Representations of gender, race and sexuality in selected English-medium South African magazines, 2003-2005

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore representations of gender, race and sexuality in a select group of South African magazines - *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Blink*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady* – between 2003 and 2005. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, I argue that these magazines present particular subjectivities as normative; privileging and centering one pole within dichotomies of gender, race and sexuality. The exploration considers ideas of social responsibility in the discourses of magazine editors, and how these are linked to subjective representations of gender, race and sexuality. I focus on the magazines' presentations of racialised heteromasculinities, and its connections to presentations of women as particular kinds of sex objects. I explore the hyper(hetero)sexual presentation of black and white femininities in women's magazines, attempting to illustrate how these presentations translate into efforts to remain or become heterosexually desirable to an unnamed and unmarked, but clearly masculine audience.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Representations of gender, race and sexuality in South African English-medium magazines, 2003-2005* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Nadia Sanger   November 2007

Signed...............................

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INTRODUCTION

As we move into the second decade of democracy, gender, race and sexuality remain socially-significant identity markers that continue to matter in South African society. Because the meanings attached to these subjectivities permeate the very fabric of almost every segment of our material existence, this thesis has provided a central space where I could link some of my discomforts. My aim in this study, as I outline below, is to explore representations of gender, race and sexuality in a particular set of South African magazines. I chose magazines as a medium because they provide substantial insights into the dynamics of a patriarchal heteronormative society that remains divided by constructs of gender, race, socio-economic status, sexuality and other socially-significant markers. As noted by McRobbie in 1999, it is precisely the work of magazines to "naturalise and universalize meanings and values which *are* in fact socially constructed" (1999: 48, my emphasis).

While not all media operate from heteropatriarchal[1] racist foundations, much of the mainstream media appears to reproduce and reinforce imaginary binaries of gender (woman/man), race (black/white) and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual), amongst others, at a time when transformation is a priority in our country. Women, poor rural black South Africans, homosexuals and differently-abled people seemed to be 'othered' in various ways within media such as television, film, radio, newspapers and magazines. My interest here is to explore the dominant messages about gender, sexuality and race in a specific set of South African 'lifestyle' magazines. And while

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[1] Heteropatriarchy suggests an institutionalised system of male domination over women within a heteronormative society. This system legitimises the subjugation of women and has been naturalised within most cultural, economic, social and religious spaces including the media.

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magazines constitute only one media form, it is also a very powerful and influential form in that it creates, recreates and maintains specific knowledges for specific readerships, despite the tensions inherent in attempting to attract as large an audience as possible. Laden (2001) argues that magazine content in terms of middle-class ideals and values, have become "local knowledge" (2001: 181) shared by all in a given culture. In describing magazines as part of South Africa's "social unconscious", Laden relates:

> In the South African juncture consumer magazines provide us with greater insight into the workings of socio-cultural entities than, let's say, overtly subversive political publications. In other words, it is precisely the priority they seem to grant to 'aspired to', not necessarily 'given' state of affairs, which should alert scholars to their hitherto unexplored cogency as historical meaningful documents. It follows then that magazines render meaningfully, without necessarily always putting into action, a shared repertoire of everyday experiences, lifestyle options, and social practices best described, from a Western or European standpoint, as typically 'middle-class' or 'bourgeois'. (2001: 188)

This study specifically explores representations of gender, sexuality and race in a select group of South African English-medium magazines over a period of three years – 2003 to 2005. These magazines are *Men's Health*, *FHM (For Him Magazine)*, *Blink*, *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*, which except for *Blink*, claim the largest readerships in South Africa.[2] I have excluded disability, culture, ethnicity, age and class from this exploration, even though these are significant identity markers that continue to operate as oppressive constructs in the contemporary South African climate. This project does not provide the space to explore presentations of all these subjectivities and the intersections between them in magazines. What I hope to provoke is open discussion about the ways in which privileges attached to one side of

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[2] In October 2007, Touchline Media, a consortium within Media24, was accused of manipulating magazine circulation figures. The magazines affected include *Men's Health*, *True Love* and *Fair Lady*. It is important to note that I consider readership figures, and not circulation figures, in my analysis of the magazines in Chapter Four.

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gendered, sexualised and racialised dichotomies continue to be presented as normative in privately owned, profit-making South African magazines and how these representations are linked to larger social issues in contemporary South Africa. Where it occurs, I will also discuss how hegemonic ideas about gender, race and sexuality are subverted.

As discussed in Chapter Three, there are few South African studies exploring representations of identities in magazines. Internationally, most feminist analyses have looked at either representations of femininities *or* masculinities in magazines. But these studies tend not to explore presentations of both femininities and masculinities, and even fewer at how representations of sexuality and race intersect with gender to produce particular constructs of privilege and subordination. My study attempts to add another dimension to the feminist research already conducted by exploring the complex and multifaceted intersections between representations of gender (power dynamics between women and men and how this manifests in constructs of femininities and masculinities), sexuality (constructs of heterosexuality and homosexuality) and race (constructs of whiteness and blackness) within six South African magazines. I therefore approach my analyses of the magazines from the perspective that gender, race and sexuality are intersectional but that particular subjectivities are more marked than others within particular contexts.

Locating the study – my approach

Although Chapter Two of this thesis discusses the methodological frameworks and feminist epistemologies on which this study is premised, it might be useful to provide a brief rationale for this project at this point. I draw on Harding and Norberg's (2005) position, which highlights why a study

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exploring influential institutions such as the media, is best framed within a feminist methodology:

> Feminist methodology and epistemology prioritises "studying up" – studying the powerful, their institutions, policies, and practices instead of focusing only on those whom the powerful govern. By studying up, researchers can identify the conceptual practices of power and how they shape daily social relations. Understanding how our lives are governed not primarily by individuals but more powerfully by institutions, conceptual schemes, and their "texts", which are seemingly far removed from our everyday lives, is crucial for designing effective projects of social transformation. (2005: 2009)

This study has developed out of my discomfort with capitalist[3] heteropatriarchy and the lack of social responsibility that institutions such as the media reveal in their representations of gender, sexuality and race and other socially-significant markers of identity twelve years into South Africa's democracy. My study takes the view that the private media operates as an agent of socialization, privileging and normalizing particular types of discourses about gender, sexuality and race. Allen (2003) argues, for instance, that a particular version of heterosexuality has been presented as normative in institutions such as the American media:

> The dominance of (hetero)sexual identity and discursive practices that support an active male and passive female sexuality are deeply embedded within social and political participation and perceived as normative. These discourses have been historically shaped by fields such as religion, medicine, law, media and academic disciplines. (2003: 217-218)

As a locality and socio-historical space, the media tells us a lot about the society we live in. Normative discourses about 'appropriate' performances of

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[3] By capitalism I mean a system of commodity production built around wage labour aimed at maximizing profit. This system is currently used in South Africa.

femininities and masculinities are always mediated by (hetero)sexuality,[4] or blackness and whiteness that are built almost invisibly into the messages relayed by the media, so that it becomes difficult to neatly decipher and extract the 'codes' utilized to relay these messages. The position I take in this thesis is that as an influential institution, the media cannot consistently reinforce and reproduce stereotypical discourses about gender, sexuality and race – it has to play some kind of transformative role in the growth of a dynamic and diverse egalitarian culture. Drawing on Harding and Norberg (2005) above, it matters what the media, as an influential institution relays to audiences about gender, sexuality and race within this particular transitional juncture in South African history.

Countering essentialist discourse

The more my writing progressed in this thesis, the more I experienced difficulties because the language I used to deconstruct gender, sexuality and race was extremely limited: I couldn't find the words to express a different reality from what I experience, or a different language to what I've been taught. In some ways, I was forced to use the oppressive terms to imagine a society free of racial and gender discrimination. My experience is not a unique one, considering the critique by many theorists of mechanisms currently being used to redress race in South Africa (see Alexander, 2006; Habib, 2003; Posel, 2001). These critiques draw attention to the reification of racial categories in policy documents on affirmative action and black economic empowerment initiatives. As researchers working across disciplines, we might be equally guilty of reviving apartheid discourses and essentialising constructions of race, gender and sexuality in our efforts to create an equitable society through our use of heteropatriarchal language. At

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[4] Heterosexuality is often unnamed in discourses about sexuality and gender. Where appropriate, I insert 'hetero' in brackets to indicate how heterosexuality is often a hidden and taken-for-granted category of analysis.

one point, I therefore considered using single quotation marks around terms such as 'race', 'black', 'white', 'coloured' and so forth to signify their construction as suggested by Berger (2001). He suggests the use of racial labels in inverted commas as signalling that "there are question marks over the meaning of categorizing people in these blanket terms" (2001: 72). But in the same way as race is a construct, so are 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'middle-class' and so on. In fact, the English language is generally suffused with words denoting power/powerlessness and hierarchies so that many terms have particular meanings within specific historical junctures – 'black', 'white', 'man' and 'woman' are examples. I therefore decided not to use quotation marks at all, but to rather contextualise my use of terms within the feminist poststructuralist framework underpinning this study, which I discuss in Chapters One and Two.

In other words, any critical analysis of gender, race and sexuality faces the danger of reproducing notions of woman/man, whiteness/blackness or heterosexual/homosexual as essentialised subjectivities. Frankenberg (1993) observes, for instance, that

> Race *is* a socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time. Race, like gender, is "real" in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals' sense of self, experiences, and life chances. In asserting that race and racial difference are socially constructed, I do not minimise their social and political reality, but rather insist that their reality is, precisely, social and political rather than inherent or static. (1993: 11, my emphasis)

In South Africa, Abrahams (2000) however, warns against a simplistic use of social constructionist accounts of race, noting that

> The idea of race as a purely invented construct is nonsensical in the context of the liberation struggle. The freedom fighters who were and

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still are imprisoned for the causes of Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness are sitting behind iron bars, not texts. Our many heroes, men and women, who confronted the possibility of dying in the struggle, knew well that their lives were more than a social construct. To lay down the breath of your body for an ideal is to be profoundly aware of the material nature of reality. (2000: 8)

It is not my intention in this study to help maintain historically specific and damaging constructs of gendered, racialised or sexualised subjectivities. Instead, I hope to contribute to work deconstructing the imaginary dichotomies of gender, race and sexuality as systems of power and inequality. With reference to my focus on whiteness as a racialised subjectivity, for instance, Ware and Back (2002: 19) warn: "there is a need to guard against the prospect of a field of study that constructs the people who fall into the category of white as separate and homogeneous and that effectively reifies whiteness as being marked in or on the body." So while I attempt to deconstruct whiteness as a site of dominance, the simultaneous risk of slipping into essentialism and racial dualism always remains. Abby Ferber (1998) similarly argues that deconstructing the imaginary binary oppositions of black/white predisposes the analyst to reproducing the very oppositions she aims to deconstruct. She draws attention to this dilemma appearing as a glaring contradiction:

If race is socially and culturally constructed, and given meaning through discourse, then we, as researchers, contribute to that construction. By failing to explore our own role in the construction of race and continuing to use it as a category of analysis, we reproduce race as a given, obvious, natural category, existing outside of discourse, delegitimising our very own claims that race is socially constructed. (1998: 18)

One route in countering this contradiction has been identified by both Ferber (1998) and Ware and Back (2002), who suggest the exploration of racial subjectivities within very specific social and historical contexts. By specifying how meanings attached to being white, for instance, are transformed through

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its relation to other hierarchies of power and inequalities like gender, socio-economic status and sexuality, and vice versa, in very specific contexts, we locate these subjectivities as shifting and fluid. Similarly, the exploration of gendered subjectivities must occur within specific contexts where other subjectivities such as race and sexuality, for example, are located. In this way, gendered subjectivities are only attributed meaning through contexts where other subjectivities are interdependently located and vice versa. I discuss the notion of intersectionality in more depth in Chapter One of this study.

Private media, transformation and social identities

While many media practitioners were marginalised and punished for challenging the apartheid regime, in contemporary South Africa there is some space for them to align themselves with the transformatory project of dismantling the historical ramifications of apartheid. Indeed, the media's influential role could be used effectively to challenge stereotypes around gender, sexuality and race. According to Berger (2001: 71), a focus on the media "in the post-apartheid era, with the aim of assessing the institution as a factor for or against transformation, and in which direction" should not come as a surprise. He contextualises this focus within the role played by the media under apartheid as either maintaining the racist order or challenging this order, "and how that history implicates the kind of role they should play post-apartheid" (2001: 71). Berger further observes the need to assess the media's contribution to national transformation when he states that

> The key focus is transformation from a racist society, based on unfair discrimination. Transformation of this goes through two analytically distinct moments: transformation first to fair discrimination – corrective action to change racial imbalances resulting from racism; then transformation to a nonracial society. The end point of transformation then is doing away with racial distinction altogether: deracialisation such that race has no racial significance. (2001: 151)

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As reflected above, discourses on transformation seem to refer particularly to race and racism and demonstrate that race continues to be challenged as a socially-significant identity marker. My feminist interpretation of transformation talk in South Africa, however, is that it is dominated by a particular type of masculinist political discourse which sees race as the master (and most significant) identity construction in need of transforming. Gender and sexuality power dynamics continue to operate mostly invisibly, and sometimes marginally, within a capitalist patriarchal structure keeping women and gay men subjugated and unsafe, with most of the power remaining in the hands of heterosexual men. As Davis (2006) states of the media:

> In countries such as South Africa, where the rights of women are considered as important as any other rights and where the media embraces its role as watchdog, the failure to provide diverse representation comes from two areas. Firstly, I believe that media transformation, although a widely spoken ideal, has been superficial. In addition most work on media transformation in South Africa has focused on race and not on gender. (2006: no page)

The multiple and meaningful experiences of being a woman, or transgendered, or poor, or mentally/physically disabled, or living on the Cape Flats, cannot continue to be marginalised in favour of race, or seen as separate from race. We cannot talk about redressing race in South Africa without looking at other socially significant subjectivities and noting the continuous negotiations and intersections between these positions. The media can play an important role in reflecting the intersectionality of subjectivities in its representations of women and men.

Although the relationship between the media and social reality has been extensively debated, the question remains as to the extent to which the media influences social reality (Rosengren, 1981; McQuail, 1997). Glasser (1997) points out convincingly that the ideological dominance employed by the

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media "is established not by the imposition of an explicit agenda but the channelling and control of the parameters of discourse and the naturalization of a particular worldview" (1997: 87). In this thesis, I take the position that there is a hierarchical relationship between the private media and society. Although the private media might *reflect* societal values to some extent, as a powerful institution pervading the lives of individuals through easy access to its products, it has substantial influence and power to maintain, reinforce, or subvert and critique identity constructions. According to Hall (1992), the media plays a huge role in defining reality for the public. He explains that

> The media defines, not merely produces, 'reality'. Definitions of reality are sustained and produced through all the linguistic practices by means of which selective definitions of the 'real' are represented. Representation is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies that the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of *making things mean*. It is a practice, a production, of meaning: what has been defined as a 'signifying practice'. The media are signifying agents. (cited in Braude, 1999: 18)

Within South Africa's patriarchal capitalist system, the private media industry is driven by profit-making and this frames the ways in which it represents gender, sexuality and race in contemporary South Africa. In this context, magazines profit financially from presenting heterofemininities and heteromasculinities[5] in particular ways; ways which I argue in Chapters Four, Five and Six, mostly maintain, reinforce and produce damaging binaries of gender, sexuality and race. As relayed by Root (1984) and Williamson (1978), the private media mostly "represents the patriarchal orientation of industrial capitalism" (cited in Prinsloo, 2003: 29).

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[5] The terms heterofemininities and heteromasculinities serves to locate gender and sexuality as inextricably interconnected, always intersecting in the production of identities. More relevant to this thesis, is the attempt to reveal the often hidden heteronormativity in constructions of gender.

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As I discuss in Chapter Four, ingrained within this patriarchal capitalist system, it isn't possible for the private media to be neutral or objective – it is highly subjective in the ways it chooses to present subjectivities rooted in South Africa's history in an effort to maximize profits. In presenting gender, masculinities and femininities are portrayed in ways which are understood to guarantee profits. Boswell (2002) links representations of women to the media's social responsibility in transformation:

> The media, contrary to its protestations of neutrality and objectivity, is not a neutral entity. It has incredible power, and concomitant responsibility, in shaping its public's views of the world...The mass media therefore can be a tool for upholding the status quo (which includes racial and gender inequity) or a tool for transformation and a just, more equitable social order. The media, collectively, plays an important role in the shaping of perceptions around women, their role in society and what is considered "acceptable" with regards to gender roles. (2002: no page)

Similarly, Durham and Kellner (2001) relate how the media plays a critical role in identity construction. They explain how

> products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of 'us' and 'them' (cited in Viljoen, 2007 – in press).

Tomaselli and Tomaselli (2001: 123) also elaborate on how the media shapes our identities, explaining how "it remains true that newspapers, magazines, television and radio are both the *sites* and *instruments* of transformation." They argue:

> As *instruments* of transformation, media provide essential platforms for debate, information and education around issues shaping the kind of society we are, and the kind of society we wish to become. More

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subtly, but in some ways more importantly, the media choose and frame the kinds of stories we read, see and hear. They provide images in which we see ourselves and others, as well as role models to which we are able to aspire, versions of the 'other' against which we rebel...all these heavily-laden signifiers are the raw material through which we confirm, modify or negate our already-existing sense of identity, both at the personal and at the national level. (2001: 124)

Why lifestyle magazines?

Magazines do not operate in a vacuum - their existence depends on the extent to which people buy into the messages being sold. This suggests that the magazines have to maintain and always focus on increasing their readerships in order to maximize profits.

Gross (1998) argues that internationally,

when groups or perspectives do attain visibility, the way in which they are represented reflects the biases and interests of those elites who define the public agenda - (mostly) white, middle-aged, male, middle and upper-class and heterosexual. (cited in Harding, 1998: 41)

This argument holds true for five of the six magazines in my sample which are controlled by Media24, the leading print media in Africa.[6] The Media24 group is subsidiary to NASPERS (Nasionale Pers), the multinational media company in South Africa. The five magazines owned by Media24 include local editions of *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *True Love* and *Fair Lady*. *Femina*, originally owned by Associated Magazines, was very recently taken over by Media24. *Blink* magazine was owned by Blink Lifestyle Trading at the time this study was conducted, but the magazine ceased to appear in October 2006. According to Living Scales Measurements (LSMs), the magazines in my sample cater for those with substantial access to economic resources in

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[6] See http://www.naspers.com/English/print.asp

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South Africa: the middle and upper-middle classes. LSM is an abbreviation for Living Standards Measure, developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF). While there has been some debate about the definition of LSMs, it can generally be understood as a marketing segmentation tool which measures wealth based on 'standard' of living. A more nuanced discussion of LSMs will follow in Chapter Two.

My findings, discussed in Chapters Five and Six, suggest that socio-economic status and affluence play a significant role in the ways that magazines present identities to their readers. Despite the predominant African[7] readerships for *True Love* and *Blink* magazines, the advertising content of these magazines do not differ substantially from the others in my sample with predominantly white readerships – *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady* and *Femina*. Economic resources – while still closely linked to constructs of race – draw consumers of different race groups together with similar 'lifestyles', experiences and social practices, as argued by Laden (2001). While racial binaries of white/black continue to operate as normative and invisibilised, and marked and 'different' respectively, the magazines' focus on profit maximisation means that they predominantly cater, as argued by Laden (2001), for those with affluence, the middle and upper classes in the country.

My findings indicate that it is advertising copy in magazines which plays a significant role in presenting particular femininities and masculinities as normative, and 'othering' non-normative ways of being women and men in the world. While there is a difference between editorial content and advertising

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[7]There is constant and necessary debate about the definitions of these racial constructs. In this thesis, I take Yvette Abrahams's (2000) position on 'Africanness' as more than continental citizenship but as linked to heritage and a particular consciousness. Blackness is linked to this consciousness, so that being black is linked to political oppression, dispossession and exploitation. But magazine representations appear to distinguish between 'degrees of blackness', so that 'coloured' and 'Indian' readers are separated from African readers. For clarity, I will make this distinction throughout this thesis.

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content, or paid-for content, it has been documented very recently that this difference is becoming increasingly blurred in the print media. Hadland, Cowling and Tabe (2007) relate how the linking of advertising content and editorial contents are practiced in obscure ways in the media. They state that the separation between editorial and advertising contents in magazines, for instance, has been "less rigid", with some media executives arguing that "the strict separation of the advertising and editorial functions is no longer appropriate in the new business climate, and have advocated more integration of editorial and marketing" (Hadland et al., 2007: 2-3). This blurring of editorial and advertising material obviously has consequences for the type of editorial content privileged and offered to the magazine reader. The argument for separating commercial interests (as represented by advertising) from editorial contents is not a new issue. In 2005, it was widely publicised that the editor of *Fair Lady* magazine, Ann Donald, resigned from her position because she was not allowed by the owner of the magazine, Media24, to run a controversial feature on cellulite creams in *Fair Lady* magazine that named brands (Grant-Marshall, 2005; Mail & Guardian Editorial, 2005). It seems then that when advertisers pay for advertising space in magazines, and editors agree to include this content, there might be a compromise on editorial integrity and media independence. As I show in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, this seems to be the case for some magazines targeting female and male readers, so that the editorial content very often echoes the often futile promises made by advertisers. Both advertising and editorial contents in magazines, then, help to produce hegemonic and normative ideas of gender, race and sexuality.

Gender ideologies in magazines

Boswell (2002) argues that the media plays a powerful role in privileging specific versions of femininities and presenting them as normative.

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McRobbie's (1996: 172) argument is similar when she states that magazines particularly may be "the most concentrated and uninterrupted media-scape for the construction of normative femininity." Syster (2004: 1) argues, for example, that "no matter how hard these publications try to differentiate themselves from the competition with snappy editorial content, all appear to have the same basic ingredient – telling women how they should look." Women's magazines appear to be significant sites for the production, perpetuation and reinforcement of particular femininities. Ballaster et al. (1991) argue that the success of contemporary women's magazines is connected to their ability to encompass glaring contradiction *coherently* in its pages. These magazines relay the message that "femaleness is in itself punishable, but can only be transcended or transformed through the acquisition and display of an excessive femininity" (1991: 13).

My interpretation of a select group of South African women's magazines, which I discuss in depth in Chapter Five, reflects that particular versions of racialised femininities are preferable. Women's physical bodies are portrayed as consistently 'in need of fixing' and are hyper(hetero)sexualised in a variety of ways, placing a substantial amount of pressure on women to maintain or become heterosexually desirable. The message relayed by the magazines to the readers is that the ideal femininity to aspire to is multifaceted and is based on a number of assumptions requiring hard work – heterosexuality is assumed, the desire to have children is assumed, the desire to appear youthful and thin is assumed, the desire for straight hair is assumed. A large amount of space in women's magazines is dedicated to advertisements and editorial content locating women as consumers of beauty products, diet programmes and fashion.

Readers do not, however, necessarily buy into these representations mechanistically. As Macdonald (1995) argues, readers negotiate with

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magazine contents in complex ways, discarding what they find useless and using what they find helpful. Van Zoonen (1996: 46) similarly warns against constructing women audiences as victims of dominant media constructions of femininity who are "bombarded by disempowering images all but alien to their true selves." Others argue that notions of ideal femininities in the mass media are oppressive to women, producing a "neurotic femininity" (McRobbie, 1999: 46), or as Wolf argued in 1991, making women more susceptible to psychopathologies such as anorexia and bulemia nervosa. Normative magazine messages, however, are powerful in their ability to persuade, attribute meaning to, disseminate values and attitudes and shape ideals of masculinity and femininity. Magazines are therefore able to shape reality in ways privileging particular versions of femininities and masculinities, and in this way might be accepted by readers/viewers as more legitimate, credible and acceptable than other versions of reality (Macdonald, 1995). Clowes (2002) takes this argument further when she discusses the persuasive role of magazine media:

> magazines embody 'processes of persuasion'; they are in a sense vehicles of persuasion that reflect, produce and ratify what is defined as 'normal' – and what is 'abnormal' – for particular audiences in particular historical junctures. The discourse of a magazine inevitably 'emphasises and privileges one version of reality over another', enabling editors, writers and even owners (themselves gendered products of society) to attribute particular sets of gendered meanings (out of a range of meanings) to the events or processes they deem newsworthy. (2002: 14-15)

Kilbourne (1995) asserts that in magazine media, there exists a recurring feminine ideal where:

> The sex object is a mannequin, a shell...she has no lines or wrinkles (which would indicate she had the bad taste and poor judgement to grow older), no scars or blemishes – indeed she has no pores. She is thin, generally tall and long-legged, and above all, she is young. All

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'beautiful' women in advertisements (including minority women), regardless of product or audience, conform to this norm. Women are constantly exhorted to emulate this ideal, to feel ashamed and guilty if they fail, and to feel that their desirability and loveability are contingent upon physical perfection. (1995: 122)

Women's magazines are built on a paradox which suggests that 'natural' femininity can only be achieved through hard work (Ballaster et al.,1991). I would add that women are pressured through magazine discourses to aspire to particular versions of femininities, situated within clear heterosexual boundaries. The message therefore is that women have to do something about their 'inadequate' faces and bodies to be attractive to men. The codifying of women's bodies, then, "into structures of appearance, that culturally shapes and moulds what is to be 'feminine'" (Macdonald, 1995: 194) is central to the types of femininities idealized in women's magazines and perpetuates the sexualisation of women's bodies within a heterosexist patriarchal system.

In contrast to the barrage of literature on presentations of femininities worldwide, as I discuss in the Literature Review (Chapter Three), studies on representations of masculinities in the media have only recently been taken up by scholars. Men's magazines have, however, been heralded as a significant site where dominant discourses of masculinity are produced, reflected and manipulated (Gauntlett, 2002). These magazines present a space where wider cultural and social meanings of masculinity can be explored. The inextricable relationship between men's magazines and socio-cultural notions of masculinity emphasises the role of magazines as "both cultural text and cultural phenomenon" (Benwell, 2003: 6), where meanings are attached to masculine representations through identification, negotiation and contestation by readers.

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Gauntlett (2002: 152) argues that although British lifestyle magazines such as *GQ* and *FHM* "can be regressive and cringeworthy on some pages", there is a need to analyse men's magazines in terms of the projection of different types of masculinities offered in their contents. He posits that a one-dimensional analysis of masculinity does not take into account the alternative expressions of manhood depicted in men's magazines. This thesis, in part, responds to the gap identified by Gauntlett and aims to explore dominant representations of masculinities, with an eye to exploring alternative discourses on masculinities within the pages of the magazines. The privileged versions of masculinities presented as normative within the South African versions of *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink* highlights the Foucauldian notion (1978) that the production and maintenance of privilege relies on power for its existence as 'normal' while rendering other versions of masculinity 'deviant'.

Across racial constructs, my interpretation of the men's magazines suggests that a certain kind of heteromasculinity is privileged and presented as normative. Biological understandings of gender are frequently used in constructing heteromasculinity as oppositional to homosexuality and femininity. This fuels the hegemonic and essentialist construction of gender where, as Benwell (2003: 17) argues, "men and women occupy exclusive sub-cultures which are polarised in terms of values, behaviours and styles, whether emotional, linguistic or lifestyle."

The structure of this thesis

Chapter One of this study is a theoretical chapter on gender, race and sexuality. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for my analysis of magazine representations in Chapters Four, Five and Six. In Chapter One, I discuss how I understand meanings attached to heteromasculinities and

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heterofemininities, as well as racialised subjectivities such as whiteness and blackness.

Chapter Two is a critical literature review of both international and local studies on representations of gender, race and sexuality in magazines. I look at the available literature in this area, discuss the usefulness of particular research for my work and the gaps my study attempts to fill.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodological premises of my study. Here I discuss in detail the kind of feminist poststructuralist epistemologies underpinning my work, which feeds directly into my analyses in Chapters Four, Five and Six. This chapter also discusses the qualitative methods I utilised to collect the empirical data – discourses on gender, race and sexuality in magazines, and process of interviewing magazine editors. I discuss difficulties around the interview process and which questions I asked editors. I also discuss the analytical tools I used to determine the hegemonic discourses on gender, race and sexuality in the magazines.

Chapter Four is an analytical chapter which attempts to contextualise the magazines in my sample through a discussion of readership statistics and interviews with editors about the contents of their magazines. The readership statistics include those for the racial categories 'African', 'white', 'Indian' and 'coloured', as well as statistics for male and female readers. This part of the chapter attempts to describe the profile of readers of the specific magazines, which feeds into the editorial and advertising contents of the magazines. The second part of this chapter is an analysis of editors' views on their magazines' role in nation-building and social responsibility in South Africa, and how this affects their presentations of gender, race and sexuality in their magazines. This section of the chapter provides some insight into my analyses of the magazines in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Five is an analysis of the men's magazines in my sample focused on the ways in which the magazines privilege particular performances of heteromasculinities. I discuss how *Men's Heath*, *Blink* and *FHM* are similar in terms of their representations of masculinities and femininities. I also discuss the differences between them with reference to the meanings the specific magazines attach to racialised subjectivities, and how this intersectionality of race, gender and sexuality is presented to readers. These magazines also provide substantial insight into constructions of femininities – if masculinity is defined in relation to femininity, then definitions of femininity are extremely meaningful for men too.

Chapter Six of this study is an analysis of the women's magazines in my sample – *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* - in terms of their representations of gender, race and sexuality. My focus here is on the hyper(hetero)sexualisation[8] of racialised femininities and the pressure on both black and white women to maintain or become heterosexually desirable to an unmarked and unnamed, but clearly masculine, audience in different ways. Again, as for men's magazines, the presentation of masculinities in women's magazines, provide substantial insight into the ways that femininities are constructed.

Reservations

I began this study a few years ago with the understanding that a doctoral thesis would allow me the space to explore multiple representations of a

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[8] The term 'hypersexualisation' has been used in black feminist literature specifically to describe the ways in which black physical bodies have been sexualised and exoticised through colonial obsession with racial difference. But as I discuss in Chapter Six, this term is inadequate for my analysis of how black female bodies are hypersexualised within the heterosexual matrix of magazines. I therefore include (hetero) in brackets to indicate this shift.

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range of intersecting subjectivities – gender, race, sexuality, class, language, religion, disability and so on - in magazine media. I also began this study with the naïve mindset that I could somehow advocate change within South Africa's capitalist patriarchal systems through feminist intellectual activism. I have realised that this is an impossible task to fulfil in a doctoral thesis - radical transformation takes consistency, lots of time, and hard work. At best, this study sets out to explore and discuss the ways in which hegemonic constructions of gender, sexuality and race are maintained, reproduced or subverted in magazine media, and how these representations relate to the larger South African concern with developing a true democracy where women's human rights and gender equality are centralised. I explore magazine messages about the binaries of femininities and masculinities, heterosexuality and homosexuality, blackness and whiteness, because in my mind, there are clear connections between these representations and social problems such as male violence against women, unequal sexual relations between women and men, which, in turn, give rise to escalating HIV/AIDS infection rates, and the lack of social cohesion in our country. While this thesis must be read as merely one interpretation of the complex relationship between magazine media and the role they play in the maintenance and reproduction of historical meanings around gender, race and sexuality in contemporary South Africa, I remain hopeful that I am adding something to the debates around the role of the media in building a truly democratic post apartheid South Africa.

The next chapter, then, explores a range of theories of gender, race and sexuality as tools in interpreting these magazine messages. I discuss how one component of the dichotomies woman/man, black/white and heterosexual/homosexual continue to operate as normative in contemporary South Africa. I clarify my use of the terms above with a particular emphasis on poststructuralist understandings of subjectivities, whiteness, masculinities,

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femininities and heterosexualities. I also provide brief explanations for my understanding of sex and socio-economic status. Chapter One therefore serves to foreground my exploration of magazine messages in terms of hegemonic discourses on gender, race and sexuality.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORISING RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

> There are people without gender, because they are male, without race, because they are white, without language, because they speak English, and without culture because they are American. (Du Toit, 2001)

The quote above highlights the overriding argument in this chapter, namely, that certain subjectivities within the racialised, gendered and sexualised dichotomies operative in contemporary South African societies, continue to function as normative, invisible but privileged. As I note in the Introduction, transformation talk in the current South African climate is one focused particularly on race, where gender and sexuality are marginalised. The intention in this chapter is, therefore, to reveal the inextricable links between race, gender and sexuality through locating socio-historical understandings of these subjectivities in the contemporary South African landscape. This process is necessary in my effort to unpack the magazine messages in Chapters Five and Six of this study.

The first part of this chapter looks critically at theories on race, gender and sexuality, and the ways in which being white, male and heterosexual in the current South African context continues to operate as normative, invisible but privileged. The second part of this chapter focuses on the intersectionality of these subjectivities,[9] bearing in mind that although there is insufficient space to deal with these here, subjectivities such as age, culture, regional location and others always mediate experiences of race, gender and sexuality. This

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[9] I use the term subjectivities to reflect the fluid positionalities, such as gender, race and sexuality, which make up individual identity. A more comprehensive explanation of the term is provided in Chapter 2, where Saco (1992) describes the ways in which subjectivities operate through discourse.

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chapter therefore provides a theoretical approach to understanding the representations of racialised, gendered and sexualised subjectivities in contemporary South African magazines.

Race

The interrogation of white subjectivities does not seem to have been of much interest for white South African researchers exploring blackness. In fact, whiteness has mostly been invisibilised, normalised and unmarked in research. My feminist poststructuralist position is that we cannot explore one side of the dichotomy without exploring the other. In other words, each pole of the binary, such as femininity/masculinity and blackness/whiteness, can only exist in relation to the other pole. Consequently, it is critical to explore how power is concentrated on one side of the binary.

Prior to research identifying whiteness as a specific racialised position, most academic studies on racialised subjectivities have focused on the oppression of the black marginalised 'other' as a racialised location (hooks,[10] 1988; Morrison, 1992; Frankenberg, 1993; Holland-Muter, 1995; Roediger, 1994; Ferber, 1998; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Studies of white subjectivities are therefore relatively new in their enquiry both internationally and locally. In South Africa the last decade has seen research on whiteness growing rapidly, with particular relevance for feminist research.

Until recently, whiteness, as a socially constructed position of privilege, power and dominance, remained the invisible core: the unnamed, 'unraced' and unmarked site of oppression. McKinney contextualises the need to visibilise whiteness as a site of racialised privilege in embarking on her study:

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[10] I spell bell hooks in small caps; the way she represents herself in all her writing.

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I wanted my study to turn the critical gaze away from the racialised Other, onto racialised whites. In this sense, my research consists of "othering" whiteness - treating it as exotic. One of the privileges of whiteness is to be able to remain racially invisible, unnamed. As in a child's "peek-a-boo" game, as white people we are able to cover *our* eyes to consciousness of "race" and, in doing so, fool ourselves into thinking that, because we do not "see" race, we will not be *seen* as racialised beings. In this state of pseudo-invisibility, whites have more often consumed the stories of racialised others, while their own lives remain unexplored. (2005: 3)

As with all subjectivities, being white in South Africa, and elsewhere, does not imply an isolated, homogeneous, essential subjectivity inherent to all white people. McKinney (2005: 4) again explains that "just as there is no one 'blackness' (i.e. blacks belong to diverse socioeconomic, religious, and political backgrounds), there is no essential whiteness – white people are divided by ethnic, regional, religious, class and gender differences, among others." But there is also the notion of human agency - as with all subjectivities, there is an element of agency involved in choosing how to think and how to act on one's thoughts. As Steve Biko noted in 1978, if whiteness is understood as a racialised space constructed on privilege, and on attitudes and behaviours based on these privileges, it follows that white South Africans can choose not to be white, even when privileges are ascribed to them on the basis of skin colour. Without simplifying the meanings ascribed to racial constructs, in my view there is agency attached to how we define ourselves even though others might continue to define us in particular racialised ways.

Within the racial dichotomy of black/white, whiteness as a particular socio-historical subjectivity is associated with a systematic unearned claim to privilege and dominance that is manifested in particular ways at particular

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socio-historical junctures. In other words, the unearned privileges positioning whiteness as a hegemonic racialised position is sustained through systematic material and economic advantages which change according to time and place. In contemporary South Africa and much of the west, the social construction of whiteness continues to determine its privilege. Certainly in the past and to a large extent still in the present, white South Africans have and for the most part continue to earn material, economic and structural privileges through skin colour acting as 'proof' of competence and ability.

The privileges attached to being white are normalised and naturalised, contributing to the invisibility of white superiority. As Goldberg (1997) argues:

> The realities of dominant racial definition are all about the implications of visibility and invisibility. Whiteness has long been characterized in terms of light and learning, blackness in terms of darkness and degeneration. Accordingly, visibility carries with it connotations that tend to be appealing, even intoxicating-access, opportunity, ability, in short, power; and invisibility has tended to connote absence, lack, incapacity, in short, powerlessness. (1997: 79-80)

In other words, white privilege is sustained through the disenfranchisement and disadvantage of racialised 'others'. As Salusbury (2003: 6) explains, whiteness can only derive its privileges from colonising the 'other':

> Whiteness *is* significant beyond its physical attributes, and this significance is flexible, constantly changing and has developed in response to the presence of others who are not white. In fact, 'whiteness' *only* has meaning in contrast to these others. (2003: 6, my emphasis)

Within the racialised dichotomy, whiteness acts as the foundation from which the 'other' is defined and vice versa. But within this racial binary, whiteness is assigned dominance, assuming the position of uninterrogated, normalised, unmarked space. As Richard Dyer (1988: 1) maintains, "As long as race is something only applied to non-white people, as long as white people are not

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racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people."

Whiteness therefore operates as the invisible core, constructed as unmarked by race, but capable of marking, naming, marginalising and defining the 'other' as different and derivative. Nakayama and Krizek (1999) explain:

> "White" is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible as it continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain. It affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterisation that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position. (1999: 88)

Chambers (1997) substantiates this idea of whiteness as the invisible core. He argues that whiteness is not a classificatory category, but serves as the unexamined norm against which 'other' subjectivities are defined, compared to and examined (1997: 197). In South Africa, blackness, colouredness, Indianness and other forms of 'otherness' are marked because they are different from the norm of whiteness: whiteness is not compared to these subjectivities but serves as the uncritiqued centre. The 'other' is weighed against this invisible norm, and for those who are not white, the sense of self is measured against its unquestionable adequacy, its unquestionable worthiness, and its apparent neutrality. Thus whiteness

> like other unmarked categories... has the touchstone quality of the normal, against which the members of marked categories are measured and, of course, found deviant, that is, wanting. It is thus...situated outside the paradigm that it defines. 'Whiteness' is not itself compared with anything, but other things are compared unfavourably with it, and their own comparability with one another derives from their distance from the touchstone. (Chambers, 1997:189)

According to Chambers (1997), it is, on the one hand, the unmarked character of whiteness which leads to privileges of normalcy and lack of susceptibility to examination. On the other hand, the marked character of

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blackness, for example, lends itself to examination through connotations of derivativeness, deviance, secondariness and disempowerment. Whiteness as unmarked and invisible, he argues, suggests that it is constructed as single and homogeneous, thus producing itself as incapable of examination but capable of pluralising and rendering the 'other' as examinable. Only the various racialised subjectivities of 'non-whiteness' are compared to each other but the unmarked character of whiteness is incomparable with the 'other'. Constructed as a singular, unmarked, homogeneous category, white subjectivities are individualised. Chambers (1997) argues that "whites are perceived as individual historical agents whose unclassified difference from one another is their most prominent trait" (1997: 192). The individualisation of white subjects constructs 'non-whites' as plural, different, 'cultured' and exotic. In other words, 'non-whites' are perceived first as belonging to a group and thereafter individualised as subjects.

This concept of the 'other' as possessing a culture in opposition to white culture as 'empty' but ubiquitous, is similar to Frankenberg's (1993) findings in her interviews with white American women who were unable to define themselves in relation to a culture, but perceived the 'other' as part of a group and culture because of difference from the normative white centre. Frankenberg's (1993) work on the social construction of whiteness is seminal in her attempt to name and examine white Western subjectivities. Her study focuses on the discursive racialised life experiences of thirty white American women in the United States with the aim of "examin[ing] the 'whiteness' of white women's experiences" (1993: 18). One of the fundamental outcomes of this study was the complex ways in which white women in the United States did not see their life experiences as 'raced' or 'cultured' but merely as 'normal'. American white cultural practices were most often seen as normative, undefined and unmarked. The power of this apparently 'empty' cultural space appeared to be linked to the privilege of being *unnamed.*

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Whiteness then, becomes the non-defined definer of the 'other', "an unmarked or neutral category, whereas other cultures are specifically marked 'cultural'" (Frankenberg, 1993: 197). The women in Frankenberg's study appeared to see whiteness as undefined, leading to the construction of nonwhite as 'other', different, lesser and deviant. White culture took the position of unspoken norm in these women's discourses, where whiteness stood for sameness and the 'other' as 'differentness'. The women's discourses revealed that "'whiteness' appeared to function as both norm and core, that against which everything else is measured, and as residue, that which is left after everything else has been named" (Frankenberg, 1993: 204). In sum, being white and American, according to Frankenberg (1993: 198), "both stood as normative and exclusive categories in relation to which other cultures were identified and marginalized."

White privilege is often unwittingly sustained through discourses which invisibilise its normality. I found Moreton-Robinson's (2000) work, *Talkin' Up To the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, particularly useful in its objective to name and visibilise whiteness as a site of power and dominance in the lives of white female academics. Her argument elaborates on the apparent invisibility of whiteness in interviews with white middle-class feminist academics in Australia. According to Moreton-Robinson, white women feminists are not racialised solely as white but presented as variously classed, sexualised, aged and abled. This kind of individualist racialised construction is tied to the way in which whiteness is 'taught, learned, experienced and identified in certain forms of knowledges, values and privileges' (Giroux, 1997 in Moreton-Robinson, 2000: 126).

Moreton-Robinson suggests that white middle-class feminist academics advocating anti-racist practice in their teaching and research, both consciously and unconsciously exercise their racialised privilege. These

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women were frequently unable to position themselves as privileged in terms of anti-racist practice. Their subjectivities as white middle-class feminist academics appeared to be normalised, unnamed, unmarked but centred. Their intellectual engagement with racism allowed for a position where these women perceived whiteness as external to their identities, rather than a racialised subjectivity where they were personally implicated. For those women then, racism often becomes a practice that shapes the lives of 'others' but is not recognised as shaping their lives as white women. As far back as 1979, Rich elaborated on this notion:

> I believe that white feminists today, raised white in a racist society, are often ridden with white solipsism – not the consciously held belief that one race is superior to all others, but a tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term continuing momentum or political usefulness. (in Ware, 1992: 20-21)

Identifying whiteness as a racialised subjectivity means marking its central place in the social construction of race, and disrupting the invisible ways whiteness retains power and privilege. In contemporary South Africa, discourses around race are complex. But a small and growing body of research on whiteness in South Africa has emerged that has begun to explore the importance of examining whiteness in deconstructing the significance attached to racialised subjectivities. Melissa Steyn, for example, encourages an exploration of whiteness in the current South African landscape:

> To name race is taken to be racist...The historical process through which South Africa has traveled makes it more than understandable that South Africans display shell shock in the presence of discourses on race, ethnicity, and even culture. Yet if the structures of feeling that informed the old South African institutions are to be dismantled, an approach that takes cognisance of the long-term effects of colonialism

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and the concomitant processes of racialisation is essential. (2001: xxxi-xxxii)

Steyn (2001) argues that whiteness in South Africa has operated as visible, rather than invisible, to those who embody this subjectivity. She claims that unlike the United States and Europe where whiteness and its advantages function as the invisible norm, historically, South Africans identifying as white have tended to be aware from an early age of some of the ways in which their identities are racialised and how this racialisation simultaneously confers privilege. I would add that, although South African whites may be aware of some of the inequalities produced through unearned privilege, they often remain unaware of the complex ways in which these privileges continue to shape their interactions with fellow citizens in contemporary South Africa.

The current interrogation of the privileges and dominance of whiteness in the past does not necessarily lead to the visibility of whiteness as the unmarked norm. Whiteness has succeeded in permeating the social fabric of South Africa to such an extent, that some argue that the focus on equality and nation-building in the new social order often suggests an assimilation into whiteness for many black South Africans who want to advance in their careers (Memela, 2004; Mniki, 2004). So although white South Africans may be aware of their racialisation and how their lives, experiences and attitudes have been shaped by racism, and despite Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment policies, centuries of white domination suggests that whiteness remains privileged in invisible ways within the South African landscape. However, as I discuss below, constructions of affluence and class are increasingly operating as critical in the ways that privilege is conferred in the new socio-political climate.

Salusbury's (2003) thesis on the *Discourses of Whiteness informing the identity of white English-speaking South Africans (WESSAs)* reveals the ways in which some white individuals have appropriated discourses of whiteness to

negotiate their collective role in the new democratic dispensation. The twenty-one interviews conducted reflected similar findings to Frankenberg's (1993) study on the racialised experiences of white American women. Whiteness again appeared to be the unnamed, unmarked cultural space defined by privilege and individualism (Salusbury, 2003). These WESSAs appeared to define their identities as cultureless and normative, saw themselves as objective social leaders, minimised the significance of politics and political struggle, and deified their European roots.

Salusbury (2003) identifies three main clusters typically permeating the discourses of WESSAs – the invisibility and normativity of whiteness; the apparent inability of white people to see themselves as having a culture, and the construction of whiteness as normal, while 'others' were racialised and possessed a culture. According to Salusbury, contemporary South African whiteness incorporates aspects of concealment and splitting of the self from the historical construction of whiteness as coloniser and settler. The discourses of the interviewees reflected that WESSAs appeared to be caught in the tensions between Afrikaner nationalism and rising black consciousness, resulting in inactivity on both sides, and withdrawal into individualism. Transnational discourses (that European roots, for example, enabled a superior understanding of the political context in Africa) were used in an attempt to understand their positions in the South African context.

While Frankenberg (1993), Salusbury (2003) and Steyn (2001) argue for the interrogation and decentralisation of whiteness as the unmarked, unnamed norm, others call for a complete abolition of whiteness. Garvey and Ignatiev (1997) emphasise the abolition of whiteness in their article *Towards a New Abolitionism: A 'Race Traitor' Manifesto*. The authors state that "the point is not for individuals to become unwhite (although that is good when it happens, as with John Brown) but to blow apart the social formation known as the white race, so that no one is white" (1997: 347-348). In other words, the

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abolitionists seek to turn whites against whiteness, to cast doubt on the white skin as a badge of loyalty, and to oppose any institutional system which privileges white skin while 'othering' those who are constructed as non-white.

Ware (1992, 2001), on the other hand, highlights the importance of working against whiteness as integral to radical anti-racist endeavours. Her central argument is that "whiteness needs to be understood as an interconnected global system, having different inflections and implications depending on where and when it has been produced" (Ware, 2001: 6). In other words, working towards anti-racism means exploring the specificities of whiteness while not overlooking its intersections with gender, class and other socially-significant markers of identity:

> Trying to talk about race, and gender, without forgetting class, is constantly a struggle against the urge to over-simplify and generalize without over-stressing particularity; against the urge to speak for others without ignoring them entirely; against the urge to run away from complicated and contradictory desires and feelings, without losing sight of the way identities are interconnected. (1992: 243)

Ferber's (1998) *White Man Falling* is a relevant text in its encouragement of an interrogation of whiteness. Her argument is that through an exploration of white supremacist discourse, we are able to identify 'mainstream' racist discourse in the United States. But while there are differences between overt and covert racialised discourses, the naming of racism *as* white supremacy enables the gaze to shift from the 'other' to the site of oppression and provides a space for viewing race relations from the angle of those who oppress. As stated by Morrison (1992: 11), effort must be exercised to "avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served." Race then, becomes asynonomous with difference and 'other', but highlights the source of oppression; the ability of white people to race, mark, name and construct this difference.

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hooks (1988) expands on this concept of 'white' supremacy by explaining why its use allows for space to decentre whiteness:

> I try to remember when the word racism ceased to be the term which best described for me the exploitation of black people and other people of colour in this society and when I began to understand that the most useful term was white supremacy. It was certainly a necessary term when confronted with the liberal attitudes of white women active in the feminist movement who were unlike their racist ancestors – white women in the early women's rights movement who did not wish to be caught dead in fellowship with black women. In fact, these women often requested and longed for the presence of black women. Yet when present, what we saw was that they wished to exercise control over our bodies and thoughts as their racist ancestors had – that this need to exercise power over us expressed how much they had internalised the values and attitudes of white supremacy. (1988: 112-113)

Ferber's (1998) study also emphasises the intersections of race, gender and sexuality which functions to maintain white supremacist ideology. She claims that

> the construction of race and gender is clearly intertwined and occurs within the difference/equality framework. Any attempts to increase equality are therefore recast as threats to difference. In order to secure difference and domination, then, the maintenance of the boundaries is *essential*. (1998: 82)

In other words, racial mixing threatens the 'purity' of white identities: here whiteness is sexualised – more specifically it is *heterosexualised* so that heterosexual white women are set up as critical in the maintenance of white superiority. As Ferber (1998) relates, the possibility of inter-racial sex threatens white superiority:

> In white supremacist discourse, a threat to the racial dichotomy and hierarchy is a threat to what is constructed as the natural racial order. Similarly, a threat to the gender dichotomy and hierarchy is a threat to what is constructed as the natural gender order. They are threats to the binary oppositions of male/female and white/nonwhite and are

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represented as threats to *difference* itself. A threat to gender difference is therefore also a threat to racial difference. (1998: 95)

Motsemme (2002) similarly links race and gender during apartheid in South Africa when she articulates that

> Power over black men and women did not preclude the ways white women experienced constraint and domination. It is this situatedness that demonstrates how power within racial discourse in South Africa did not operate in a monolithic and simple manner, but always existed in relation to other forms of power rooted in circulating meanings of femininity, womanhood and sexuality. (2002: 653)

The inability to see one's whiteness in shaping thinking and behaviour maintains whiteness as the invisible, unmarked and uncritiqued centre and reproduces racism. As hooks (1988) explains:

> When liberal whites fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white-supremacist values and beliefs even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination (especially domination that involves coercive control), they cannot recognise the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they profess to wish to see eradicated. (1988: 113)

In Ferber's (1998: 4) words: "Since race is believed to be something that shapes the lives of people of colour, whites often fail to recognise the ways in which their own lives are shaped by race." But what follows from this understanding of white supremacist discourse is that homosexuality, bisexuality or any sexuality which falls outside of normative and racialised heterosexuality would be considered as a threat to the 'purity' of white subjectivities. While white supremacist discourse relies on what it understands as biological, essential differences between the races and sexes in order to sustain itself, it fails to recognise that the biological differences it selects as significant are themselves social constructs. Arguments built around the inscription of meaning and value onto biological differences have long been problematised and deconstructed within the academy - some

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examples are sex, gender and sexuality. I discuss some of these inscriptions in the section on sex and gender below.

Sex and Gender

It is important to differentiate between the meanings I attach to sex and gender. The definition of 'sex' I will employ throughout this study is one used by OUT LGBT[11] Well-being (2003), that while physical sex is determined at birth by virtue of genitalia, "human sexuality is dynamic and diverse in its expression" (2003: 9). I would add that intersex individuals, for example, challenge the notion that there exists only two sexes – males with penises, and females with vaginas. Sally Gross, for example, an intersexed South African, explains that the ways in which biological sex develops is complex, and that the classification of human beings into male and female is not a straightforward process (Gross, 2000: 2). I take the position, accordingly, that individuals should be able to define themselves in ways that most make sense to them and are not necessarily tied to the appearance of their physical genitalia at birth.

It is also important to note that discourses about sex in science as well as popular culture often play a critical role in constructions of gender and sexuality. Martin (1991) and Tuana (1988), for instance, explore the ways in which scientific language constructs and promotes gender and sexual stereotypes. Martin's (1991) article on scientific accounts of reproductive biology which rely on stereotypical definitions of males and females, is important to mention here. She focuses on the gender and sexual stereotypes informing the discourse of science, which, she notes, is also evident in popular discourse. I briefly discuss the ways in which the authority of science is used to naturalise gender and sexual constructs in my reading of

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[11] LGBT is the abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.

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men's magazines in Chapter Six. Suffice it to say here that Martin describes the ways in which female reproductive organs and processes are mostly presented in negative ways, while male reproductive organs and processes are presented positively. She argues:

> How is it that positive images are denied the bodies of women? A look at language – in this case, scientific language – provides the first clue. Take the egg and the sperm. It is remarkable how 'femininely' the egg behaves and how 'masculinely' the sperm. The egg is seen as large and passive. It does not *move* or *journey*, but passively 'is transported', 'is swept', or even 'drifts' along the fallopian tube. In utter contrast, sperm are small, 'streamlined', and invariably active. (1991: 489)

What is useful about Martin's (1991) descriptions of male and female biological sex in scientific literature is that she shows how they are steeped in cultural stereotypes about women as passive recipients and men as active performers. Where female reproductive organs and processes are more accurately described in revisionist scientific accounts, this activity is redefined as "disturbingly aggressive", "as dangerous and aggressive", "the femme fatale who victimizes men", discourses paralleled in constructions of femininity in western popular culture (1991: 498).

Tuana's (1998) article is similar in focus and looks at the ways scientific language used to describe reproductive theories have historically utilised biological explanations and justifications for the systematic oppression of women. Claiming that "scientists work within and through the worldview of their time" (1998: 147), Tuana highlights that the construction of science as objective and value-free is a myth, where scientists bring their subjective, biased views into the ways in which they conduct their research and recreate stereotypes about male and female biological sex. Despite these kinds of scholarly critiques of the ways in which biological sex has been constructed,

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sex continues to determine gendered and sexualised meanings in the popular imagination. I discuss this below.

Gender and sexuality

My study is premised on Butler's (1990) idea of gender as performative, i.e. women and men perform prescribed roles of heterofemininity and heteromasculinity within particular contexts. Butler states, for instance, that gender is "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990: 33). But she also notes the intersectionality of subjectivities in the following argument:

> If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes difficult to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (1990: 3)

But normative gendered performances are learned within heteropatriarchal contexts, at particular historical junctures through the socialization of girls and boys into 'womanhood' and 'manhood'. Van Zyl (1990), for example, explains:

> To be a woman or a man in our society, does not imply only a biological description, but a whole set of social expectations about conduct, appearance, roles and activities. Therefore, one's social identity is determined on the one hand by biological designation, sex, and on the other hand by a cultural definition, gender. While most societies agree on the biological ascriptions, they vary widely on what is deemed gender appropriate. What it means to be a woman or a man, is therefore historically particular, and varies greatly over time and place. (1990: 11)

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McFadden (2003) elaborates on the process of gendered socialization within heteropatriarchal societies. Her narrative, which I cite extensively below, highlights the ways gendered and sexualised socialization works within a heteropatriarchy:

> A fundamental premise of patriarchal power and impunity is the denial and suppression of women's naming and controlling their bodies for their own joy and nurturing. In all patriarchal societies, women and girls are taught, consistently and often violently, that their bodies are dirty, nasty, smelly, disgusting, corrupting, imperfect, ugly and volatile harbingers of disease and immorality. The redemption of the pathologised female body is seen to come through males of various statuses: fathers, who protect and defend the family honour through them; priests, who experience holiness and godliness through them; brothers, who learn through women and girls how to become authoritative and vigilant; husbands, who realize their masculinity through sexual occupancy and breeding; and strangers, who wreak misogynistic vengeance upon them for an entire range of grievances, imagined and otherwise. A denied right, misinformation, a frown, a disapproving scowl, a raised voice, an angry reprimand, a verbal insult, a shaken fist, a shove, a slap, a punch, rape, a slit throat – these are part of the routine processes of socialization and gendered identity construction through which girls and women are persistently reminded that they are chattels of men in our societies. (2003: no page)

I agree with McFadden that, within patriarchal societies such as South Africa, girls and boys are socialised into particular heterofemininities and heteromasculinities within a system that pathologises the female body while simultaneously allowing men the rights to violate and abuse this body. Gender and sexuality are inextricably connected where sexuality operates as "the learned, culturally inscribed values, meanings, symbols, habits, and rituals that humans live and experience alone and with other humans" (Holmberg, 1998: 60). Ratele elaborates on the social construction of gender when he argues that

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Men are not naturally heterosexual and "masculine". This is supported on the one hand by the fact that there are (for the purpose of pleasure, among other reasons) men who dress up in women's clothes, men who enjoy sex with men, men who have sex with men and women, women whose sexual preference is for women, and women who have sex with both women and men. (2006: 57)

My study also takes the position that the particular versions of masculinity privileged in South African societies are "*always* established in opposition to femininities, *as well as* to other kinds of masculinities" (Clowes, 2002). Hegemonic masculinities, always mediated by privileged constructions of race, class, language, geographic location, sexuality and so on, marginalise different ways of being men and polarise femininities. Where women and homosexuals, for example, are constructed as oppositional to masculinities, it is heteromasculinities which is most likely to operate as hegemonic and normative within patriarchal societies.

Ratele (2006) talks about this notion of hegemonic masculinities, drawing a parallel between the notion of "ruling masculinity" and "hegemonic masculinity". He states that, like ruling masculinity,

hegemonic masculinity is intended to convey something more than simply a focus on men's biologies. Hegemonic masculinity is not an identity, not a set of role expectations, and not only about practices. Masculinities in general and dominant ones specifically, are fundamentally about discursive material power, as well as resistance practices that shape relations men have in and to the world. These relations cover those arrangements men and women have to institutions, structures, laws and policies over and above males' relations to their own bodies, bodies of other males, and female bodies. (2006: 56-57)

Richardson (1996) describes heteronormativity as an institutionalised "form of practice and relationships, of family structure, and identity" (1996: 2), encoding and structuring everyday life, and presenting itself as a "natural,

fixed and stable category; as universal and monolithic" (1996: 2). Van Zyl (2005) problematises heteronormativity, arguing that "the biologically essentialist paradigm used to advance (a certain type of) heterosexuality" is deemed the only "'natural' form of sexuality", which leads to "a multitude of ideologies of exclusions and 'othering'" (2005: 226). Within a heteronormative climate, women are located as "citizen-objects: problematised, marginalized, particularized, privatized, and biologised while certain men are positioned as the universal citizen-subject" (2005: 227). She narrates:

> The political regulation of sexuality in Western societies was for centuries dominated by Christian interpretations of sex as inherently sinful, but that it was necessary for procreation within marriage. Erotic sex became one of the boundaries of 'othering' in a hierarchical system of sexual value ranging from marital, reproductive heterosexuals (with the man on top) to homosexuals, polygamists and sex workers...The further people fall from the centre in this range of hierarchies, the more the individuals will be stigmatized; criminalized, medicalised, and demonized. Those whose sexual behaviour is closer to the centre will be rewarded with sanity, reason, respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support and material benefit. (van Zyl, 2005: 230)

Similar to the ways in which whiteness is centred and normalised, van Zyl observes that the centering and privileging of heterosexuality in western/westernised societies, results in the marginalisation and demonisation of all 'others' outside of this norm. The privileging of heterosexuality is often inseparable from a capitalist patriarchal system which thrives on homophobia. Isaack (in Gqola, 2006) discusses homophobia and its connections with religion and culture in South Africa. She argues that

> Homophobia, like patriarchy and many other social evils and exclusions, is supported and justified in the name of religion, culture and tradition. Homophobia is also institutionalized in the economic system of capitalism...In many communities of all races, lesbian and gay people are seen as threatening the social order: women because they seek to exercise autonomy over their bodies, while men are seen

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as traitors to masculine privilege because they are perceived to be adopting 'feminine roles'. And transgendered people call into question the traditional assumption that all humankind must fall irrevocably into one of two gender categories. Defiance of the 'heterosexual norm' provokes moral condemnation, exclusion and violence. (2006: 93)

But Kinsmann (in Holmberg 1998: 73) argues that the term homophobia obscures the ways heterosexuality operates as normative and is best replaced by the term 'heterosexism':

It merely individualises and privatizes gay oppression and obscures the social relations that organize it. It reduces homophobia to a mental illness, detaching it from its social context and reproducing all the problems of psychological definitions. I therefore prefer to use the term 'heterosexism', relating the practices of heterosexual hegemony to institutional and social settings and to sex and gender relations. In this context homophobia can be seen as a particularly virulent personal response organized by heterosexist discourse and practice. (1998: 73)

As Chapters Five and Six of this thesis reflect, magazines reinforce and reproduce a particular kind of heteronormativity. Salo and Gqola (2006) argue for a disruption of these hegemonic heteronormative discourses:

Sexuality and desire have become commodified, with only certain bodies considered suitable in the marketplace of desire. These bodies are able, youthful, often heterosexual, thin, middle-class; they adhere to contemporary Western dress styles and are ethnically neutral – or, occasionally, interestingly 'exotic'. (2006: 5)

Salo and Gqola (2006: 5) call the above "the dominant discourse of the commodified body in the global marketplace, which brands the disabled body as asexual" (2006: 5). And as I show in Chapters Five and Six of this study, it continues to be women's physical bodies which are hyper(hetero)sexualised in the consumerist world of women's and men's magazines.

Intersecting subjectivities

Womanist and Black Feminist theories are premised on the ways that various subjectivities interlink to produce nuanced identities. Abrahams (2000) explains that a Womanist perspective defines "race, class and gender as mutually constitutive categories of analysis" (2000: 4), and finds these separate subjectivities "less interesting than their relationship with one another" (2000: 16). As I've mentioned before, constructions of gender, race and sexuality are only meaningful within the binaries in which they occupy a space. The ways in which being white has historically been constructed in South Africa was meant to be in opposition to the ways in which being black has been constructed. As Abrahams (2000) again notes "if white supremacy is the thesis, Black is the anti-thesis" (2000: 4). Similarly, gendered meanings around what it means to be a 'man' or 'woman', heterosexual or homosexual have been, and continue to carry specific meanings, within particular historical junctures, especially when interlinked with other socially-relevant markers such as ethnicity, culture, age, regional location and socio-economic status. Learner (in van Zyl, 2005) explains, for example:

> Gender, race, ethnicity and class are processes through which hierarchical relations are created and maintained in such a way as to give *some men* power and privilege over *some men* and *over women* by their control of material resources, sexual and reproductive services, education and knowledge. Such control over others is maintained by a complex weave of social relations among dependent groups, which offers each group advantages over other groups, sufficient to keep each group with the dominance system subordinate to the elite. (2005: 231)

Similar to racial, gendered and sexualised binaries are the dualities associated with socio-economic status or what is popularly referred to as 'class'. In the current South African landscape, for instance, there remains an

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inextricable link between race and poverty. Abrahams (2000) notes that "class is determined by a person's relation to the mode of production" and "like race, it is heritable, that is, poverty and wealth alike tend to run in families" (2000: 10). The poorest in our country remain black rural South Africans. But poverty is also closely connected to gender, so that rural women are the poorest in South Africa and Africa. Nzimande, for instance, takes a Marxist approach, defining class as the

> existence of various economic classes in society and the current domination of society by the capitalist classes. As a result of this class system, the majority of the people in our country and the world belong to the working and poor classes. In our specific case, the majority of the working class is black and African. (2000: no page)

Nzimande insists that race and class are closely interconnected – racism in South Africa cannot be separated from South Africa's economy and therefore "the basis of racial oppression and racism in South Africa is capitalism" (Nzimande, 2000, no page). Alexander expands on this position and argues that in redressing race in post-apartheid South Africa,

> there is no need to use the racial categories of the past in order to undertake affirmative action policies. In the South African context, because of the demographic fact of a black majority at this stage of the evolution of the population's cultural consciousness, the strategy would be equally effective and more precisely targeted at the level if individual beneficiaries of class or income groups were used as the main driving force of the programme. (2006: 10)

While useful, the positions of the SACP (2000) and Alexander (2006) disregard both gender oppression and oppression around sexuality. Both these positions do not consider that it is black *women* who are the poorest of the poor. Alexander is arguing above that 'class' replaces 'race' in redress mechanisms in South Africa. For the purposes of my study, I will use socio-economic status to refer to access to resources within the neo-liberal capitalist South African landscape.

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However, the intersectionality of classed, racialised, gendered and sexualised subjectivities in the current South African climate implies that these positions co-exist, and carry little meaning in isolation or when separated from each other. Motsemme (2002) elaborates:

> The idea that individuals' experiences cannot be understood through a master identity such as race, class, or gender has become widely accepted in the social sciences. This theoretical shift has been informed by the notion that structures of class, race, gender and sexuality cannot be treated as 'independent variables' since the oppression of each is inscribed within the other and constituted by and of the other. (2002: 648)

Embedded in this is the notion of privilege and power, which is important for my work exploring magazine messages about gender, sexuality and race. Despite the increasing awareness of the ways in which privilege is socially constructed around these complex and fluid identities, maleness, whiteness and heterosexuality, in my view, continue to carry privilege and power. As Wise (2005) argues, despite "the ways in which individual whites may face obstacles on the basis of nonracial factors, *being white* continues to elevate *white people* over similarly situated persons of colour" (2005: ix-x, my emphasis). In many ways, being male in South Africa continues to elevate men over women in many spheres, but the allocation of privilege is of course complicated by the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and socio-economic status and other socially-significant markers so that gay white men are not positioned in the same way as straight white men.

In his book entitled *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, Wise (2005) highlights the intersection of multiple subjectivities comprising our identities. His argument reflects the convolution of whiteness with other subjectivities such as class, gender and sexuality, disability and language. He states:

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> I am not claiming, nor do I believe, that all whites are well-off, or even particularly powerful. We live not only in a racialised society, but also a class system, a patriarchal system, and one in which other forms of advantage and disadvantage exist. These other forms of privilege mediate, but never fully eradicate, something like white privilege. So I realize that rich whites are more powerful than poor ones; white men are more powerful than white women, able-bodied whites are more powerful than those with disabilities, and straight ones are more powerful than gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered whites. (Wise, 2005: ix)

As highlighted by Wise (2005), the interconnectedness of multiple subjectivities does not preclude the accentuation of particular positions at particular instances. In other words, some aspects of our identities will become more prominent within particular contexts. Theorists like Butler (1991), for instance, take the position that gendered subjectivities precede the production of other subjectivities like race or class. She argues that

> It would be wrong to think that the discussion of 'identity' ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that 'persons' only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognisable standards of gender intelligibility. (1991: 17)

Butler (1991) positions constructs of gender as primary in how human beings identify themselves and others. But social, historical and political context determine which subjectivities precede others at particular points in time and space and in South Africa, race currently appears to take precedence in discourses of redress and nation-building. However, reading race as the master identity in redress mechanisms isolates it from other socially significant markers, such as gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, language and so on. And this is one challenge which Affirmative Action, Employment Equity and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment policies need seriously to consider in implementing redress mechanisms. The experiences of being black, white, coloured or Indian cannot simplistically be defined outside of the context of being a woman or man, heterosexual or

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homosexual, disability, sexuality and so forth. The meanings of each are derived from and interceded by those to which it is relative, and are further mediated by the socio-political context. In other words, there are very specific meanings attached to blackness, middle-classness and heterosexuality that simply don't have the same meanings for men as they do for women. All subjectivities are inextricably linked and produce particular identities, spaces from which individuals define themselves and understand the world.

In a capitalist heteropatriarchal society like South Africa, women remain subjugated across race, class, culture and sexuality, albeit in different ways. This process of 'othering' is, as I illustrate in Chapter Six of this study, reflected in South African men's magazines through the sexual objectification of women. The poststructuralist feminist position I take in this thesis is that heteropatriarchy, as operative in the current South African climate, continues to subjugate and oppress women. Gqola (2006) notes this when she narrates:

> The discourses of gender in the South African public sphere are very conservative in the main: they speak of 'women's empowerment' in ways that are not transformative, and as a consequence, they exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South African women are not empowered: the rape and other gender based violence statistics, the rampant sexual harassment at work and public spaces, the siege on Black lesbians and raging homophobia, the very public and relentless circulation of misogynist imagery, metaphors and language. (2006: 4)

This chapter has explored some of the current theoretical debates on intersecting subjectivities such as gender, race and sexuality and how these are produced in particular ways within the contemporary South African climate. The magazines I explore in this study are themselves products of this raced, gendered and sexualised society, and their constructions - as I show in Chapters Four, Five and Six – tend to serve to privilege ideas of maleness,

heterosexuality and whiteness. But before the analyses chapters, I discuss the methodological framework in which my work is located, and explain how I conducted this study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROCESSES

> Feminist, antiracist, postcolonial, antibourgeois, and antiheterosexist research projects, amongst others, have often advanced social science understanding and knowledge. Such projects bring fresh perspectives to bear on old questions and ask new questions about ourselves and the social worlds with which we interact. (Harding and Norberg, 2005: 2010)

In line with Harding and Norberg's (2005: 2010) stance on social science research as quoted above, my understanding of representations of identities in the media is framed within a feminist poststructuralist approach. This study is also situated within a social constructionist paradigm highlighting the social, historical and political construction of identities. Within this framework, my intention in this study is to explore some of the ways in which representations of gender, race and sexuality intersect in South African English-medium magazines. These magazines include *Femina*, *Fair Lady*, *True Love*, *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink*.

This chapter outlines the methodological framework on which my study is based and details the ways in which I set out to conduct the research.

Feminist poststructuralist research

Based on the principles set out in the *Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists* (African Women's Development Fund, 2006), I take the position that African feminism is not homogeneous, but encompasses multiple ways of theorising and advocating. This thesis is part of a political "struggle for women's rights *which* questions the legitimacy of the structures *keeping* women subjugated" and is part of a process that sets out to "develop tools for transformatory analysis and action" (2006, my emphasis).

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My theoretical approach in this thesis is therefore based on a feminist epistemological critique of androcentric traditional knowledge systems which are, in addition, framed within ideologies of 'objectivity', 'neutrality' and 'universal truths'. According to Hesse-Biber, Levy and Yaiser (2004: 3), "research conducted within a feminist framework is attentive to issues of difference, the questioning of social power, resistance to scientific oppression, and a commitment to political activism and social justice." I also identify with McFadden's radical feminist position (2002) which she articulates as follows:

> For me, intellectual engagement is the most sensual and most satisfying experience of living. It is akin to nurturing the very essence of my being. As a feminist, I draw critical impetus from my own struggles to live differently: to be free and autonomous as a woman who bears an African identity that I re-craft and re-shape in continuous interaction with modernity as a moment of opportunity to live differently. The resistance that women engage in against reactionary patriarchal ideology and its practice feeds my radical feminist intellectual politics and informs my praxis of living and thinking within a radical tradition. (2002: no page)

The poststructuralist framework on which this study is based is a transformative one which aims to "denaturalize and transform oppressive power-knowledge relations with the intent of creating a more just world" (Hesse-Biber, Levy and Yaiser, 2004: 18). Further, this approach is concerned particularly with the critical deconstruction, exposure and transformation of oppressive power relations (Hesse-Biber, Levy and Yaiser, 2004: 19).

Critical to the process of conducting feminist research is what Hesse-Biber and Leckenby (2004) refer to as a synergistic research perspective. This involves the interlocking of epistemology, methodology and method, which interact in the production of new knowledge, interrogating the status quo and raising our consciousness about the ways in which we conduct research

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(Hesse-Biber and Leckenby, 2004: 210). Feminist research entails the acknowledgement that researchers' understandings are politically, intellectually and emotionally grounded (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 23) and that power always exists in the research process. A feminist epistemology therefore takes into account who can be the 'knower', what can be 'known' and what validates knowledge (Stanley and Wise, 1990).

Within this poststructuralist paradigm, this study aims to explore power, identities and knowledge production imaginatively, and look at the ways in which language and representation operate through power (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Clark (2006), for example, relates that a feminist poststructuralist approach would

> bring to analytic enquiry an emphasis on the social construction of subjectivity, i.e. *it* views identity and experience as produced through broader historical and institutional relations. In emphasising the centrality of issues of power and the situatedness of knowledge, *this approach* highlights the significance of interrogating historical processes that position subjects and produce their experiences. (Clark, 2006: 9, my emphasis)

A feminist poststructuralist exploration which considers presentations of subjectivities recognises that "particular forms of 'sexuality' are only real in the sense that they are constituted in discourses" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 87) and that one of the ways in which discourses construct what gender, race and sexuality 'are', is through 'authoritative' channels such as magazines. As postulated by Laden (2001),

> [T]he evocative power or potency *of magazines* is important, that is, the ways consumer magazines authorize "aspired to", not necessarily "given" states of affairs: they confirm existing cultural repertoires and options and formulate new ones, and as effective modeling apparatuses they inspire cultural reordering and revitalization. (2001: 518, my emphasis)

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The poststructuralist notion of deconstruction as an analytical tool is particularly useful in reflecting on and unsettling existing assumptions of gender, race and sexuality and helps unpack how binary logic in terms of femininities/masculinities, black/white and heterosexual/homosexual are constituted in magazine texts and imagery. While deconstruction "reveals interdependence of pairs of categories and the hierarchy of binary oppositions that gives primacy to one pair over the other", deconstruction also pulls apart these taken-for-granted categories and "transforms *these assumptions* into new and fluid possibilities for multiplicity, difference and resistance" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:89, my emphasis). In hegemonic western thought, binary oppositions such as masculine/feminine; reason/nature; mind/body and civilised/primitive tend to be understood as 'natural' or inherent characteristics attributed to the particular subjects/objects constituting the opposition. Feminist poststructuralist analysis enables an exploration of the power relations within these binaries and recognises the permeability and fluidity of these supposed contradictions. Any unified notion of concepts such as 'truth', 'woman', 'man', 'black' or 'white' is undercut through deconstruction and provides space for reconceptualisation.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods

Traditional social science methods have been mostly quantitative and based within a positivist framework. These methods have been, and continue to be, criticized rigorously by feminist researchers such as Mama (1995), Harding (1987), Stanley and Wise (1990) and Burman (1994), amongst others. Part of this criticism includes notions of 'objectivity', 'validity' and 'reliability' of quantitative research methods. Researchers such as Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1991), Banister (1994), Lather (1988) and Wolf (1996) have even interrogated the meaning of the terms 'objectivity', 'validity' and 'reliability' as contextualised within quantitative research techniques. Tindall (1994), for

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example, points out that completely valid research as representative of an ultimate 'truth' is impossible when working within a feminist paradigm which posits that all knowledge is socially constructed: "We must recognise that *all* research is constructed, that no knowledge is certain, whatever the claims, but is rather a particular understanding in process, and that different understandings, different ways of knowing, exist" (Tindall, 1994: 157). For this reason, 'testing' findings of studies conducted within a qualitative paradigm cannot possibly render the same results since "all research findings are shaped by the circumstances of their production" (Bloor, 1997: 39).

Reflexivity, however, has been characterised as an alternative method of validation and is considered one of the most distinctive aspects of qualitative research. One way of practicing reflexivity as a method of validation in qualitative research is through recording the researcher's experiences within the research process. Tindall (1994: 151) proposed that a reflexive journal be kept in which the researcher explores why she chose a particular topic, how she positions herself subjectively within the research process and how her subject positioning has affected the research process. For this study, I kept a writing journal and voice recordings where I explored my experiences as a researcher and a black feminist heterosexual woman implicated in a process of knowledge production. Every few weeks, I went back to these experiences and reflected on why and how I positioned myself in particular ways and considered how I could, for example, look at a complex representation from a different angle. While acknowledging that knowledges and findings are continuous constructions, this method of validation encompasses a degree of self-reflection and evaluation of the research process as well as the role of the researcher. Linking the findings to similar work and "checking theoretical assumptions" has also been considered as an alternative method of validation (Potgieter, 1997: 107).

Dines, Jensen and Russo (1998) explain how traditional quantitative content analyses "tell us little about what images and words mean. A text is a structured whole, and fragmenting it into quantifiable units leads us away from, not toward, understanding" (1998: 70). Further, these authors argue that despite the postmodernist stance of 'no definitive truth', a collective understanding of a text is possible through a context-bound, context-specific reading, which locates the text within the socio-political climate in which it is produced, and the genre it represents. In exploring representations of gender, race and sexuality in South African magazines, it is therefore critical to locate magazine messages carefully within the specific socio-economic and political contexts of their production. From the perspective of this study this means taking into account, for example, that the magazines I aim to explore are a particular genre produced at particular moments within a heteropatriarchal capitalist society undergoing complex processes of transformation and democratization in the shift away from white racist rule.

Subjectivities and Identities

In this thesis, the terms 'subjectivity/subjectivities' and 'identity/identities' are taken from Saco's (1992) explanations. She defines these terms as follows:

> *Subjectivities* need to be understood as symbolic categories that emerge out of particular discourses: For example, masculinity and femininity are two subject positions made possible by the discourse of gender, and we can well imagine androgyny as another possibility. Second, *identity* should be regarded as a composite term signifying the multiple subjectivities that comprise ones sense of who one is. (1992: 23-24, emphasis in original)

Saco's (1992) definitions of subjectivities and identities would include subjectivities such as sexuality and race, so that when we speak about 'black' and 'white' South Africans, we understand that these symbolic

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categories are made possible by discourses of race. In the same vein, subjectivities such as 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' are made possible by discourses of sexuality similar to how subjectivities such as 'middle-class' and 'working-class' are given meaning through discourses of social and economic class. However, it is critical to consider, as Saco (1992) explains, that discourses do not operate from an equal basis – some discourses are more powerful than others. But many postcolonial feminists such as Motsemme (2002) and Clowes (2002) understand gender to be inseparable from other subjectivities such as sexuality, culture and race, amongst others. As a consequence, particular subjectivities within particular binaries are normalized, naturalized and centred. An example of the way in which this works is through discourses of gender, where 'man' and 'woman' are socially constructed as binary oppositions, with elements of power attached to being a 'man', and elements of powerlessness attached to being a 'woman'. Similarly, within discourses of race in South Africa, definitions of 'white', 'coloured', 'black' 'Indian' and so on carry historically and context-specific meanings that might be obscure to foreigners but appear to be crystal clear to those of us raised in South Africa. Overall, as I discussed in the previous chapter, whiteness, maleness, affluence and heterosexuality continue to be privileged, normalized, unnamed and often invisibilised but centred within discourses of race, gender, socio-economic status and sexuality.

Because of the fluidity of subjectivities, there are no fixed, inherent, unchanging definitions of terms such as 'man', 'woman', 'black', white', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual', since the intersection of these positions mean that the ways in which one person's identity is constructed at a particular historical juncture is dependent on the ways in which these multiple subjectivities intersect. In other words, the lived reality of a 'black heterosexual man' is very different from the lived reality of a 'black homosexual man'. Further, notions of nationalism are specifically salient in

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contemporary South Africa, suggesting that meanings around 'Africanness/South Africanness' intersect and negotiate with subjectivities such as race, gender, sexuality and socio-economic status, producing even more complex, fluid South African/African identities. Saco (1992) explains:

> Given the historical incommensurability of some subject positions, therefore, identity is best understood not as a product, but as a process that involves the constant negotiation and renegotiation of multiple subjectivities in which human beings have unequal investments. Identity is the feigned product of interested intersubjective mediations. The dual nature of identity – its concomitant *presentness* and *becomingness* – derives from these endless mediations and is what makes identity fluid: at once defined and redefined, at once real and (re)presented. (1992: 24, emphasis in original)

In terms of magazines, a feminist poststructuralist approach to understanding subjectivities built around gender, sexuality and race, suggests that all texts – where a text can be understood beyond the level of the word - function as a representation of reality and a signifier of meaning. A poststructuralist framework therefore provides space for a deconstructionist analysis of magazine messages about gender, sexuality and race and how in a variety of complex ways these messages, subvert and critique, and/or reinforce and reproduce, damaging constructions of gender, sexuality and race in a society harshly divided by these socially-significant markers of identity.

While the feminist analysis I privilege provides a basis for exploring how magazines play a significant role in relaying particular messages about gender, sexuality and race for particular readerships, it also seeks to contribute to the transformation of these ideologies. In particular (but not exclusively) feminist research has been defined by some as the exploration of women's experiences in an attempt to "correct both the *invisibility* and *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal

social position" (Lather, 1988: 571). Others like Abrahams (2006) define feminism broadly as "individuals and organizations seeking the freedom of women and therefore of necessity the freedom of everybody" (2006: 4).

The feminist poststructuralist approach contextualizing this study is that privileges attached to one side of the dichotomies of gender, sexuality and race continue to operate as normative within hierarchies maintaining inequalities that are inconsistent with notions of transformation, democracy and social cohesion in our country. It is my contention that feminist qualitative research should be understood as political in its purposes and goals and should be committed to the interrogation and transformation of these dominant ideologies that reinforce and legitimise hierarchical ways-of-being. My study aims to do this by exploring representations of gender, sexuality and race in South African magazines. The feminist qualitative analysis framing this study is political in its attempt to interrogate hierarchical discourses within heteropatriarchal capitalist South Africa, and transformative in highlighting how hierarchical discourses 'other' - through silence, marginalization and erasure - specific constructions within binaries of gender, sexuality, race and so forth. But this study is also premised on the Foucauldian (1980) notion that binary oppositions are not fixed and unchangeable. There is always resistance within relations of power and privilege. Foucault relates:

> As soon as there's a relation of power there's a possibility of resistance. We're never trapped by power: it's always possible to modify its hold, in determined conditions following a precise strategy. (Foucault, 1980: in Allen, 2003: 216)

While my approach aims to destabilize essentialist notions of gender, sexuality and race, it simultaneously endeavours to take into account the intersectionality and fluidity of these subjectivities comprising our identities.

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The previous chapter on theories of race, gender and sexuality highlighted that context-specific studies are critical in exploring how subjectivities interlink and are organized in particular spaces and within particular sociohistorical contexts. I draw on a Foucauldian understanding of power, which contextualises discourses as sites of inclusionary/exclusionary systems within the broader capitalist heteropatriarchal context in which we live. The premise on which my work is based sees South African discourses of transformation and nation-building to be hyper-racialised and masculinist (see Waetjen, 2006 for a discussion on masculinities and nation-building) with consequences for radical gender transformation. This hyper-racialisation evident in discourses of transformation, such as Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment policies, continues to elevate 'race' as a significant marker of identity above inequalities based on gender and sexuality. Gqola (2006) problematises notions of 'women's empowerment' within a state that is masculinist in its approach to nation-building:

> Truly empowered women do live with the haunting fear of rape, sexual harassment, smash and grabs and other violent intrusions into their spaces, bodies and psyches. A country that empowers women would grant us our *entitlement* of freedom of movement, sexual autonomy, bodily integrity and safety...There simply is no two-ways about it. *A gender-progressive country* certainly does not watch and participate in curative rapes against its most marginal: Black lesbians and/or poor women. (Gqola, 2006: 5, first emphasis in original, second is my emphasis)

I move on now to the methods I used in conducting the research.

Method

Sample and readership

In employing discourse analysis to explore the meanings produced by the magazines, it was necessary to work with a small sample size. Even though I browsed approximately 60 South African versions of *Blink*, *Fair Lady*, *Femina*, *For Him Magazine* (*FHM*), *Men's Health* and *True Love* published between January 2003 and December 2005, I selected only 37 editions for analyses. Because magazines generally work on the premise of repetition - which in my view plays a significant role in presenting certain subjectivities as normative - it seemed more appropriate to explore fewer magazines. And rather than covering more magazines and compromising on depth, I have chosen to limit the number of magazines to 37 in the hope that my analysis will be enriched through a more thorough and detailed qualitative exploration of fewer magazines. While my sample limits my ability to generalize, my analysis moves beyond the parameters of the study into the socio-cultural dynamics of South African society. As Laden points out, "In the South African juncture consumer magazines provide us with greater insight into the workings of socio-cultural entities" (2001: 188).

As I note above, the magazine titles in the sample are *Men's Health*, *Blink*, *FHM*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady*. While *Men's Health* and *FHM* are essentially international magazines, the South African editorialized versions of these magazines naturally include a substantial amount of local content.

The rationale behind the selection of *Men's Health* and *FHM* is that these magazines reflect the largest readerships in South Africa (see discussion of magazine readerships in Chapter Four). Similarly, the three women's magazines - *True Love*, *Fair Lady* and *Femina* - have also been selected

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because they are amongst the magazines with the largest readerships (SAARF, 2005).

This particular range of titles is appropriate for this study for a number of reasons. The readers of *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady* and *Femina* are predominantly white, middle-class South Africans who are located in the highest Living Standard Measurement (LSM) scales. LSMs refer to the economic categorization of readerships deployed by the advertising industry to refer to standards of living based on household earnings. A further breakdown in terms of race and gender is depicted in Chapter Four. In attempting to respond to the need for analyses which particularise how gender, race and sexuality are constructed within particular contexts, to explore whether privilege is attached to one pole of gendered, racialised and sexualised dichotomies, magazines targeting white, middle-class readers are particularly relevant spaces to investigate. For comparative purposes, *True Love* and *Blink* are critical to include because of their dominant black readerships and the lack of research on these magazines.

As profit-making tools, these magazines cater for the perceived needs and desires of particular readerships in terms of gender, race and sexuality. They are therefore suitable texts in keeping with the aims of this study. Considering the media's influential role in helping to shape readers' perceptions of subjectivities such as gender and race in South Africa, and influencing the way readers perceive their worlds, the period 2003 to 2005 is significant in its emphasis on political and social transformation in South Africa, but also a short enough period of time to allow for a close engagement with the texts. But an engagement with the magazine texts would have, in my view, been inadequate if the voices of the editors who produced these texts were missing. I therefore decided to conduct interviews with the editors. I now explain how I approached the interview process.

Interviews

One reason for requesting these interviews was to explore editors' views about the editorial and advertising contents which made up their magazines, and what these say about gender, sexuality, race, social responsibility and nation-building in South Africa. When developing my questions for these interviews, it was important to take into account that editors themselves are social products of history and context. Clowes (2002), for example, has argued:

> As magazines - and the people who make them – are products of particular social and historical landscapes, they inevitably reflect the gendered contexts in which they themselves are made, and this ultimately shapes the version finally offered to consumers. (2002: 16)

The interviews served as an additional source in exploring magazine messages and helped my analysis take into account the editors' positions regarding the work they produced. In other words, it was important to explore how editors' ideologies, objectives and notions about social responsibility influenced the decisions they make in representing gender, sexuality and race to their readerships. Their perspectives frequently challenged my position and taking their views seriously has strengthened and deepened the discussion in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this study.

In terms of planning, I had aimed to conduct face-to-face, semi-structured interviews which are open to qualitative diversity and a multiplicity of meanings; and take language into account as a constructor of reality. As Kvale (1996) highlights the "knowledge obtained within one context is not automatically transferable to, or commensurable with, the knowledge within other contexts" (1996: 44). Kvale (1996) further explains that a

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poststructuralist approach to the interviews would allow for a focus on the social construction of reality within the interview - "on its linguistic and interactional aspects including the differences between oral discourse and written text, and *the emphasis on* the narratives constructed by the interview" (Kvale, 1996: 38, my emphasis). These types of interviews are particularly useful when the idea is to gain a detailed account of editors' ideas and perceptions concerning the ways in which they represent ideas of gender, sexuality and race to their readers. But, as I explain below, my plans to conduct these interviews face-to-face were not successful.

Process

Although I would have preferred face-to-face interviews, I was forced to accept that this was not going to be possible and that I needed to negotiate whatever time and location was possible for the editors in order to access their views. Editors were always busy, sometimes in meetings or travelling. When I did manage to speak them over the telephone at all, it was difficult for them to avail themselves for forty-five minutes. But I did manage to conduct a total of five interviews – three were telephonic and two were email-based responses. All participants were editors of the magazines in my sample, except for one who was positioned as a deputy editor. Due to their unavailability and busy traveling schedules, I was unable to interview either the editor or deputy editor of *Femina* magazine.

When I first contacted the magazine editors via telephone or email to request face-to-face interviews, I described my study and explained why their contribution to the project was an important aspect of my research. We discussed the parameters of the interview in terms of interview duration, time and place of recording. Thereafter, all participants were sent an informed consent form (See Appendix II) outlining the purposes and details of the

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study and again describing how their participation would benefit the study. No participant was forced or manipulated into participation and it was clarified that participants could withdraw from the interview at any time. Participants were also guaranteed anonymity and this meant that their views as editors of the magazines would not be linked to the magazine title. Hence, as can be seen in the analysis of their views in Chapter Four, pseudonames have been used to identify the participants.

While telephone interviews are not ideal, they are the best arrangement I was able to negotiate with the editors. According to Babbie (1998), there are advantages to telephone interviews – sensitive issues related to gender, sexuality and race might be easier to discuss over a telephone. Babbie (1998) has also raised the issue of safety for female interviewers, particularly where the only time participants can avail themselves is at night. But there are also disadvantages to telephone interviews, one which relates to the critical aspect of building trust in the relationship between the interviewer and participant. According to Babbie (1998) and Rubin and Rubin (1995), there are some difficulties in developing a relationship over the phone. However, I managed to build a relationship with interviewees through our communication over email and across telephone lines. The constant negotiation regarding a suitable date and time for a conversation between editors and myself, meant that we were always *talking* about the details of the research. I also discussed with all interviewees the importance of depth and detail in their responses. All three telephone interviews continued for over an hour, and over the course of a year, particularly when I wrote up their responses, I followed up on a number of issues.

The telephone interviews suited the three participants as well as my own schedule since two of the interviewees lived in Gauteng and although the other participant resided in Cape Town, he preferred a telephone interview.

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So while three of the five interviews (for *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink*) were telephonic, two participants (for *True Love* and *Fair Lady*) rejected face-to-face semi-structured interviews, preferring that open-ended questions be emailed to them so that they could answer these questions in writing when they had time, and email or fax them back to me. The turnaround time in getting the responses took a bit longer, but the process succeeded since the questions asked were answered, and our continuous discussions revealed interesting dynamics, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

Aims

My elevation of gender, sexuality and race above language, ethnicity, disability and geographical location, lies in the foregrounding of my work within a particular feminist poststructuralist framework which currently sees gender and sexuality to be central but marginalized and/or silenced in contemporary South African discourses on citizenship and race. While subjectivities are always intersectional in the production of identities as Saco (1992) notes, there is insufficient space to explore all of these in one thesis. For this reason, the analysis presented later in this thesis will be grounded on the premise that subjectivities always intersect and are always being negotiated in complex and often contradictory ways. Within heteronormative patriarchal capitalist societies such as South Africa, certain kinds of sexualities, 'races', performances of gender and socio-economic positions are legitimised and/or idealised through a variety of social and political mechanisms, while others are marginalized. The meanings ascribed to these social constructions have become increasingly contested and increasingly interrelated to produce particular nuances of identities. These interrelations are reflected in South African magazines in complicated ways.

Analysis

Discourse analysis implies that meanings are inseparable from context in the social world and thus informs the analyses presented later in this study. So if discourse is socially constructed, this suggests that multiple meanings exist (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Potter (cited in Wood and Kroger, 2000) explains that discourse needs to be understood as extending to written language and language use above the level of the sentence:

> [Discourse Analysis] has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as *texts and talk in social practices*. That is, the focus is not on language as an abstract entity...Instead, it is the medium for interaction; analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis of what people do. (in Wood and Kroger, 2000: 3, emphasis in original text)

Burr (1995) explains that discourse is always socially and historically specific. The magazine discourses which I analyse in Chapters Five and Six are therefore contextual – their meanings are located within a specific social and political juncture. Language is seen as a performative social practice and discourse represents the meanings that we attach to objects/subjects in our social worlds. In terms of analysing the discourses embedded in magazines, I explore the meanings attached to both written and visual texts, and present the dominant themes emerging from my reading in terms of gender, sexuality and race for women's and men's magazines respectively. Where existent, I also discuss subversive presentations of these subjectivities.

The analysis component of this thesis is split into three chapters. Chapter Four of this study provides information on the magazines' readerships, and was meant to be followed by a feminist poststructuralist interpretation of magazine editors' views on social responsibility, nation-building and representations of gender, sexuality and race in the magazines' contents.

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What emerged from my analysis of editors' views however were strong positions around objectivity, neutrality and notions of 'the political' in magazine representations and my focus in this chapter therefore reflects these positions. Chapters Five and Six analyse the editors' insistence on objectivity and neutrality in the pages of their magazines, where I argue that the reinforcement and production of particular versions of racialised heterofemininities and heteromasculinities within the magazines erase any stance of objectivity and neutrality. Both chapters consider the role of language and context as tools in how gender, sexuality and race are presented within the editorial and advertising contents of the magazines, discussing the ways in which racialised, sexualised and gendered binaries operate as normative and privileged within the magazine texts.

What follows in the next chapter serves as an engagement with the literature on international and local studies on representations of gender, sexuality and race in magazines. This chapter contextualises my study by critically assessing the relevant literature in the area, and locating my research.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, RACE AND SEXUALITY IN MAGAZINES, 1983 - 2007

In an attempt to contextualise my study, the intention in this chapter is to review international and local literature on representations of gender, race and sexuality in magazines. Despite the widespread literature on representations in the media, there is a paucity of international and local research exploring the ways in which gender, race and sexuality intersect in representation. One reason for the dearth of research on intersections of gender, race and sexuality in magazines appears to be linked to the invisibility of whiteness as a racialised subjectivity in representation. Consequently, researchers themselves tend to contribute to the invisibility of whiteness through not problematising it in their work.

Globally, the relatively small pool of literature exploring the links between gender, race and sexuality in magazines, tends to privilege representations of (white)[12] femininities in advertisements. In contrast, there are much fewer studies on representations of black femininities as well as both black and white masculinities in the media and in magazines specifically. Internationally, research conducted by Easthope (1986); Mort (1988); Nixon (1996); Edwards (1997); Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (2001), Gauntlett (2002) and Benwell (2002, 2003), have drawn attention to the complex constructions of masculinities in magazines. A common denominator across these studies is the need to denaturalise and deconstruct constructions of a 'universal' masculinity (Benwell, 2003; Van Zoonen, 1996).

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[12] I place 'white' in brackets to indicate how whiteness often operates as unnamed, unmarked and therefore invisible in research on representation in the media.

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Although not examining magazines, Ratele has noted in 2001 that black men in South Africa are "yet to receive any serious attention by scholars, and such attention should from part of the recent attempts to understand local masculinities and male behaviours in general" (Ratele, 2001: 239). In South Africa, except for Clowes' (2001, 2002, 2004) studies on contesting and changing masculinities in *Drum* magazine between the 50s and mid-80s, Toerien and Durrheim's (2001) paper on 'real man' discourse in the South African version of *Men's Health*, and Viljoen's (in press, 2007) paper on ideals of masculinities in men's glossy magazines, there is a lack of local studies on representations of masculinities in magazines.

Additionally, most studies seem to explore representations of either femininity or masculinity by targeting women's or men's magazines respectively. But because of the binary construction of woman/man, women's and men's magazines present both masculinities and femininities in their contents. My intention in this study is therefore to explore how this binary is presented in men's and women's magazines, and thus fill a gap in current research.

The literature

Ferguson's international landmark study (1983), while somewhat dated remains significant for contemporary critical reading of women's magazines. In her analysis of British women's magazines, Ferguson explores the most repeated messages of 'appropriate femininity', describing the world of women's magazines as a 'cult of femininity':

> In so far as cults have members, required rituals, explanatory myths or parables, visible 'badges' of membership, an object of veneration, high priestesses or esteem conferred by membership, so do the followers of women's magazines share in these things. (1983: 12)

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Ferguson (1983) relates how the messages emanating from advice columns in women's magazines are intensely prescriptive and essentialist, with psychological 'experts' providing advice about women's (heterosexual) relationship 'inadequacies', women's central roles as 'good' wives and mothers, and suggestions on beautifying themselves. I discuss the extent to which these types of messages are heterosexualised in contemporary South African magazines in Chapter Six.

In South Africa, Hofmeyr's (1987) article focuses on how Afrikaans literary culture served as a critical terrain in which nationalist ideologies were elaborated between 1902 and 1924. One aspect of her article looks at the representation of Afrikaner women in upholding the heteropatriarchal Afrikaner family in magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Boerevrou*, where these women were represented as "selfless", "stayed in nice families, not boarding-houses" and were undoubtedly professional domestics (1987: 113). She notes that "women's magazines gave advice on sex education and marital problems which were then indirectly linked to the broader issue of 'Afrikaner identity'" (1987: 114).

Similarly, Viljoen and Viljoen's (2005) South African study focuses on presentations of Afrikaner femininity in *Huisgenoot* magazine as emblematic of changing trends in Afrikaner culture between 1953 and 2003. The authors note the transformation of Afrikaner femininity as "signifier of nature and family, pragmatism and patriarchy" in 1953, to a more globalised and consumer-driven construction of femininity as in need of work through "laborious and expensive" processes of beautification (2005: 112). In addition, while adult women were depicted in 1953 *Huisgenoot* advertisements as "girlish", they were presented as "sexualised girls" in 2003, infantalised and childlike (2005: 111).

Both Hofmeyr's (1987) and Viljoen and Vljoen's (2005) study are unique in their exploration of the ways in which Afrikaner femininities were presented as critical in the building and maintenance of Afrikaner national identity in the 1900s within a magazine targeting Afrikaner readers. The change in this presentation of femininity to a more globalised, cosmopolitan depiction can be found in all the editions of South African English-medium magazines targeting women which I discuss in Chapter Five. But neither study examines presentations of masculinities or problematises the normative portrayal of whiteness in their work.

Also in South Africa, Cooke's (1991) unpublished Honours paper explores the differences and similarities in ideology as articulated by magazine editors, and messages conveyed to the perceived readers of South African magazines. With a sample consisting of *Fair Lady, Sarie* and *Cosmopolitan,* all three magazines which had a predominantly upper middle-class white and coloured readership and an "aspiring middle-class black" readership at the time of the study, Cooke's findings reflect that there was not necessarily a link between editors' ideologies and messages conveyed to readerships (1991: 8). Women's magazines, she notes, at times perpetuate the worst gender stereotypes, reinforcing (white) women's subordinate positions in South African society. My study builds on Cooke's finding that editors' ideologies are inconsistent with their messages about gender, race and sexuality in their magazines. In Chapter Four, I discuss how editors' views about the objectivity, neutrality and 'apolitical' positioning of their publications are in stark contrast to the presentations of gender, race and sexuality in their magazines which I discuss in Chapters Five and Six.

Cooke (1991) acknowledges that her findings cannot be generalised to magazines aimed at black audiences and rationalises her decision to exclude

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these magazines by noting that "it is generally acknowledged that Black print media", according to the Marketing Mix in April, 1991, "has low circulation, unreliable distribution, poor editorial standards and is fragmented" (Cooke, 1991: 25). In a later study by Clowes (2002) however, it was noted that *Drum* magazine in the mid-1950s had a big circulation and perfectly adequate editorial standards. In the mid-1970s, problems with distribution were ironed out. But it is the lack of naming and marking of 'white' femininities in Cooke's (1991) study, that best demonstrates the way that whiteness often operates as a universal, normative and taken-for- granted racial category.

Wilbrahim's (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) work on *You, Fair Lady* and *Femina* magazines in South Africa explores the discourses in advice texts on women's experiences of 'crises' around beauty and marketability within heterosexual practices. Wilbrahim's work is significant for my study which includes the magazines *Fair Lady* and *Femina*. Focusing on the links between ideas of social attractiveness and heterosexual relationships, Wilbrahim relates how institutionalised knowledges in advice columns disempower and commodify women through, for example, normalising beauty and diet routines. Wilbrahim (1996b) highlights how advice columns in women's magazines such as *Femina,* are understood as a 'feminine genre' where women seek advice on relationship challenges from psychological 'experts' in hope of happiness and fulfilment.

My critique of Wilbrahim's (1996a, b and c) work is that she makes little or no attempt to problematise whiteness, despite the fact that the readers of *Femina* and *Fair Lady* are predominantly white middle to upper class South African women (SAARF, 2005). Consequently, there is a lack of attention to intersections of femininity and race, begging the question whether there would be differences in advice aimed at black female readers, for example. In Chapter Five, I attempt to rectify this omission by comparing and contrasting

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the contents of *Femina*, *Fair Lady* and *True Love* through unpacking some of the racialised meanings embedded in these gendered texts.

In Brazil, Monteiro's (1997) study examines representations of masculinity in the Brazilian magazine *Ele Ela: uma revista para ler a dois* (*Him Her: a magazine to be read by the couple*) between 1969 and 1972. Monteiro argues that while the magazine claims to be a project of gender equality, to be "read by the egalitarian couple that rises with the sexual revolution, the liberation of women and with 'modernity'" it is unable to achieve these ideals (1997: 6). He observes that women in the magazine remain the "foremost object of representation" (1997: 7), "objects of an excess of representation" (1997: 7) and through this excess, become "invisible in [their] specificity" (1997: 7). Masculinity, Monteiro (1997) argues, while increasingly becoming the object of written and visual discourse in the magazine, becomes the object of *difference*, joining femininity on the margins as objects of spectatorship. Despite this objectification of masculinity however, Monteiro (1997) argues that "the change in masculinity and its increasing objectification did not mean the end of patriarchy and to male dominance in discourse and society" (1997: 8) but remained the "dominant pole in a system of differences or a dichotomy between masculine and feminine" (1997: 8). In other words, despite the objectification of masculinity through articles on male appearance, male homosexuality and men's emotions in magazines such as *Ele Ela: uma revista para ler a dois*, heteropatriarchal versions of masculinity remain privileged – homosexuality is still demonized, women are still subordinate and feminism is regarded as a social movement intended to destroy ideal notions of traditional masculinity and ruin the possibilities of heteropatriarchy.

Monteiro's (1997) article, though dated, does raise important issues in terms of the recent surge of visual objectification of masculinities in the media at large, and what this objectification means for gender relations and sexualities

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outside of the heteropatriarchal norm in society. My findings on presentations of masculinities in *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink* however, discussed in Chapter Six, suggests that when compared to femininities, men are not valued in terms of their physical bodies in the same ways as women. Men's heterosexual desirability appeared to be linked to ideas of (hetero)sexual prowess and their ability to convince women to have sex.

In India, Rajan (1993) narrates how commercial advertisements in print media have celebrated the emergence of a 'new' woman who is modern,' liberated' and essentially 'Indian'. This 'new' woman is represented as socially 'attractive', hardworking, educated and socially aware within the context of a 'stable' heterosexual nuclear family premised on Indian values and norms. She does not, however, escape westernisation:

> In interpellating the users of these products as 'new' women, the advertisements not only provide an attractive and desired self-image for women in general, but also provide a normative model of citizenship that is, significantly, now gendered female. The power and success of the representation derive not from fantasy but from an embellishment of reality and from the 'liberal' idiom in which it is couched. (Rajan, 1993: 131)

Rajan's (1993) study highlights the contradictoriness within ideas about the postcolonial Indian woman subject as an object of westernisation. She considers the ways in which advertisements shape representations according to western standards on the one hand, while attempting to locate women within the Indian context on the other: the role of heterosexual homemaker and caretaker remains central. Rajan's findings highlight continuities in the Indian/South African experience – both countries experienced colonialism, which was both a gendered and gendering experience. In Chapter Six of this study, I discuss the simultaneous positioning of the '*Blink* Woman' as both career-oriented and sexually objectified.

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But Rajan's (1993) notion of the gendered citizen as female contrasts with van Zyl's (2005) notion of the ideal South African citizen as heterosexual male. My reading of magazines in Chapters Five and Six suggests that the ideal unnamed citizen continues to be a white (heterosexual) male but that a certain kind of black man and woman are presented as signifying authentic Africanness through a number of magazine discourses on racialised heterosexuality.

Ahmad's (1995) work is particularly relevant for my own in its analysis of black femininities in South African magazine advertisements. One of the central questions in Ahmad's study is whether projections of the black female body are liberating or imprisoning constructs. Echoing findings on presentations of white femininities, Ahmad notes that the compulsion to disassemble the black body into hair, facial features, skin, physique and body mass supposedly aims to "assist black women in determining and targeting their imperfections" (1995: 27). According to Ahmad (1995), western constructs of beauty are held up as ideals which black women should aspire to. Advertisements for facial and body creams emphasise this aspiration for 'whiteness' where black women are persuaded to embody an "ideal feminine identity" (1995: 36) resting on racist western ideology. Talking about *Palmolive* soap advertisements, Ahmad relates,

> Although black women are persuaded to identify with black models' alluring qualities, the soap labels disclose that the desired femininity in the ad is predominantly a Western construct and is therefore, the ultimate model to embody. (1995: 34)

Ahmad's (1995) findings highlight that movement towards political liberation in the early 1990s in South Africa had not eradicated a hegemonic western ideology regarding racialised heterofemininity and the ways in which this ideology encourages black women to aspire to whiteness. Although Ahmad's

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work is twelve years old, some elements of western ideologies around heterosexual desirability remain dominant in South African advertisements within magazines targeting black women, as I discuss in Chapter Six. A weakness of Ahmad's study, however, is the lack of exploration of other sites within the magazines (such as advice columns or feature articles) and the lack of attention to masculinities. I update Ahmad's (1995) work by considering presentations of masculinities in Chapter Five and by looking at presentations of black women within various magazine sites in Chapter Six.

The dominance of western notions of beauty has also been observed by Ribane in her book called *Beauty: A Black Perspective* published in 2006. Ribane provides an insider's view on the experiences of black South African models in the modelling industry. She discusses the dominance of Western notions of 'beauty' and how whiteness is held up as aspirational in terms of hair texture and skin colour, for example. Ribane relates:

> Black girls of my generation, like everyone else at the time, grew up admiring 'the most beautiful women in the world'...there were no Black women mentioned in the same vein as these Goddesses of Beauty. This had the inevitable effect of making your aspirations shift to the European role models, rather than your own community and culture...Despite all the political and cultural water under the bridge, the mentality of wanting to imitate those Western beauties still prevails in Black communities. (2006: 12)

In some areas, Ribane's (2006) work highlights how racial constructs of 'beauty' continue to matter in contemporary South Africa and can be extended to the media's representations of ideal femininities. But the author does not problematise her use of racial categories such as black and white. In fact, she essentialises these categories by referring to 'a black culture' and 'a black identity' in this way homogenizing and reifying racial categories rather

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than subverting them. For example, Ribane defines African beauties, "who drove men to frenzy" (2006: 19) as constituting "well-rounded hips; good firm breasts; round cheeks; dimples; full lips; and lovely clear skin that looks as if it had been 'licked by a snake' or 'washed with milk' (2006: 19). This definition of 'African beauty' is limited and fetishistic.[13]

From the perspective of the male gaze, Ribane (2006) relates that "large, rounded, protruding bums are particularly sexy. In the same way that 'menotoane' – thin legs – are a turn-off to the average African, so are 'seshoapha' – 'flat bums' (2006: 20). Considering the eroticized construction of African beauty, the 'average African' Ribane refers to above, is surely a male. Ribane's (2006) analysis lacks a gender perspective which would take into account constructions of 'beauty', and how this term very often excludes many in its limited description, be it a western or African definition eroticising and fetishising women's physical bodies. While essentialising race and gender, this book contributes to damaging constructions of black women's sexuality as hyperheterosexual, and perpetuates essentialised biological constructs of race through defining Africanness in limiting and exclusionary ways.

An American study conducted by Gadsden (2000) explores how the male voice in *New Woman* and *Essence* magazines between 1986 and 1995 polices female sexuality through a number of discursive strategies. While *New Woman*'s readership is predominantly white American women, the readership for *Essence* is predominantly black American women (Gadsden, 2000). In *New Woman*, Gadsden explains that the role of the male authors in

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[13] I use the term 'fetish' to describe the process of partialism, fragmentation and objectification of women's bodies through the male gaze. Unlike Freud's understanding of fetishism as reliant on male castration anxiety, I follow Henning's (2004) discussion of fetishism in photography, as "a culturally dominant way of seeing both the object world and ourselves" (2004: 172).In Chapter Five, I discuss the ways in which women's bodies are fetishised in women's magazines.

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advice articles involves assisting white heterosexual women in finding male partners, understanding and pleasing these male partners while also offering strategies for women to maintain their relationships with men (2000: 51).

Gadsden (2000) also highlights the ways in which these male authors define ideal (hetero)femininities through valuing women in terms of their physical appearances and sexuality, and labelling them as deviant when they do not conform to traditional and stereotypical constructions of heterofemininity. In *Essence* magazine, the male authors focus particularly on assisting black heterosexual women readers to understand their black male partners. Similarly, the male authors in *Essence* magazine exercise power through "defining appropriate behaviour and ideologies for black women" (2000: 54), in this way maintaining and reproducing particular narrow constructions of black heterofemininity. Both magazines define ideal heteromasculinities as dominant, aggressive, controlling and unfaithful (Gadsden, 2000), but race is invisibilised across the magazines despite the differences in racial profile of the readers. Gadsden states that

> readers encounter similar, traditionalized messages. White and black women both confront the image of the 'oversexed' woman, and male authors continually remind female readers to be 'feminine', have proper values, and emphasise emotions over sexuality. (2000: 56)

Gadsden's study is useful for my own because it explores intersections of gender and race in magazines targeting female readers. But his primary focus is on the strategies used by male authors to control women's sexualities in two magazines in the United States, and the context is very different from that of contemporary South Africa. I hope to add to this work by comparing and contrasting the dominant presentations of gender, race and sexuality in six South African magazines targeting both women and men between 2003 and 2005.

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Mutongi (2000), Driver (2002) and Clowes (2002, 2004, 2006) have all explored, from various perspectives, presentations of gender in *Drum* magazine. Mutongi (2000) discusses presentations of youth, courtship and sexualities in the 'Dear Dolly' advice column published in East, Central and West African editions of *Drum* magazine between 1960 and the mid-1980s. Intended to instruct and entertain, 'Dear Dolly' helped shape sexualities and ideas around masculinities and femininities in changing ways (see Clowes, 2002). The advice to readers by mostly male editors depended on particular sets of gendered constructions that tended to undermine women relative to men (Mutongi, 2000). Women were advised to abstain from heterosex, while the 'moral' value of heterosexuality was emphasized to both women and men (Mutongi, 2000). In terms of femininity, Mutongi explains how young women were warned to be "cautious", "self-disciplined" and "sensible" (2000: 14-15) in their relations with their boyfriends; were blamed for pregnancy and its consequences (where the young men refused to take responsibility for their actions, for example). In terms of masculinity, young men were often advised in more humorous, "lighthearted", "conspiratorial" tones when they sought advice regarding sex or courtship (2000: 12).

"Situational homosexuality" on the other hand, was tolerated in the advice column because it was understood as temporary – just a phase - and thus would not interfere with the 'normal' functioning of society. But this was the case only for short-term same-sex liaisons. If there were any indications that homosexual relationships might be longer term then they were more likely to be constructed as "abnormal" and requiring psychiatric intervention (Mutongi, 2000: 16).

In an article focused on the process of psychic resettlement of *Drum* magazine from Africa to Europe and into the nuclear family and home

between 1951 and 1959, Driver (2002) talks about contradictory presentations of femininity in the magazine. She notes that "the magazine's shift from rural 'past' to urban 'present' was negotiated largely by means of belittling and damaging misrepresentations of women" (2002: 156). These damaging misrepresentations were in the form of adjusting women's physical bodies to confirm the "modern male gaze" (2002: 156). Driver adds that presentations of sportswomen, housewives and political women "always emphasized their femininity" (2002: 157). In reproducing western notions of romantic love within ideologies of domesticity (even though many women worked outside the home) and the patriarchal nuclear family, Driver observes that black femininity was defined in particular ways:

> Advertisements for skin-lightening creams, hair-straightening lotions, and competitions around the three 'vital statistics' defined the African woman's body as an idealised European or American look-alike. Pond's Vanishing Cream promised that blackness itself, like dirt, would vanish". (2002: 157)

In terms of masculinity, although *Drum* presented men as heads of families, this male authority was threatened by the false separation between the public (male) and private (female) spheres: many black women worked outside the home and *Drum* also urged men to play a role in domestic life.

Similarly, Clowes' (2004) work on the changing constructions of manhood in *Drum* magazine between 1951 and 1965 is significant in its focus on shifting representations of black masculinities in *Drum* magazine during the apartheid years in South Africa. Tracing these changes historically, Clowes (2004) argues that the social roles of black men were represented in the early 1950s as mutually supportive within the home, and domestically obligated in their roles as husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles and so forth (2004: 116). However, this representation of urban black masculinity began to change as the 1950s progressed, resulting, by the 1960's, in a construction of

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masculinity as detached from the home and domestic responsibilities, and more defined by men's positions within the public sphere, and their central roles as financial providers for their families.

In her paper, Clowes (2004) attributes these changes to two interconnected trends. Firstly, she suggests that the change from black men writing the stories and articles and producing the photographs in the magazine (although managed by a white editor), to white male editors producing the stories and articles, resulted in a shift in representation of black men. Secondly, Clowes (2004) suggests that black journalists themselves might have changed what they produced in an attempt to

> adapt their writing to embrace the 'modern' (i.e. western) narrative of white writing that, even within the nuclear family, treated men as isolated, autonomous and independent of women as well as children. As the journalists grew more familiar with their trade, as they themselves perhaps aspired to the trappings and trimmings of 'modernity' ...where texts about white men remained silent about their social context, it may be that the ways in which black writers positioned black men in their writing also changed. (2004: 124)

In a later article, Clowes (2006) suggests however that the black writers who repositioned urban black men as belonging outside the home did so in an attempt to challenge white racism declaring that black men weren't 'men'. In other words, while family and children (especially boys) might be central in a black man's life, they were central in very different ways in a white man's life. In white society, manhood was achieved by distancing oneself from women and children. If the black writers of *Drum* realized this, by portraying black men as men through wives and children, they inadvertently reinforced hegemonic ideas that black men weren't 'men'. So the only way to challenge that was to portray black men in similar ways to the ways that white men were portrayed – i.e. outside the home, as breadwinners and unconnected to family and children (Clowes, 2006).

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He looks at gendered identities from the 1940s to the 21st century and highlights how media presentations of gender in television, film, magazines and advertising have evolved over the decades. In opposition to the 40s and 50s where the 'happy housewife heroine' (Friedan in Gauntlett, 2002: 50) was celebrated in women's magazines, the presentations of gender in the 1960s appeared to diverge from these traditional roles for women. More progressive women's magazines in the United States saw the development of the career woman interested in politics, global affairs and feminist issues. But these did not override the popularity of more traditional magazines such as *Family Circle, Ladies' Home Journal, Women's Own* and *Women's Weekly* in the US. The advent of *Ms* and *Cosmopolitan* in the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting the context of the sexual liberation of the 60s and feminism of the 1970s, celebrated the idea of "a strong sexual identity" for women and highlighted their multiple roles (Gauntlett, 2002: 53).

According to Gauntlett (2002), advertising in the United States appears to have taken a similar route through the decades, with substantial change in gender representation only taking place from the 1990s. Advertisers seemed to become more aware of gendered stereotypes and began representing women in what they considered to be more 'realistic' roles. However, these changes did not replace the ideal of white women as heterosexual, 'attractive', slim, young and part of an unskilled labour force, in opposition to men who were more often portrayed as heterosexual, fit, strong and active within the skilled, paid labour force (Gauntlett, 2002). While Gauntlett's study is comprehensive, like others in the field, it is limited in its disregard for the intersections between gender, race and sexuality. The 'woman we expect to see' always appears to be white and heterosexual; but whiteness itself seems to warrant little or no exploration in Gauntlett's work. While he does explore representations of homosexuality in recent years in the United States mass media, there is no discussion of how gender and sexuality are racialised.

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Studies of this type, while useful in many ways, do not take into account how black femininities are presented in the media, in this way perpetuating the invisibility but centrality of whiteness, as I discussed in Chapter One.

Overland's (2002) study focuses on representations of gender in post-apartheid South African advertising on television and in magazines. The author explores how advertising content tends to reproduce and reflect sexual and racial stereotypes in the 'new' South Africa. More relevant in this study is the emphasis on how race and socio-economic status mediate messages which reflect gendered and sexual stereotypes and how these messages are relayed to readers. Overland's (2002) findings highlight that most advertisements still use white female and male models to sell their products. Furthermore, the predominant portrayal in South African magazines, like those in the west, tend to normalise passivity, dependency and heterosexual domesticity for women while reinforcing ideas of control, agency, strength, intelligence and access to power for men. Notions of beauty for women tend to be constructed according to western ideals with heteropatriarchal values forming the foundation for 'attractiveness' for women. These symbols of 'attractiveness', says Overland (2002), serve as role models against which the black self constantly measures, judges, disciplines and corrects itself. My discussion of racialised heterosexual desirability in Chapter Five adds to this finding.

Benwell's (2003) study explores representations of masculinities in British and American men's magazines. He identifies a particular representation of manhood embroiled in what he calls "new lad" discourse. According to Benwell (2003), the basis of 'new lad'/'real man' discourse in men's magazines lies in "a return to traditional masculine values of sexism, exclusive male friendship and homophobia" (2003: 13), values which as I

reflect on in Chapter Five, seem comparable with the versions of white heteromasculinity privileged in the South African version of *FHM*. According to Benwell, these discursive strategies "allow the writer to articulate an anti-feminist sentiment, whilst explicitly distancing himself from it, and thus disclaiming responsibility from or even authentic ownership of it" (Benwell, 2003: 152).

Dines and Perea's (2003) work is particularly relevant for my study in terms of its focus on the intersections of gender, class, sexuality and race, as presented in the American *Playboy* and *Hustler* magazines. Using cartoons in the two magazines as their data, the authors explore the relationships between marketing strategies and contemporary presentations of masculinity, foregrounded in constructs of 'class' and race. Arguing that *Playboy* and *Hustler* operate on stereotypes of racialised and sexualised class in a number of ways, Dines and Perea (2003) identify the "absence or presence of Blacks" in the magazine as a key indicator of the class location of the cartoon characters within the magazine:

> *Playboy* depicts a world so affluent that Blacks are excluded by invisible market forces. Indeed, even the White working class is invisible in the *Playboy* world of expensive clothes, gourmet restaurants and well appointed homes. In *Hustler*, however, Black cartoon characters do make regular appearances, intruding on the world of the poor whites in ways that suggest that poor Blacks and Whites are locked in a struggle for diminishing resources, in this case, sexually available attractive White women. (2003: 194)

In differentiating between the presentations of women in the two magazines, the authors describe the upper and middle-class female and male cartoon characters in *Playboy* magazine as "overwhelmingly attractive, well dressed and always White", with women being represented as the "epitome of female sexual attractiveness" (2003: 195). In *Hustler*, however, the women are

presented as "overwhelmingly White, middle-aged and fat with huge stomachs, thighs and legs. Their vaginas are depicted as extra large with unusually large amounts of hair" (Dines and Perea, 2003: 196). In a similar way, the white male working-class cartoon characters in *Hustler* magazine are represented as 'unattractive' with "huge beer guts, several days' stubble on their faces and a receding hairline" (2003: 196). In the world of *Playboy*, women are always heterosexually available to any men, submissive and passive, while the women in *Hustler* magazine are presented as having some agency in the sense that white males are depicted as so 'pathetic' and 'desperate' for sex, that their heterosexual female partners are sexually revolted by them (Dines and Perea, 2003).

Black masculinities in *Hustler* magazine conform to stereotypes of hyper(hetero)sexuality - they are depicted in images with unrealistic huge penises, sexually aggressive and abusive (Dines and Perea, 2003). These images are different from those of working-class white heterosexual men, who are ridiculed as bad lovers with small penises, who are unable to excite their female partners. Yet again it is men's role as agents to satisfy passive women, reinforcing particular constructions of heterosex and drawing attention to the dangers of failure. Calling this magazine strategy a "discourse of resentment" (Dines and Perea, 2003: 198), the authors describe how the cartoons depict the 'white' female sexual partners of black men as "thin, attractive and lacking body hair...a very unusual female image in *Hustler* cartoons and suggests that the male is siphoning off the few sexually available, attractive women, leaving the White man with rejects" (2003: 198).

Dines' and Perea's (2003) study provides some insight into the South African version of *FHM* magazine, which as I discuss in Chapter Five of this study, tends to depict white masculinities as immature, childish and unable to make adult decisions, with the magazine providing step-by-step guides for male

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readers on how to behave like adult men. These presentations are similar in some ways to the constructions of working-class white men in *Hustler* magazine. The sexist, degrading depictions of heterofemininity in the magazine also draws parallels with those in *FHM*. However, the racist representations of black masculinities in *Hustler* do not appear to have a place in the South African *FHM*. In Chapter Five, I discuss the possibility that this could be a result of the invisibility of black people in the local version of *FHM* altogether.

Stibbe's (2004) study looks at six issues of the American version of *Men's Health* magazine between June and December 2000 in an effort to explore the discourses around health on which the magazine is based. According to Stibbe, these discourses reproduce a particular type of hegemonic masculinity associated with a number of negative health behaviours for men. The naturalization of male power and exploitation of biological factors used to explain and sustain heteromasculinities in men's magazines, according to Stibbe (2004), need to be challenged. He argues that *"Men's Health* magazine is steeped in traditional masculine ideology and fails to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the interest of health" (2004: 34).

Stibbe (2004: 36) identifies three interconnected aspects of masculine discourses employed in *Men's Health* magazine. These are the discursive constructions of masculinity through the creation of images of the "ideal man", the role of the magazine in reproducing male power, and the link between hegemonic masculinity and negative health behaviours. Most pervasive, Stibbe (2004) argues, is the discourse of medical science and the discourse of the "buddy", the latter acting as a mediator who explains and interprets medical science for the reader. My findings in Chapter Five address a similar notion of men needing to be taught how to be appropriately (hetero)masculine. Additionally, Stibbe (2004) also relates how the

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presentation of ideal masculinity as hugely muscular serves to reproduce male power (2004). These types of discourses also connect with constructions of femininity which pressurise women to fix their bodies in very particular ways, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

Stibbe's (2004) study is useful for my focus on the messages about heteromasculinities in the South African version of *Men's Health*. But again, like the other studies reflected on above, the intersections between gender and race are not a focus of Stibbe's study. The disregard for racial subjectivities in many ways contributes to constructions of whiteness as a normalised way-of- being in the world, and ignores the dominance of particular racialised masculinities in magazine presentations. Stibbe's study also doesn't focus on how women are presented in *Men's Health* to a dominant white male readership.

In another American study, Rogers' (2005) explores the ways in which men's magazines create 'uncertainty' around certain kinds of heterosexual intimate relationships. His magazine sample includes six issues of *FHM* and six issues of *Loaded* magazine in the United States between February and July 2002. Through the presentation of masculinity as 'in crisis', Rogers' (2005) argues that the magazines offer men a sense of belonging – "a unified sense of identity or ideology by casting out ambiguity or complexity" (2005: 179). In other words, the magazines move men from 'chaos to control' through the masculinisation of certain kinds of intimacy. Anxious men are therefore encouraged into particular performances of masculinity through employing a variety of techniques in their heterosexual relationships, including techniques of management (controlling relationships as employees are controlled in work organizations), the Fordisation of sex (sex as something that can be worked on and worked out) and the scientisation of sex (presenting scientific theories

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of sex and intimacy in an effort to move the reader from ignorance to knowledge).

Rogers (2005) insists that through a form of "constructed certitude" - a way out of men's confusion with regard to sexual intimacy - men's magazines encourage men to master intimacy, thereby rescuing them "from the uncertainties of the (media) 'crisis of masculinity' phase, building them a new role to play within relationships with women" (2005: 192). However, although this new role encourages (heterosexual) men to play an active part in their intimate relationships with women, the discourses employed are those that attempt to reinscribe very particular versions of heteropatriarchal masculinity. Rogers' (2005) study, while useful in its focus on presentations of masculinities, is very limited in its lack of attention to the ways in which masculinities are racialised and heterosexualised in men's experiences of being men.

Baker's (2005) American study on the images of women's sexuality in advertisements in women's and men's magazines targeted at both white and black readers has a lot of relevance for my study. Baker examined eight popular magazines published in 2002: *Black Men*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Essence*, *GQ*, *Honey*, *King*, *Maxim* and *Vogue* magazines. Baker found that black women in magazine advertisements targeting white readers were most likely to have European-like features (straight hair, fairer skin, slim) than black women in advertisements targeting black readers. Magazines targeting black men were more likely than magazines targeting white men to portray black and white women as sexual objects, although white women were, according to Baker (2005) presented as sexual objects to a much greater extent than black women across magazine readerships.

Baker's findings reflect that "black women were not as likely to be portrayed in traditional feminine roles as were white women, and they were not as likely to be objectified as white women were" (2005: 25). Presentations of black women in magazines targeting black readers differed from the more "submissive" and "repressive" images of white women in advertisements. Black women, according to Baker (2005) were "more often portrayed as having characteristics such as strength and independence, and they had physical characteristics that did not necessarily conform to mainstream media images of beauty" (2005: 25).

Further, Baker relates that images of black women in advertisements conformed to three particular stereotypes conceptualized by Jewell in 1993. The first is that of matriarch, the mother who heads a household and has more authority than a father. Similar to the matriarch, the second stereotype of black women in magazines targeting black audiences is the portrayal of black women as Sapphire, a "headstrong" and "independent" black woman, often presented as threatening black men's "sense of masculinity" (2005: 15). The third stereotype of black women in advertisements aimed at black readers is that of Jezebel, "who is portrayed as a sexually aggressive black woman and therefore is considered deviant from the submissive image of women's sexuality in mainstream culture" (2005: 16). Jezebel is constructed as seductive, alluring and promiscuous, and according to Baker, this image of black women is still present in advertisements aimed at black readers.

Baker's (2005) study highlights significant and overlooked areas of research on representations of black women in magazines targeting black and white male and female American readerships. But certain questions remain unanswered, such as what does Baker mean when she talks about "African features"? Do African American women share features with African women and what constitutes these features? Furthermore, Baker talks about the

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representation of white women as more submissive and more sexually objectified than black women. It is unclear how she defines sexual objectification, i.e. what constitutes submission in the advertisements and what constitutes the notion of black women as independent. I keep Baker's findings in mind when I compare and contrast the images of black femininities in the women's magazines in my sample in Chapter Six.

In New Zealand, a recent study by Farvid and Braun (2006) is one of the few exploring both male and female sexuality in six sequential issues of the women's magazines *Cleo* and *Cosmo* between January and June 2002. Some of the findings emanating from their study are relevant for my own work. The authors note that female sexuality only exists in relation to men and that it is men who define the heterosexual experience. 'Real' sex, in the world of Cleo and Cosmo, is defined in terms of male penetration and male orgasm. Even though the magazines attempt to portray women as possessing sexual agency and individual autonomy, Farvid and Braun argue that this is "*pseudo liberation*" (2006: 306) since women are overwhelmingly represented as needing men and seeking monogamous relationships. Male sexuality, on the other hand, is mostly portrayed as performance-oriented, uncontrollable, always ready to penetrate, easily aroused and easily satisfied. While masculinity defines the heterosex experience, femininity, on the other hand, "remain[s] embedded within a heterosexist imperative, where [women] should take part in the institution of heterosexuality" (Farvid and Braun, 2006: 307, my emphasis).

My findings on performance-based masculinities in Chapter Five speak to Farvid and Braun's (2006) findings above. Additionally, the lack of agency portrayed by heterofemininities in women's magazines, as I discuss in Chapter Six, further illustrates the discourses of "pseudo liberation" that Farvid and Braun (2006) discuss in their sample of women's magazines in

New Zealand. But the study completely ignores the different ways racialised femininities and masculinities are represented in their magazines. It is unclear who the dominant readers of *Cleo* and *Cosmo* are because it is not mentioned in the article at all. As with previous studies, whiteness is a taken-for-granted racial construct in the authors' analysis, further reinforcing its normativity.

Viljoen's (in press, 2007) article on ideals of masculinities in six South African men's glossy magazines overlaps in focus with my work and also considers questions of race to some degree. Viljoen explores six magazines targeting male readers – *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink*, *GQ*, *Maksiman* and *Manwees*, the latter two magazines targeting Afrikaner males.

Viljoen describes *FHM* as markedly different from *Men's Health* in terms of its disregard for "all forms of aspirational rhetoric in favour of outright laddishness" (in press, 2007). Her perspective on how women are presented in *FHM* is that "the object seems to be good, 'innocent' fun since the women are scantily clad but almost never naked" (in press, 2007), which is an analysis I take issue with in my discussion in Chapter 5. In terms of *Maksiman*, the South African magazine targeting Afrikaner males, Viljoen relates that the dominant version of masculinity is one which "includes the relationship to significant others" (in press, 2007), similar to the representations of black (hetero)masculinities evident in the early *Drum* magazine discussed by Clowes (2002) above. Viljoen states:

> In contrast to this trope of eternal and thriving bachelorhood, favoured by *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *GQ*, *Maksiman* seems to consciously draw the attention of their readers to their partners and cultivate a culture of accountable responsibility. (in press, 2007)

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In terms of *Blink* magazine, and a finding I discuss in Chapter Six, Viljoen argues that black masculinities are presented as politicized and "Afro-centric" highlighting "the question of black, post-apartheid masculinity in crisis" (in press, 2007).

Viljoen's article is one of the few exploring the intersections of gender and race in representations of masculinities in South African men's magazines. Her inclusion of Afrikaans men's magazines is a unique contribution to the area. And while norms of white (hetero)masculinities are not a huge focus of her study, she states that more financially successful magazines such as *FHM*, *Men's Health* and GQ present the ideal masculinity as white. Viljoen argues that this masculine representation "does not necessarily draw on old pre-1994 patriarchal identity, but replaces this trope with yet another, that of the globalised, cosmopolitan, non-racialised (but white) male" (Viljoen, in press, 2007). Certain parts of this study speak to my focus on representations of masculinities in *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink.* While Viljoen's analysis is an important socio-semiotic one, my feminist poststructuralist analysis explores in more detail the racialised representations of both (hetero)masculinities and (hetero)femininities in magazines targeting men and women, and problematises the representation of whiteness as normative.

Overall, the literature reveals that globally, and despite minor regional variations, there is a lack of research exploring representations of gender, race and sexuality in magazines. Many studies reviewed here seem to perpetuate the unmarkedness of whiteness by not exploring how gender and sexuality are racialised in magazine representations. In addition, international analyses of magazine advertisements focus overwhelmingly on how (white) (hetero)femininities are presented in disempowering ways within western media. As a result, international studies have mostly inadvertently reinforced the notion of white heterofemininity as the beauty standard for all women to

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aspire to whilst deconstructing it. Such research has tended not to consider the kinds of messages about femininities embodied in magazines aimed at black audiences and not looked at how black femininities are portrayed in magazines aimed at white audiences.

The South African studies reviewed above reveal that very few explore the intersections between gender, race and sexuality in magazines. Heterosexuality and whiteness, in particular, are usually unmarked and unnamed. Additionally, the focus on femininities in women's magazines seems to have marginalised presentations of masculinities. In terms of masculinities, the literature surveyed reflects the recent academic interest in masculinities but hasn't as yet extended into more detailed explorations of the various magazine contents such as problem pages/advice columns, educational articles and advertisements, for instance. Most research is limited to exploring presentations of masculinities in men's magazines and presentations of femininities in women's magazines. But the binaries of gender and sexuality need to be considered if we understand these as dichotomies of power and privilege.

The next chapter contextualises the magazines in my sample and reflects on my interviews with the editors. Chapter Four begins with a discussion of the respective magazines' readerships between 2003 and 2005 as provided by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF). The second part of Chapter Four explores the views of the magazine editors and the meanings they attach they attach to notions social responsibility, objectivity, neutrality and 'the political' in their representations of gender, sexuality and race. The full interview guideline for these interviews is attached as Appendix I.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WE CANNOT AT ANY STAGE BE SEEN TO BE POLITICAL, AS WE ARE NOT HERE TO ENGENDER CHANGE, BUT TO INSPIRE": MAGAZINES, EDITORS, AND NOTIONS OF OBJECTIVITY AND NEUTRALITY

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part explores readership statistics for the monthly magazines *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady* between 2003 and 2005, the period of time I chose as my sample. The second part of this chapter contains a discussion of the interviews held with editors/deputy editors of *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Blink*, *True Love* and *Fair Lady*. Again, as previously mentioned, I was unable to interview either the editor or deputy editor of *Femina* magazine. A complete interview guideline can be found in Appendix I while the participant information sheet and consent form can be found in Appendix II. Both parts of this chapter serve to contextualise the analysis of the magazines presented in Chapters Five and Six of this study.

1. Contextualising the magazines: readerships and contents

The readership statistics (2003-2005) for *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*, which I discuss here, were provided by the South African Advertising and Research Foundation (SAARF) and transformed into two tables – one table for men's magazines and another for women's magazines. A number of graphs illustrating the magazine readerships in terms of gender and race can be found in Appendix III. Readership statistics for *Blink* magazine have not been documented by SAARF as the first edition of the magazine was only launched late in 2004. Although I had hoped to get some information from *Blink* Lifestyle Publishers regarding readership

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statistics, this was not possible because the magazine has not been published since October 2006 (personal correspondence with advertising consultant for *Blink* magazine, 22nd February 2007). The discussion which follows aims to provide an overview of the changing nature of the readerships of those magazines' I was able to obtain readership figures for, particularly changes with regard to the racial and gender dimensions of the magazine audiences.

The readership statistics discussed here (seen in the tables below) are called "average issue readerships", defined by SAARF as "the average number of people who claim to have personally read or paged through all or part of a copy of a publication for the first time during the issue period prior to the interview. It can be anywhere, anybody's copy and includes both current and old issues" (Definition provided by SAARF, via email, 2005). In other words these are not simply circulation or sales figures. For the sake of simplicity, I will call these statistics 'readership statistics'. It is also interesting to note, as I mention in the introduction, that the racial category 'black' is separated into 'African', 'coloured' and 'Indian'. I will use these same categories in my discussion in this chapter. While it is interesting to note that, as discussed below, these average readerships appear to be falling, it is not the task of this study to explain such changes.

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Men's Magazines

	Men's Health			FHM		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Total readership (in 000)	753	719	700	552	591	624
African	35.7%	31.9%	34.2%	14.3%	13.3%	13.7%
White	43.2%	43.5%	43.0%	66.4%	67.3%	65.9%
Coloured	15.2%	18.9%	17.7%	11.8%	13.2%	14.1%
Indian	5.9%	5.7%	5.1%	7.5%	6.2%	6.3%
Women	28.4%	25.9%	25.7%	26.4%	28.3%	28.5%
Men	71.6%	74.1%	74.3%	73.6%	71.7%	71.5%
Highest LSMs	9,10	9, 10	9, 10	9, 10	9,10	9, 10

Table 1: Men's magazines (adapted from SAARF, 2003, 2004, 2005)
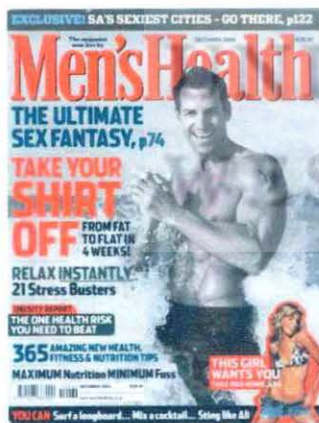

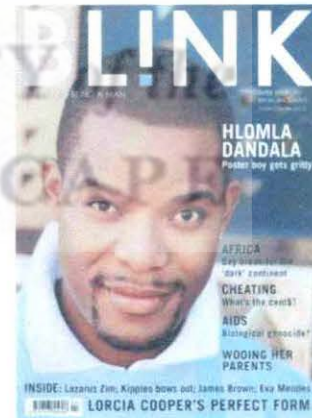Fig. 1: *Men's Health*, Dec 2004　　Fig. 2: *FHM*, April 2005　　Fig. 3: *Blink*, December 2004

Men's Health

In their website, the editors of the South African version of *Men's Health* describe the magazine as

> A monthly magazine that inspires a balanced, active and purposeful life. It's committed to helping men gain control of their physical, mental and emotional lives by focusing on five core areas – health, fitness, sex, stress and nutrition...offers actionable, well-researched advice that allows men to meet their daily challenges and live up to their potential in every aspect of life. The magazine speaks to men in a manner they can relate to: man-to-man, conversational, never condescending.

In some ways, the magazine lives up to its claims. Between 2003 and 2005, *Men's Health* shows a higher readership than that of *FHM*. But SAARF's statistics for 2005 reflects that readerships for *Men's Health* decreased between 2003 and 2005. While the total readership for 2003 was 753 000, this number decreased to 719 000, and then decreased again to 700 000 in 2005. In 2005, of a total of 700 000 readers, 301 000 (43%) were white, followed by 239 000 (34.2%) African readers, 124 000 (17.7%) coloured readers and 36 000 (5.1%) Indian readers. In terms of sex, 520 000 (74.3%) were males aged between 16 and 34 years (SAARF, 2005). In comparison to *FHM* between 2003 and 2005, *Men's Health* had the largest numbers of African readers.

FHM

With the words 'It's a guy thing' boldly printed on its masthead, the average issue readership for *FHM* in 2005 was 624 000 (SAARF, 2005). *FHM* is the only magazine in my sample which saw an increase in its readership - from 552 000 readers in 2003, to 591 000 in 2004, and to 624 000 in 2005. In

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2005, the total readership of 624 000 comprised 411 000 (65.9%) white readers, 86 000 (13.7%) African readers, 88 000 (14.1%) coloured readers and 39 000 (6.3%) Indian readers (SAARF, 2005). Of the total readership in 2005, male readers comprised 447 000 (71.5%). In comparison to *Men's Health*, *FHM* showed the largest numbers of white readers between 2003 and 2005.

Blink

While there are no statistics available from SAARF for the readership of this magazine, Viljoen (in press, 2007) has documented that the circulation figures for *Blink* was a very low 35000 in 2006. The only South African magazine targeting a black middle-class readership, the tone of the magazine is described by Viljoen (2007, in press) as recalling

> The political cadence of black philosophers such as Aime Cesaire, Steven Biko, Frantz Fanon, and Malcom X, who through their racially conscious pedagogy emphasised the possibility for taking ownership of the processes that govern identity in the wake of an oppressive ideological system. (2007, in press)

Blink challenged notions of traditional (black) masculinity, but also hegemonic masculinities more broadly, by moving beyond the usual rhetoric of men's magazines, which prioritised topics such as sex, money and sport. Some examples include discussions on men's role in eradicating gender-based violence, and their responsibilities in terms of fatherhood. Ex-editor of *Blink*, Siphiwe Mpye, even notes that one of the goals of the magazine was to "bridge the divide between the sexes" (cited in Viljoen, in press, 2007). In the launch issue of the magazine, Mpye further relates: "I had always dreamed of editing a men's magazine that I – a young, intelligent and aware black man – could relate to...we have it all, from style tips, politics, business, personal

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wealth and travel, to health, man talk, women, sex, relationships, cars, gadgets, music, culture, sport" (Launch Issue, November 2004: 10). Despite this holistic editorial approach, *Blink* magazine closed down in late 2006 for reasons unknown to the public. My analysis of *Blink*'s contents in Chapter 5 suggests that it might have been precisely the provocative stance of editors such as Mpye that did not appeal to the targeted black, middle-class male readers, and was unable to attract readers from other demographic groups.

Women's Magazines

	True Love			Femina			Fair Lady		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Total readership (in 000)	2.297	1.981	1.870	440	375	304	1.051	903	802
African	94.4%	93.9%	93.8%	28%	21.9%	24.4%	33.3%	29%	31.7%
White	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	47.6%	50.2%	46.3%	42.2%	44.2%	40.5%
Coloured	3.7%	3.9%	3.9%	17.4%	19.3%	19.1%	18.2%	19.5%	20.95
Indian	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	6.9%	8.6%	10.2%	6.3%	7.3%	7.0%
Women	64.7%	63.6%	64.1%	78.4%	78.8%	78.3%	75.5%	74.4%	72.9%
Men	35.3%	36.4%	35.9%	21.6%	21.2%	21.7%	24.5%	25.6%	27.1%
Highest LSMs	5, 6	5, 6	5, 6	6,9,10	6,9,10	9, 10	6,9,10	6,9,10	9, 10

Table 2: Women's magazines (adapted from SAARF, 2003, 2004, 2005)

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Fig. 4: *True Love, March 2005*   **Fig. 5:** *Fair Lady, May 2003*   **Fig. 6:** *Femina,* May 2005

True Love

The text on the masthead of *True Love* magazine reads "All a Woman Needs". According to the magazine's editor, Busiswe Mahlaba, *True Love*'s readership mostly fits into the LSMs 5-8; they are aged between 25-35, and are mostly black females. Mahlaba also describes her magazine as follows: "*True Love* has been very proud part of the changes in this country. We played, and continue to play, a huge part in informing our readers, educating them as well as equipping them with the tools that are required for the change" (Interview with Busisiwe Mahlaba, 27th February 2006).

True Love magazine showed the largest readership amongst the women's magazines. Despite the growth of the black middle-classes in South Africa, readerships for *True Love* decreased between 2003 and 2005. In 2005, of a total of 1.870 000 readers, the percentage of African readers were 93.8%, followed by 3.9% coloured readers, 1.6% white readers and Indian readers were again the smallest in number at 0.8%. In 2005, women made up 64.1% of the total readership.

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

Fair Lady

The editor of this magazine describes the typical *Fair Lady* reader as

> In her 30s, confident, curious, seeking to learn more about herself, her life and where she fits into it. She may be a mother, she may not. She is not necessarily married, and not necessarily with a man. She has a career but is equally comfortable staying at home. She's strong, caring and informed about what's happening in the world. She enjoys learning new things about her world and those around her, and tries hard to understand the social dynamics of being a woman in contemporary South Africa. (interview with Suzie Brokensha, 26th May 2006)

Despite this exhaustive and all-encompassing description of the typical *Fair Lady* female reader, like *True Love* magazine, the magazine's readership shrunk between 2003 and 2005 – 1.051 000 in 2003 to 802 000 in 2005. In 2005, 40.5% of the total number of readers (802 000) were white, 31.7% were African, 20.9% were coloured and 7% were Indian (SAARF, 2005). In 2005, 72.9% of all readers were women.

Femina

In their website, *Femina* magazine is described as:

> The only South African magazine that speaks to a woman as an individual, but also as a mother. *Femina* features compelling reads, inspiring fashion, health and beauty, information, news and inspiration for women in the years when they are juggling parenting with the demands of relationships, career and home...to the *Femina* woman life is about love, children, home, work and the world around her. She's at the centre of her family, at a successful point in her career. She controls the family finances and makes most of the big purchases. Affluent and intelligent, she is a big spender – both for necessities (food, household goods, insurance and financial services, cars etc) but also for luxuries – cosmetics, fashion, décor, jewellery.

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In comparison to *True Love* and *Fair Lady*, *Femina* magazine showed the smallest numbers of readers between 2003 and 2005 and the greatest loss in readers during the same period. While the readership was 440 000 in 2003, this shrunk to 375 000 in 2004, and then shrunk again to 304 000 in 2005. In 2005, of a total readership of 304 000, 46.3% were white, 24.4% were African, 19.1% were coloured and 10.2% were Indian (SAARF, 2005). Of these, the vast majority of readers (78.3%) were women.

The brief discussion above serves as a reflection on the readerships for *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady*, *True Love* and *Femina* magazines, pointing to the racial and sex breakdown of these audiences. My aim however is to explore the messages in the magazines in terms of race and gender, and how these messages might be read from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. So, while the statistics above provide a backdrop to my analysis, they must be read in conjunction with the analysis in chapters five and six of this study. What follows is an analysis of my interviews with editors/deputy editors of the magazines in the sample. These interviews were initially meant to provide an understanding of the views of editors/deputy editors in terms of the messages their magazines relay about race, sexuality and gender to their readerships, but it became clear that larger issues around objectivity, neutrality and notions of 'the political' were at stake in terms of the magazines' representations of gender, sexuality and race. I turn to these interviews now.

2. Editors and their magazines

The analysis below is based on my interviews with five editors of South African magazines – *FHM*, *Men's Health*, *Blink*, *True Love* and *Fair Lady*. Except for the editor of *Blink* magazine, I will use pseudonames to refer to the interviewees, and these names will not be linked to the magazine brand

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which they represent. Two editors are white males, who will be named Brandon and Adrian respectively. One editor is a black female who will be called Thandi, and another editor is a white female, who I will refer to as Sue. *Blink* magazine had a black male editor, Siphiwe, before the magazine stopped publishing late in 2006, as I previously mentioned and will discuss towards the end of this chapter.

Editors' roles

Most editors linked the success of their magazines to increasing circulation and sales based on "profit-making as the priority", noting that "a successful magazine taps into the heads of its readership – their needs, desires and lifestyles" (Brandon). Another white male deputy editor of a men's magazine, Adrian, noted that

> magazines are much more concerned with the bottom line than with playing an important role as change agents. Magazines are very commercially orientated and people who work there see their jobs as growing circulation/readers. The business prerogative in magazine publishing is far more dominant than the social one.

Similarly, Sue, a white female editor of a woman's magazine relates that "consumers only respond to something that has personal appeal for them, which means that they are already predisposed to the subject matter". Both these editors appear to agree that magazines merely *reflect* the realities of its readership – they do not produce realities.

This is different from the views of ex-editor of *Blink* magazine, Siphiwe Mpye, on his role in building *Blink* magazine. Mpye (in Viljoen, 2007) notes, for example, that *Blink* set out to

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To show the rest of the country that the affluent black male *but not the black female* has not only emerged, but will, given time, increasingly be the backbone of [the South African] economy...we had also realised and wanted to show this man to be about much more than soccer, BMWs and bling. We wanted to show that he was also passionate, compassionate, intelligent, worldly, sensitive, politically aware, discerning. (in Viljoen 2007, in press, my emphasis)

The difference in what these editors saw as their role was consistently played out in our discussions of notions of what constitutes the 'political', objectivity and neutrality. I discuss this after positioning myself within the relevant literature on magazines as creators of meaning.

Magazines as creators of meaning

As agents of socialization, the media could play an important role in social responsibility by raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, male violence against women and children, racism and poverty amongst other social ills in South Africa. This has been argued by others who see the media as having a critical responsibility in transforming South African society. Boswell (2002), for instance, has argued that the media has both the power and responsibility in shaping society's views about the world. She points out that the media could either be a tool for maintaining the status quo or a tool for transformation. Similarly, Tomaselli and Tomaselli (2001) describe the role of the media - including magazines - as both sites and instruments of transformation. As instruments of transformation, the authors relate how the media provides important platforms for information, debate and education 'around issues shaping the kind of society we are, and the kind of society we wish to become' (2001, 124).

In terms of gender and sexuality, many feminist theorists have critiqued the ways in which women are presented in the media. Boswell (2002), for

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instance, has argued that the media plays a critical role in shaping constructions of femininities by reinforcing 'acceptable' gender roles. Speaking particularly about masculinities, Kimmel (1992) has suggested that the media functions as one of the key elements in presenting 'acceptable' ways of being men. Allen (2003) argues that the normative presentations of masculinities and femininities in the media are those which privilege heterosexuality, and the active male/passive female binary. Similarly, Durham and Kellner (2001) relate how media products provide materials from which we forge our notions of what it means to be heterosexual, homosexual, women or men. In terms of how heterofemininities are presented in the media, I align myself with MacDonald's (1995) position when she claims that definitions of femininity

> have historically been much more integral to the formation of identity for women than for men. If women had defined for themselves the ideals of their bodily shape or decoration, this would not be problematic. It is the denial of this right in the history of Western cultural representation, in medical practice, and in the multi-billion dollar pornography, fashion and cosmetic industries, that has granted women only squatters' rights to their own bodies. (1995: 193)

But as I will discuss below, most editors did not see their magazines as obligated to playing any role in transformation. Instead, social responsibility was understood as a 'political' issue, and magazines were located as both objective and neutral in their contents. The prevailing views in my interviews with editors therefore centred on notions of objectivity and neutrality, which I discuss below.

The dominant view in interviews was that magazines were not 'political' but subscribed to particular notions of objectivity and neutrality:

> It's not the job of the media to fight racism, sexism, homophobia, HIV/AIDS, poverty, TB or whatever. The media plays an important

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social role but it does not play judge and jury to whatever happens in society. We do have a responsibility to highlight and discuss social phenomena, but ultimately we afford the reader the respect to make her own judgments and opinions. The role that the media occupies – that fourth estate position we occupy - is one that is free from bias and judgment.

This view, articulated by Sue, was common in my interviews with editors. But it is also a view that has long been problematised. Unlike the view of the editor above that the media might 'highlight and discuss social phenomena', Stuart Hall (1992) has argued that the media defines, not merely produces, 'reality'. Hall explains how the active work of selecting, presenting, structuring and shaping material in media content does not merely reflect 'an already-existing meaning' but instead is the practice of *'making things mean'* (cited in Braude, 1999, 18, emphasis in original). But this was not the view of the editors I interviewed and they overwhelmingly took the position that their magazines reflected neutrality and objectivity. As Brandon related:

I'm uncomfortable with magazines supposed role in nation-building. Magazines are products, like chocolate bars. Magazines are profit-making products; they are not there for nation-building. Magazines do not have to be there for the betterment of society. But they also can not be guided by commercial gain. Too much emphasis on products playing a role in nation-building when magazines have a massive responsibility to shareholders.

Instead, magazines were understood to be a mode of entertainment, as Sue put it:

They are there to amuse, inform and entertain people no matter what the subject. A magazine's role is to discuss issues and explain/break down arguments that help readers make an informed decision on their own. People's perceptions may not be changed by what they read in magazines, but at least they have more info at their disposal to inform/challenge those perceptions, whatever they may be.

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In other words, magazines provide information that readers can choose to discard or utilise. Again, this information is understood by the editors to be neutral and objective, even though, as Sue argues later, 'social, political and economic changes all play a distinctive role in moving the magazine and its readership in particular directions.' But Thandi, a black female editor, believed that magazines should steer away from 'politics' entirely, stating that 'as a glossy women's magazine, we cannot at any stage be seen to be political, as we are not here to engender change, but to inspire.' Again, the overriding discourse in editors' opinions was that their magazines always aimed to be neutral and objective, in terms of the types of material included on racism, homophobia, HIV/AIDS, sexism or poverty, for instance, or in the decisions to exclude material of this type altogether.

There was also the view that it was difficult to be socially responsible in South Africa when the global market plays a major role in determining what goes into editorialized versions of local magazines. The global context within which the magazines were produced shaped and framed the choices of which South African stories could be published and which stories would be most 'marketable'. Adrian highlighted this:

> Our aim is teaching and learning from the American. Our stories are of such a global brand. We have to give it a South African spin – it's never around being socially responsible. It's about trying to solve a guy's problem. We're about day-to-day things, rather than building the nation's conscience. It's not about the broader goals of social justice. We are also tightly controlled as a brand internationally. It always comes back to how useful the info is to the reader; how will it help him in his life. We very rarely approach things to do with society. We'd never run an HIV/AIDS story and we are a health magazine. We are working on it now. We also ran a big rape feature, all with very personal stories, but the drive was this: how can you as a man respond in an environment where rape and sexual violence is so prevalent?

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This view illustrates the supposedly 'apolitical' framework preferred by the magazine. Men's problems are not understood to be social problems, and hence men must individually work them out. In other words, this magazine, targeted at male readers, clearly does not represent questions of, for example, gender violence, fatherhood or HIV/AIDS as political questions requiring political solutions. Instead such questions are presented as individual problems requiring individual solutions. The focus is on individual men's 'day-to-day problems', which are understood as unrelated to more overtly political questions, such as 'building the nation's conscience' and feeding into social change.

In terms of social transformation in which women and other marginalized groups such as gay and lesbian South Africans are able to experience a more meaningful 'democracy', questions of sexualities are key. The following discussion reflects why neutrality is not possible.

Gender and Sexuality

In my interviews with editors, a central element of the version of (hetero)masculinity privileged in the magazines is the construction of femininity. Adrian related that while women are often used as professional sources,

> The male gaze is very present. Men will buy our magazine partly because there are beautiful women in it. We give readers what they find attractive (not fat women). There is international control over what you publish. The most enlightened man will enjoy looking at beautiful women – a skinny, slight creature. She may not be Kate Moss, but it's ok if it's J-Lo. Women are featured as objects of desire in men's magazines.

This comment suggests that there is a particular version of femininity privileged in the world of South African men's magazines and these are often

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modelled on western beauty ideals. It is assumed that all 'enlightened' males are heterosexual, and that all of them find a particular type of woman attractive – 'skinny, slight creature(s)'. A woman who is not skinny and slight, who does not fit into this limited construction of femininity, is understood as unattractive to heterosexual men and therefore is a risk to feature as a model in men's magazines. 'Fat' women, in Adrian's words, are not attractive, despite the evidence that many societies around the world (including African) have long histories in which plumper women have been constructed as desirable. This preference for particular types of feminine representations again articulates a political position, one which sees western presentations of beauty as superior within a global market.

Other male editors appeared to agree with this view, with *Blink*'s editor concurring with the dominant stance that women are mostly presented for the male gaze. He stated that "there are many reasons for women being represented through men's eyes, *even though* our editorial staff is mostly female" (Siphiwe, my emphasis).

Similarly, Brandon presented the view that women are presented in men's magazines for men's viewing pleasure and that this was not something to be questioned or challenged:

> Women are represented from the perspective of the male gaze. It is a mistake to believe that women and sexuality do not preoccupy men most of the time. This is what men spend most of their time thinking about.

While male editors Brandon, Adrian and Siphiwe appeared to be aware of some of the ways in which women are often presented as sexual objects in men's magazines, the two female editors – Thandi and Sue - rejected this notion of women as sexual objects in women's magazines, reflecting that

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there was at least some awareness of – and discomfort around - the 'politics' of representing women as sexual objects. As Thandi argued:

> Women's magazines, especially within Media24, have always reflected women through women's eyes. There is never any doubt about that and I think more and more women's magazines on the shelf are all about women and reflect us absolutely through our own eyes.

This view was supported by Sue who argued that "women wouldn't buy *magazines*" where they were positioned for men's visual pleasure because "women are not stupid" (my emphasis). My view, however, is that editors often fail to see (or choose not to see) the connections between the dominant visual representation of women in their magazines and the broader heteropatriarchal climate in which we live.

Underlining the argument by Durham and Kellner (2001) that media products provide the scripts from which people forge their sexualities, for instance, were the views of Brandon and Adrian (editor and deputy editor of two of the most popular men's magazines in the country) explaining that their magazines targeted heterosexual customers:

> We are not a homophobic publication *but* we make fun, joking reference to this. There seems to be a male homophobic trend, male humour. We are in line with being seen to encourage tolerance in South Africa but our readers are mostly heterosexual. (my emphasis in italics)

And when homosexuality is not referred to jokingly, it is almost completely ignored, again reinforcing heterosexuality and pointing to the impossibility of ever producing a neutral publication. Adrian narrated, for example, that his magazine "does not feel it has an obligation to cover homosexuality" in its contents:

> Our magazine has a high gay readership but regardless of the story being run, it always has a heterosexual bent. I don't think our magazine would ever run a how-to sex story on homosexual sex. But that's not to say the magazine only ever covers things conventionally associated with straight men. For instance, we have a big grooming, fashion, nutrition and weight loss focus. These would conventionally have been regarded as more the domain of the gay readership. But they are issues now which all men look for advice on. The fact that our magazine has a gay readership means the content mix is working for that readership, but the magazine has never actively sought out that market or addressed it directly.

Again, the above view reflects a political stance where editors, based on their readerships' assumed heterosexualities, deliberately choose no to address their homosexual readers. This is not a neutral stance. Similarly, Thandi reverted back to notions of neutrality and objectivity in her view that women's magazines present a range of sexualities on equal terms. Again, heteronormative discourses - believed to be neutral and objective - are employed, invisibilising rampant homophobia in our society:

> *Our readers* don't ever have to be 'educated' when it comes to these matters – they know their minds. It's therefore not for us to ever be prescriptive. We simply report on all aspects of sexuality, as this is part of normal everyday life in South Africa and in the rest of the world. (my emphasis)

There were challenges to the consensus that magazines had no business messing with the 'political' and these mostly came from Siphiwe, the editor of *Blink* magazine. I discuss these below.

Challenges to the dominant view

Adrian noted that "magazines do have a huge role to play in nation building. They simply have not been creative enough in trying to find ways to explore

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that and write about it." Editor of *Blink*, Siphiwe, however, connected constructions of (black) masculinities to gender violence and highlighted the ways in which men's magazines can act responsibly by playing a role in raising these connections for their readers. He argued that

> Nation-building relates to relationships between women and men. *Consider* the baggage black men have had -abuse, alienation. We have a responsibility to reflect a different kind of man who is not intimidated by women, not an absent father, protects his family – this will go a long way towards nation-building. We have lots of female readers who encourage us. They say that we give insight into their problems with men. We present a general idea of what women go through. We get debates and topics out there and lots of insight will happen outside of the magazine. We also deal with hard issues, such as AIDS, abuse and other harder issues. (my emphasis)

He also linked the notion of magazines' social responsibility to racism:

> Race issues are a huge preoccupation because too often people strive to pretend that race issues do not exist. There is a sense that we should move on – this is dangerous. We need to find ways of dealing with racism. The subtle things need to be dealt with. *Magazines* in our own way need to conscientise readers and society in general. Then we would be doing our part. (my emphasis)

In terms of homosexuality, the dominant assumption that readerships were heterosexual and that the magazines only include content relevant to these readers was challenged by Siphiwe. Even though Siphiwe himself appears to cling to essentialist notions of what a 'real' man is in the quote below, he simultaneously argued that men's magazines have a responsibility to educate readers about homosexuality:

> We most definitely have an obligation to educate readers about homosexuality. A lot of gay men can identify although the tone of the magazine is heterosexual. *It has* a lot to do with male identities – men are grappling with who they are. It's an exciting time for masculinity – before there was a focus on women and women's issues. Rightfully so.

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Masculinity is now largely a reaction to women's emancipation. Men were always the hunters. Men have to adapt. Conversely, all these different types of men have emerged. *Blink has* a political conscience. We represent this kind of spirit. (my emphasis)

Adrian, however, highlighted the difficulties in talking about issues such as racism, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in magazines targeting white readers:

In terms of HIV/AIDS and racism, it's hard to separate oneself from the magazine. *Our magazine* has never considered it – never felt any responsibility to run any story. I think it is changing. Magazines have had to find fresh ways to approach things like HIV. It is no longer about big shocking stories, but about how it is an ordinary everyday part of our lives. (my emphasis)

While the most challenging points of view on presentations of masculinities and media social responsibility came from the black male editor of *Blink* magazine, it is unfortunate that this magazine stopped publishing late in 2006. My interview with Siphiwe Mpye, now ex-editor of *Blink* magazine, suggests that his provocative vision did not produce positive, sustainable results in the world of magazines, which operate on maximizing profits. It seems that challenging readers to think more critically about the social context in which they find themselves doesn't sell magazines. As Adrian pointed out:

Magazines that have tried to put more into their editorial mix often get labelled 'too worthy' or just 'boring', like *Marie Claire* and *Fair Lady*. *You-Drum*, *Huisgenoot* has done a huge amount with their readership in terms of social awareness in the last year. But magazines tread a fine line between being slick and serious, glam and heartfelt, titillating and earnest, self-involved and community minded. The rampant consumer in our readerships and advertising base generally wins the battle.

The collapse of *Blink* magazine demonstrates that the inclusion of features aiming to subvert traditional ideas of (black) masculinities as unemotional,

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absent fathers, highlighting the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and male violence against women and children - content usually only found in women's magazines - did not interest black male readers enough to continue buying the magazine and may have served as a warning to other magazines to tread carefully on such ground. A more thorough analysis of the ways in which *Blink* magazine presents gender, sexuality and race to their readers, is presented in Chapter 5.

In conclusion, an overriding theme in my interviews with the editors of *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady* and *True Love*, was the notion that their magazines are both neutral and objective. Editors appeared to believe that it is not the role of magazines to contribute towards social change - they aim to produce magazines which fit comfortably into and reflect existing societal norms rather than challenging them. Social responsibility and nation-building were believed to be 'political' endeavours understood to be completely separate from the magazines' primary objective to accumulate profits. But there were challenges to this understanding. The now ex-editor of *Blink* magazine saw his magazine as taking a stance on matters related to gender-based violence, racism, HIV/AIDS, masculinities and so on. He thought that magazines could play an important role in transformation. And while the other editors generally felt that their magazines maintained neutrality and objectivity by not overtly challenging the status quo, this stance in itself was not understood to be a political one which helps to maintain and reinforce inequalities around gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS and so on in South Africa.

There were signs of a slightly deeper understanding of the political in discussions around representations of women – presumably linked to almost 50 years of feminist activism and theorizing about representations of women.

But except for *FHM*, the declining readerships (SAARF, 2003-2005[14]) for *Men's Health*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady* reflect that editors are not connecting with their readers as comfortably as they suggest in their interviews. It isn't clear whether an inclusion of articles which challenge the status quo might work better in the existing magazines, if these were offered to readers. But there are real risks involved in producing articles that challenge the status quo as the demise of *Blink* seems to illustrate. Given *Blink*'s experience, alongside the fact that the South African market for magazines is a microcosm of the global capitalist economic system, it seems unlikely that local editors will change their existing strategies to follow *Blink*'s lead. In addition, the sudden inclusion of features about socio-political challenges could result in a further decline of readerships and ultimately a loss in profits. At the same time, declining readerships do suggest that editors need to consider a change in strategy.

According to the editors of the magazines involved in this study, it is not the role of magazines to contribute towards social change. They aim to produce magazines which fit comfortably into and reflect existing societal norms rather than challenge these (often damaging) social norms. In the next chapter, I discuss, in detail, the ways in which stereotypes around gender, race and sexuality are reinscribed rather then confronted in a select group of men's magazines.

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14 South African Advertising and Research Foundation. (2003). Email communication with Tshifhiwa Mulaudzi, Technical Support Executive at SAARF.

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CHAPTER FIVE

HETEROMASCULINE PERFORMANCES: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, RACE AND SEXUALITY IN MEN'S MAGAZINES

> If masculinity is socially constructed, one of the primary elements in that construction is the representations of manhood that we see daily in the mass media. The media portray a wide variety of masculine images, informing us about the positive characteristics toward which we should aspire and warning against the negative facets of personality that we must avoid. Media representations tell us who we are, who we should be, and who we should avoid. (Kimmel, in Craig, 1992: xii)

Viljoen (in press, 2007) has recently written on representations of masculinities in South African men's magazines such as *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink* from an important socio-semiotic point of view. My work in this chapter expands on some of Viljoen's observations of the "masculine ideals" she sees as dominant within the magazines. Unlike Viljoen, however, I consider questions of sexuality and race when I problematise the normative presentation of white (hetero)masculinity and the ways in which black (hetero)masculinity is both 'marked' and marked as 'different' in the magazines. A large part of this chapter also looks at the ways in which femininity is presented in magazines targeting male readers.

Six themes are explored in this chapter – heteromasculinity as normative; predatory heteromasculinities; teaching men how to 'do' (hetero)sex; women as sexual objects; socio-political representations of black masculinity, and Africa, black masculinity and hypersexuality. It is important to note that most models and celebrities in *Men's Health* and *FHM* are white, while most models/celebrities in *Blink* are black, but hardly ever coloured or Indian. I attach images where appropriate.

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1. "The hungry homo" - heteromasculinity as normative in men's magazines

Viljoen (in press, 2007) notes that there is an "absence of homosexual voices" in magazines targeting black men such as *Blink* magazine. But this also seems to be the case for *Men's Health* and *FHM*. Discussions about same-sex relationships are generally non-existent in the magazines I explored. As the deputy editor of *Men's Health* relates, "We ignore our homosexual readership" (interview 20th March 2006). And if homosexual readers are not ignored, they tend to be ridiculed, as noted by the editor of *FHM*: "We are not a homophobic publication *but* we make fun, joking reference to this" (interview 20th February 2006, my emphasis).

Across *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink*, I was able to find one discussion between three heterosexual black men in *Blink* titled 'Sexuality Dissected' (September 2005: 22-24) focusing on intolerance of and discrimination against male homosexuals, and another article in *FHM* titled 'The Gay Cannibal' (February 2005: 54-57) which juxtaposes cannibalism and male homosexuality. I did not find even one article on same-sex desire and/or relationships in my sample of *Men's Health* magazine. In *Blink*, the discussion focuses on three self-identified heterosexual black men's views about male homosexuality. Some of these discussants' views in the September 2005 edition of *Blink* magazine include: "I have to be sensitive to things that gay people might not appreciate me saying or doing" (September 2005: 22-23) and "a bad attitude from the normal people – if I can put it that way – towards gay people brings forth intolerance" (September 2005: 23). Unlike *Men's Health* and *FHM*, which either ignores or ridicules homosexuality, I found that this one discussion in *Blink* at least visibilises homosexuality and provokes discussions about multiple ways of being men.

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In contrast, an article titled 'The Gay Cannibal' in the February 2005 edition of *FHM* feeds into stereotypes about homosexuality and negatively reinforces notions of same-sex desire as 'abnormal' (see figure 7 below). The four-page story details the brutal murder of a man in Germany who willingly offered himself to be eaten alive by the alleged perpetrator, Armin Meiwes (*FHM*, February 2005: 55). The article features photos of the alleged "cannibal", the "hungry homo" (February 2005: 54), the "German man-eater" (2005: 55) and the "bisexual and flesh fantasist" (2005: 54). While this is a story about cannibalism, the magazine turns it into a story about (homo)sex by focusing on the same-sex relationship between Merwes and the victim. The perpetrator's sexuality is described in criminal and psychopathic ways, and cannibalism in this article is presented as a version of homosex. Meiwes is deliberately marked as a homosexual in this article, but his sexuality is grounded in psychopathology.
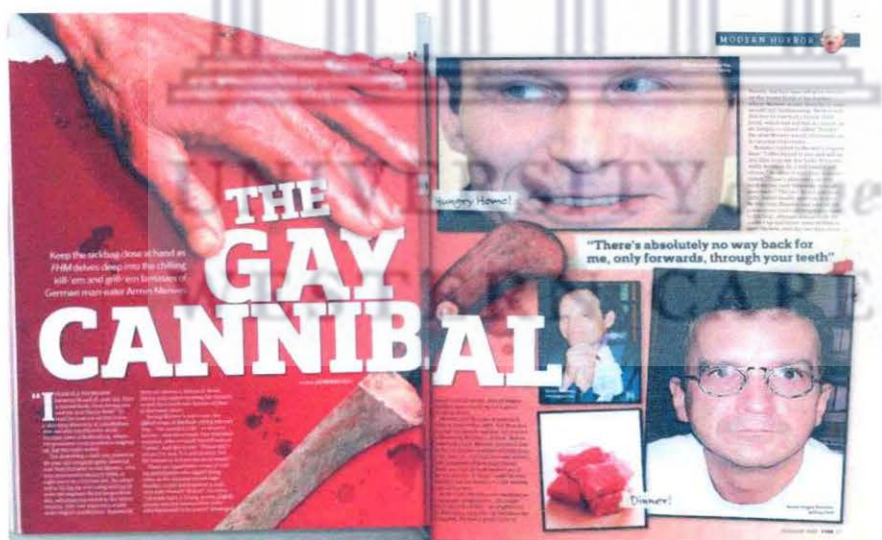

Fig. 7: *FHM*, February 2005: 54-55

Given the invisibility of homosexuality in all the editions of *FHM* I consulted, it is noteworthy that the one mention of same-sex desire is framed within the context of cannibalism, presenting homosexual subjectivities as

psychopathological, abhorrent and abnormal. The absence of such stereotyping and pathologising of heterosexual relationships effectively works to present heteromasculinities as normative within the magazines I examined. It is the magazines' specific versions of heteromasculinity that I go on to explore in the rest of this chapter.

2. "Show me a guy whose number-one fantasy isn't having a threesome": predatory heteromasculinities in men's magazines

The notion of male (hetero)sexuality as predatory and inherently desiring multiple female sex partners has been illustrated and theorised in literature on the topic. Benwell (2003) discusses how the "new lad" discourse in British and American magazines centres on "traditional masculine values of sexism" (2003: 13) where men are presented as inherently craving multiple sex partners. In South Africa, Viljoen (in press, 2007) talks about the presentation of men as unattached where "eternal and thriving bachelorhood" is a privileged trope within magazines such as *FHM, Men's Health* and *Blink*. Studies on HIV/AIDS, sexualities and masculinities in Africa have highlighted the notion of heteromasculinities as desiring of multiple partners (Epstein, 2003; Shefer, 2004). Closer to home, South African studies by Strebel et al, (2006) stress the existence of male-centred sex as common in their interviews with male and female youth on HIV/AIDS and gendered violence.

I use the term 'predatory' to describe the ways in which *FHM* masculinities are presented as insatiable and voracious in their attitudes and behaviours regarding heterosex. My exploration of *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink* suggests that this notion of predatory heteromasculinity is endemic in *FHM* even though there are also elements of this discourse in *Men's Health* and *Blink*. Below I discuss how the magazines present this type of masculinity as normative.

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Three discourses contribute towards constituting heteromasculinity as predatory. The first discourse includes the supposedly inherent male sexual desire of multiple female sex partners (closely linked to men's apparent desire to remain unattached to one woman); the second discourse revolves around men's desire for heterosexual pornography, and the third discourse is built upon men's apparent inability to resist women.

The construction of heterosexual men's desire for multiple female sex partners is most extensive in *FHM* (see front cover of *FHM* in figure 8 below), and is simultaneously linked to a fear of commitment within a monogamous relationship. The magazine claims, for instance, that "the only commitment you're ready for is your pre-order of *Grand Turismo 4*, but you're dying for some real action, like a one-night stand" (*FHM*, March 2005: 57) or in an advertisement in *FHM* where men are presented as desiring to remain unattached to a female partner: "Timothy guys fear nothing: except commitment" (*FHM*, February 2005: 31). Sex with multiple female partners is presented in *FHM* as every man's desire: "show me a guy whose number-one fantasy isn't having a threesome" (*FHM*, February 2005: 52), or "Like me, I'm sure one of your fantasies include sisters" (*FHM*, February 2005: 49). While having sex with two women at the same time is supposedly "every man's dream come true" (*FHM*, November 2004: 59), it is also an opportunity that does not arise often, as the December 2003 edition makes clear: "If you find yourself playing out one of your threesomes fantasies, take it slow and make it last. You may not get another chance" (*FHM*, December 2003: 56). And men are warned to seize the opportunities for multiple partners, as their "chances of pulling 18-year old blonde triplets will steadily decline over time" (*FHM*, December 2004: 48). For *FHM*, it seems clear that the ideal 'man' is by definition a person who wants sex with multiple women, women who, furthermore, are almost always portrayed as white. This imperative for 'real' men to seek multiplicity is presented in *FHM* as normative. And although

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these kinds of representations are widespread only in *FHM*, traces do surface in the other magazines from time to time as well: "You know you're a man when at least once in your life you've fantasized about twins" (*Blink*, May 2005: 66).

Fig. 8: *FHM*, February 2005: front cover

Complementing and reinforcing this construction of heteromasculinity as desirous of multiple partners is the presentation of men as avid pornography consumers, particularly dominant in *FHM*. A 'male dilemma' in *FHM* is, for instance, defined as a girlfriend wanting "to get rid of your porn – you've known her for a year, but all the girls of *All Anal IV* a lot longer" (*FHM*, February 2005: 49). The response to this 'dilemma' is that while "double anal penetration with repeated cumshots might not be quite what turns her on", the aggrieved male needs to "stand firm but tell her you respect her views and won't watch it when she's around. If you back down, what will she demand next? No more strip clubs?" (*FHM*, February 2005: 49).

In *FHM*, men are also consistently presented as being unable to resist women, and again the images presented are primarily those of white women.

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For instance, the magazine claims that "man can endure many tortures, but a naked woman asking for sex is not one of them" (*FHM*, November 2004: 56) or worse still "The view between a naked lady's spread-eagled buttocks is something *FHM* will not easily forget" (January 2005: 35). And in another example, "while mankind remains divided in his loyalties in the long-running legs-vs-breasts debate, we are all united under the banner of booty love" (*FHM*, January 2005: 109). A more direct quote from *FHM* reads: "A lady offering her services as a fellatrix is something that sticks in the mind of every man...we can only pray to the gods of free love that that such women exist in reality" (December 2003: 137).

These kinds of statements emanating from *FHM* help contribute to the construction of a discourse around heteromasculinity that establishes it as insatiable and ravenous. (White)[15] men, according to *FHM*, are programmed to be on the constant look-out for heterosex, desire pornography, desire sex with multiple female (white) partners and are incapable of resisting naked (white) women or (white) women offering sex. Documented in Farvid and Braun's (2006) study as "gratification-focused" and "uncontrollable" (2006: 301), hegemonic heteromasculinity in *FHM* is presented as almost helpless in the face of its own biology, virtually controlled by its own sex drives, as acting on instinct rather than reason.

Yet, while the presentation of heteromasculinity as 'instinctive', animal-like or predatory is particularly rife in *FHM*, other magazines simultaneously (and contradictorarily) present men as ignorant and needing to be taught how to 'do' heterosex I move on to this theme now.

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[15] As I discussed in Chapter One, whiteness is often not named or marked. In the magazines I explored, it is blackness which is often named and marked in particular ways. Where necessary, therefore, I insert 'white' in brackets to indicate its invisibility in magazine text.

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3. "Six secret ways to turn her on": Teaching men how to 'do' (hetero)sex

Stibbe's (2004) work on the American version of *Men's Health* magazine focuses on how particular scientific discourses function to teach men how to perform (hetero)sex but simultaneously create performance anxieties in men. Similarly, Rogers' (2005) study on *FHM* and *Loaded* in the United States discusses the scientisation of sex in magazines, where scientific theories of sex and intimacy function to move the heterosexual male reader from ignorance to knowledge, and hence work towards privileging a very particular version of heteromasculinity. My discussion below reveals that discourses on heterosex continue to be 'scientifically' grounded in *Men's Health* and *Blink*. What Rogers (2005) calls the 'Fordisation of sex' - where sex is understood as something that can be worked on and worked out – appears to be a particularly popular technique used by *Men's Health* and *Blink*. I focus specifically on the ways that the discourses about heterosex in the magazines serve to polarize essentialised roles for women and men, with men being presented as active in the pursuit of heterosex.

Certain aspects of Wendy Hollway's (1984) analysis of the male sex drive discourse, although dated, and not dealing with magazines, still seem to underpin the ways men are presented as ignorant in *Men's Health* and *Blink*, and therefore in need of teaching. Hollway (1984) discusses, for instance, how men are often expected to be aggressive in pursuit of heterosex, and this is supported by my discussion of *FHM* above. Other theorists, while not focusing on magazines, have specifically explored the notion of active masculinities in heterosex. Shefer and Ruiters' (1998) work on constructions of masculinity in heterosex as well as Shefer's later (2004) work on hegemonic discourses on femininity, highlights the hegemony of notions of active masculinity and passive femininity in heterosex and how these

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constructions fuel unequal relations between men and women. In addition, Hillier, Harrison and Bowditch's Australian work (1999) on perceptions among rural youth of sex and relationships highlight how ideas about the penetration of the 'passive' vagina by the 'active' penis underpin the dominant meanings attached to sex. In particular, the idea of intercourse as performance as articulated by Holland, Ramazanoglu and Thomson (1996), where male (hetero)sexuality is "expressed through 'doing' rather than 'being'" (1996: 145), where women are 'done to', is reflected strongly in men's magazines. There are clear links between these findings and the ways that heteromasculinity is presented in men's magazines.

The presentation of men as biologically programmed in men's magazines has been discussed by Stibbe (2004) and Rogers (2005) and appears central to the portrayals of (hetero)masculinity in *Men's Health*. In teaching men as a homogeneous group how to do heterosex, *Men's Health* and *Blink* often reinforce essentialist binaries of masculine/feminine in a variety of ways. "Men" claims the magazine "are biologically programmed to crave shut-eye after sex" (*Men's Health*, October 2003: 78) or in a different article are told that

> Her brain acts very differently to yours. You're keyed in to beauty, shape, fantasy and obsession; on some biological level that she may be unaware of, she's trolling for a mate who will sire healthy children and protect and provide for her and them. And yes, maybe even buy them a family car...Her goals are programmed for the long range, whereas yours are often shockingly short term. (*Men's Health*, February 2005: 56)

Dressed up in scientific authority, the writer, Daniel Amen, draws on biology as evidence that men and women are essentially different, even while this has been widely challenged by many feminist analysts such as Butler (1990) over the years. Claimed by the magazine to be a neuroscientist, Amen (2005) suggests that all women are biologically programmed to desire commitment

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and babies, and that intercourse is simply the means to this end, while all men are biologically designed to desire the short-term pleasure achieved through intercourse. Particular versions of heteromasculinity and heterofemininity are naturalised so that male readers are told that "You've been lit up on testosterone right from the start, even when you were just a multicelled notion in your mother's womb" (*Men's Health*, February 2005: 56).

These types of discourses reinforce ideas of (hetero)masculinity and (hetero)femininity as preordained, unchangeable and biological (and thus not political) and feed into the magazines' setting up of heterosexual men as ignorant of women's needs and desires. The magazine promises male readers positive sexual responses from women on the condition that they follow the how-to-do heterosex step-by-step guides (see figure 9 below). The focus is on sex and sexuality with the magazine endeavouring to explain white female sexuality (also understood in an essentialised way) to its male readers. One such example is the following:

> Talking to her – about work, family, the news – is the greatest aphrodisiac for a woman because it establishes a bond of sharing that she equates with romance. To you, it's conversation. To her, it's intimacy. (*Men's Health*, April 2005: 62)

More advice on how to actively procure sex with women is "Leave love notes around the house – in the fridge, on the bathroom mirror, under her pillow. That much sweetness might make you feel a bit nauseous, but it'll make her feel like a lovesick teenager" (*Men's Health*, November 2003: 65). Heterosexist stereotypes abound in these magazines - *Men's Health* declares that: "Women spend their lives trying to look good for men. So a woman who feels she's sending the right visual signals is pleased with herself...The best time for a 'nice arse!' shout-out is when there's no chance that you'll be having sex anytime soon..." (*Men's Health*, April 2005: 65). In other words,

men need to work and plan in advance in order to get sex. They need to be active in the pursuit of sexual pleasure because women are not. Not only are women portrayed as passive, awaiting an approach from a man, they are also portrayed as relatively uninterested in sex, requiring persuasion and convincing, thus further reinforcing the idea that men are biologically programmed to need (hetero)sex.

Fig. 9: *Men's Health*, December 2004: 165

The magazines spend a lot of time advising men on the appropriate actions to take to release women's apparently absent or repressed sexual desires: "Shower her with attention for an entire weekend and you're guaranteed to bring out her inner wild woman" (*Men's Health*, December 2004: 80) or in *Blink* magazine, "Come on guys, with a little guidance and some effort on your part, you can experience the truth of age old legends. Coax your love to burning desire" (*Blink*, June 2005: 93). Here black men are presented as active in the pursuit of heterosex and black women as passive sexual recipients, waiting to be coaxed to "burning desire" by men. As *Men's Health* puts it, "To persuade her to slip into naughty gear you need to harness that

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trust. Tell her your fantasies, but don't pressurize her to gratify them" (*Men's Health*, October 2003: 77).

Fig. 10: *Blink,* May 2005: 90

Men are often presented as ignorant of women's needs and desires, and apparently unaware of what 'works' to please women in heterosex, as reflected in the November edition of *Blink* magazine: "Want to become the sex god that you know you are? Take special note guys: sex is not just about the good old in and out" (*Blink*, May 2005: 90). In an article titled "Instant heat" in *Men's Health* magazine, men are similarly advised: "You're ready now. She needs to preheat. Here are 50 simple ways to stroke her furnace – and a few ideas for what to do once she's hot" (*Men's Health*, November 2003: 62). Men are also warned to "Be sure not to turn it into a regular chore for your partner! Never give up the quest for the BIG Multiple O" (*Blink*, June 2005: 91, see figure 4 below) and to remember that it is a bad move to "just go straight to the mountain top and stake your claim with your oh so proudly South African flag" (*Blink*, May 2005: 91). Men are further advised to "Never, I repeat never, leave your socks on while you're on the job. It's hard to be aroused by a man when you're busy laughing at him" (*Blink*, November 2004:

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100) or "Make sure you do it right: this means no hard tongue and no drenching her lips in slobber" (*Blink*, November 2004: 101). Finally, men are forewarned that "thrusting your erect penis up and down your girlfriend's back is not going to turn her into a screaming nympho. Indeed, most women do not consider this a valid form of foreplay" (*Blink*, November 2004: 101).

As identified by Stibbe (2004) and shown here, the anxiety-provoking advice emanating from men's magazines place a substantial amount of pressure on men to perform (hetero)sexually. In *Men's Health* and *Blink*, men seem to be burdened with the responsibility of satisfying their passive female partners. These discourses, while presenting men as ignorant (see Rogers, 2005), also function to define women as a passive homogeneous group who are recipients of male sexual desire. In *Men's Health* and *Blink*, men are presented as responsible for women's sexuality as the magazines promise men sexual rewards from women through men's performances of romance, attention and proper etiquette during sexual encounters with women.

Moreover, in my analysis of editors' views in Chapter Four, the notion that magazines do not shape readers' perceptions and that magazines can therefore not 'educate' their readers about gender concerns, for instance, was rife amongst editors. Given this perspective, it seems contradictory that editorial contents in men's magazines find it necessary to 'teach' men how to 'do' (hetero)sex, and to advise them on an activity that supposedly should come naturally. And there is an additional paradox - even though black and white men are told over and over again how to behave in order to procure sex with women and what to do in order to please women, they are also told that their behaviour is biologically programmed. These conflicting discourses seem to jostle alongside each other very comfortably in the pages of *Men's Health*.

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I now move on to the dominant presentations of femininity as particular types of sexual objects, specifically in *FHM* and *Blink*.

4. Fetishised and sexualised: women as sexual objects in men's magazines

The objectification of mostly white women in the media has been widely argued and illustrated in feminist literature and within other disciplines as I discussed in the literature review in Chapter Three. In South Africa, Overland (2002) has found that the dominant portrayal of women on South African television and in magazines is one of passivity and dependency on men. And in the United States, Baker (2005) argues that while white women are mostly portrayed as sexual objects in magazine advertisements targeting white audiences, black women are portrayed as dominant and independent in magazine advertisements targeting black audiences. In other words, and as I discussed in Chapter 3, most of these studies focus on the ways in which the female body is sexually objectified within advertisements and little has been said about presentations of women within men's magazines and outside of the advertisements.

Viljoen (in press, 2007) relates that the presentation of (white) women in *FHM* is not problematic because "the object seems to be good, 'innocent' fun since the women are scantily clad but almost never naked" (2007). I problematise Viljoen's simplistic point of view on presentations of women in *FHM* in my analysis below. I also add a South African dimension to Baker's (2005) argument that it is white women who are sexually objectified in American magazines targeting white audiences, while black women are presented as independent and dominant in American magazines targeting black audiences by considering this argument in the context of South African magazines. In

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the analysis below I consider whether black and white women are portrayed differently in South African men's magazines.

The presentation of women as sexual objects is pervasive in *FHM* and certain sections of *Blink* magazine. Two often complementary discourses contribute to this presentation: women as sexual objects, and women performing for male pleasure. While women are objectified as sex objects in complex ways, the bulk of these presentations portray them as sexually passive.

"Welcoming a grateful gent in her bed and letting him shag her": (hetero)femininity as passive, vulnerable and available

Grover (2002) observes that in the United States media, advertisements consistently use women as tools of sexual pleasure to sell products that have nothing to do with sex. She notes that women

> are shown to be willing and ready; in almost any circumstance life has to offer. More often than not, the body position of women becomes one of a passive and vulnerable person, rather than one who takes an active participation in her sexual affairs. She is shown with her finger in her mouth, looking coyly to the side or down, with the passivity of a little girl. This is not an image of power. (Grover, 2002: no page)

A recent study on gender and advertising in Southern Africa by Morna and Ndlovu (2007) reveals that blatantly sexist gender stereotypes are upheld in advertisements across a number of mediums such as television, billboards, radio and newspapers. Even though the report does not discuss advertising in magazines, it highlights that women are continually portrayed as "as a lure or decoration with no relationship whatsoever to the product advertised" (2007: 17) and are often shown "lying down and 'ready to bare'", as "an object for the visual pleasure of men" (2007: 17). But Grover and Morna do not differentiate on the grounds of race. So while my exploration of South African

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magazines tend to support both Grover's (2002) and Morna and Ndlovu's (2007) observations in terms of how women are presented as sex objects, I discuss how this sexualisation is also racialised. *FHM* reveals that the construct of (primarily white) women as passive and vulnerable is not only pervasive in advertisements, but cuts across various sites within the men's magazine. In *Blink* magazine, the presentation of primarily black women as sexual objects emanates from the 'Sticky Pages' feature, a regular column which presents black women as different kinds of sexual objects at different points in the magazine. While there are similarities between the images of women in *FHM* and *Blink*'s 'Sticky Pages', there are also important differences in the text accompanying these images.

Women across racial constructs in *FHM* and *Blink* are often presented in passive and vulnerable positions - lounging, standing or sitting - where attention is drawn to particular parts of their bodies which our society deems sexual - buttocks, breasts, legs and mouth - and where they are presented as 'available' to the male reader. When women's bodies appear in imagery, they have more flesh exposed than male bodies, which seldom, if ever, even appear semi-naked either in *FHM* or *Blink*.

In *FHM*, sexually suggestive images of (mostly white) women are often accompanied by stereotypical statements foregrounding their passivity and availability. Accompanying a huge image of a white woman sitting on the ground, wearing nothing else but a bra, is text which epitomizes the overall sexist tone used in *FHM*: "Bathing, going for a sauna, tanning, having a doctor's check-up, welcoming a grateful gent in her bed and letting him shag her...there are a few things a beautiful woman can do while stark naked. But the one *FHM* is professionally most grateful for is 'posing'" (*FHM*, March 2005: 101). This statement depicts white women's passivity and lack of agency – notions of "letting him shag her" helps construct men as active and

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women as passive in heterosex. This is similar to the text accompanying an image of a white woman in a bathing suit leaning against a pillar, her back to the camera but her head turned towards it: "I got a smack on the bottom quite regularly, from numerous people, but in a playful way. Usually from my man, or my strange family members" (*FHM*, February 2005: 63), or as one model lying on her stomach, wearing only panties, describes her "best assets" in "three words: lips, legs and boobs" and states that it's her "dream to be arrested for indecent exposure" (*FHM*, March 2005: 104 and 106, see figure 5 below).

Another image in *FHM* foregrounding white women's availability is complemented by the text "Do you know anyone? I'm still single" (November 2004: 27, see figure 6 below). These images and statements depict white women as passive, vulnerable and available sexual objects whose primary roles are to be penetrated ('shagged') and "smacked on the bottom" by men.

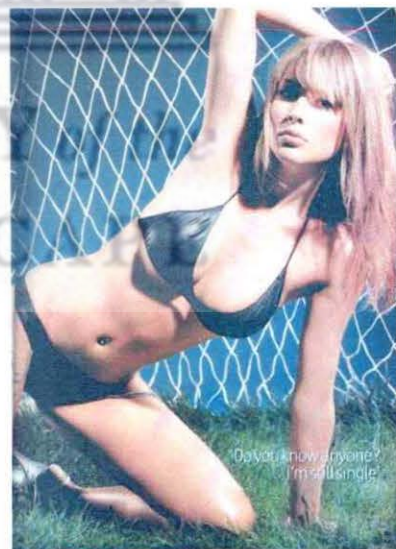Fig. 11: *FHM*, March 2005: 106   Fig. 12: *FHM*, November 2004: 27

On the other hand, two conflicting presentations of black women emanate from *Blink*'s 'Sticky Pages'. The first is similar to that of *FHM*'s portrayal of

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white women as sexual objects, which I discuss below. The second presentation, which I speak about later in this section, is the dual presentation of black women as sexually objects and career-oriented.

In *Blink* magazine's 'Sticky Pages' feature, the male voice accompanying the images of largely black women and assumed to be representative of the typical *Blink* male reader, usually fragments and fetishises black women's physical bodies in the following ways: "That skinny black girl with the sultry lips has been mesmerizing men ever since" (*Blink*, May 2005: 89), or "with skin like that, a man is almost convinced she can slip anything down on it" (*Blink*, May 2005: 89, see figure 13 below).

Fig. 13: *Blink*, July 2005: 89

And if not lips and skin, other parts of the female body such as "adorable dimples and cleavage" (*Blink*, August 2005: 23), "lips, legs, glutes and all" (*Blink*, November 2004: 149) or "looks and physical form", with "velvety lips you will continue to feel long after you have caressed them" (*Blink*, September, 2005: 95) are fetishised for the heterosexual male reader's pleasure. It might be worth noting here that the black women fetishised often have long straight hair, an issue I focus on in the following chapter.

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In *Blink* magazine, however, there is also another kind of presentation of black women as both sex objects and career-oriented, where women speak with a voice that simultaneously centralises their physical bodies, while also acknowledging that they are more than the sum of their body parts. An example is where a part-time model is also identified as a fifth year medical student. On the one hand, stereotypical gender roles are reinforced by presenting an image of Lungile Mthembu that focuses on her body, and by recording that her ambition to be a doctor is because she wants to help people: "the satisfaction I get from that is worth more than anything else" (May 2005: 21). At the same time, however, becoming a doctor is evidence of her agency. Another example is the portrayal of the body of ballet and modern dancer, Kitty Phetla. Kitty not only challenges the racist stereotype that ballet is a 'white' pursuit but also disputes stereotypes of women's passivity when she relates that "mental preparation is very important in dance. When you are on stage you're in another world and you have to transport yourself into a different mindset" (September 2005: 27).

Another image of a 'beautiful' woman is complemented by text suggesting that women are more than their bodies and faces: Mmabatho Monthso states that "I don't have a drop of blood in me that seeks approval or is overtly loud or seeks attention. I express myself through other means, like drawing or making a dress" (November 2004: 23). But just in case Mmabatho expresses herself as too independent for the *Blink* male readers, the magazine includes a sexualised image with the accompanying text alluding to the actress' (hetero)sexuality: "I need to look at a man and think, Yum, good choice! Someone with a brain, opinion, masculine, I don't really want to see his feminine side" (*Blink*, November 2004: 22, see figure 14 below). In the June 2005 edition of *Blink*, Kenyan model, Adhiambo Mula, is photographed in a bathing suit and recorded as stating that "Right now, I'm doing communication science through UNISA and want to get into advertising,

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television or media, something not totally removed from what I'm doing now" (June, 2005: 24). Again, just in case the reader thinks Adhiambo appears too goal-oriented, she is photographed in a highly (hetero)sexualised way, foregrounding her body (see figure 15 below). On the one hand, black women are presented as independent, assertive, articulate and goal oriented. On the other hand, images complementing the text continue to emphasize women's (hetero)sexualities in ways that have little to do with their career aspirations.
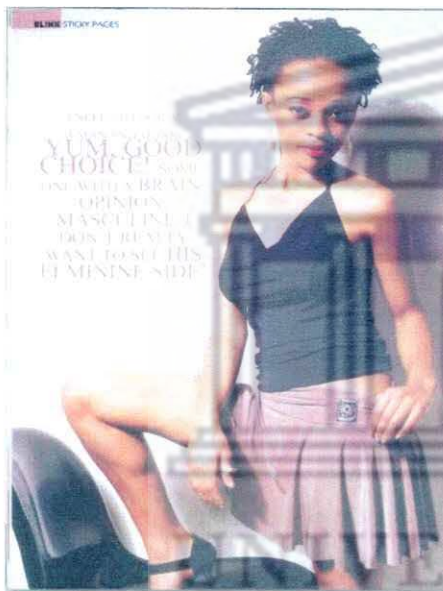

Fig. 14: *Blink*, November 2004: 22   Fig. 15: *Blink*, June 2005: 24

Text suggesting that women are agents tends to be overwhelmed by a combination of images of women's sexualised bodies designed to appeal to heterosexual male readers, alongside language meant to be titillating, and repeatedly articulates the message that women do not really control their sexualities, their bodies or even their minds. In my view, this depiction of women in men's magazines is far from "innocent fun" as Viljoen (in press, 2007) suggests in her analysis of *FHM*. Even when black and white women are presented as persons with some agency in *Blink*'s 'Sticky Pages', their bodies are still (hetero)sexualised. This echoes Levy's (2005) discussion of

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black and white female Olympic athletes in the United States posing naked or semi-naked in *Playboy* and *FHM*. High-jumper Amy Acuff and breaststroke world record-holder Amanda Beard, for instance, could be found in these men's magazines "hips thrust skyward" (2005: 19) and "legs spread and lips parted" (2005: 19) in ways which erased their athletic skills. Overall, these images and texts combine to produce discourses that reflect the ways in which women's physical bodies operate as sites of oppression within a limiting heteropatriachal system where they seem to have little agency in presenting themselves differently. But this is not the only set of representations of women in the magazines. The next section looks at the ways women are depicted as performers in search of male attention in men's magazines.

"I've got bruises all the way up and down my legs from the guys grabbing me": performing the (hetero)sexualised female body for male attention

While not dealing directly with portrayals of women in magazines, Wesely (2002) has argued that in phallocentric societies, women's deprivation of power and control in political, social and economic realms is directly linked to their value as commodified sexual objects. Often

> women then engage the market in the only way they are allowed access in a phallocentric culture: by substituting possession of phallic power with their sexualised bodies, their femininity, as an item of exchange. (Wesely, 2002: 1183)

In 2005, Levy wrote about the 'pornification' of women in popular culture in the United States, where the rise of 'raunch' is mistakenly perceived as 'post-feminist' sexual liberation. Levy talks about the ways in which 'women's empowerment' translates into overt and public sexual performances across a

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wide spectrum of media including television, sport and pop music. Exhibitionist performances and seeking to "provoke lust", Levy (2005) relates, is "exclusively women's work" (2005: 33), where "hotness requires projecting a kind of eagerness, offering a promise that any attention you receive for your physicality is welcome" (Levy, 2005: 33).

Similar heterofeminine exhibitionism can be seen in the South African versions of *FHM* where white women's physical bodies function as tools for men's attention: women's presence in the magazine is mostly through their bodies. Accompanying an image where a white woman is sitting cross-legged in a bikini staring at the reader is the text: "Just about anyone can lick their toes – it's not hard" (*FHM*, February 2005: 62) or in image and text where white women perform in a bikini competition for a predominantly male audience: "It's getting harder and harder to beat these college girls. Plus, I've got bruises all the way up and down my legs from the guys grabbing me" (January 2005: 90). While licking one's toes might be considered a talent in a toe-licking competition, in the context of *FHM*, a woman posing in panties and covering her breasts in a way which might be considered titillating to some, presents white women as infantile and vulnerable, and simultaneously available in offering her body to the male reader.

This type of vulnerability is further entrenched in the example above where a white woman talks about being badly bruised by men's physical abuse during a bikini competition in a way that legitimises the abuse. The notion of competitiveness between white women ("harder to beat these college girls") and the abuse evident in "bruises...from the guys grabbing her" represents white women as victims with agency primarily focused on the pursuit of male attention, and sets up white women as competing for male attention within a heterosexual matrix. Another example includes images of semi-naked white women dancing with each other for male attention (see figure 16 below).

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These heterofeminine performances echo Levy's (2005) argument that feminist ideas of women's liberation and empowerment have been perverted in ways where women's "lusty, busty" exhibitionism (2005: 200) is regarded as normative and indicative of women's liberation. As Levy sums up:

> In their performances, which is the only capacity in which we see these women we so fetishise, they don't even speak. As far as we know, they have no ideas, no feelings, no political beliefs, no relationships, no past, no future, no *humanity*. (Levy, 2005: 196, emphasis in original)

Fig. 16: *FHM*, January 2005: 35

FHM is different from to *Blink* and *Men's Health* in its presentation of white women performing sexually with other women for male titillation (see figure 17 below), echoing depictions of lesbian sex in traditional heterosexual pornography, meant to titillate male viewers. The portrayal of lesbian sex in *FHM* recalls Farvid and Braun's (2006) description of female sexuality as

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existent only in relation to men, where 'real' sex is defined as penetration and the male climax. In this context, lesbian desire and practice is located within the logic of heteronormativity where "women are encouraged to partake in sexual activities that men (supposedly) desire" (2006: 307). These depictions do not centralise women's pleasure outside the heteropatriachal male gaze. The images and text in *FHM* clearly reflect the traditional pornographic style of these features where as Dines, Jensen and Russo (1998) argue, women's sexualities are controlled by men within a heteronormative system where gender inequalities are endemic. On the surface, these images might appear to reflect women pleasing themselves, but the pictures and text make it very clear that the performance is for men's entertainment.

One example is an image of two women (one black woman and another who appears to be white) drawing on notions of sadomasochism (see figure 18 below) where the accompanying text reads "He ravishes me on his vibrating tractor as the heavens open (*FHM*, January 2005: 62). Referring to these performances as 'lesbian' behaviour (February 2005: 49), text in FHM includes "You can't beat a bit of feminism. These girls agree. Behold, the wonder of kissing women" (December, 2004: 32, see figure 17). Here the magazine defines 'feminism' as two women performing sexually without a man, even though the purpose of these images is to titillate heterosexual men. *FHM* even calls on its readers to submit photographs of women engaged in sexual acts with other women: "Mutual feminine tongueplay is catching on...keep sending your pics..." (March 2005: 37). Other examples of how this behaviour in white women is encouraged for male readers' entertainment include "Female tongues slathering over each other: encouraged" (February 2005: 30) and women themselves, according to *FHM*, desire other women to some extent. But just in case anyone might think that women could really prefer women, the January 2005 edition emphasises that a woman being with another woman" doesn't make you a lesbian, it's just for

fun…yeah, I need a man. There's gotta be a man in there!" (January 2005: 104). This recalls Holland, Ramazanoglu and Thomson's (1996) argument that heterosex *is* masculinity. Lesbian sex is set up as "just for fun", for men's pleasure, an activity secondary to 'real' heterosex where men are the penetrators. In this way, the possibility of women loving women is erased and instead distorted so that it fits very comfortably within a heteropatriarchal framework where men are the definers of women's sexualities. This type of discourse also feeds into ideas that lesbians can 'change' their desires if they so choose, again reinforcing the normative construction of heterosex (Sanger and Clowes, 2006).

Fig. 17: *FHM*, December 2004: 32   Fig. 18: *FHM*, January 2005: 62

The *Blink* Woman

There are, however, presentations of women which challenge the construction of women as sex objects. These images tend not to sexualise women's bodies at all and appear in a regular column called '*Blink* Woman',

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consisting of interviews with black women who have excelled in their careers. This feature appears to be an attempt at celebrating black women's achievements through profiling their professional working experiences, although still paying lip service to gendered roles which define motherhood and nurturing as women's work. The images of these women differ from the sexually objectifying presentations of women discussed above. Instead, these '*Blink* Women' are fully-clothed and little or no attention is drawn to particular parts of their bodies deemed sexual. One example is the profile article of Marang Setshwaelo, co-director of an events, production and public relations company called 'Dreamcatcher Multimedia' (see figure 19). She states "when you're young, black and female, you do have a lot to prove...Being the underdog is a mixed blessing – the payoff is that when you prove yourself, the victory is that much sweeter" (*Blink*, June 2005: 79).

In another example, journalist and news reader Nikiwe Bikitsha, talks about her life experiences. The interview covers Nikiwe's career: "At the moment, professionally, I'm doing everything I've ever wanted to do" (*Blink*, August 2005: 81), and parenting of specifically boy children: "My biggest challenge in life as the mother of a boy is to raise a man who upholds family values and treats women with respect, so that he becomes a good, sensitive responsible man" (August 2005: 81). A similar interview appears in the July 2005 edition of *Blink* with Judi Nwokedi, the only female director at 'Motorola Southern Africa'. Jodi talks about age: "At 46 I have not had a bad day in my life, it is about choice" (July 2005: 79), about children: "My defining moment was giving birth at 41, a miracle baby!" (July 2005: 79) and about work: "I am driving this at Motorola as well. How do you bridge the digital divide ...have a public safety system that does exactly this – connecting the unconnected" (July 2005: 79). Another '*Blink* Woman' interview is featured in the May 2005 edition with Managing Director of 'Unplugged Communications Architects', Thandi Davids. She talks about BEE, race and gender: "What I've brought

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into the merger is another way of thinking, in a young, black and female kind of way" (May 2005: 77), transformation and racial redress: "Black people have begun the fight, we have seen black people who are in positions and are willing to put themselves out there, willing to fight" (May 2005: 77), and gender stereotypes: "There are times when as a woman, you have to endure being called difficult, just because you have voiced an opinion. It is important that you make yourself heard and not retreat when you have made that stance" (May 2005: 77). On the one hand, these are role models for potential women readers suggesting that women can hold down professional jobs/careers. At the same time, however, they reinforce the idea that children are women's work and not men's. Other examples of *'Blink* Woman' interviews can be found in every issue of the magazine (November 2004; April 2005; June 2005; September 2005).

The *'Blink* Woman' feature differs from the dominant presentations of women as sex objects in *FHM* and the 'Sticky Pages' component of *Blink* magazine. The *'Blink* Woman' is presented as a human being who is complex, not a one-dimensional sexual object performing for men. These black women articulate the challenges they experience as racialised and gendered subjects in South Africa, as professionals in the public sphere and as mothers in the private sphere. In this way, black male readers are at least offered a more realistic version of femininity, where women articulate a different kind of voice and subjectivity, which is in marked contrast to the ways in which *FHM* and *Blink*'s 'Sticky Pages' overwhelmingly depict women. The presentation of black women outside the normative heteropatriarchal presentations of women as sexual objects, reflect women as directed, assertive and independent subjects. In terms of *Blink* magazine at least, my findings echo those of Baker's (2005) that black women in American magazines targeting black readers are often presented as independent and assertive. But at the same time, the reader can turn a few pages and in *Blink*'s 'Sticky Pages' find

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contrasting images, images which much more closely resemble those sexually objectifying images of white women in *FHM*.

Fig. 19: *Blink*, June 2005: 78

The last section in this chapter discusses the differences between racialised constructions of masculinities in *FHM*, *Men's Health* and *Blink*. I focus particularly on the ways black masculinity is represented as politically and socially responsible, and black men as agents of the communities they hail from. Finally, I discuss how black men are conflated with Africa, in ways which construct black masculinity as hypersexual.

5. Socio-political representations of black masculinities

> *Men's Health, FHM* and *GQ*, for instance, all three boast that roughly a third of their readers are black, yet, true to the homogenizing influence of the men's lifestyle magazine format, not one of these titles address their readers as multiracial, include features on multiculturalism or even a representative sample of 'black' subjects and models. (Viljoen, in press, 2007)

Viljoen points out how white masculinities in the world of *Men's Health* and *FHM* are represented as normative, "a pre-1994 picture of masculinity" (in press, 2007). Viljoen does not however explore the ways in which blackness, in contrast, operates as marked and visible in *Blink* magazine, also part of her sample. Except for the views of Frankenburg (1993), Chambers (1997), Ferber (1998), Nakayama and Krizek (1999), Moreton-Robinson (2000) and Steyn (2001) discussed in Chapter One, which situate whiteness as a racialised subjectivity outside of magazines, there is a paucity of literature on the ways in which whiteness is represented as unmarked, while blackness is often marked and made visible in magazines. In this section of my analysis, I discuss the ways that black (hetero)masculinities are represented as visible and marked in *Blink* magazine, while white (hetero)masculinities are not. The discussion which follows attempts to explore how the marking of black masculinities forms part of rendering black men as politically and socially obligated in the context of men's magazines.

Viljoen (in press, 2007) suggests that "black male identity is differentiated from white male identity within *Blink* through an emphasis on political responsibility that underscores the Afro-centric nature of the magazine" (in press, 2007). Black masculinities in *Blink* are often linked to discourses on socio-political transformation in historically white arenas in South Africa. Sport is one such example, with *Blink* asserting in the May 2005 edition that "Black men can't swim or paddle they say. Not only are they wrong...there's a sea of

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black faces entering the sport" (May 2005: 128). Here racism in sport is highlighted and critiqued. A similar example in the November 2004 edition of *Blink* critiques the attitudes of some white South Africans in sport: "Consistently – when it suits white people in sport, they will scream 'politics has no role in sport!' To hell with that naïve thought process. The two are intertwined" (November 2004: 91). But sport is also connected to continual challenges that black people face in historically white arenas in the following statement by mountain climber, Ntombizanele Vithi: "Mountain climbing has never been in our (black people's) vocabulary and hopefully I have changed that. In many ways the mountain is also symbolic of the challenges that African people face every day" (August 2005: 31).

As can be seen in the examples above, in *Blink* magazine, blackness is named as a significant racialised subjectivity in the lives of black men. In many ways, this demonstrates the historical marginalisation of black men and parallels the changing representations of white women in *Fair Lady* magazine emerging out of the struggles of the women's movement. Clowes (1994) notes, for instance, how *Fair Lady* – the first South African magazine produced by white women for white women – in the 1960s and 1970s, included a number of features about the first (white) woman truck driver, the first (white) female lawyer, for example. While white femininity was not named and marked in *Fair Lady* magazine, in the same ways that whiteness is not named and marked in *Men's Health* and *FHM*, black masculinities are named and marked in *Blink*. This demonstrates racial and gender hegemonies where whiteness remains hegemonic and blackness remains marginalised.

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"Achievements in my life are determined by my community, the people I serve": black masculinities as community agents

"The key to being a man" *Blink* states, is to "open your mind *and* think with your heart" (April 2005: 136-137, my emphasis, see figure 20 below). Black men in *Blink* magazine are often presented as community agents, as fulfilling nurturing and caring roles – roles more often associated with women across racial constructs in magazines. Profile articles on South African businessmen such as Lazarus Serobe, the first black CEO of a major record label in the world, tend to downplay motivations of individual gain and often link notions of black men's success to community obligations. "Whatever I do is not done to achieve. Achievements in my life are determined by my community, the people I serve" (*Blink*, July, 2005: 85). Another profile article with Hlomla Dandala in the April 2005 edition of *Blink* describes Dandala's multiple roles as an "actor, director, businessman *and* father" (2005: 26, my emphasis). Again, being a black man is linked to rural community development: "A dream that has absorbed him over the past few years is the delivery of cinema to where the people are: in rural areas and the townships" (2005: 27).
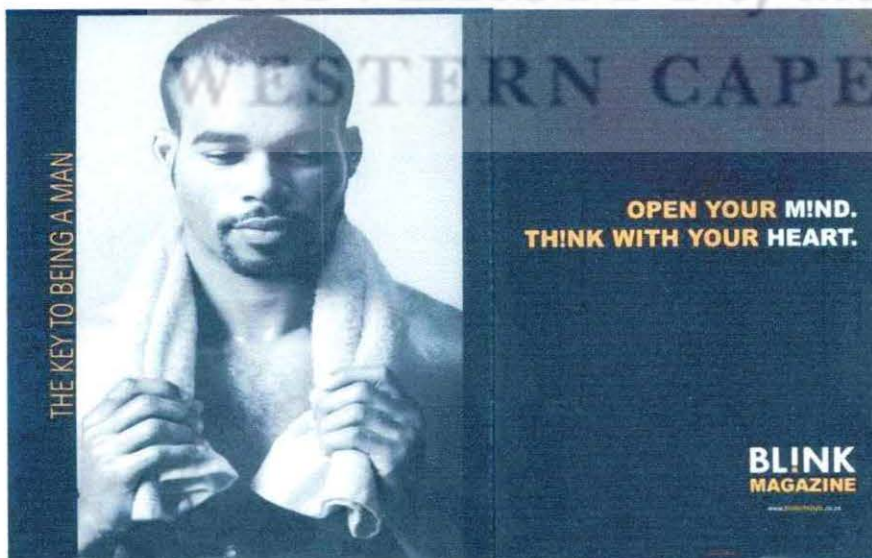

Fig. 20: *Blink*, April 2005: 136-137

The September edition of *Blink* features a similar profile article on one of South Africa's leading thinkers on brand theory and application, Thebe Ikalafeng (September 2005: 32). Linking BEE to the development of black communities, he states:

> People get upset when the Cyrils get wealthy, saying the money only circulates among the same people. Money circulating among a few hands is not new, it happened when the country was in white hands. We need them (BEE barons), we need our own Warren Buffets so that youngsters can look at their own black icons and get inspired. The only tragedy is when they don't use their new economic influence to empower other blacks. (September 2005: 34)

Another example of how black masculinities are presented in *Blink* as community agents is articulated in the July 2005 edition of the magazine. Here Karl Socikwa, the CEO of 'Transtel' is described as "intrigued by the way in which technology can change lives, especially those of the poor, here and on the continent. It is the impact that IT has on people's lives that feeds the passion for his job" (July 2005: 29). Discourses on blackness in the magazines are also etched within African knowledge production, centralising the telling of African stories by Africans, and challenging the hegemony of European standards: "We need our own cinema, our own stories, to preserve our own culture. We need to leave an ideological and political stamp on our times" (Khalo Matabane in *Blink*, August 2005: 86).

But while black masculinities are often presented as community agents, other members of the black elite are criticised for their lack of responsibility in community building and cultural heritage. In the words of South African filmmaker Khalo Matabane,

> There is something fundamentally wrong with the fact that none of the black elite who were approached to invest in this movie contributed even a thousand rand. It seems the black elite do not want the African

experience; they do not want to conserve stories or discourse in a time when people like Bush, Blair and Chirac have their own agendas. (*Blink*, August 2005: 87)

The examples above reflect that, for *Blink,* it was important to acknowledge and even foreground versions of black masculinity in which men are socially engaged and responsible agents. In contrast, white men in *Men's Health* and *FHM* are not linked to obligations around community building, nurturing and nation building in the same kinds of ways. The lack of articles on socially relevant issues such as poverty or male violence against women and children in *FHM* and *Men's Health,* attests to this. Apparently whiteness, at least as presented in these magazines, can separate itself from these obligations.

Black masculinities as socially responsible

Blink magazine also presents men as interested in social challenges through educational articles which highlight and critique violence against women and children. In the August 2005 edition of *Blink* magazine, two educational articles highlight male violence against women as a serious social problem where men are implicated. One article, written by a black man, Nhlanhla Hlongwane is titled 'Loving abused women' (August 2005: 40-42). Hlongwane discusses his experiences with women in his life who had been survivors of multiple rapes as children. He speaks of how he has listened to their struggles in overcoming these ordeals, and the guilt he felt as a man:

> I was confused and angry to learn that so many of the women who I had come to know, and love, had been raped as children, and as young women. I became introduced to the world of incest, abuse and sexual offences. I felt guilty for being male, I felt responsible. I wished I could have been there for all of them to prevent it all from happening. I took it all on, I felt hopeless. I felt ashamed. (August 2005: 41)

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Another example of an article dealing with male violence against women (August, 2005: 82-84), written by Lisa-Anne Julien, focuses on intimate femicide and deals with issues of socio-economic conditions without using it as a context to rationalise male violence against women. The article highlights the social construction of masculinities, the use of guns as a perceived extension of masculinity and the socialisation of black boys into violent men. Paraphrasing Shanaaz Mathews of the Medical Research Council, Julien (2005) writes:

> Men, for the most part, have been socialised to be in control, to conquer and with the influence of cultural practices, to be the providing head of the house no matter what. One can even argue that boys are socialised to be aggressive and violent and taught that these qualities are in keeping with 'manhood'. (August 2005: 84)

In a way that is rare within my sample of *Men's Health* and *FHM*, the above articles firstly acknowledge gender-based violence in which men are perpetrators, and secondly, help to construct black men as sensitive to and proactive against the male abuse of women. In contrast, the absence of these kinds of articles in *FHM* and *Men's Health* works to hide white men's responsibility for gender based violence, thus limiting the possibilities of white men's engagement in challenging this aspect of women's oppression. While *Blink* clearly attempts to destabilise stereotypical constructions of black men, there are, however, instances where the magazine reflects colonial discourses on black male sexuality. I discuss one such instance below.

6. Africa, black masculinity, and hypersexuality

As I discuss in more detail in Chapter Six, Osha (2004) reflects on the hypersexualisation of the black subject in the colonial imagination. He notes how blackness is associated with ideas of abundance, "excess, unrestrained carnality, irrationality and violence" (2004: 92). One way in which this

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functions in *Blink* magazine is through the conflation of black men with ideas of African sexuality, as in figure 21 below. Featured in the April 2005 edition of *Blink*, the advertisement connects notions of the African continent to black masculinity and sexuality. Text such as "packed with Taurine and 5 vitamins" and "powerful African energy" (April 2005: 54) accompanies an image of a semi-naked, muscular black man who appears to be shouting, in a strained, energetic, and almost aggressive way. This image, combined with the text "there is no energy, like African energy" (April 2005: 54), implies that black masculinity, like Africa, is marked as different from an unnamed norm; it is abundant, plentiful and excessive. Black masculinity is hypersexualised in ways paralleling the excessiveness of Africa in the colonial imagination. This kind of hypersexual masculine association with Africa is also different from the type of linkages made between black hyperheterosexual femininity and Africa in women's magazines. While black male hypersexuality is associated with "powerful African energy", aggressive in its depiction, black female hypersexuality, however, is reflected as subdued, calmer, and aligned with the African landscape. I discuss this difference in Chapter Six.
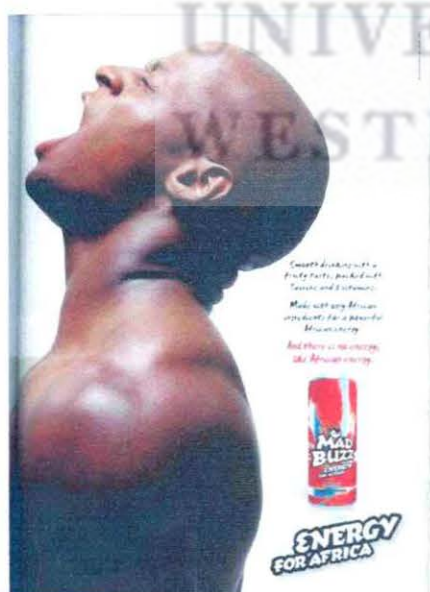

Fig. 21: *Blink,* April 2005: 54

Despite the instances where black masculinity is depicted as hypersexual, black masculinities in *Blink* magazine are mostly conflated with political and social responsibility that presents these men as inseparable from the damaging political system of the past, as well as the current socio-political climate in South Africa. Simultaneously, black men are portrayed as 'damaged' products of South African history, in ways that white men are not in *Men's Health* and *FHM*. White masculinities are not labelled and named, contributing to its presentation as normative, or as Viljoen puts it (in press, 2007), as "globalised, cosmopolitan, non-racialised (but white)" (Viljoen, in press, 2007). In contrast, the naming and marking of black masculinities in *Blink* is linked to the rendering of black men as politically and socially obligated in ways that separate white men from the same kinds of obligations.

While all three magazines seem to suggest that men need to be changed in some way, it is the ways in which men should change that seem to be strikingly different. The message emanating from the magazines over and over again is that apartheid did not damage white men at all, and the only change they need to make is learning how to 'do' (hetero)sex effectively. Black men, on the other hand, were seriously damaged by apartheid and therefore need to heal/ be healed. While commitment to the communities from which they hail is a positive presentation of black masculinities, they also seem to mark damage on the black skin in ways that reinforce whiteness as normative and undamaged, and thus, separate white masculinities from the social and political.

This chapter has attempted to discuss the ways in which masculinities are both racialised and heterosexualised in three men's magazines – *Men's Health*, *FHM* and *Blink*. Heteromasculinity is presented as normative in the ways that homosexuality is ridiculed or invisibilised. Men are presented as sexually predatory in ways portraying heteromasculinity as pre-ordained.

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Black masculinity is, at points, represented as hypersexual in its conflation with Africa. Finally, women across racial constructs are mostly fetishised and (hetero)sexualised in ways reflecting the continual hegemony of patriarchy and the subjugation of women across racial constructs. Some of these discourses, however, are also contradictory so that while heteromasculinity is naturalised and biologised, men are also taught how to 'do' heterosex. While this contradictoriness suggests that there is at least some space to represent different ways of being men, the magazines appear to be comfortable with positioning men in more traditional ways.

I continue my analysis of magazines, this time exploring the contents of magazines targeting women, by looking at the ways gender, race and sexuality are presented in *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*. I specifically explore how femininities are hyper(hetero)sexualised in the pages of the magazines, where heterosexual desirability is presented as central to female subjectivity.

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CHAPTER SIX

HYPER(HETERO)SEXUAL DESIRABILITY: PERFORMING THE RACIALISED FEMINISED BODY IN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

As long ago as 1975, Laura Mulvey wrote in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* that

> in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey, 1975:11)

Reddy notes that "the subordination of women resonates transhistorically" (2004: 3). Thus even in today's globalizing heteropatriachal capitalist world, Mulvey's (1975) famous conception of the (heterosexual) male gaze remains relevant for contemporary analyses, not only of cinematic representations, but multiple media where binaries of power continue to exist in representation and where femininities are commodified for profit. My analysis, in this chapter, continues to draw on the insights offered by feminist theorising. I look at the ways in which contemporary South African women's magazines such as *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* hyper(hetero)sexualise racialised femininities in ways where the physical female body is consistently located as in need of 'fixing' and perfecting in order to be desirable to an unnamed and unmarked, but clearly masculine audience.

As I state in the literature review in Chapter Three, it is important to note that almost all international literature on women in the media has been

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documented by white feminists, writing about representations of unmarked white femininities. There are some exceptions to media analyses that normalise whiteness in the work of Helké (2002), Baker (2005) Patton (2006) Tate (2007) and others. But mostly, the dominant body of work tends to help normalise whiteness – and the notion of white femininities as the ideal representation of beauty - by rarely exploring the racialised and heterosexualised construction of black femininities. In this chapter, I attempt to add to this existing body of work by, first, insisting theoretically that any analysis has to consider the intersectionality of gender, race and sexuality as I explain in Chapter One and discuss in Chapter Three. Secondly, I explore *both* racialised and heterosexualised femininities and masculinities in contemporary South African women's magazines as intersecting identities. Thirdly, I compare and contrast representations of gender, race and sexuality across magazines targeting white readers such as *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, and magazines targeting black readers through an analysis of *True Love* – a magazine which has not been explored before. Finally, I look at women's magazines as a whole, instead of particular sites such as advertising or advice texts in isolation, as some insightful South African studies (see Cooke, 1991; Ahmad, 1995; Wilbrahim, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c) which I discuss in Chapter Three have done. I hope to add more dimensions to these analyses by exploring the intersecting representations of gender, race and sexuality in women's magazines as whole entities.

Joke Hermes stated as far back as 1995 that internationally, women's magazines are "overwhelmingly heterosexual in orientation and predominantly white in colour" (1995: 9). In South Africa, Erasmus (2000) has noted that a history of "differential racialisation has meant that "whiteness and 'degrees of whiteness' have been regarded as the yardstick of beauty, morality, and social status" (2000: 381). More recently, writing about African American women and notions of beauty, body image and hair, Patton (2006)

has argued that "in the United States, and in many countries that are influenced by the United States (largely through mediated forms), the current standard of beauty is a White, young, slim, tall, and upper class woman" (2006: 30). Similarly, and very recently, Shirley Tate (2007) notes how the "influence of whiteness as a yardstick for beauty has a history which extends back to slavery" (Tate, 2007: 301).

In South African magazines – particularly within advertising content - such as *Fair Lady*, *True Love* and *Femina*, there are differences in the racial profile of models in the magazines so that while *Fair Lady* and *Femina* use mostly white models or celebrities from the west, *True Love* uses mostly black[16] local models and celebrities. Helké pointed out in 2002 that this is also the case for magazines in the United Kingdom targeting European black and white female readers. Despite the racial profile of models, *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* present ideal heterofemininities in very particular and limiting ways: female models are slim, with long, straight or straightened hair. In *True Love*, female models seem to be a fairer shade of black, i.e. as documented by Mama (1995), Patton (2006) and Tate (2007), who note that lighter-skinned black women are often presented as preferred presentations of feminine beauty. Across the magazines, there are exceptions where darker-skinned, darker-haired and sometimes physically bigger models are featured, but this is the exception rather than the norm. As mentioned earlier, and as I will show in the first part of this chapter, it is advertising content that plays a primary and powerful role in locating women as consumers through defining particular versions of heterofemininities as ideal. And despite the emerging black middle-class in South Africa, black people are rarely presented in the contents of magazines targeting white female readers such as *Fair Lady* and *Femina*.

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[16] See my explanation of the use of these racial categories in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

I begin the discussion of my findings by pointing out what appears not to have changed since the early 1990s in representation within contemporary South African magazines targeting female readers: the notion of women as nurturers and men as detached from this responsibility within a heteronormative context, where essentialised constructions of sex are presented as normative (Clowes, 1994) While *True Love* has not been analysed before, its presentation of women, and not men, as nurturers is as common as it is in magazines targeting white female readers. The rest of the chapter reveals the ways women are normatively presented as hyper*hetero*sexual in the pages of the magazines. I argue that the bodily work women are advised to perform are hyperheterofeminine performances serving to maintain or produce heterosexual desirability for men. One such performance is all three magazines' focus on concealing 'bad boobs', cellulite and fat. But other heterofeminine performances are racialised and I discuss three ways in which racialised hyper(hetero)femininities in the magazines are produced - the notion of youthfulness in white women as heterosexually desirable in *Fair Lady* and *Femina*; the notion of black women in *Fair Lady* and *Femina* as exotic, and the idea of straightened hair as heterosexually desirable in black women in *True Love*.

1. Women, but not men, as nurturers

In 1993, Rajan noted that advertising in India, while appearing progressive, continued to locate women's role within the heterosexual family as primary. The 'new' woman in India was presented as socially attractive, educated and socially aware, but always within the context of a 'stable' heterosexual nuclear family premised on Indian values and norms. My findings echo some of Rajan's (1993) observations; in *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* women are overwhelmingly presented as prioritising their careers, and as consumers

who spend substantial time and money on fashion and homemaking products, but not to the detriment of being nurturers or 'better mothers'.

In South Africa in 1994, Clowes' study on notions of marriage, motherhood and money-earning amongst white South African women, includes an analysis of discourses in South African women's magazines such as *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *Cosmopolitan* between 1960 and 1990. Clowes (1994) points out that the stereotypical messages emanating from these magazines were that relationships with men, children and families were the concern of white women, but not white men. Further, Clowes relates how white women's primary roles, as represented in the magazines, was that of wife, mother and homemaker, even if they had entered the labour market or were self-employed:

> the moment a girl left childhood her life revolved around finding and keeping a husband, bearing and rearing children, making and maintaining a home (usually with the assistance of a black domestic servant), until old age brought widowhood and loneliness. (Clowes, 1994: 22)

The role of men, however, was that of financial supporter of the home, where as biological fathers, they "are able to avoid the responsibility of the rearing and nurturing of their own children" (Clowes, 1994: 200). While Clowes' study does not interrogate the normative presentation of heterosexuality or whiteness in the magazines, and does not look at presentations of black femininities at all in magazines targeting white readers, her findings remain valid thirteen years later. Women, and not men, are still depicted as nurturers in magazines, suggesting that not much has changed in the way of representation in South African magazines since the 1960s. I talk about this below.

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The types of articles and advertisements across *Femina*, *Fair Lady* and *True Love* between 2003 and 2005 often uncritically highlight women's specific roles as mothers and nurturers. In *True Love*, for instance, the text reads: "Liya has the best of both worlds: a rewarding career, a fulfilling marriage and a delightful baby boy" (*True Love*, March 2005: 77). Another example of how women's multiple roles, including paid and unpaid work, are presented as normative includes the following text, again in *True Love*: "I'm juggling as fast as I can! Wife. Mom. Sister. Lover, Employer. Employee. Nurse. Chief cook and dishwasher. Minister of Finance. Daughter. Friend. And, right at the bottom of this endless list, 'me'" (March 2005: 98). Indeed, *True Love* makes it clear that "being a woman means caring. For others and yourself...as a woman, you have to fulfil a number of roles including that of caregiver" (March 2005: 68).

Consequently, the many images of mother and child/children (see, as an example, figure 22 below) in the magazines seldom include men - the domain of motherhood appears to be solely that of mother and child/children. I managed to find only one article - appearing in the October 2004 edition of *True Love* magazine - deviating from this normative presentation but even this doesn't feature actual existing children. Under the 'motherlove' section of the magazine, the feature is titled "A letter to my unborn baby" (October 2004: 183). Here, we see a black man (the father-to-be) in what appears to be a loving embrace of the highly pregnant stomach of the mother-to-be (see figure 23 below). The feature indeed reads as a letter to the unborn child where fatherhood is described as a deeply emotional and anxiety-provoking experience: "For many years I believed this world, with its hatred, violence, poverty and fear, would never see a child of mine"; "I'm the man who'll be looking into your eyes on that day, laughing and crying"; "I love you with a passion I've never known", and "You're the most important person in the world to me, the thing I'm most proud of and most in awe of" (*True Love*,

October 2004: 183). This feature, while only one, signifies at least an attempt on the part of the magazine to include men as fathers in their presentations. Here, the father-to-be is portrayed as a loving and caring nurturer-to-be, who sees himself as a co-parent, not a substitute parent, as in an example that I discuss below. Despite this, the magazine never follows up with any advice as to how to put these aspirations into practice.

Even though two images (one advert and another image within an 'Expert Advice section') in the November 2005 edition of *Femina* diverge from the normative presentation of mother and child exclusively, fatherhood is presented as secondary and marginal. In the first image, the father sits behind the pregnant mother while the child touches its mothers' swollen stomach. The father watches from behind as this intimate interaction takes place (*Femina*, November 2005: 192). The second example of marginalized fatherhood is slightly more progressive where the heading reads "A night out with the girls" (*Femina*, November 2005: 197). Lovingly holding and kissing the baby in ways similar to images of mothers and babies (see figure 24 below), the text in the advert reveals however that this is merely a temporary situation: "With the help of our ISIS Breastpump your baby can still enjoy your breastmilk even if YOU have the night off" (November 2005: 197). In other words, this intimate interaction between father and child is limited to the unlikely event that the mother is unavailable – fatherhood is something that happens only when the mother cannot fulfil her consistent and 'inherent' mothering role.

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SPECIAL
CARE

Fig. 22: *True Love*, October 2004: 182

A night out
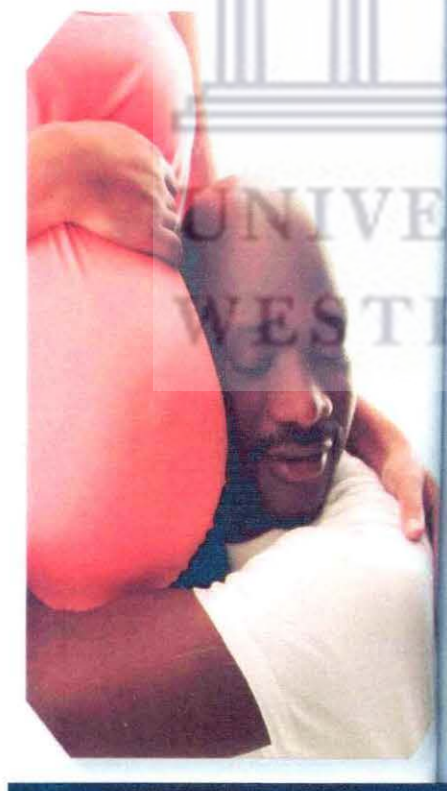with the girls

CLINICALLY PROVEN

AVENT
Naturally

Fig.23: *True Love*, October 2004: 271

Fig. 24: *Femina*, November 2005: 197

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Overall, femininity is often presented in the magazines as inherently exhibiting very specific nurturing and mothering roles: "Dianne Lang is mother to almost 50 abandoned and abused children. Like a latter-day Pied Piper, Dianne has drawn them to her to become her family and her cause" (*Fair Lady*, March 2005: 63), or advertisements representing motherhood - but never fatherhood - as 'magical', mythical and unique: "Any mother will tell you that touching is the magical way mother and baby share their feelings, thoughts and love. Baby's skin against yours is a special connection between you and your baby" (*True Love*, October 2004: 277). Imagery and text reveal that it is women's responsibility to nurture. Men, as I mentioned earlier, are mostly invisibilised as fathers in the pages of the magazines, and don't appear to have the responsibility to nurture anyone, including their own children.

Despite decades of feminist critiques of women's magazines, it seems very little has changed in the way women, and not men, are presented as nurturers in South African magazines since the 1960s, as Clowes' (1994) study has illustrated. Magazines between 2003 and 2005 suggest that nurturing roles are a normative aspect of femininity, while men can be spared these types of responsibilities precisely because they have penises. According to the magazines at least, anyone with a vagina has the natural inclination to nurture. This normative construction suggests that women who choose not to nurture are not 'normal'. In addition, the consistent lack of positioning of men as nurturers in both women's and men's magazines suggests that men are not naturally nurturant, reinforcing societal stereotypes that men do not have a role to play in the care of their own children, inadvertently leaving very little space for nurturant types of heteromasculinity to be considered normative. Presenting heteromasculinities and heterofemininities in these very narrow and prescriptive ways, the magazines resonate with Wendy Hollway's (1984) concept of the 'have-hold' discourse

popular in women's magazines: women desire children and family life while men are driven by sex. The invisibility of fatherhood, however, also reinforces the idea that the role of men in childcare is limited to the conception phases of procreation. If both men's and women's magazines mostly invisibilise men's roles in childcare and nurturing, then both male and female readers are being told over and over again that women's roles in childcare are important and men's are not.

The next section looks at the ways in which women are advised to perform femininities in hyper(hetero)sexualised ways across racial constructs, where their bodies are presented as inadequate and in need of 'fixing' in an effort to maintain or produce heterosexual desirability.

2. "There's no need to sacrifice (hetero)sex appeal" - concealing 'bad boobs', fat and cellulite

In the mid-1970s in Britain, feminists argued that glossy women's magazines exemplified oppression by convincing women of their bodily inadequacies and drawing them into consumerism through promises that bodily satisfaction and healthy self-esteem could be bought (McRobbie, 1999). In 1996, Jackson added that these magazine ideologies are sexist, promoting heterosexuality as normative through pressurising women to buy particular products as a means of being desirable to men (cited in McRobbie, 1999).

In 2002, Wesely pointed out that "women learn that they are valued for their (hetero)sexual bodies, but even as they devote energies to perfecting them, the ideal remains largely unattainable" (Wesely, 2002: 1183). The notion of perfecting the female body remains relevant in women's magazines where specific body parts are chosen as sites in need of work across *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*. This work, it appears, is central to remaining (or

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becoming) heterosexually desirable to an unnamed and unmarked, but clearly masculine audience.

In the January 2005 edition of *Fair Lady* magazine, female readers are advised on the most appropriate swimsuit to wear (see figure 25 below). Stating that "there is a swimsuit to flatter any figure. Choose the right one and prepare for compliments" (January 2005: 164-165), the article suggests that there is a 'wrong' swimsuit choice. The article goes on to suggest ways to 'fix' problem body parts. However, every body shape seems to be problematic, so that the article makes suggestions for the "boyish figure", "long torso", "big bust", "wide waist" or the "pear shape" (January 2005: 164-165). In other words, female readers are told that their bodies always need attention and work to remain heterosexually desirable, no matter what their physical shape. A similar example appears in the same edition of the magazine, where female readers are encouraged to use underwear in order to "change the way you look today by learning how to show off your best assets and disguise the ones you don't like" (*Fair Lady*, January 2005: 66-68). Emphasis is placed on particular 'problematic' body parts so that "big boobs", "no boobs", "saggy boobs", "fat back", "flabby tummy", "no waist", and a "cellulite bum" are all problematised as body parts to be fixed.

This is similar to the advice offered in the December 2003 edition of *Femina* magazine which suggests ways in which women can hide body parts considered 'undesirable' (to men): "For a trimmer tummy – apart from 100 sit-ups a day, the only solution is to cover that tummy with full panties" (December 2003: 15). The magazine insists that "there's no need to sacrifice *hetero*sex appeal" (December 2003:15, my emphasis). For all-over (hetero)sexiness, the magazine suggests the exploration of "petticoats, camis and teddies for hiding a whole lot in the *hetero*sexiest possible way. A lycra

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petticoat will smooth your curves into one sleek line. Teddies create an instant hourglass figure" (*Femina*, December 2003: 15, my emphasis).

Fig. 25: *Fair Lady*, January 2005: 163

Thinness also appears to be heterosexually desirable, with the May 2005 edition of *Femina* magazine providing advice on "how to look taller and slimmer" (May 2005: 104). Some advice includes "Create an illusion of length by wearing long, lean, clean lines...avoid details like pockets over breasts and hips" (May 2005: 104), or suggestions on concealing "unwanted rolls and bulges" like, "Who needs diet and plastic surgery when these 'miracle' undies can get rid of unwanted rolls and bulges?" (*Femina*, May 2005: 104). The magazine's reference to plastic surgery not only betokens the affluence of readers, but also presents what Mercer (1994: 98) calls the "glamorous violence of surgery" as a normative and typical consideration for some women, again to remain, or become, heterosexually desirable. The overarching theme in the subtext, however, is that women need to change

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their physical bodies in all sorts of ways in order to remain heterosexually desirable. Within the feminine/masculine binary unproblematically employed in these magazines, men are presented as a homogeneous group who desire this version of heterofemininity privileged in the magazine. These limited constructions of gender leave little space for different ways of being women and men.

In addition, stretch marks and cellulite, a natural part of the biological process of maturing, are often presented as 'problems' that women need to fix through eradication or concealment. In the October 2004 edition of *True Love* magazine, the fulfilment of motherhood is juxtaposed against the after-effects of pregnancy on women's bodies: "Your bundle of joy's arrival is the most important, incredible, challenging and fulfilling stage of your life – but it can also do devastating things to your body" (October 2004: 275). In these magazines, marks that demonstrate the 'owners' use of their body are seen as devastating. Devastating effects are described as "cellulite clinging to your thighs and bottom" (*True Love*, October 2004: 275) which can be fixed through "a variety of products and treatments on the market" (October 2004: 275). Here, the body is marketed as an object in need of fixing within the South African consumer economy, influenced by global trends which privilege hegemonic western values.

In *Fair Lady* magazine, treatments for cellulite include concealment: "There is no better camouflage [for your burgeoning cellulite] than a great pair of latex bum and thigh knickers" (*Fair Lady*, January 2005: 68). Another example suggests tablets to eradicate cellulite altogether: "Anti-cellulite capsules balance detox functions in the body...contains all natural ingredients to help remove cellulite" (*Fair Lady*, January 2005: 127). Cellulite is constructed as heterosexually undesirable, with some products (see figure 26 below)

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claiming to "visibly reduce cellulite by 50% - skin becomes noticeably less dimpled and smoother" (*Fair Lady*, September 2004: 23).

While the physical female body is presented as consistently in need of work, across racialised constructs, in order to be desirable to men, there are racial differences in how heterofemininities are presented. The next theme discusses the pressure on white women to defy age in *Fair Lady* and *Femina*.
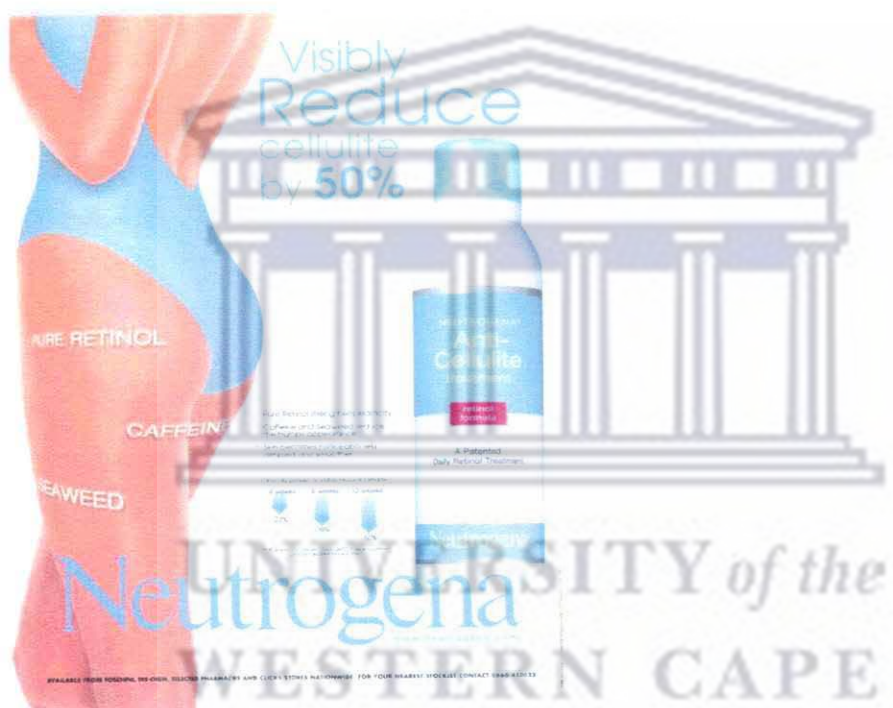

Fig. 26: *Fair Lady*, September 2004: 23

3. "Ageless beauty" - white women and youthfulness

Many feminist theorists - both internationally and locally - have recognised the role of youth in media constructions of beauty for women (see, for example, Dines and Humez, 1995; MacDonald, 1995; Ahmad, 1995; Overland, 2002). In 2007, Morna and Ndlovu note the virtual invisibility of older women in advertisements across various media in Southern Africa, where women

between thirty-six and sixty years old are hardly represented. The argument the above theorists pose is that together with thinness, in order to be considered socially desirable, women also have to be young. My findings suggest that in South African magazines, the significance of preserving and maintaining a youthful appearance seems to be a western construct, limited to white women. In *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, over and over again, advertisements instruct (white) women that heterosexual desirability is synonymous with youthfulness and that it is white women's task to manage and mask the inevitable signs of ageing.

One example of how women can maintain or become desirable to men, is presented in the magazine advertisements as a focus on biological changes such as facial skin texture, changes which the advertisers construct as deeply problematic but able to be fixed through the consumption of various beauty products. Employing metaphors of war and battle alongside the authority of science, accompanied by images of white international models/celebrities whose apparently 'youthful', unwrinkled and unlined faces serve to attest to the fight won against ageing, one advert reads: "Science confirms – the skin-care tablets that minimize any lines you have now, as well as defending against new signs of ageing" (*Fair Lady*, December 2004: 157) or "Awaken your skin's youth: 42 active ingredients for the ultimate anti-ageing treatment. Fine lines are smoothed, facial features are firmer, and your complexion is more radiant and youthful-looking" (*Femina*, May 2003: 23).

Youthfulness is consistently presented as heterosexually desirable through the many pseudo-scientific discourses authoritatively claiming to help (white) women achieve eternal youth in the pages of the *Fair Lady* and *Femina*: "Anti-wrinkle effectiveness within 15 days: 77%" (*Fair Lady*, March 2005: 5); "the ageless future. Perfectionist correcting serum for lines/wrinkles" (*Fair Lady*, September 2004: 1), or "Age redefining treatment lifting – firming – anti-

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wrinkle: Skin is as if redefined as if from within. Facial contours are more defined: 72%, skin is firmer: 80%, skin is tighter as if lifted: 80%" (*Femina*, May, 2005: 9).

These pseudo-scientific discourses promise youthfulness and claim to 'reduce' signs of ageing such as wrinkles and lines: "In the fight against time, never slack off" (*Fair Lady*, May 2003: 17); "Let Yardley Skincare look after your skin and leave it with ageless beauty" (*Femina,* December, 2003: 40) or "Fight the 3 major signs of ageing – 1. wrinkles; 2. uneven skin texture; 3. dull tone" (*Fair Lady*, May 2003: 71) and "Now you can change the destiny of your skin…Future Perfect Anti-Wrinkle Radiance Moisturisers – helps re-ignite skin's natural age-fighting ability…the look of lines and wrinkles is significantly reduced" (*Fair Lady*, March 2005: 1). Other adverts even promise to provide an alternative to more dramatic measures of defying ageing, such as surgery (which the advert mentions lightly, as if surgery is an appropriate possibility for some in the quest for youth): "Let surgery wait! The 1st 24/7 anti-creasing programme with BOSWELOX™ to visibly correct wrinkles" (*Fair Lady*, December 2004: back page advertisement – see figure 27 below) or "Dramatic skin improvement need not require drastic measures: If you're thinking of a chemical peel, laser surgery or Botox® (and even if you're not), we think you should know about this new approach" (*Femina*, November 2005: 39).

The pages of *Femina* and *Fair Lady* are littered with advertisements presenting biological ageing as heterosexually undesirable. The language used is often synonymous with battle – strong terms such as 'defending' and 'fighting' construct the natural ageing process as repulsive, to be almost violently eliminated through skin-care products. Appearing youthful, however, does not appear to be a requirement for men in magazines such as *Men's Health*, *Blink* and *FHM*, or for black women in *True Love* magazine. In terms

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of men's magazines, this suggests that men are not valued within the heterosexual matrix in the same way as women. In fact, as discussed in the previous chapter, ideal black and white heteromasculinities are valued in terms of (hetero)sexual prowess, abilities and successful careers (as in *Blink* magazine). This pressure for white women to portray youth, as noted by Jackson in 1996 (cited in McRobbie, 1999), serves to locate them as worthy of competing within the heterosexual market - advertisers suggest that if white women want to remain marketable within the racialised heterosexual matrix, they must look youthful.

Fig. 27: *Fair Lady*, December 2004: back page

In contrast to the overwhelming number of age-defying advertisements targeting white women in *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, these adverts barely exist in *True Love* magazine, which has a dominant black female readership. But black women are not let off the hook. Where *True Love* hardly advertises anti-ageing products, it makes up for this in hair straightening advertisements,

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setting up straight hair in black women as heterosexually desirable. I discuss this below.

4. "Straight up gorgeous for hair that's smooth, silky and all out lovely": straightened hair as heterosexually desirable

In 1994, Mercer noted that "black people's hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigmata of blackness, second only to skin" (1994:101). One year later, Amina Mama argued that the desire for "long, flowing hair, lighter skin and aquiline features" amongst black girls in Britain reflects the ways in which British society defined 'attractiveness' (1995: 150). Similarly, Shirley Tate's (2007) recent research in Britain reveals that racist representations of skin colour, facial features and hair texture continue to shape the experiences of black women. While some might argue that straightened hair for black women could be understood as one hair style within a myriad of hair styles for black women (see Erasmus, 2000, for example), Tate (2007) relates that part of the "negative black aesthetic" is the "presumption that long straight hair is a necessary component of black women's beauty" (2007: 303). Other authors such as Jones and Shorter-Gooden disagree, arguing instead that "Not every woman who decides to straighten her hair or change the colour of her eyes by wearing contacts" (cited in Patton, 2006: 29) sees beauty as synonymous with whiteness. They argue that "trying on a new look, even one associated with Europeans, does not automatically imply self-hatred" (Jones and Shorter-Gooden, cited in Patton, 2006: 29).

Targeting black women, *True Love* magazine features a substantial amount of hair straightening advertisements which is in contrast to the editorial content in the magazine, where images of black women (and sometimes coloured women) are shown wearing a variety of hair styles, including afros,

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dreadlocks, curls, and weaves. This is quite the contrary to the ways black men were equally targeted for hair straighteners in the early days of *Drum* magazine (Clowes, 2002). Adverts such as "For sleek, sultry tresses – soft, silky, health-looking hair, rely on Soft & Beautiful" (*True Love*, March 2004: 187) and "Dark and Lovely: Experience luxurious body and ultimate shine. A moisturizing relaxer! Seeing is believing" (October 2004: 73) are common in *True Love* magazine.

A different advert in the October 2004 edition of *True Love* features a black woman with short straightened hair staring confidently at the camera. Three containers of permanent hair relaxers for different 'types' of black hair appear at the bottom of the page. Here the text reads: "Discover the beauty of your hair" suggesting that unstraightened hair needs work in order to become beautiful (October 2004: 79). The March 2004 edition of *True Love* features a longer advertorial on *Soft & Beautiful* hair straighteners for women, but this time with an emphasis on 'healthy' hair. Again, accompanying an image of a black woman with short, straight hair, the text reads: "Sleek, sultry tresses - for soft, silky, healthy hair…no-lye conditioning relaxer that helps smooth and straighten the hair without any discomfort" (March 2004: 187). Promising to "restore the hair's natural acid pH balance", help to "control frizziness" and "nourishing dry hair" (2004: 187), this advert tells readers that western science can improve on nature and that curly and/or frizzy hair i.e. 'natural' hair, is heterosexually undesirable. By using a chemical product, the advertisers promise to restore the hair's "natural acid pH balance."

Another advertisement in the March 2004 edition of *True Love* titled 'Healthier Hair" reads "Soft and Beautiful promises you soft, silky, healthy hair – the ways it was meant to be" (October 2004: 151). In other words, black women's hair was not meant to be the way it is - unstraightened, not silky and

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unhealthy. The image accompanying the text is one of a black woman with long straightened hair (see figure 28 below).

Fig. 28: *True Love*, October 2004: 151

A mock letters' page in the December 2003 edition of *True Love* appears to be an advertisement for *Sofn'free* hair straightening products. One question reads "How can I keep my hair looking good?" The response is a passionate "We recommend you use the new *Sofn'Free* straightening oil until your hair's condition recovers. Then relax with the *Sofn'Free* Shine Formula sodium relaxer – it has been specifically formulated to give your hair better colour intensity and shine" (*True Love*, December 2003: 89). "Looking good" in the world of *True Love* means having straightened hair. But the pressure to look 'good' is not limited to adult women. It seems that little black girls are similarly expected to straighten their hair as the October 2004 edition of *True Love* (see figure 29 below) illustrates: "Stop damage before it starts – with love and *Sofn'Free n' pretty*. We all know hard and painful it can be to manage coarse

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hair" (October 2004: 273). Little girls, according to *True Love*, must be taught from an early age how to be heterosexually desirable.

Fig. 29: *True Love*, October 2004: 273

Similar to *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, desirability is heterosexualised in *True Love* magazine – black women are advised that they will be more desirable (to men) if they straighten their hair. But there are a few adverts featuring images of black women with curls or braids. Text in an advert appearing in the October 2003 edition of *True Love* reads, for instance, "Let your hair speak for yourself" playing on the notion that hair which hasn't been chemically treated is 'natural' (*True Love*, October 2003: 141). The accompanying image is one of a black woman with dark, curly hair. This binary of 'natural'/'unnatural' hair styles in black cultural practices, as presented in the October 2003 advertisement, has been discussed by Erasmus in 2000, where she problematises either side of the binary as symbolic of an authentic and essentialist racial subjectivity, when most hairstyles require some sort of

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'working on' to begin with. In reality, hairstyles worn by white women and men as well as black men are often worked on in the form of straightening, perms to curl their hair or hair cuts, for example. But the reality produced in *True Love* is a different one.

It is interesting to note that by 2005, advertisements selling hair straighteners seem to appear less, and there are more inclusion of adverts selling products for braid care. One such advert includes the *Sta-Sof-Fro* advert, where the text reads: "See your oil moisturizer in a different light" (*True Love*, April 2005: 76). The accompanying image is one of a black woman with braids. Another example, also advertising *Sta-Sof-Fro* reads: "The *Sta-Sof-Fro* Braid range has been specially formulated to relieve itchy, dry scalp and combat frizziness and breakage. Stylish braids: braiding is a distinctive mark of African style" (March 2005: 175 – see figure 30 below).

But in *True Love* magazine, particularly in 2003 and 2004, the many hair straightening advertisements continue to present straightened hair as heterosexually desirable: black women's hair can *become* beautiful, and advertisers recommend that women use chemical treatments to achieve this desirable look. In this way, the western construct of straight hair as beautiful is presented as aspirational for black women readers, and echoes feminist analyses, such as Tate's (2007) argument, that historically western constructions of straight hair as beautiful has simultaneously defined black hair as undesirable (also see Ahmad, 1995 and Ribane, 2006).

There is another difference between the magazines in terms of its presentations of black women. The next theme discusses the ways in which black femininities are exotised within magazines targeting white readers such as *Fair Lady* and *Femina*.

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Fig. 30: *True Love*, March 2005: 175

5. Exotised black heterofemininity

Helké, writing on women's magazines targeting black European women in France and the United Kingdom, wrote in 2002 that while there was an overwhelming presence of black models in British magazines targeting black female readers, these adverts did not challenge dominant ideologies about femininity. In magazines aimed at European audiences, black European women, according to Helké (2002), were subjected to the same pressure to conform to particular feminine constructions as white European women. But Mama in 1995, although not focusing on the media at all, convincingly pointed out that much feminist discussions about femininities and notions of beauty revolved around white, middle-class women. The concern with being attractive, Mama argued, "features strongly in black women's femininity, probably all the more so because racist discourses have historically defined black women as 'ugly' and their sexuality in negative terms" (Mama, 1995:

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149). hooks (2004) seems to agree with this argument when she notes that "the convergence of racist sexist thinking about the black body has always projected onto the black body a hypersexuality" (hooks, 2004: 67). Osha (2004) makes a similar point when he argues that

> A series of erasures and misrepresentations have been visited on black sexuality since the advent of coloniality. The colonizing agent either unduly romanticized the colonized subject by virginising her/him through a powerful process of de-agentialisation and also by objectification (fossilization in the Eurocentric imaginary) or by hypersexualising her/him, employing tropes of excess, unrestrained carnality, irrationality and violence. (2004: 92)

This is analogous to Tate's position in 2007 when she relates that "whiteness was about the embodiment of beauty while black women were viewed as physically strong, immodest and as exuding an animal sensuality" (Tate, 2007: 301). Although Mama (1995), hooks (2004), Osha (2004) and Tate (2007) all fail to mention that it is black women's *hetero*sexuality which has been racialised, Lewis notes that "discourses of heteronormativity, it becomes clear, powerfully inscribe representations of black female bodies" (Lewis, 2005: 17).

More relevant to my analysis of women's magazines, are the views of feminist theorists who have noted that the black female body has been exoticised within art and various media. Both Mama (1995) and Tate (2007) cite the exhibitions of Sarah Baartman, Josephine Baker and Grace Jones as examples of black femininity presented as animal-like. Abrahams (2000) writing on Sarah Baartman's resistance, has noted how European scientists examined and classified Khoekhoe women's genitals, defining these women as hypersexual and a sub-human species (in Salo and Gqola, 2006). Talking about the "deeply entrenched social codes that inform representations of black women and sexuality" (2005: 11), Lewis states, for instance, that

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in the 20th-century context of a burgeoning print technology, popular culture and a modern sex industry, visual pornography exoticised black women to perpetuate the colonial emphasis on their hyperdeveloped sexuality, and their status as sex objects for others' gratification and use. (2005: 13).

In examining eight American magazines, Baker (2005) noted that a number of stereotypes about black women continue to operate as normative in magazine advertisements. One such stereotype is the black woman as 'Jezebel', "who is portrayed as a sexually aggressive Black woman and therefore is considered deviant from the submissive image of women's sexuality in mainstream culture" (2005: 16). Jezebel is presented as seductive, alluring and *heterosexually* promiscuous (even though heterosexuality is hidden in the analysis) and according to Baker, this image of black women is still present in advertisements aimed at black readers. In South Africa, *Femina* and *Fair Lady* magazines seldom present black women in their imagery, across editorial and advertisement contents. When black women are presented in *Femina* magazine, more often than not, they are exoticised in ways which mark the black female body as hyperheterosexualised in ways that the white female body is not. While various parts of white women's bodies are exposed for different purposes - depending on the product being advertised – such as bare legs for shaving creams, or bare feet for foot creams, my sample of magazines reflected that white women's bodies are almost never shown in the nude.

An example of the hyperheterosexualisation of the black female body is a special report on a book titled *The naked woman: a study of the female body* authored by Desmond - who is described as an expert on women's bodies – discussing his 'discovery' of "not one but four female G-spots" (*Fair Lady*, January 2005: 33) features a full-page photo of an black woman's naked body shown from behind (see figure 31 below). Another example of this

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racialised hyperheterosexualisation appears as a half-page promotional advertisement in the February 2005 edition of *Femina* magazine selling *JôJô Africa* body products. The main heading of the advert reads "My African Dream" and is accompanied by text and an image of a naked black woman lying on her stomach with her face turned towards the camera, against a backdrop of mountain and land, part of the African soil and emblematic of the African landscape (see figure 32 below). Using terms such as "rare and distinctive", "pure" and "indigenous" (February 2005: 55) to describe the product, the text and imagery imply that black femininity, as signifier of Africa, is hyperheterosexualised in ways that clearly derive from hundreds of years of white colonial obsession with black bodies. Within the context of minimal representation of black women in magazines targeting white women readers, I argue that where black women's bodies are shown and spoken about in these magazines, they are presented as *more heterosexualised* than white women's bodies. I discuss these racist inscriptions below.
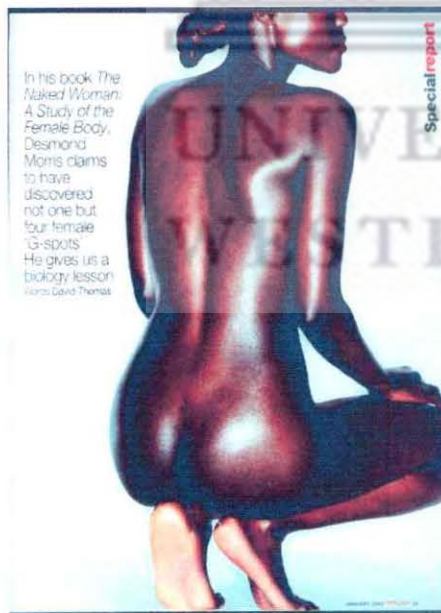

Fig. 31: *Fair Lady*, January 2005: 33

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Fig. 32: *Femina*, February 2005: 55

A series of shopping advertisements in the December 2003 edition of *Femina*
magazine features black and white female models selling various 'glamorous'
looks. Both the 'shiny look' and the 'ultra feminine look' are modelled by white
women (December, 2003: 110 and 113) with terms such as 'glow', 'glitters',
'sensual' and 'floaty' being ascribed to these women. On the other hand, both
the 'colourful look' and the 'exotic look' (*Femina*, December 2003: 106 and
109) are modelled by black women, with terms such as 'bold' and 'oriental'
being ascribed to the type of femininity presented by these women. A similar
series of shopping advertisements appears in the February 2005 edition of
Femina magazine. While both white and black women again appear in this
advert, it is one of the few locations where black women are presented in
Femina magazine, and they are again described in exotic ways. The bold text
accompanying the images of white women reads more neutrally: "Just Now"
(2005: 83); "Hey-Hey" (2005: 85) and "(Global) Village Girls" (2005: 86). The
bold text accompanying three images of black women reads as follows: "Wild

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Life" (February 2005: 79); "*Tula* Mama" (February 2005: 85) and "Township *Tjerrie* - The essence of Africa: Black and White and Animal Prints" (February 2005: 90). Here, white heterofemininity is presented as normative and neutral while black heterofemininity is presented as 'different' and thus exotic.

The ways that race, gender and sexuality intersect, reflecting the colonisation of the black 'Other', is revealed in an advertisement selling *Amarula Cream Liqueur.* In the November 2005 edition of *Femina,* an image of a black woman with short curly hair and a white man intimately sharing a glass of liqueur appears. The accompanying text reads "Taste the spirit of Africa: savour the exotic flavour of Amarula Cream Liqueur" (*Femina,* November 2005: 107 – see figure 33 below). The 'exotic flavour' being 'savoured' appears to refer to the black woman who signifies Africa in the following text: "Explore the untamed plains of the African savannah" (2005: 107). This is typical of the ways in which the black female body is represented for the white male colonist. The links between Africanness, exoticisation, colonisation and heterosex are clearly articulated in the magazine's explanation that "The exotic fruit is prized as an aphrodisiac and plays a unique role in African fertility rates" (*Femina,* November 2005: 107).

Fig. 33: *Femina,* November 2005: 106

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In another example, The October 2004 edition of *Fair Lady* features a three-page *Surf* advertisement where three black female actresses are posing in clothing apparently washed in *Surf* washing powder. Where white models are seldom defined in terms of the nation, the three black women are presented as both South African and *different* from (white) norms of femininity through terms such as 'bright' and 'shine'. In other words, race is marked when a black skin is involved and unmarked where a white skin is involved – white (hetero)femininity is presented as normative and black (hetero)femininity as *different from* this white heterofeminine norm. While there is some variation in the subtexts, the bold text accompanying all three images reads "Surf celebrates the bright style of South African women" (*Fair Lady*, October 2004: 219, 221, 223).

Similar notions of blackness as markedly 'ethnic' appear in *True Love* magazine. A regular feature, *Ethnic Chic* features slim, black female models wearing a variety of hairstyles (mostly braids and dreadlocks) in fashions termed 'ethnic'. Always accompanied by an image of three to four black women, the text differs slightly in each edition. In the March 2004 edition of *True Love*, it reads: "Add Swazi-inspired style to your look, with a touch of ethnic elegance" (March 2004: 60). In the September 2004 edition of the magazine: "Go for simple, but stunning style in these black and white outfits inspired by Xhosa designs" (September 2004: 72). Again, in the March 2005 edition of *True Love*, the text reads "Make a proud statement with stunning haute couture the African way!" (March 2005: 54).

Two messages emanate from these advertisements. One is the notion of blackness as 'ethnic' and 'cultural'. The other is the notion of a certain type of blackness as authentically 'ethnic' and 'cultural'. In terms of the *Surf* advert in *Fair Lady* and the *Ethnic Chic* advert in *True Love*, blackness, (excluding coloured and Indian), mediated by femininity, is emblematic of the 'nation'

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and 'culture'. Coloured or Indian people, female or male, are rarely, if ever, presented in ways defining them as African. But *True Love* at least presents black women in a variety of ways, modelling fashions from the west as well as Africa and sometimes an eclectic mix of the two. While *Fair Lady* and *Femina* rarely present black women in their imagery, it is noteworthy how these women are presented when they are reflected at all. While women across racial constructs in women's and men's magazines are often presented as erotic simply because they have vaginas, different from the normative presentation of men, black women are both hyper-racialised and hyper(hetero)sexualised in magazines targeting white readers, in deeply racist and (hetero)sexist ways.

Contrary to Baker's (2005) findings in the United States that black women are presented as heterosexually suggestive, seductive, alluring and promiscuous in magazines targeting black readers, I did not find this to be the case in *True Love* magazine. Similarly, presentations of black women in *Blink* magazine's 'Sticky Pages' and white women in *Men's Health* and *FHM* appeared to hyperheterosexualise women in similar ways, which was different from the racist exoticisation of black women present in magazines targeting white women. This construction not only hypervisibilises black women as the 'Other' or 'the African' but simultaneously presents white heterofemininity as normative and 'empty' through its apparent lack of 'culture', 'ethnicity' and exoticism.

In conclusion, within the heteronormative context of women's magazines, black and white women are told that nurturing children and others is their job and not men's. Similarly, black and white women are told that they always need to work on their physical bodies (albeit in different ways) in order to maintain or become heterosexually desirable for an unnamed and unmarked, but clearly masculine audience. Particular messages about racialised

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heterofemininities and heteromasculinities resonate from the pages of *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love.* Time-consuming, costly and transient beautification practices borrowed from the west – hair straightening for black women and restoring the youthfulness of white skin - are two exercises women are advised to perform in order to exhibit heterosexual desirability.

As I've shown above, the messages emanating from the pages of the magazines have different meanings within socio-political contexts where racial constructs continue to define the black/white imaginary binary in terms of heterosexual desirability. Black women, although seldom presented in magazines targeting white female readers such as *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, are exoticised and presented as the 'Other' in racist ways within these magazines. Similar to the ways in which black men are presented in *Blink* magazine, black women are also presented in all three women's magazines as authentically African, emblematic of 'ethnicity' and 'culture' while white heterofemininity remains the unmarked norm.

The next section concludes this thesis and discusses my overall findings. I highlight the shortcomings of my study, and suggest avenues for future research in the area of representation, subjectivities and the media.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I set out to explore representations of gender, race and sexuality in South African magazines. Even though I started this project prioritising representations of gender constructs, I found that my analysis consistently drew attention to heterosexuality and its intersections with race. For me, this indicates the inextricable linkages between subjectivities such as gender, race and sexuality. My experience highlights Yvette Abrahams' (2000) Womanist discussion of African women as "a dispossessed collective", where "the struggle over gender cannot be the primary one" (2000: 14). Abrahams insists that "even the possibility of thinking along those lines is a luxury reserved for those who are not oppressed by their race" (2000: 14). I would add that the disconnection of sexuality and race similarly underscores an erasure of experience within a society seeped in institutionalised heteronormativity.

At the end of this project, I feel that I have merely scratched the surface within possible debates about representations of gender, race and sexuality in the media. One limitation of this study is the lack of exploration of a broader range of representations of subjectivities such as class, language, disability and geographical location. Another limitation is the range of titles of magazines which I explored in this study. I would have liked to explore more titles such as the South African editorialised *Oprah* and the uniquely South African *Manswees* magazines. But there just wasn't sufficient space in this study to include more titles or a wider focus.

Despite its limitations, this study has opened up space for further research. One area branching from the focus of this study is the exploration of

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magazines targeting adolescent girls, such as *True Love Babe*, *Teen SA* or *Seventeen*. There are no equivalent magazine titles targeting adolescent boys in South Africa. On browsing, these magazines reveal a great deal about feminine hyper(hetero)feminine performances and it would be interesting to delve into the hegemonic scripts in these magazines – are there differences from the traditional *True Love* magazine and are young girls being socialised into disempowered heterofemininities? Or are there more options for these young girls to explore diverse ways of expressing their sexualities? In addition, it is important that South Africans continue developing their own media outside of the mainstream in an effort to subvert traditional and disempowering representations of women and men. One example of a magazine which targets a male homosexual readership is *Source* magazine, which deals with concerns related to relationships and HIV/AIDS, which are marginalised or silenced in most mainstream men's magazines.

There has been little research on black masculinities and black femininities in media representations, particularly those in magazines. While I discussed the ways in which whiteness is presented as normative in South African magazines, I also highlighted how black masculinities and black femininities, albeit differently, are portrayed in ways marking race on the physical body. Black men are portrayed as 'damaged' social and political agents while black women are hyper(hetero)sexualised in ways which clearly mark blackness as essentially 'different' from whiteness. My findings suggest that the lack of recognition given to intersections of gender, race and sexuality in many South African analyses of magazine representations - Wilbrahim in 1996a, 1996b and 1996c and Toerien and Durrheim in 2001 are examples - erases racial/racist constructions of blackness and contributes to the normativity of whiteness.

While 'lifestyle' magazines are only one medium highlighting hegemonic scripts about gender, race and sexuality in South Africa, they are powerful tools in shaping ideas about these subjectivities. As a socialising agent, magazines reveal much about the racialised and heteropatriarchal society in which we live. In a variety of complex ways, they tell us that whiteness is mostly normative, blackness is not; manhood is normative, womanhood is not; and that particular versions of heterosexuality are normative but homosexuality is not. They do this through marking and naming particular subjectivities within each of the binaries – such as womanhood and blackness, for example, and invisibilising the centre of each binary such as maleness and whiteness, for example. Same-sex desire, activity or relationships was mostly erased as a viable sexual subjectivity. Overwhelmingly, the magazines represented the performance of heterosexuality as not only normative, but the only viable sexuality to perform. And it is significant that the kind of heterosexuality privileged in these magazines was one defined by masculine sexuality, where as Holland, Ramazanoglu and Thomson (1996) argue, female agency, power and pleasure is virtually absent. Men 'do' heterosex while women are 'done to'.

In Chapter Four of this thesis, I added a new component to the on-going debate about whether the media merely reflects social 'reality' or produces particular hegemonic realities. I attempted to illustrate Tomaselli and Tomaselli's (2001) reflection that "the media choose and frame the kinds of stories we read, see and hear", signifying our "sense of identity, both at the personal and at the national level" (2001: 124). I focused on ideas of social responsibility in the discourses of magazine editors and how these are linked to subjective representations of gender, race and sexuality. I problematised the editors' views of what constitutes 'the political' and discussed how their understandings of gender, sexuality and race were rooted in the idea that these were political issues on which they and their magazines took a neutral

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or objective stance. The overarching discourse emanating from their views was that it is their jobs as magazine editors to prioritise profit-making, they are not paid to build the nation; they are paid to make money. But my reading of the magazine scripts in Chapters Five and Six suggested that representations were anything but neutral. In men's magazines in particular, representations of women as mostly sex objects, their physical bodies fetishised for male readers portrayed as heterosexually predatory, but simultaneously needing to be taught by the magazines how to do heterosex, does not reflect a neutral position on gender and sexuality. Notions of black African masculinity as linked to the socio-political in ways that white men are not, further reveal that the magazines take a political stance on meanings related to race. Ideas of femininity as hyper(hetero)sexual in magazines targeting women reveal how race, as synonymous with blackness in the magazines, is marked on the female body in racist ways. This portrayal of black femininity as 'unusual' and 'interesting', echoes Osha's (2004) reflection of the hypersexualisation of the black body as excessive, unrestrained, carnal and irrational (2004). But I would argue that it is a representation reflecting hundreds of years of racialised *hetero*sexualisation, a link that is not overtly made by the editors of the magazines but also hidden in many theoretical discussions about gender, race and sexuality.

In Chapter Five, contradictory discourses on a certain kind of heteromasculinity revealed that there was some difficulty in representing 'men'. It is this difficulty which erased the notion that heteromasculinity, as represented in the magazines, was biological and static. The magazines revealed this difficulty in essentialising a kind of heteromasculinity which was linked to an inability to resist women and the desire for multiple sex partners. Simultaneously, the magazines attempted to teach men about women and how to 'do' heterosex. Homosexuality was not an option for 'real' men. Because gender is always relational, men's magazines relied on particular

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constructions of femininity in representing masculinity. In the men's magazines in my sample, women were mostly (hetero)sexualised and presented as always available to men, their bodies fetishised in ways considered by the magazines as provocative and titillating to heterosexual men. Representations of 'lesbian sex' revealed that the possibility of same-sex desire between women was distorted so that women were presented as performing heterosexually for male attention. In presenting the 'Blink Woman' as non-sexualised, Blink magazine made some attempt to represent women differently from the normative construction of women in men's magazines, but as has been discussed, and reflected on below, this disruption of traditional gender constructions was, I believe, one reason for the eventual failure of the magazine.

In Chapter Six, I attempted to illustrate how magazines overwhelmingly represent women as hyper(hetero)sexual where performances of heterofemininity seemed to translate into efforts to remain or become heterosexually desirable to an unnamed and unmarked, but, clearly, masculine audience. I built on the work of Ahmad (1995) and Overland (2002), who both argue that western notions of femininities are held up as ideal in South African magazines. But I also suggested that the work both black and white women are expected to perform were geared towards remaining or becoming heterosexually desirable for an unnamed masculine audience. Women, both black and white, the magazines suggested, always need to work on their physical bodies in some way. Fat, cellulite and stretch marks are presented as abhorrent and women are advised to fight against these signs of physical human 'imperfections' and 'faults'. I found advertisements in women's magazines to be particularly rigorous in defining heterosexually desirable femininities in ways which required time and money. The performance of these heterofemininities as I discussed, were racialised in ways where the black female body was presented as more (hetero)sexualised

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within discourses locating Africa – synonymous with a certain kind of blackness - as 'exotic'. Magazines like *Femina* and *Fair Lady*, both with predominantly white readers, presented western notions of femininities as ideal where white women were advised to remain youthful in order to be considered heterosexually desirable. Black femininities, however, did not escape westernisation that easily, with *True Love* advocating straight or straightened hair as heterosexually desirable. But in 2005, *True Love* seemed to be showing signs of change – more advertisements appeared to be portraying a variety of hair styles, so that wearing extensions was at least being regarded as a possible desirable style for heterosexual women.

Foucault (1980) wrote that where there is power, there is always some kind of resistance and agency. Not all South Africans read 'lifestyle' magazines and not all those who read them, uncritically internalise the messages emanating from their contents. But it is likely that many do not make the same kind of connections that I do in my analysis. So while readers do possess agency, magazines do more than merely shape the ways people think about gender, race and sexuality – they create new kinds of representations and reproduce these as normative. This means that 'lifestyle' magazines also have the influence to create more diverse, empowering ways of being women and men. Diversions from hegemonic ideas about gender, race and sexuality can be found in *Blink* magazine. It appears that readerships, however, are inclined to privilege material which doesn't destabilise normative ideas about gender, race and sexuality. So except for *FHM*, magazines like *Men's Health*, *Femina*, *Fair Lady* and *True Love*, although showing declining readerships, (perhaps due to the increasing number of titles available) continue to be the most popular magazines in South Africa. Targeting black male readers, *Blink* magazine failed after approximately two years of publishing. As I argued in Chapter 4, and showed in Chapter Six, it seems that content attempting to destabilise the binaries, presenting black men as socially and politically

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responsible or personally implicated in violence against women and children, for example, is not profit producing. If the failure of *Blink* is anything to go by, it is unlikely that *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* will attempt to change their contents.

These representations reflect the socio-political climate in which South African magazines operate. But from our hegemonic socio-political reality, magazines 'choose' which representations to privilege, and use these to design subjectivities in new ways. In other words, magazines do not merely reproduce reality, as the editors reiterated in my interviews - their presentations constantly evolve into portrayals of womanhood, manhood, heterosexuality, homosexuality, 'blackness' and 'whiteness' which reflect a quality of uniqueness. These representations are exaggerated, recreating ideas of racialised heterofemininities and heteromasculinities which can be traced in our hegemonic socio-political reality, but which, I believe, are inimitable to magazine scripts. And if magazines are believed to reflect 'reality', their reflections leave huge gaps. I found coloured and Indian women and men to be mostly invisible in my sample of magazines. This suggests, to me at least, that magazine scripts targeting white readers particularly, recreate a reality where mostly white South Africans matter, paying lip service to transformation by adding a few black models in their magazines. This 'reality', which most editors claim magazines reflect, is a reality where black people do not really exist, or mostly emulate white people but have black skin. And when, as was the case for *Femina* and *Fair Lady*, black women were portrayed at all, they were exoticised in racist ways. While this type of racism was not evident in *True Love*, particular western constructions were also privileged in the magazine.

If the magazines in my sample are a reflection of social 'reality' as argued by the editors, then the dominant reality filling its pages is one where women and

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men, in very different ways, are disempowered and locked into a system where gendered and sexualised performances limit our freedom to make healthy choices about who we want to be. There were almost no subversive representations of masculinities and femininities, realities which do exist in the world outside of magazines. While this is disheartening, it is useful to heed Yvette Abrahams' (2000: 15) reminder that

> To envision freedom in the midst of oppression is the hardest thing to do - and yet it continues to be done, generation after generation, and shall continue to be done until we are free.

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March 2005; September 2005.

Femina
May 2003; December 2003; February 2005; May 2005; November 2005.

FHM
December 2003; November 2004; December 2004; January 2005; February
2005; March 2005; April 2005.

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Men's Health

October 2003; November 2003; December 2004; February 2005; April 2005.
    True Love

October 2003; December 2003; March 2004; September 2004; October 2004;
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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

General questions

1. How would you describe your average reader? (age, class, sex, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity)

2. Have you noticed any changes in this over the last decade? What kind of changes?
What do you think has caused these changes in readership? Political change? Economic change? Social change? Other factors?

3. What role do you think the magazine itself played in contributing to these changes in readership?

4. How have you gone about producing change? In what ways has this been limited? What are the constraints? What do you see as opportunities?

Nation-building and social responsibility

5. There is a major debate about the extent to which magazines lead readers' aspirations versus reflecting existing social conditions. What are your views? To what extent do you think magazines are able to shape or influence readers' aspirations for themselves?

6. Do you see any role for magazines in nation building? In helping to define what is 'South African'? Or what is 'un-South African'?

7. Do, or should, magazines aim to be socially responsible? If so, in what ways? For instance, many years ago Fair Lady took an editorial decision (because of widespread concerns around anorexia) to use only 'normal' looking women as models rather than 'stick insect' women. I don't know the extent to which they were able to instruct advertisers to do the same, but in

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their own fashion shoots they used 'plumper' women. So they saw themselves as playing an important role in fighting a disease that affected their readership. Do you see it as your magazine's job to fight racism or sexism or homophobia or HIV/Aids or poverty or TB or whatever? How have you set about this? What do you think you've achieved? What are the limitations?

Gender, Race and Sexuality

8. In terms of equity, many people argue that women are unfairly represented in the media. Gender links, and Media watch are just 2 organisations ever ready to provide a public critique of articles or features that they say are biased against women. They suggest that magazines primarily depict women through men's eyes, and that women are still represented as objects for the male gaze. What are your views on this? Do you think there is any truth in their comments?

What about advertising, do you think advertisers are more sensitive towards issues around gender now or not? Does the magazine have any guidelines for advertisers?

9. Similarly that report on racism in the media a few years ago suggested that 'subliminal racism remained endemic'. And this debate keeps popping up in the press. What were your views about that at the time? Did that report make any sense to you? Do you think the same critique could be levelled at today's media?

10. Then in terms of sexuality * SA is leading the way with regard to legal change. But attitudes towards homosex are much more difficult to change. I did a study a few years back in which it became very clear that ordinary South Africans are extremely homophobic. And some of the letters from readers are truly horrific. One bloke wrote in to the Star saying a woman was better off

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being raped than having consensual lesbian sex. How do you juggle these tensions? Magazine's have for decades had articles that deal with sex education * but very particular kinds of sexuality. Do you think the magazine has any obligation to educate readers with regard to homosex?

APPENDIX II

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Individual interviews

I am Nadia Sanger, a PhD candidate in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape. The title of my thesis is *Constructions of race, gender, sexuality and class in South African, English-medium magazines at the turn of the 20th century.* The completion of the thesis is necessary to acquire a doctorate in philosophy.

A critical aspect of this study is participants' views on the role of magazines in contemporary South Africa. I would really appreciate your participation in this regard. Participation in the study is voluntary and no penalty or loss will be suffered as a result of you not participating in the study. Also, you may withdraw from the study at any time without any personal loss or penalty. I undertake to treat all information that you may provide during the course of the study as strictly confidential. Also, unless we are given your explicit permission, we will not disclose any information that could identify you personally and relate you to specific information that you may have disclosed to us during the course of the study. In other words, when the interview data is transcribed, I will not link your name to your data. The duration of the interview will be 45 minutes to 1 hour. All face-to-face interviews will be recorded, unless you feel uncomfortable in this regard.

The principal investigator for this study is Nadia Sanger and the only other person to have access to the interview data is Dr. Lindsay Clowes, my supervisor. Please feel free to contact us at the numbers below:

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If you decide to take part in the study, I would be grateful if you could please complete the form below and send it back to me either via e-mail or by fax:

Name: _____   Company: _____

Position in company: _____

How long have you held this position in the company?
_____

Email address: _____   Contact Tel No: _____

Postal Address:

_____
_____
_____

I, the undersigned, having read the information contained in this document, willingly agree to take part in this study. I expect the interviewer to abide by her undertaking with respect to confidentiality, my right to withdraw and privacy.

Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

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APPENDIX III

READERSHIP STATISTICS IN GRAPH FORM

Graph 1: Comparison of total readerships: men's magazines, 2003-2005

☐ Men's Health   ■ FHM

2005

2004

2003

| 0 | 100 | 200 | 300 | 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800 |

Total Readership (in 000s))

Graph 2: Men's magazines: readerships by race, 2003-2005

☐ Men's Health   ■ FHM

	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
	African			White			Coloured			Indian		

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Graph 3: Men's magazines: readerships by gender, 2003-2005

Graph 4: Comparison of total readerships: women's magazines, 2003-2005

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Graph 5: Women's magazines: readerships by race, 2003-2005

Graph 6: Women's magazines: readerships by gender, 2003-2005

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