think you just go for the ones that you know?
B: Um I think probably I’d always go for the ones I know but then to choose between the ones I know coz I don’t have a rule of what I’d choose – yeah you’d choose one that’s got a good like a good headline on the front or yeah maybe a free gift but they’re not often that great so maybe not
S: Sometimes I’d like flick to see what’s in them coz sometimes they’re just full of adverts and rubbish articles so if that’s the case then I’d probably choose like something else
E: What do you think that you get out of magazines like when you read it – what would you say is the point of having a magazine?
B: Uh personally I think – well obviously it’s not exactly life changing I think I’d get it just to – I dunno for entertainment purposes instead of – or even in front of watching the telly like as a chill out time yeah like some light reading
S: | some light reading |
B: obviously there’s nothing overly – I dunno in these types of magazines there’s nothing too intellectually stimulating or whatever but like – I don’t […]
E: What’s interesting about celebrity magazines is now we have all this stuff on the internet so most celebrity stories and things like that you can get before they come out in a magazine - so do you feel like that changes something like you already know mostly what’s going on?
S: Yeah I think it depends like the weekly ones especially can like oh there’s a photo of so and so and so and so and like I always think have they just made up this story where have they got it from and like with the monthly ones it’s a bit – I dunno – not trust them a bit more but it’s a bit – yeah because they’re not like as often – it’s – I don’t know – it’s a bit different
B: Hmm – I think coz like if you’re actively searching for something on the internet it’s more of an effort whereas that is just given to you and it’s all put together already so I think I prefer magazines to looking on the internet - though I mean I do have certain like bad habits I mean not the news I’d never read the news but like the Daily Mail like celebrity
E: | gossip section! |
Me too!
B: (laughing) I love that! And like I’d obviously never read the news coz I know it’s a bit – not so like trustworthy
E: That’s interesting though because I think the same thing I wouldn’t read the Daily Mail because I think it’s full of crap but I read all the celebrity stories
B: Yeah so I suppose you could argue that if the news isn’t believable why would the –
E: Yeah – so what do you think it is about the celebrity stories that keeps us so interested?
B: I think that they’re just like a – sensationalised
S: | I think it’s slightly like escapism a bit like ‘oh look at what so
and so is up to – she’s gone here she’s wearing this she looks good or she
looks bad or she’s stumbling out of a party it’s – kind of as well we can – not
relate to it but I think it’s just like the culture like our culture
B: Makes you feel better about your own life
S: Yeah
B: Reading someone else’s
S: Yeah

E: But what about with the Daily Mail coz that’s full of ludicrous headlines so do
you think again it’s to do with the sense of humour behind it and the kind of
like we’re all together laughing at these people
B: Mmm hmm maybe the Daily Mail isn’t intentionally funny like whereas these
are more trying to be funny and they put in like little puns and stuff the Daily
Mail is probably not intentionally trying to be funny but the fact that they’re
so outrageous does make it funny for us – but yeah I think the reason why
that’s so good is because they update it so much and that’s – I dunno I suppose
with blogs and stuff that’s the same sort of principle but I don’t know why the
Daily Mail is so – just – yeah all in one place
S: Lighthearted and stuff isn’t it
B: Yeah
E: It’s a habit that you get into as well I guess coz it’s easy to and it’s always
there – easy to spend five minutes doing that and you don’t have to go to any
effort. So what about – you guys have both lived in houses with other girls and
stuff – do you find that you get quite a lot of magazines passed on to you?
S: A few – more so at work as well coz like people always buy them to read on
lunch so I’ll just like read them if they’re there
B: Um – this year in the house just strewn around the lounge there’s loads of
magazines just everywhere that are always there and even if they’re months
old you still pick them up and read them – rubbishy articles and stuff
E: Do you think they can be quite a sociable thing – coz when we all used to live
together we’d sit and read magazines and be like ‘oh my god have you read
this’ and stuff – so do you think there’s an element of that where you can kind
of be reading it and kind of having a conversation
B: Yeah
S: Yeah definitely especially with like a group of girls as well because it’s
generally things you can relate to whether it’s on a page or in a conversation
so it like transfers
B: Yeah and I think the boys in our house have quite a love of reading out all like
the sex pages to us and like social activities
E: Do you find that you guys talk about magazines with each other like ‘I read so
and so’
S: Yeah- at work we do as well a lot
E: And would that be like real life stories or but like the features as well because
obviously we all talk about celebrity stories a lot but stuff like if you read in
Glamour a real life story would you talk about that as well?
B: Maybe not so much the real-life things maybe just more celeb stuff coz
everybody will have seen it like from somewhere – whether it’s on the internet
or like whatever but I dunno maybe not – I suppose you could maybe but it
depends if everyone’s been reading the same magazines but as I said yeah if
they’re in the lounge then everyone will have read it so it’s quite a good conversation topic and stuff

E: What do you think about the portrayal of women in these magazines in general – do you think its realistic/unrealistic/positive/negative

B: I think – even though I read it - think Glamour’s well both like Glamour and Cosmo grouping together – I think they’re quite conflicting in their content because on the one hand – like for example Adele they’ll try and portray the fact that she’s not a conventional celebrity stick thin perfect blah blah blah so they’ll try and put that across and encourage the readers to be like yeah try and go against all the clichés but then at the same time they have weight loss things and they have all these fashion things that obviously you can only wear if you’re a certain size and then they’ve got all the sex stories which is obviously encouraging you to be more provocative or whatever

E: Or submissive even

B: Yeah – yeah in a way – but very conflicting but I do still read it which is bad but

S: I think they do have a lot of that they have a lot like all the ‘hey it’s ok’ and the like ‘everyone does this so it’s fine’ kind of like – attitude especially in the articles like you know there’s one in Glamour about or I can’t remember maybe Cosmo – about the single girl and the one who’s in a relationship and each month they go out and do something and then write about if from a different perspective so they sort of um have a lot of things you can relate to so it’s like ‘oh that’s fine that’s normal’ but then like Becca was saying they’ve got all the beauty tips and so it’s like how to make yourself perfect

B: Yeah like how to get men on the one hand and on the other like sex and the single girl – like you’re so independent you don’t need them so it is very mixed messages

E: Why do you think it is? Are they trying to appeal to too many people or do you think

S: I think obviously they want to reach the widest audience they can and you know if they have – the more different things they have in there the most chance it’s gonna have to appeal to someone

E: Ok so what about – hang on – what about Grazia do you guys ever read that?

S: Occasionally

B: Occasionally

S: But its more – I’d say more – well not serious but again it’s more – I’d say it’s got more fashion in it – even though it’s got the celebrity stories so it’s kind of a cross between the two

E: Mmm hmm – what age range do you think Grazia would be for?

B: I’d say that was slightly older coz yeah that’s not the kind of thing I think that’s more the kind of magazine I’d read if someone else had it rather than buying it myself so maybe from when I have read it yeah maybe more like late twenties to thirties rather than the other ones that are a bit younger

E: Ok so it’s not necessarily something you’d go and buy?

B: I mean I would but it’s just - I don’t think I’d choose it as a first option just maybe coz it’s more restricted because it’s just more focused on yeah like fashion rather than the whole

E: Yeah ok so what do you think about looking through this

(Looking through Grazia)
E: So what do you think about that combination of stuff?
S: I quite like it because there’s – um – more variation rather than just like sex or beauty or fashion - sometimes I like to read something a bit more intellectual – in with – like again you don’t have to go and buy a newspaper its just in there together so maybe convenience as well
B: Yeah coz I think – I know I’m always talking about *Glamour* – but I think other magazines are trying to follow that more like in *Glamour* the other month there was the whole explanation of what’s going on in Libya but they from *Glamour*’s point of view they try and tell it in more of a patronising sort of way like you don’t understand any of this so they try and put it really simply whereas this is – well I think its aimed at a slightly older audience so they probably assume you know it and they’re more elaborating rather than explaining it from the basis of what’s going on – but yeah I think the combination is good and again it could appeal to a wider audience because it’s including all of that but yeah – I don’t know why I don’t read *Grazia* actually – I dunno – I think maybe I will more when I’m not at uni
E: But do you think going back to the mixed messaged thing that’s sending quite a mixed message coz it’s the same sometimes with *Vogue* like they’ll have quite a serious article – sometimes written by quite important political journalists so they’ll have here’s what’s going on in the middle east and then here’s a £4,000 dress for you to buy – do you think that that’s a mixed message or a strange combination?
S: I guess so because it’s like educating what’s going on in the world and current affairs but also – it’s almost like a bit selfish like the way they put fashion and beauty on you because it’s focusing you on yourself like you could look amazing if you wear this thing […]
B: I think this is a good combination because although it is a bit weird I suppose if you try and compare – but I dunno coz personally things like Essex – The Only Way is Essex – as a treat again I do secretly love it but I know it’s awful like the worst kind of thing to watch but the fact they try and like acknowledge that loads of people watch this and it’s really popular but they’re trying to keep you up to date with what is actually going on on coz if you’re – all you do all the time is watch rubbish on the telly and never care about all the yeah Colonel Gadaffi and all that then you need to be up to date on what’s going on but yeah this is good
E: Coz do you think it’s saying you can you can do all these things – you can be someone who watches The Only Way is Essex – doesn’t mean you’re stupid
B: Mmm – but then I suppose if they’re trying to put in like feminist views as well and you can’t really mix feminism with The Only Way is Essex coz that’s all like
E: Well maybe you can if you look at a certain perspective
B: Yeah – well I dunno I think maybe this is good to have this and you know if you only want the gossip you know you can go to *Heat* because I don’t think there’s any risk of *Heat* including any like real political issues (laughing) so if you buy it if you know what you’re buying
E: What is it do you think about girls that we like magazines so much? Versus maybe boys who don’t so much? Do you think that there’s some one thing that’s like
S: I think it’s just [...] girls are quite [...] not like – we can look at it read it take it in and then apply it to ourselves I don’t know if it’s different to boys but like we were saying earlier it can be quite sociable and like I’ve seen this I’ve seen that and you know encouraging things like makeup and fashion I think that’s really what appeals to a large percentage of the population – well not everyone but – especially at this age – a lot of people are concerned about their looks and how to look good – to advance in your career and stuff – I don’t know

B: Yeah – and on a different level obviously I don’t know if my friends are just a bit camp but my like quite a lot of my guy friends love reading women’s magazines to get an idea of what is going on in our heads kind of thing coz it is sort of a - you can get quite a lot from reading what we read but you can understand why we think like their minds work a certain way or that – I think as well with men’s magazines there’s a bit more of a limited selection like I suppose you have all the sports magazines if you have a specific taste like tailored towards that coz I suppose the magazines are like men’s health magazines and stuff

S: Or cheeky ones

B: Yeah like the main – I suppose the main focus would be on like FHM and like sleazy magazines and maybe then don’t wanna invest in that – I don’t know

E: Do you think that um – that you’re saying your guy friends read women’s magazines and we were saying before we find magazines quite confusing like these mixed messages

B: Yeah

E: Like you can be single but you have to be in a relationship – do you think guys would be really confused by that

B: Yeah I guess so coz I suppose they get the same sort of messages about that from programmes that we watch as well but yeah I dunno if it actually affects what they – I don’t know if we can say it affects how we feel coz I don’t know from reading a magazine I don’t finish reading a magazine and think ‘oh god I’ve got to get a boyfriend’ it doesn’t change me that much but I think it probably does confuse guys to a certain extent coz they don’t know how they’re supposed to act if we’re being told these – how great we can be when we’re single – I think it probably does make them change the way they are

E: Coz it sounds like when you guys read magazines you read them with a total awareness of what’s being said and how it’s being said

B: Yeah

E: But that’s one thing like in all these years of research about magazines the one question people find hard to answer is why do women read magazines because it’s like if you understand that there’s these mixed messages and if you look at it even if you don’t realise at the time why do we keep buying them why do we keep going back to them

B: Yeah – because I suppose in this day and age there are more – I don’t know enough about the media sector but I’m sure there’s more regulations now to make sure they’re not too – even though they’re all obviously airbrushed – there’s quite a lot of focus on this and they do acknowledge it so I’m sure it has changed to a certain extent throughout the years but yeah the popularity’s always been true – but then I suppose the internet might carry on changing it in the future but yeah personally I’d always say I still prefer magazines

S: I think as well a lot of it does appeal to quite a lot of our interests but I suppose something that’s like maybe trashy that you can just pick up put down
when you want to it’s not like a novel that you have to concentrate on you can just look at it but its always gonna have like a – new things -things to look at that you know don’t – it’s just always gonna interest I think interest women coz we’re curious – we like to see what other people are wearing and what people are doing – what’s happened like a real life story here and there to make you think […]

E: What do you guys do with magazines after you’ve finished with them?
B: Um probably after it’s like circulated around the house or whatever then normally I end up piling them up somewhere and then when I do a clear out I don’t really keep them – just like recycle them all – coz I don’t think I – I know it’s nice if you’ve got a nice magazine – like a big pile of *Vogue* like Steph said but I think personally I just get rid of them coz I’m not gonna pick them up again probably – coz these magazines aren’t gonna have anything good to look at in a years time

S: I just have not the same thing but
E: So you keep your *Vogues*?
S: I keep the *Vogues* some like *Elle Decoration* like *Country Living* sometimes I keep if it’s like – just if it’s like a really nice magazine like I quite like looking at the adverts and stuff as well but I think I’ll always find it inspiring to look at them – I bought a *Vogue* when I was in India and I love looking at that

E: So do you think they’re like almost coffee table books?
S: Almost yeah – yeah
E: Ok – well I think that’s great guys is there anything else you’d like to discuss?
B: Not especially no
S: (shaking her head)
E: Ok well great – thank you.
Transcript G.

Date of Interview: 19/06/2011
Length of Interview: 00:37:20
Location: My House

Information about Interviewee
Name: Sarah Warburton
Gender: Female
Age: 22
Occupation: Student

Marital Status: Single

E – Interviewer
S – Interviewee
[ | ] - Indicates overlapping speech
- - Indicates a pause of one second
[...] – Indicates a longer pause
( ) – Indicates an action by speaker

E: So you are a magazine reader – right – do you read magazines generally or?
S: Um – not really to be honest I don’t read a lot of them but every now and then I do read them – I do enjoy reading them I just don’t generally buy them
E: Ok – so how do you tend to get your hands on them?
S: Um – to be fair like friends – friends pass them down once they’ve read them or if they’ve got a second copy if they’ve bought it twice for the free gift and - um
E: | Oh right ok | – do people do that a lot?
S: Lea gave me one the other day – I was at John’s house and she had two Glamours because she wanted two of the freebies so she had a separate one and that’s a good way of doing it like you get the free thing cheaper and yeah – sometimes like if I’m bored or whatever or if I see an eye-catching headline I’ll just buy it then
E: Ok do what kind of ones do you tend to buy in general?
S: Um probably quite trashy ones – I go for like – the price is quite important actually I go for quite cheap ones but I generally find that they’ll have like quite similar stories and as I’m not so interested I’m magazines I just got for the cheaper one – um – so one with quite an outrageous – or quite – a big statement as a headline – I generally find that it’s not true it’ll be like one sentence in the whole story and I’m not expecting the whole story to be about like an epic event going on in Cheryl Cole’s life or something but that’s what attracts me
E: So what are they the weekly ones then?
S: Um – I’m not really sure to be honest coz I don’t know what titles are weekly and what are monthly
E: Ok but would it be more like a Heat magazine or a
S: | Yeah |
E: Or what about the stuff like the 60p ones like Best or like Pick Me Up and stuff like that?
S: Um – I think they’re really funny yeah – I think my housemates have them a few times and I’ve been through them – they are a very different type – a very different kind of like sensationalised story – um – but I do enjoy reading them though they wouldn’t necessarily be the ones I would buy – I might buy them – I’m not sure of the titles but with more – rather than kind of like more real life shocking stories more like celebrity news
E: Ok – so like – I’m trying to think like More do you know More?
S: Yeah – or like Heat maybe
E: Yeah – so do you tend to buy them for a reason if you’re like in a train station or something?
S: Yes
E: So if you’ve got a specific time – place to go. Do you think living with girls – coz you’ve lived with girls for the last few years – that you tend to get magazines in the house and stuff?
S: Um yeah
E: So when you see them what will you be doing – do you pick it up while you’re watching TV or passing through or?
S: Yeah definitely – like in a communal area I’ll read it or if I’m having breakfast or something I’ll flick through to a page or something as well – I think a lot of it is almost guilt like I should be doing something else work wise so that’s why I haven’t bought them myself really but if it’s there and you’ve got a spare few minutes it’s less guilty – yeah
E: So what about the monthly ones like we were talking about Glamour do you tend to read them – or like Marie Claire or anything like that?
S: Um no I don’t think I’ve ever read Marie Claire though I’ve heard the title and Glamour again – err – I like them – I don’t buy them – I’m not in the habit of doing it – I think coz like my magazine habit started – when I was younger I used to read Shout and Mizz and then there’s a massive gap where I didn’t get magazines and then I went into Sixth Form and I was in an all girls school and there was a common room full of magazines so that’s again where I picked up loads of my like magazine and celebrity knowledge and again after Sixth Form is another period where I haven’t read magazines other than ones – every now and then when I’ve bought them or people have had ones around I’ve flicked through
E: So you think it’s probably the price and stuff – like it seems like a bit of a
S: Yeah probably – like not that I’m saying they’re too expensive but it’s probably been instilled into me like my Mum would be like don’t get that
E: They’re quite expensive – like three four pounds
S: I think four pounds is probably too – is more than I would spend unless it was every now and again and also I think it’s like a time thing as well and maybe now I’ve finished my degree I’ll get more into them because I’m kind of – I don’t constantly feel like I should be doing something towards my degree
E: Yeah – so do you think they’re like a guilty pleasure or like filling in time kind of thing?
S: Um yeah like potentially yeah that’s a good way of putting it – also almost like a hobby kind of thing like they’re interesting to read – almost kind of like socialising you know what I mean like looking at the world – looking at fashion and things like that
E: So does the fashion part kind of interest you?
S: Yeah like more so recently again when I was in […] Sixth Form I wasn’t really interested in that it was more the other bits but recently the fashion is definitely the bit I prefer looking at – um maybe again when I was looking at the Glamour you can tell it’s for a different audience because they put things that are much more high end in there like this skirt oh it’s only £130 and I understand it’s a better budget but with like Heat and things I love it coz it’s
like this is from Matalan so you can look at stuff like Primark and that’s really nice and I’d get it

E: Oh ok so if you see something in a magazine – do you think you’d go and like
S: Yeah
E: Have that in mind when you went shopping
S: Yeah definitely have it in mind – I’ve often like Matalan really like I know it’s a cheesy store but I’ve seen it in magazines and been like I wish there was a Matalan
E: Yeah – or like Primark as well it’s in magazines as well – and it’s more accessible to us
S: Yeah
E: So what when – you read *Glamour* and see something that’s really expensive do you still find it interesting – do you still look at it and maybe have it in mind as like this is what’s fashionable
S: I definitely think it’s interesting I love looking at it but probably less so because it’s like that’s kind of inaccessible and unattainable at the moment but yeah definitely – or maybe like see what went together quite well – do like a Gok Wan version maybe go to the haberdashers as well – I’ve got it in my mind
E: So it’s like inspirational
S: Yeah yeah
E: So what about the celebrity stories and stuff like what do you think it is about them that’s particularly interesting to us?
S: Yeah – um I’m not really sure I think what’s quite fun about it is um – it’s like a series and you’re kind of following a character along
E: Yeah – that’s a really good way of looking at it
S: It’s not like – when they have real-life stories it’s like one glimpse into someone’s life but it’s got to be a sensational thing that’s happened – and it’s like wow that’s incredible – but with celebrity you feel like you’re watching them on TV like Desperate Housewives or like Lost or something you’re kind of following different episodes of a different series so it’s like – coz I think a lot of what they do is so uninteresting – I think a lot of celebrity is rubbish but I think they know that a lot of the stories don’t have much substance
E: And do you think because they’re celebrities it’s easy to forget these are real people – coz obviously if we compare it to Desperate Housewives or something that’s made up but like the drama that’s going on with Cheryl Cole at the end of the day she’s a real person – do you think it’s more interesting because she’s a real person?
S: Um – I don’t really know – I think that there probably is an element of forgetting who they are […] um I don’t really know […] but I think that like […] I think in terms of like […] I think it has a right to be there in a way when people become celebrities to that extent the rewards do outgrow having a personal life in there so I think that like – you know it’s not forgotten to that extent you realise they’re still real people but at the same time I guess you kind of do see them as a brand as a front and um yeah – I guess it would be kind of weird if Sarah Warburton was up on the screen everywhere like Cheryl Cole (laughing)
E: (laughing) Ok – ok so say when you’ve got a magazine in your house – if you tend to flick through it at breakfast and stuff do you tend to have it there and you’ll come back to it over time so like it takes you time to read one magazine
or do you just read that page then you’ve kind of forget about it move onto the next one kind of thing

S: No it takes me ages – and that’s the other thing about it I feel like I ought to read every page – so it takes me ages – sometimes I’m not even interested in it – I don’t know why – maybe like a novel or something I feel like you know if it’s part of a magazine I should read it – um but I much prefer it when you see a story you like and you read through it but then you’ll come back and get a different story things like that

E: Do you think that you go based on the headlines and stuff – would you read the front cover and then flick to certain stories first?

S: Yeah – I do that to find stuff out yeah

E: Ok – so what about like – when you said you were reading Glamour – the lifestyle advice and stuff like the – what kind of messages do you think magazines send in general do you think they’re quite positive

S: Um I think – I’m not sure about the lifestyle but I hate it when they have articles like – I don’t hate it I find it unhelpful when it’s like fifty ways to like give a great blow job (laughing) and things like that – is there genuinely like fifty ways? It’s like every woman feels inadequate and like I just think it’s really unnecessary as well – how to make a man like - it’s quite interesting but I think it’s quite a lot like –

E: Do you think it’s a mixed message when there’s articles about how to please a man and stuff but actually like – it’s meant to be for women

S: Yeah - I think – coz I think like boyfriends and men are an interest of women like what girls like to talk about and things like that um – I just think it’s kind of um […] I think they should just be more realistic and do an article like it’s stupid there aren’t 250 ways to give a blow job – I just wish it was more like that more realistic rather than like creating these – I think kind of like creates something about sex that doesn’t really exist so you always feel inadequate because your sex isn’t like Disney or like in a film or something – but also in this one (referring to Glamour magazine) I hated there was um – ‘are you and your partner compatible’ and it was kind of like give your boyfriend the questions and he has to do it in one room and you do it in another room then you come back and I thought how unrealistic and I did it with John the other day – but we did it like we didn’t have to read this article but if you were like worried like ‘I don’t think we’re compatible’ like go and answer these questions – I think that’s quite an immature way for a woman to handle a relationship – and it was questions like – um – oh I don’t know I can’t really remember the questions but um I thought it was quite an immature way of handling a relationship and checking if you are compatible if you’re having problems or whatever – I think it’s quite interesting – I think it’s all interesting on a level but at the same time they push it like too literally in a way

E: Yeah – yeah – but do you think that uh – I mean obviously you’re reading it thinking it’s a bit of a joke – fun and stuff but like people would read that and as you said if they were genuinely worried about their relationship take it as a thing – do you think they should make it more like a fun jokey thing

S: Yeah – um – um

E: Coz obviously it is fun like you and John did it – how compatible were you?

S: Um (laughing) well it was like quite funny – one of the bits was ‘are you ready to get married yet’
E: So from that did you get the impression it was for slightly like older people?
S: I got the impression that it was and I think that’s kind of also to do with it being more high end as well like the clothes being more expensive fashion and stuff like that I felt it was definitely aimed above me at the moment
E: But do you think – coz I’ve been reading *Glamour* for a few years and you’ve probably seen it around before – like to you think generally we tend to read magazines that are probably for people older than us – coz I mean how many magazines do you think there are specifically for people of our age
S: Um – yeah I don’t really know – I think probably – coz even thinking back to when I was younger like *Shout* like *J-17* and stuff like that – I don’t really know what *J-17* meant but I imagine it to be around seventeen years old – just seventeen or something – and um I was younger then and again I always felt a bit like clasping for it – they would talk about like – even lower down like *Mizz* they were talking about well advertising periods and stuff when you maybe hadn’t quite started and when you moved onto teen magazines it was kind of like boys or fashion that’s beyond you because you were at school your parents buy your things you don’t really have boyfriends and stuff – so maybe it’s kind of the same thing like obviously I would never read *J-17* now so I’m reading *Glamour* and maybe it’s the same kind of thing in terms of I don’t quite have the money for that and I’m not ready to get married but maybe magazines are kind of like you look at fashion for inspiration and you look at the rest to maybe like mould where your life will go – research into your life
E: Do you think it can be quite aspirational in a way?
S: Yeah – yeah – I think it maybe can be – or – it makes me question like wow £120 just for a skirt that’s quite expensive but it makes me question oh well maybe if I before I have a family or any responsibilities I might like – maybe one day that would be like – um – attainable or maybe my views will change and I’ll want one expensive classy garment rather than like loads of crap from Primark – so I dunno maybe kind of – again it’s me looking to me in the future – maybe I’ll think of things like that
E: Do you think that’s quite a good message to send like the idea that you know – they’re suggesting if you’ve got the money you should spend it on yourself – do you think that’s quite a positive –
S: Um – not really to say it like that actually – um – I think fashion is like – it’s ridiculous because I do – I am a culprit of like spending money I don’t have on clothes and I think magazines definitely do make me think ‘oh god that’s gorgeous I love it’ and everyone else looks so good in it - makes me want to go and buy it or whatever um but I don’t necessarily think it’s a good think at all to be – I think it’s quite materialistic and um gluttonous – it’s part of society fashion changes every season or whatever and I think that’s quite greedy so I don’t think it’s positive at all to buy clothes for people to buy designer clothes which is quite snobby and then encourage people to spend like too much which is definitely more than it’s worth so I don’t think that’s really positive and I think like saving and things like that would be a lot better for your future because everyone’s going to go through difficult times and stuff like that so maybe it would be better if they encouraged things like that or even encouraged things like um socialising or travelling and cultural events and stuff like that – I think that would definitely enhance the person more than fashion which is more transient
E: So – um – yeah that’s interesting – what about the representation of women in general in magazines – you were saying some of the real-life stories and stuff are quite outrageous – do you think generally when you look at magazines you think generally women are like this or they sensationalise certain aspects of what women are like
S: Um – I think it’s definitely sensationalised absolutely
E: Like it plays up to the extreme point of like all women love fashion all women love – coz obviously there are elements of – we all love of course we’re interested in our relationships and in fashion but do you think it kind of – accurately portrays how much – do you know what I mean?
S: Yeah – whether the magazine mirrors the women?
E: Yeah
S: Uh – I guess it’s really difficult to say – um – I don’t think any woman would want to be labelled like this is what I’m interested in what I like – but again I can’t – you can’t really criticize a magazine coz it’s offering the elements of what you might want to read about what you might be interested in and I would find it bizarre if they had like – almost like these weekly periodical journals of like Dickens or whatever if they put that in I’d think that’s weird – I’m sure most women that read these things love doing other things as well so I don’t think it accurately mirrors or encapsulates a woman but I mean – it’s got things of interest in there but they do take it to extremities – like in one of the like really 60p mags they had – you know I have my thyroid thing – there was like an article about that and it was so sensational and it was like ‘I felt like I was dying’ and it was like no and I do think on the front covers there’ll be a story about a celebrity and it’ll say like how she was bullied and then in the story there’ll be like one line – so I think they misrepresented what they were going to say
E: Do you think it’s quite um formulaic as well do you think like they tend to be quite similar these stories – do you think when you open a magazine you kind of know what to expect
S: Yeah – potentially yeah
E: Do you find yourself being surprised by a story ever like say Cheryl Cole or something – like surprised – or do you think they represent people pretty similarly
S: Yeah I would say – I’m not very surprised often by what happens and coz often on the magazine rails they seem to have the same headlines and the same celebrities and they’re reporting the same thing or whatever so it’s very similar – you kind of knew what was already happened whatever
E: Do you think that they’re quite sociable in the house – you were saying with your housemates – do you tend to talk about stuff with them ‘have you seen this’ kind of thing?
S: Yeah – and the more outrageous the more we chat about it coz they’re hilarious
E: So there’s like a social element to it
S: Yes
E: Um – do you read them while you’re watching TV – like you were saying while you have breakfast and stuff – is it something you can half be doing while you’re doing something else?
S: Yeah – um – I’m quite sad I do quite like to concentrate on them but like definitely while you’re eating or something you can read along or look at the fashion or something
E: What do you think about Grazia have you ever read it?
S: I don’t think so no
E: Well – I’ll talk to you about Grazia coz the thing that’s interesting about Grazia is it looks like a kind of – well what would you say that was?
(Showing Grazia)
S: I’d say it’s like a nice one
(Looking through Grazia)
E: So what’s your first impression – say the idea of combining all these different elements into one thing?
S: Um – I think it’s quite cool actually – and I like how it’s kind of structured into – oh so there’s ten of these (referring to the ’10 hot stories’) that we’re going to show you so you’re not just flicking through trying to find what the stories are and stuff – I quite like that – and also um yeah seems to be like the mixture of real-life and celebrity and also it’s quite interesting that they’ve put something about Gadaffi because I think like this will sound awful but you kind of want it in a capsule kind of way – you don’t want to watch the news and watch it unfold every day – not that you don’t want to but you’re not able to or if you haven’t it’s quite cool to have that almost like a summary – yeah so this is as it is
E: Well in Glamour last month they did this thing and it was um ‘what’s going on in the Middle East’ and it was like a double page spread of what has been happening like starting in Egypt up till now – so do you think that’s quite a good thing
S: Really good thing definitely – yeah – I think you can often feel quite ignorant about things and the root will be in history and it’s hard to catch up without going into research specifically so I think it’s definitely good to have like a summary of events and I think that’s really good like what is going on in the Middle East coz obviously it is quite complex and I’m not saying it’s like too complex for women or normal people or women who read these magazines at all – that’s why i’m like actually saying the opposite – you can actually understand it you just need to be told it
E: But do you think like – do you read the news ever or like catch the news read it online anything like that
S: (sighs) I’m gonna be honest I don’t – that’s quite embarrassing to admit
E: No I don’t think it is – but I mean do you go online to read about stuff like Perez or celebrity stuff or
S: No – no I just use the Internet for Facebook, iplayer, 4OD
E: Specific things then
S: Yeah
E: What about stuff like so do you think then it’s quite good to have this information in something that people would read even though it’s in the context of fashion – I mean the thing that’s interesting here is the Gadaffi story is ranked number eight – it’s after the Kate Middleton story – like number one story of the week is Brangelina (laughing) So we’ve got all of that – but do you think that even matters that they’ve ranked them?
S: Well I when I saw ten hot stories to me that wasn’t ranking them it was just numerical order and I quite like the idea that it’s one two three rather than just flicking the page it’s not just endless babble like they’re numbered and I don’t think it is in order of importance it’s just kind of like how they’ve laid the magazine out.

E: Ok – ok – um do you think that you tend to read magazines and be quite – critical or sort of aware of like what you’re reading as you read – like with Glamour and stuff were you quite sort of aware – coz you seem to be when you’re talking about like the angle and what’s going on.

S: Yeah I do think I’m quite critical like I do read it with a critical approach just in terms of like I would question what they’re saying or I would – I’m not just going to take it for gospel or whatever.

E: Ok – do you think that’s like being an English student or just being slightly more self-aware or something?

S: I’m not really sure I think just in any situation in life I would always think for myself about it and I definitely accept what they’re saying oh yeah it’s really interesting or I agree but at the same time I’d be like I don’t agree with that or I can see why they’re saying that and I think it’s a bit of a silly thing to say.

E: Ok – um – right I think that’s pretty much – is there anything else you’d like to say that we haven’t covered – anything – oh the free gift thing – what about – you’re now going to buy Glamour for the free gift (she already has one copy) what do you think about that.

S: I think it’s a really good idea to be honest I think it’ll boost sales and not necessarily for the magazine – people will buy like several copies – with the same people buying it they could like double their sales with people buying more than one.

E: Would you buy more than one copy then.

S: Yeah definitely if I thought the gift was worth it I’d do a financial calculation and say if I bought two magazines for four pounds but the gift was usually ten pounds.

E: What about subscribing.

S: Yeah I think that’s definitely a good way of doing it to save money and um – I just don’t know I think it depends on your interests and your lifestyle coz I don’t know if I’d just be inundated with these – coz if they come every week or whatever.

E: Yeah like Grazia comes every week and Elle comes every month.

S: Yeah I just feel like I’d be inundated with all this fashion and celebrity news and stuff and I wouldn’t necessarily get round to reading it but I want to read it and – but I guess that’s if you’re really interested you would read it and stuff if you had time and it was like your relaxation time then you would – I guess like it’s a good idea it seems a lot cheaper.

E: Do you find that – sometimes the ones lying in the house and stuff can be quite out of date but do you still find them interesting or do you think you’re a bit like ‘oh this happened already’.

S: Yeah that’s really interesting I suppose with celebrity things like – I don’t even know it just like infiltrates into you – you already know it and old news there is really – I think it’s really like inane and really boring but I guess with life real-life stories or whatever – I love problem pages – I genuinely love problem pages and I don’t like the advice but I love problems.

E: Really?
S: Yeah I love reading them they used to be my favourite part – now its I think the fashion bit
E: Why what is it about them?
S: I don’t know I think – I don’t know
E: Coz if you don’t like the advice then it’s not like you’re looking for advice so it is like the comedy of them or
S: I don’t know I really like the love and relationships or sex like – problems – I don’t really know why it is like I don’t think they’re funny
E: Would you ever write in for advice?
S: No I wouldn’t I wouldn’t ever do that I’d be to embarrassed and like if I – I dunno I’d hope I could talk to other people but – yeah so I can’t see myself ever writing into but maybe that’s why but I can’t see myself going on embarrassing bodies on TV – I don’t know (unintelligible) but – um – why do I like them I don’t know – I think I enjoy talking to my friends about boys and relationships and stuff like that so maybe it’s an extension of that – like what does Emma by email say? (laughing)
E: (laughing) But I guess that’s like quite a lot what magazines are in general like I – we obviously talk about clothes and relationships and are you and John compatible (laughing)
S: (laughing) yeah
E: So it’s like an extended conversation with other people involved
S: Yeah – cool
E: So what – um – what do you think like the hardest question which nobody can really answer is like – why do people read magazines – because in every conversation I’ve had it’s like well they cost a lot of money and I don’t always read what they say and stuff like what do you think it is – why do we do it? (laughing)
S: Ah it’s a difficult question isn’t it – I suppose like – I think we do like – they capture things that do interest you and they’re – um – I think its also quite nice coz it’s kind of like nice in terms of it’s solitary and um internal like you can spend some time sitting on your bed on your own chilling out and you’re not watching TV or something you’re doing it in your own head and it encapsulates things that interest you but also it’s not like – you can dip in and out of it in terms of like you can just look at a few pages here and there and I suppose it’s like women concentrated like I wouldn’t say like they represent women but you can dip in and out of it and it represents you at different times and in different ways – yeah maybe and it’s informative as well and inspirational or like I do think it’s a really good idea what’s happening in the Middle East like not all of it obviously just so you get an idea of it.
E: Yeah – like lots of different elements. Well is there anything else to say do you think?
S: Not really
E: Well thank you very much