Women's magazine editors: Story tellers and their cultural role

Kathryn Davies

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Women’s Magazine Editors:
Story Tellers and their Cultural Role.

Edith Cowan University
Faculty of Education and Arts
February 2009
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ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of contemporary Australian women’s magazine editors and their perceptions about their role and function within their workplaces and, as creators of media products, within culture itself. It explores and finds support for the premise that they don’t perceive their role purely as journalism, or in the way that feminist scholars critical of their cultural influence and morality see them. The core motivation behind the study is the notion that it is important to understand what women’s magazine editors do, from their own perspective, before calling for them to change.

Seeking to expose editors’ intimate understandings of their work, the study begins by looking at autobiographical material written by the author and two other Australian magazine editors. It draws questions about the role and function of editors from these autobiographical materials that are then put to seven West Australian editors in qualitative interviews. Quantitative substantiation of their responses is then secured through a questionnaire completed by editors of 30 of the top 50 magazines in Australia, ranked by female readership figures. Six key media figures were then asked to comment on the results of the questionnaire and their responses indicate that some aspects of the role and function of women’s magazine editors in Australia are hotly contested and viewed from a range of perspectives.

Some of this contention centred on the extent to which the work of women’s magazine editors fits the definition of good journalism and questions are raised about what functions, other than journalistic purposes, magazine writing may serve. Most editors said that they consider themselves to be journalists but they don’t think their work is well understood by other journalists. Most editors said they were more interested in influencing culture than reporting on it and, when asked which issues they were promoting cultural change on, they listed several.

While confidentiality measures were employed to enhance the honesty of the participants, the data gathered was not evaluated on the basis of its claim to truth. All material was handled using an approach inspired by Foucault’s concept of the statement. It was deemed to be illustrative of what could be said from the position of editor and therefore, taken collectively, the participants’ responses show the parameters of what can be said from the position and illustrate where the position of editor sits in relation to others involved in the production of women’s magazines.

It is hoped that this project will inform debate about the changing role and function of women’s magazines in contemporary Australian culture.
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INTRODUCTION

“How could I not believe, when Ita tells me to?”
Cold Chisel

If media commentators like *The Australian*’s columnist Mark Day are to be believed, the women’s magazines cheerfully perched among the chocolate bars at the checkout are “the least credible print products” (Day, 2005). Day, whose wife is Nicole Kidman’s publicist, may have insider knowledge about specific instances of inaccurate reporting in magazines that fuel his view that magazine writing is bad journalism. But, if this is true and magazines are not credible, why do they sell so well? Are the readers simply too stupid to notice that magazines are ‘bad’, or are they getting something from their magazines that make them worth their cover price. The success and continuing growth of the magazine sector support the idea that many women think magazines are worth buying and this begs the question: What, if it isn’t ‘good’ journalism, are they getting from their magazines? And is it something that good editors are deliberately and expertly providing? These questions raise further questions about who is best qualified to answer them.

This study began with my irritation about the hard time that media commentators give to women’s magazines. As my own career has included both business journalism and magazine editing, the irritation was personal and borne of an understanding that newspaper and magazine journalism are different in ways more subtle than one being simply inferior in quality to the other. As a journalist first and magazine editor second, I was acutely aware of the connection between the two fields, that is supported by bodies such as the Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance and the Journalism Educators Association that consider magazines to be a part of the field of journalism. However, magazines stories often don’t fit the definition of ‘good
journalism’ in the context of media’s role as the fourth estate. Despite this, when selected, written and presented well, they are stories that a significant number of women are drawn to. It seems as though, for as long as magazines were located within the context of journalism, they were doomed to be judged harshly (and to some extent uniformly). The first step required in order to be able to gauge and consider the quality of magazines was, therefore, finding another frame of reference for them.

Magazines are full of stories told in text and image and, in that sense, magazine editors are story tellers. Regarding them as journalists, their work is focussed on informing and entertaining their readers (White, 1996). Looking at them as story tellers, they enter a realm where their work can involve individual and social therapeutic aims (Pinkola-Estes, 1992). The need for this framework-shift was highlighted by Angela McRobbie (1978, 1991, 1996) who, over many years, charted the development of themes in the content of British teen magazines. These themes include problem-solving advice and streams of celebrity-focussed articles that collectively convey messages about the relative importance of romance, beauty, fun, independence, relaxation and education as part of a balanced and successful life.

This idea, that magazines may be providing a different but somehow nourishing kind of story, grew into a rudimentary hypothesis that the old wise women, the cantadores, the tellers, are still with us, not just in cultish art circles, but pervasively through the glossy print media. The old storytellers described by Jungian psychologist Clarissa Pinkola-Estes (1992) in Women who run with wolves were mistresses of disguise who emerged when they were needed, to provide support, advice and, sometimes, provocation on a personal level, and at times when social or cultural change was required. Graves (1982) also pointed to the cultural utility of stories, writing that myths often arose (or resurfaced) during turbulent times and functioned as teaching tales to guide and inspire the populace. To borrow some of Pinkola-Estes’ slightly fabulous terminology, it seems that these wise women may have come out of their caves and reinvented themselves as magazine editors. If magazine editors have picked up the mantle of the old tellers, then perhaps their justification for producing ‘bad journalism’ is that their focus is on tasks like
promoting healthy lifestyles, supporting education and career aspirations, encouraging philanthropy and promoting intercultural tolerance.

Standing opposed to these rosy ideas are sensible arguments against the benevolence of women’s magazines, including Al Gore’s assertions that stories about celebrities, such as Britney Spears and Paris Hilton, are threatening global political stability by making the United States “vulnerable as a democracy to mass and continuing distraction” (Davis, 2007). Gore’s claim is a snapshot of an ongoing debate within journalism about the softening of news and the merging of fourth estate journalism with entertainment. The pro-hard-news side of this dispute was well stated by Rosen (1999) and Patterson (2000), and Simons (2007) continued and updated the argument. In the other corner, the words of Sir Larry Lamb, former editor of the London Sun, are oft-quoted to illustrate the corporate virtue of giving the public what it wants. For example, Ketchell (2005) used this Lamb quote in an article about the rationales used by tabloid editors: “One must ... aim to stimulate, educate, coax, coerce, cajole – shock when necessary – but, above, all to entertain.”

Another avenue of concern flagged by Turow (1997) was that narrower and narrower niche-targeting, which is the stated aim of many magazine stables, may be separating and isolating communities just as much as it is bringing them together.

Questions about the impact of the online media revolution on print products also needed to be considered before committing to research focussing on magazines. Addressing this issue, Donald Krummerfeld, president of the International Federation of the Periodical Press, reassured an international conference in late 2007 that magazines will continue to hold their ground against the slide of all things online, not only because readers are more accepting of magazine advertising, but because they offer readers the luxury of an ‘escape from the screen’ (Leong, 2007). Krummerfeld explained that while most magazines were sprouting websites, these sites tended to provide complementary multimedia content, functionally extending (rather than diminishing) the role of magazine editors and their potential reach into the lives and culture of their readers (Leong, 2007). His optimism about the potential longevity of the magazine industry was echoed by US-based media
commentator Rex Hammock (2007) in the neat phrase: “As long as there are coffee tables, there will be magazines.”

The next stage in the process of forming a viable research hypothesis dealing with magazine editors and their cultural role was finding a clear definition of culture. Early anthropologist Edward Tylor defined it in his 1871 book *Primitive Culture* as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1987/1920). Despite its now-dated gender reference, this kind of definition served anthropology well for many decades. Stuart Hall (1996) was concise and more contemporary when he said culture was about ‘shared meaning’. Joke Hermes (1995, p. 27) unpacked it further calling it “a system of beliefs, values and ideas about the world that meaningfully organise a way of life in a process of negotiation and struggle between those with different positions in the social formation and with different social and cultural power sources.” This is similar to Foucault’s (2001, p. 173) description of culture as “a hierarchical organization of values, accessible to everybody, but at the same time the occasion of a mechanism of selection and exclusion”.

Described as a ‘social formation’ (Hermes, 1995) or ‘hierarchical organization’ (Foucault, 2001) culture appears to be a kind of territory or architectural structure that one can be more (or less) familiar with, skilled at travelling through and adept at exploiting. The problem with brief definitions and metaphors like these is that they emphasise the fixedness, or at least the firmness, of culture rather than its mutability, which is evident when looking at the accelerating pace of cultural change within and expressed by the media (Simons, 2007; Rao, 2003).

Consideration of the mutability of the media and of sub-cultures within it and the larger culture that surrounds it (Finberg, 2003) raises questions about the perennial nature of the role of ‘wise women’ (cum-editors) in a culture that also clearly changes and evolves. The typical lifestyles of western women have changed and diversified profoundly over the last few generations. As women have negotiated and struggled to assume new positions in both old and newly constructed social settings, women’s magazines have changed with them – perhaps leading the way, perhaps as a medium
through which the struggle occurred, perhaps merely reporting its passing. Janice Winship (1987) and Marjorie Ferguson (1983) argue that magazines have played an important role. In Winship’s words, they have offered women readers “help and, above all, hope in a world where the odds are stacked against them” (p. 14).

Standing against this benevolent notion is the accusation, often levelled at magazines, that they portray unrealistic images of women and their lifestyles in order to create mental discomfort that consumers will alleviate by purchasing advertised products. In _The Beauty Myth_ Naomi Wolf (1991/2002) connected women’s magazine content with statistics on anorexia and McMagnus (2007) continued to argue this position stating that, in magazines “there is an emphasis on being, what is for most women, unhealthily slim – which causes eating disorders and similar neurosis [sic] about appearance.” If there is any truth to this claim, the messages embedded in magazines are different and differently motivated – than in the scenario described by Ferguson (1983) and Winship (1987) – but the expectation that they influence the psychology and behaviour of their vast readerships is supported. Holmes (2008) drew attention to this point writing:

> Ever since Betty Friedan published _The Feminine Mystique_ in 1963 there has been a growing corpus of work which identifies magazines, and specifically women’s magazines, as baleful influences in the normative construction of gender and identity, and encouragers of consumption. Yet even in that now debated role magazines are granted a cultural importance far greater than their appearance (ephemeral, disposable) and image (lightweight, stopgap) suggests. (p. iix)

As a theory this view of magazines as baleful emanates from the field of behavioural psychology formulated by early psychologists including Skinner (1974) and Packard (1960), and discussed with reference to more recent studies of culture by Baum (2005) and Lattal and Chase (2003). The implication of this view is that editorial content is specifically and solely designed to support the effectiveness of the advertising. The mechanism it speaks of is the intention of the editor, or the inability of the editor to resist being a conduit for the intentions of the publishers and advertisers. While, from my own experience, the notion that editors intend only to serve advertisers was blatantly untrue, I couldn’t speak for other editors and so my research focus zoomed in on the challenge of revealing editorial intentions.
The prerequisite for this was orientation into the existing body of research, in order to establish what ground has already been covered. Wading in, I found a relatively small cluster of researchers, who extensively cross referenced each other.

Familiarising myself with them and their work I learned that broad cultural agendas in magazine content were discussed at length by London-based sociologist Marjorie Ferguson (1983) who focussed on the role of editors in shaping notions of femininity and concluded:

that it is here, through their content choices, that women’s magazine editors truly act as gatekeepers of the female world. It is they, the high priestesses, who decide the what, as well as the when, of social changes permitted to pass through the pearly gates of editorial discretion (p. 10).

The term “gatekeeper” was first applied to the communications field by David Manning White in 1950. As a concept it is still popular within journalism, with textbook authors such as Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith (2000, p. 9) writing: “editors are gatekeepers; they decide what stories will be covered, whether the coverage appears in print, and if so, how it is reported.” Despite speculation that citizen journalism may be challenging the mass media’s gatekeeper powers, the concept of the gatekeeper, or agenda-setter, still has widespread acceptance and currency (Errington & Miragliotta, 2007). Interestingly though, Ferguson elaborated on her claim about the gatekeeping role, writing: “in making choices of this order on behalf of the female sex, these editors are acting in ways more complex, active and prescriptive than the classic model of media gatekeeping suggests” (p. 132). In arguing this, she raises questions ripe for consideration about the role of editor as a site of power within the discursive fields created and maintained by the producers, consumers and critics of women’s magazines.

Formulating editors as gatekeepers suggests that they have access to the people on both sides of a fence who otherwise have limited opportunities to communicate. In the classic gatekeeper model Ferguson (1983) is referring to, the readers (as a subset of the general public or the citizenry) are on one side and the people who do and say potentially ‘newsworthy’ things are on the other side. Returning to the accusations about magazine editorial content being nothing more than a persuasive extension of
advertising, it is also possible to consider companies with products to sell as players in the gatekeeper model. In her study of the evolution of British women’s magazines through the 1980s and 1990s Anna Gough Yates (2003) documented a series of significant shifts in the print industry’s efforts to identify and target female markets. She wrote:

Magazine editors, in particular, had the job of promoting to advertisers their potential as ‘cultural intermediaries’, who were ‘in touch’ with the lifestyles of their target market groups because they were – quite literally – part of them. This, it was hoped, would encourage sceptical media buyers to believe in the existence of the feminine lifestyle formations of a ‘New Woman’ developed by magazine publishers, and to purchase advertising space as a vehicle for ‘reaching’ young women. (p. 153)

The key phrase in this quote is “to advertisers”. Gough Yates is speaking about the intermediary position editors occupy between companies with goods to sell and the women who might buy them. It is interesting to note that this sentiment is currently echoed in the advertising rate cards of most of Australia’s high circulation women’s magazines in the form of assurances that the readers consider the magazines to be ‘trusted friends’. In this context the personification of ‘magazines’ into ‘friends’ clearly implicates the editors. Sometimes an even more meaningful relationship is claimed. Hedging into a realm of spiritual terminology reminiscent of Ferguson’s (1983) ‘high priestess’ label, ACP Magazines last year used this descriptor in a press release: “Cleo is so much more than just a magazine. To young Australian women it’s the bible” (“Talking Turkeys”, 2007).

While journalism’s attachment to neutrality and freedom from pecuniary interest make this an uncomfortable topic, it has been pointed out that “advertising money pays for most of Australia’s media, and one cannot be understood without the other” (Windschuttle, 1988, p3). Casting editors as pawns of the commercial side of the magazine business who seduce and cajole their trusting readers in return for financial gain for their publishers is a far cry from Ferguson’s (1983) description of editors as ‘high priestesses’ who educate and induct young women. The pawn argument describes editors as disempowered operatives engaged in disempowering (subconsciously compelling) readers, while Ferguson’s calls them empowered individuals engaged in empowering others.
In this sense the advertising-related behavioural psychology claim is similar to the power-oriented critique of the work done by magazine editors offered by feminist scholars, predominantly from the 1970s. Commentary by Angela McRobbie (1978), who discussed the “suffocating embrace” of romantic themes in magazines for adolescent girls, is a good example of this type of analysis. Her take on the inclusion of beauty and grooming advice pages in magazines was that “they pave the way for a woman’s status and identity to become synonymous with her physical attractiveness” (1991). Summarising the feminist position espoused at that time by McRobbie and her 1970s peers, Gough Yates (2003, p. 7) said that they argued that magazines, being the products of monolithic media corporations, are guilty of “conspiring in the promotion of both capitalism and patriarchy” and of being “a key site through which oppressive feminine identities are constructed and disseminated”. Hermes (1995, p. 1) challenged this older feminist media criticism, by saying that these feminists spoke “on behalf of others who are, implicitly, thought to be unable to see for themselves how bad such media texts as women’s magazines are.” Disparaging the “holier than thou moralism” of this perspective, she advocated a more post-modern and less moralistic approach that acknowledges the agency of readers, writers and editors.

While relatively little research has been done on magazines in Australia, in a book called *Fame Games* Turner, Bonner and Marshall (2000) looked at celebrity journalism in a range of media forms via interviews with media professionals, including *New Idea* editor Bunty Avieson. The authors cited Hermes (1995) view that magazine gossip was a mechanism of community formation because it extended the readers’ circles of familiar people and it was a source of melodrama. They also flagged awareness of the intense criticism often levelled at magazines for carrying celebrity stories writing “conventional criticism of celebrity journalism in these magazines tends to privilege elite views of popular culture and potential misogynist conceptions of a passive, gullible female reader” (p. 153). They also made the point that “while there may be a number of different judgements made about the cultural function being served by these magazines it is important to recognise that … their coverage is essential to the processes through which celebrity profiles are built and
disseminated” (p.153). This point emphasises the impact of magazines on culture beyond the intimacy of the editor-reader-advertiser enclave.

Margaret Beetham (1996, p. 2) is another who opted not to see woman’s magazines “exclusively as instruments of a pervasive domestic ideology and a regime of sexual repression”. Citing historians from a number of perspectives, who have challenged the early feminist critique, she points in particular to Foucault (1981) and the tools he provided as being particularly useful in their ability to “throw light on the complex relationships enacted in women’s magazines between readers, writers and editors.”

This call for more understanding of the complex relations involved in magazine production and consumption opens up a middle ground between the two positions that first sparked my interest in magazine research, the first being that magazines are simply bad journalism, and the second, that editors (and the magazines they produce) are good, nourishing and helpful. However, researching complex relations is a complex enterprise and Foucault’s intricate vision of the fabric of culture (rendered not as a solid structure but as a fluid discourse) is useful in that it makes the slippery and rarely-defined components of cultural exchanges visible and amenable to discussion.

Recapping the logical progression so far, the seed idea behind this study was irritation with the mismatch between the claim that women’s magazines are ‘bad’ journalism and the clear reality that they are popular with readers. This prompted consideration of magazines from a storytelling perspective that enables discussion about their involvement with empowerment of individuals and cultural activism.

Weighing against this positive view of magazine editors were: arguments that magazines are bad, simply because they distract the citizenry from more pressing environmental and political concerns (Gore, 2007); critiques that magazines socially isolate people by encouraging them to identify with tightly defined niche-market subcultures, rather than with society as a whole (Turow, 1997); and concerns that media convergence may be threatening the whole magazine industry, making them
soon-to-be obsolete and therefore irrelevant (Potts, 2007). While the first two of these arguments may well have substance, the third was discounted by Donald Krummerfeld, president of the International Federation of the Periodical Press (Leong, 2007), who has a vested interest in promoting the sector but is, nonetheless, in a position to be well-informed. The presence of these well-argued contradictory positions indicated a potential for more research to untangle some of the contested positions.

The next step was the search for a clear definition of culture that would enable it to be considered both as a stable entity in which one can see a continuity of a particular function, and as a mutable entity that changes and evolves as a result of changes in both internal and external conditions. By this stage an investigation into the role of editors in changing and shaping culture was emerging as a potential research target.

The existing arguments supporting the idea that magazines are culturally influential included claims that magazines are manipulative and serve the interests of publishers and by extension the companies who advertise (Wolf, 1991/2002; Day, 2005; McMagnus, 2007). This position downplayed the agency of editors however because it portrays them as pawns of the businessmen. In contrast Ferguson (1983) and Winship (1987) described magazines and their editors as ‘nurturing’ while other researchers, such as Hermes (1995) and Gough Yates (2003) have expressed doubt about the hapless gullibility of readers and called for more research into the complex relationships between magazine producers and consumers. Holmes (2008) took a more decisive stance in writing: “the idea of audiences being passive consumers has been convincingly challenged” (p. iix) and in echoing Gough Yates’ call for more research he described magazine journalism as “a form which scholars have, with a few exceptions, tended to underestimate and overlook” (p. ix).

At this point my own personal line of enquiry merged with the evolving body of research and this project began to take shape as an earnest attempt to advance understanding of the cultural role of magazine editors and the products they produce. More will be said in the ‘Literature Review’ about the research that
predates and underpins this study, while for now we follow the progress of the budding research plan.

A methodology for gathering information was required. Who should be asked about what and how? Several contemporary researchers, including Hermes (1995), Gough Yates (2003) and Ferguson (1983), have called for more ethnographic studies in this area claiming that ethnography has the potential to contribute meaningful information about the processes behind the production and consumption of magazines that will broaden understanding of cultural formations, discourses and cultural change. Taking this lead and adopting an ethnographic approach meant that editors would be asked to give information about their own work and thoughts about its impact, as opposed to deducing information about them via textual analysis. How? Tools in the ethnographic shed include a range of interview and questionnaire options. The rationale behind my selection of autobiographical writing, face-to-face interviews, and online and email questionnaires are explained more fully in the ‘Methodology’ section.

Once gathered, the transcripts of interviews and tables of questionnaire results could be handled in a number of ways, and described in terms of psychological, anthropological, sociological or other models. Again, advice was taken from other magazine researchers and a decision was taken to use a framework and research methodology derived from Foucault’s (1972) work on fields of discourse. More will be said about which specific aspects of Foucault’s prodigious body of work will be used, and how, in the Literature Review and other sections of this thesis.

In addition to adding to the body of knowledge accumulating within the discipline of cultural studies by building on the work of researchers, such as Hermes (1995), McRobbie (1991), Beetham (1996) and Gough Yates (2003), this study is also relevant to the field of academic journalism and more specifically to journalism education. While magazines are print media products, this study posits that viewing them as journalism misses the point in terms of their aims and makes it impossible to assess their quality. This is clearly problematic for media educators teaching from a journalistic perspective. The magazine themes identified by McRobbie (1991)
included narratives about the relative importance of romance, beauty, fun, independence, relaxation and education and these are outside the gambit of usual journalistic concerns. McRobbie noted that the development of a better understanding about the production of this kind of content might bring “magazine journalism more tangibly within the career horizons of the magazine’s keenest readers” (1991, p. 32).

If McRobbie is right about this, then this study could pave the way for more effective lectures and courses on magazine writing and editing. A refreshed and more informed approach to teaching could empower a new generation of magazine editors to bring deeper understanding to the role than current editors who have not had the benefit of university-based education in their specific profession. This assumption, that current editors were not trained, or, if they were, that their training covered only the practical side of the task and didn’t address the ‘other side’ of the position, is backed by Ferguson (1983) who wrote: “no British women’s periodical publisher operates a training school for editors as such….the majority of editors had worked their way up through the ranks… the tradition has been one of on-the-job training.” In his autobiography former Ralph editor, and Woman’s Day chief subeditor, Mark Dapin (2004, p. 122) indicated that the same system operates in Australia’s magazine world. He pointed to its major shortcoming as a form of training with the words:

Nobody told me how to be an editor. There was no training and no job description. I only knew what I had learned from watching editors in the past – but editing is not a particularly visual task. Editors spend much of their day on the phone, and it’s hard to tell if they are brokering an international deal for exclusive rights to the new Martin Amis story, or dialling 1-800-WET-MAMMA.

It is precisely because it is hard to see what editors are actually doing that this study was designed to elicit and capture explanations from editors about their work processes, rationales and motivations.

It is worth acknowledging here, at the outset, that any attempt to study magazine editors in the context of ‘culture’ will have to wrestle with the fact that editors are both producers and consumers of magazines, and may be responding to cultural
pressures as much as they are applying them. Another critical limitation of this study is that it only explores the theory that magazine editorial choices and policies influence cultural values by examining the opinions of magazine editors, who may have an inflated sense of their own power, or conversely, who may be too deeply embedded in the culture of their readerships to be able to see the culture and their role within it with analytical perspective. Avenues are therefore left open for future studies to further test actual shifts in cultural values (via research such as Sheridan’s 2000) and to determine whether some cultural values, such as perceptions of beauty, are more or less malleable via editorial suggestion than others, perhaps such as attitudes about minorities. There may also be some strategies that editors use that are more effective than others in manipulating cultural values.

That said, this study – limited in its scope, as all studies are – was commenced with the aim that its findings would be useful, specifically in: documenting the nature of the mental, as well as the physical, work done by magazine editors (for the sake of journalism educators, media commentators and other journalists); plotting the configuration of workplace relationships that editors operate in; identifying limiting, supportive and inspirational elements; and describing the way magazine editors perceive their roles in terms of their contribution to maintenance and change of the values and beliefs Australians collectively hold as a larger culture so that the extent to which those expectations are met in reality can be explored in future research.

The research developed through four phases: topics of interest derived from autobiographical material in phase one were extended and refined via interviews in phase two; these were further explored through a questionnaire in phase three; and discussed by a range of stakeholders in phase four. The long list of topics that the editors brought into the project includes advertorial, burnout, professional ethics, pride in their products and the nature of their relationships with their readers, employers and colleagues.

Thanks to the generosity of seven editors who consented to long interviews, 30 who completed a questionnaire, and six industry stakeholders who reflected on the findings, the project achieved what it set out to do.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Why is the position and function of magazine editors an important area of study? In 1997 Queensland-based academic Frances Bonner wrote: “Australians (and not just women) are renowned as the highest per capita consumers of magazines in the world.” Ten years later this statement was directly echoed by Magazine Publishers of Australia (MPA) – the industry association representing Australia’s consumer magazine publishers – that proclaims in the opening lines of its website that “Australians continue to be among the world’s most avid buyers of consumer magazines.”

Both these claims use the word ‘consumer’ which straddles the two measures routinely used by the publishing industry: readership and circulation. MPA (2008) cites Roy Morgan Research’s finding that, in the 12 months to June 2007, more than eight out of 10 Australians (aged 14 years and over) read at least one magazine. Broken down by gender Roy Morgan estimated that 7.5 million females and 6.8 million males in Australia were magazine readers. These figures are updated quarterly and based on data from face-to-face interviews about actual magazine readership behaviour. More than 54,000 respondents aged 14 years and over are involved in each yearly sample in the ongoing research process (MPA, 2008).

While Roy Morgan Research conducts Australia’s most comprehensive readership studies, the leading sources of circulation figures are the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) and Circulations Audit Board (CAB). The ABC and the CAB are non-profit industry organisations that provide a forum for publishers to establish credibility for their circulation for the benefit of advertisers and their agencies. The ABC was founded in 1932 and the CAB in 1957 and both bodies are governed by directors elected annually from their membership of advertisers, advertising agencies and publishers. While the veracity of their audits has been questioned (“A case of,”
2005; “News Ltd doth,” 2005; “Publishers on circulation,” 2005; Kelly, 2005), they are still well-supported and utilized by their membership, which includes the major players in Australia’s magazine sector. According to MPA (2007a) around 140 magazines are currently audited by ABC and:

In the 12 months to June 2007, gross copy sales of ABC-audited consumer magazines were around 223 million and the retail value of consumer magazine sales is estimated to be more than $1.06 billion. … The total number of Australian cover-priced magazine titles is estimated at more than 1100, with a large number of niche titles catering to the special interests of dedicated readers. There is also a high volume of imported titles for sale on newsstands bringing the total number of magazines to approximately 4500. (MPA, 2007a)

Bearing in mind that some magazine editors edit more than one title, these figures indicate that there are probably around 1000 to 1100 magazines editors in Australia. While it is tempting to imagine editing a large circulation magazine as the most common form of the role, this isn’t the case. Looking at MPA’s list of the top 100 consumer magazines in Australia in 2007 it is interesting to note that only six have sales in excess of 200,000, only the top 23 titles have circulation figures over 100,000 per issue; only the top 60 have circulations over 50,000 and the bottom 12 on the list (along with the other 1000 magazine titles produced in Australia) have circulations below 25,000 per issue (MPA, 2007b).

These small circulation magazines are not just less successful versions of the large circulation magazines. In many cases they are reaching communities of readers more specifically defined than the audiences targeted by the larger circulation magazines. These magazines are products of a trend away from mass media advertising described by Turow:

The heads of major technology firms, media corporations and marketers clearly feel that there is no turning back from the growth of print and electronic choices aimed at narrower and narrower groups of people….Marketing and media executives are sure that people gravitate to materials that most closely zero in on their likes and dislikes, their sense of themselves. (1997, p.1)
According to International Federation of the Periodical Press president Donald Krummerfeld, it is the ability of magazines to penetrate niche, as well as mass, markets that underpins their success. He stressed, though, that the other jewel in the crown of magazines is that while readers find online advertising annoying, they tolerate and seem to enjoy consuming advertising in magazines. He claims that this accounts for the 26 per cent growth in magazine advertising expenditure worldwide in 2006-07, outstripping the performance of all other media types including newspapers, television, online and cinema (Leong, 2007).

The 4500 titles available in Australia range from hugely popular international fashion magazines to business publications to novelty sport publications and craft magazines. According to the MPA almost two thirds of magazines sold between July 2006 and June 2007 (as audited by ABC) were in the women’s weeklies (52.5%) and women’s interest (12.1%) categories. The next largest categories were men’s lifestyle and interest (8%); food and wine (5%); current affairs and business (5%); and home and lifestyle (4.9%). Motoring, youth and music, kids, computers and gaming each took between 1% and 3% of the market and 4.7% of the market was categorized as “other”. With market domination clearly demonstrated and with much of the contention about content, credibility and cultural impact of magazines directed towards publications in the women’s categories (Day, 2005; Ferguson, 1983; Gough Yates, 2003) this study will focus on the field of ‘women’s magazines’.

Grouping magazines into categories is problematic, though, because they consistently defy them. Women’s magazines often carry stories about travel and travel magazines carry stories about issues relevant to women. Magazines are often loosely ascribed to categories (such as ‘women’s’, ‘motoring’ and/or ‘travel’) based on their target audiences, content and surveys of their readership. This kind of casual description allows publications to fall into more that one category depending on the context of the conversation about categories. However, some situations call for more stringent categorisation. In 2007 MPA produced a list of the magazines available in Australia grouped into discrete categories to give newsagents and other retailers guidance about how to arrange them in a content-related manner on their display shelves. The MPA categories include ‘women’s weeklies’ and ‘women’s interest’, with

An interesting snapshot of who the readers of Australian women’s magazines are can be glimpsed by comparing the readership demographics of *The Australian* and *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*. The newspaper trumpets itself as Australia’s only national broadsheet newspaper and *The Australian Woman’s Weekly* retains its long-held position as Australia’s highest circulation magazine. While their statistics are used for self-promotion, both publications attribute their figures to independent research firm Roy Morgan Research. *The Australian* (News Ltd, 2008) reports a daily circulation of 137,000 that it expands to an estimated readership of 477,000 people. It claims that 65% those readers are men; that 50% of its readers earn more than $50,000pa; and that 64% of them are white collar workers, professionals or managers. *The Australian Woman’s Weekly* (ACP, 2008) expands its monthly circulation of 605,039 copies to an estimated 2.57 million readers. It claims 78% of these are female; 43.5% earn over $50,000pa; and 84% are white collar workers, professionals or managers. Apart from highlighting income inequities, these figures challenge the stereotype of women’s magazine readers as silly girls or gullible housewives.

Not only are magazines read by a startlingly large proportion of the Australian population (Bonner, 1997; MPA, 2007a), their content is taken seriously by their readers (Bonner & McKay, 2000; Sheridan, 2000). Bonner and McKay (2000) refers to several studies that indicate that Australian magazine readers take their content seriously, including Radimer and Harvey’s (1995) research that showed that Queensland women cite magazines as their most frequently accessed source of
nutrition information. And, Kassulke et al’s (1993) research, in which women in three Queensland electorates reported that magazines, rather than television, radio, newspapers, books, or even family friends or health professionals, were their principal source of health information.

The notion that magazines have an impact on Australian cultural values, as well as being a source of information, is also supported by Susan Sheridan’s (2000) research on attitudes towards migrants in the post-second world war Australian Women’s Weekly. Sheridan looked at the magazine over 25 years and found that during that time there was a shift in the attitudes expressed about post-WWII migrants. She also found that the growing acceptance of migrants in the pages of the magazine in the late 1960s and early 1970s was “foreshadowing the move towards the multiculturalist discourses and policies of the 1970s and 1980s” (p. 124). This statement confirms that magazines and their editors can be seen as occupants of an influential site within the discourse of contemporary Australian culture and, in a circular manner, it confirms the utility of frameworks drawn from Foucault’s study of discourse (1972) for research into the cultural impact of magazines.

As much of the debate about the benevolence (Ferguson, 1983, Winship, 1987) or malevolence (Wolf 1991/2002, McMagnus 2007) of women’s magazines has touched on the question of whether editors are pawns or empowered, it is interesting to note the power dynamic implied in The Australian Women’s Weekly’s self-designated role over the period covered in Sheridan’s study. It was to “preserve and modernize national identity in ways that were compatible with its central business of preserving and modernizing femininity and domestic culture generally” (Sheridan, 2000, p. 121). While the magazine’s attempts to preserve femininity may have angered feminist readers seeking to change it more suddenly, its work on modernizing femininity may have appealed to them and worked in their favour. In working towards its stated aim, the magazine was active in ushering in new forms of Australian femininity, and doing it gently enough to keep its readership engaged in the process. Using stories prescriptively to support social changes and unite disparate groups, has resonances with Jungian scholar Clarissa Pinkola Estes’s (1992) description of what old-fashioned story tellers do. She wrote that “stories are
embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life” (p. 14). She identifies herself as belonging to a tradition of storytellers and says: “for us story is medicine that strengthens and arights the individual and the community” (p. 17).

It is interesting to note, though, that the word ‘story’ in the sense that Pinkola Estes uses it seems to stand apart from the sense in which journalists use it. A fast-breaking news-flash about a plane crash is clearly a story in the journalistic sense of the world, but it is difficult at first glance to see how it works as a story that impacts on cultural cohesiveness and wellbeing. The connection is clearer, though, when you consider news as a form of narrative about life in specific communities. Narrative theory grew out of the study of literature and has more recently been put to use in social-science research. Describing this cross-disciplinary work, Vincent et al (1997, p. 352) said that the scholars involved in this endeavour began with a common assumption “that storytelling is an important human activity, and through an informal knowledge of the narrative process, people interpret the indistinct information found in society.”

Journalists, as tellers of stories, are part of this process and, according to Vincent et al (1997), even divergent narrative theories “agree on the media’s power to help guide the social construction of reality” (p. 357). In their study they go on to describe how the telling of a story about a plane crash, with the ensuing tragedy of loss of life, the heroism of the rescuers, the exposure and bringing to justice of the culprit and the return to normality, fits a traditional literary storyline and appears to serve the same cultural function as mythology, as described by Robert Graves (1982), who wrote that one of the key the functions of myths was “to justify an existing social system” (p. v). The resonance echoes again in Bird and Dardene’s (1997) statement that news is “a way in which people create order out of disorder, transforming knowing into telling. News offers more than fact – it offers reassurance and familiarity in shared community experience” (p. 336). The need for stories that provide cultural guidance for women in contemporary culture is perhaps explained by Australian media academic Keith Windschuttle’s assertion that “women’s magazines today are feeding off, and reinforcing, a lifestyle for women that is of fairly recent historical origin and which, in many ways, is quite unnatural” (1988, p.

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Ferguson (1983) concurs, arguing that magazines play an important education role in the lives of women in saying: “women’s magazines also provide the syllabus and step-by-step instructions which help to socialise their readers into the various ages and stages of the demanding – but rewarding – state of womanhood” (p. 185).

In recent years attention has been drawn to the need for more research about magazines in Australia by Turner et al (2000), and internationally by Gough Yates (2003) and Tim Holmes (2008), editor of a compilation of studies presented at two Mapping the Magazine conferences in the UK in 2003 and 2005. Despite this, the practices of magazine producers (including writers, editors and publishers) remain relatively unexplored. In addition, much of this analysis focuses on the messages within magazines that allegedly promote or legitimise dominant interests (Ballaster et al, 1991; McRobbie, 1978; Wolf, 1991/2002). In contrast, Gough-Yates (2003, p. 7) argues that: “such accounts of women’s magazines offer, at best, only a partial account of the industry”. In the opening chapter of her study of British women’s magazines in the 1980s and 1990s, she clearly identifies a need for more research going beyond textual analysis, claiming that the existing perspectives “marginalise the specificities of social, political and economic formations and their impact upon not only women’s magazine production but also the lived cultures of the magazine producers themselves” (p. 7). She argues that by taking the text as the key point of analysis, the research has “ignored the roles of producers in using (and transforming) discursive and ideological elements within the development of women’s magazines” (p. 7).

McRobbie (1991, p. 186) also drew attention to the people who create magazines in a reflection on developments in British teen magazines between the 1970s and 1980s arguing that “perhaps the single most interesting change in the publications has been the result of the outlook and editorial values of those working inside them and the attention they pay to the girls who make up their readership.” She had noted earlier in the same chapter that dramatic change in the way problem pages were written was “partly a result of the people now working on the magazines who themselves had been influenced by feminism” (p.165).
While there has been some research on Australia’s magazine culture in recent years, principally led by scholars in Queensland and New South Wales (Bonner 2000, Radimer & Harvey, 1995; Kassulke et al, 1993), there is still much work to be done, particularly work incorporating methodologies selected for their ability to access information about the position and function of media producers within discursive fields. According to Frances Bonner (personal communication, 2/7/2004), no one had yet done a study that involved asking Australian magazine editors how they perceived their roles and responsibilities.

Noting these shortcomings in the research to date, this study seeks to explore the untilled ground where the position and function of editor, with all of its practical and commercial responsibilities, meets with individuals occupying the position and their use of, familiarity with, and attempts to, transform or maintain the culture, common knowledge or discourses of their readerships. This endeavour falls into what Gough Yates (2003) called “important areas of knowledge that need to be developed more fully” (p. 13).

Models of discourse have been used to inform and shape studies of women’s magazines since the late 1980s. Many of the text-based studies that Gough Yates (2003) claims dominated research into women’s magazines prior to this shift, such as Hebron (1983) and Winship (1987), were based on the work of Italian Marxist writer Antonio Gramsci (1971) and depicted women’s magazines as a site within civil society that was part of the hegemonic framework that subordinated women. Over the next two decades magazines changed dramatically, to some extent led internationally by the scorching success of *Cosmopolitan* under the editorship of Helen Gurley Brown – who unashamedly urged her readers to pursue education and careers and to unshackle sexuality and marriage. Her clear calls for cultural change and empowerment of women challenged the view that women’s magazines were, by their nature, repressive, and presented them as something clearly more complex. In response, academic researchers were drawn to the work of post-modern and post-structuralist theorists, especially French philosopher Michel Foucault, because they were offering frameworks for exploring the ways that information and ideology move in culture that, unlike the Gramsci-inspired frameworks (that in turn rested on
Marxism), were relatively free of inherent political positions. In Foucault’s (1972) words, his approach was “much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new positivities and of sudden redistributions” (p. 169). This suited it well to research into magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, and others that followed the trend that Gurley Brown was setting, and their cultural impact.

Foucault’s work focuses on the notion of discourse that he defines at length in his books *The Order of Things* (1970) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). In brief, for Foucault a discourse on a topic, or within a profession or culture, is: “a field of ‘what can be said and what can be thought’ ” (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 34). Foucault’s books focus on discourse in specific times and settings, such as nineteenth century medicine, and sexuality in Ancient Greece, but the implications of his theories have broader application, and have been incorporated into studies of subjects as diverse as statistics, legal and literary discourse, photography and pedagogy. As a result of his work, research into magazines in the last three decades (Hermes 1995; Gough Yates 2003) has begun to analyse the role that magazines play in the lives of contemporary women and the cultures they live in, providing an alternative perspective to earlier ones that framed readers as simply naive and gullible.

In his model, it is the content and form (meaning internal rules and practices) of a discourse that dictate the behaviour of institutions and individuals. But Foucault doesn’t see discourses as static or necessarily stable. While the rules that operate within them can be described, he said a discourse is “by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle” (1972, p. 120) (‘political’ in this context meaning culturally influential, rather than governmental). It is this focus on how discourses evolve that makes it interesting to look at media (including magazines) from a Foucauldian perspective because it allows consideration of not only what constrains what magazines can and can’t say within in a cultural setting proscribed by a time and place, but also consideration of how editors using a one-to-many medium might be weighing into the struggle to transform the discourse of their culture.
Describing the shift towards discourse-inspired studies, Gough Yates (2003) wrote that feminist researchers “began to consider the meaning of women’s magazines as ‘dialogical’, and in potential struggle with other historically and culturally specific uses of language, other forms of culture, and practices” (p. 11). This ‘dialogical’ approach started to consider not only how magazine producers spoke to their readers but also how they listened to them. Rather than seeing magazines as produced by particular powerful entities and projected into the culture, this new research started to investigate in more detail the reciprocal relationships between the readers and producers of magazines. Joke Hermes (1995) asked readers what magazines meant to them and examined the contexts in which magazines were read. She concluded that meaning could not be separated from context. Ros Ballaster et al (1991), while predominantly focusing on a text-based analysis, also interviewed groups of women and found that readers were very conscious of women’s magazines as “bearers of particular discourses of femininity”.

As the focus on discourse made what the participants in the discursive field ‘said’ the essential material for analysis, a rethinking of research methodologies was required. Approaches were borrowed from anthropology because they were a means of accessing information about the processes, responses and discourses of specific communities and subcultures, and they could be applied to groups such as magazine readers and producers. Hermes (1995) called it an “ethnographic turn” and Gough Yates (2003) wrote that “influenced by these [post modern, post structuralist] perspectives, some authors began to embrace interpretive and ethnographic methodologies in their studies of women’s magazines” (p. 11-12).

Ethnography as a methodology was not all that was borrowed. The trend within anthropological ethnography towards indigenous (insider) research was also cribbed, in the sense that value began to be perceived in autobiographical accounts from researchers who were also members of the communities being studied. Winship’s (1987) study, Inside Women’s Magazines, gives an account of changing trends in magazines over three decades and is peppered with anecdotes about her own experiences and perceptions as a reader herself. Commenting on this approach and contrasting it against the moralism of the Gramsci-inspired research of the 1970s,
Hermes (1995) wrote: “Winship’s lesson for me is that it is possible to be both appreciative and critical as long as it is done in a self-reflexive vein” (p. 4).

This project is a continuation of the excavation along this vein, taking an insider ethnographic approach to uncovering the self-perceptions of editors, not only by speaking to editors, but also by using myself as a former editor as a starting point. In taking advantage of my personal experience and the network of contacts available to me as a result of having worked as a magazine editor, this study offers an insider’s view, particularly valuable in the light of Gough Yates’ (2003) concern that “access to the culture industries may be a problem for future feminist academic research in this field” (p. 158).

Commentaries on, and research into, media production have already described the field of competing pressures that editors operate within, including the pressure to make their magazines commercially successful, to appease the demands of their owners and publishers and to make their products appealing to their readers (Whitaker, Ramsey & Smith, 2000; Windschuttle, 1988). It is also acknowledged, however, that editors bring something unique and personal to the position, employing what has been called an “instinctive knowledge” (Gough Yates, 2003) or “sixth sense” (Ferguson, 1983) to guide their decisions. In addition, their own personal style and their own brand of editing is often used as a marketing tool to convince advertisers that the magazine is truly in tune and therefore popular with its target audience (Barrel & Braithwaite, 1988; cited in Gough Yates, 2003).

This study, as well as describing editors via demographic data, will explore editors’ own opinions about their position, function and potential to put their own mark on their publications, amongst the enormous pressures of the position, so eloquently described by editor Mark Dapin (2004, p. 120) with the words:

Editing a magazine is a fantastic, frustrating, exhilarating, all-consuming, intoxicating, terrifying, fascinating, soul-destroying, addictive, magnificent waste of time. A morning lasts a minute; a week is over before you have had time to go out for lunch; a year telescopes into a month. You’re on a continual emotional bender,
filling and draining yourself, congratulating and flagellating yourself, falling in and out of love.

In asking these questions this study seeks to discover the extent to which editors, in the midst of these pressures, subscribe to (and worry about) the view encapsulated in Ferguson’s assertion that:

The significance of the editor’s role within the editorial process is dwarfed by comparison with its potential social significance in the world outside. For it is these editors, in deciding what their magazines will deal with, who are deciding what will be included or excluded from the agenda of feminine concerns. (1983, p. 131)

While this statement could make sense of the emotional intensity described by Dapin (2004), in saying it Ferguson could be accused of assuming homogeneity in how readers react to magazine content and the extent to which they accept it into their agenda of concerns. More recent research has questioned this assumption (Hermes 1995, Ballaster et al 1991). In a ground-breaking study, Ien Ang (1990) summarised a number of research perspectives on the study of audiences that, viewed collectively, provided a more nuanced picture of how a range of media publications are used and interpreted by different people in different contexts. Her approach downplays the ‘power’ of media to inject universally understood messages into the minds of mass audiences and focuses instead on the ways that people integrate media messages into their lives and use various elements of media messages to create meaning. This approach informed studies such as Hermes’ (1995) and McRobbie’s (1996) explorations of how magazines are read and studies such as Radimer and Harvey (1995) and Kassulke et al (1993) that provided data on how magazines were used as a source of health information. What this project contributes to this line of enquiry is insight into how current magazine editors think their audiences react and how those beliefs about their readers shape their practice.

Delving deeper into the reader-editor relationship this project also probes the issues of editor-activism and the celebritisation of editors. Editor-activism is a term I am applying to the promotion (through their magazines) of issues or causes that editors feel passionate about. It is similar to the concept of ‘advocacy journalism’ (Berman, 2004) but as ‘advocacy journalism’, as a term, has emerged from the US alternative
political media it carries political connotations not relevant to this study. If, and when, Australian magazine editors use their publications as a platform from which to advocate for social or political change it may be done simply because, as editors, they can. It may be done because they feel that their concerns echo their readers’ concerns and so stories about endangered animals or social justice issues are therefore fair game as editorial topics. The other possible source of this kind of editorializing is encouragement from industry bodies such as the Australian Press Council that issues guidelines recommending ways of handling certain topics (such as racism and suicide). Sometimes these guidelines are informed by research on the outcomes of media coverage of these issues, such as the Hunter Institute of Mental Health’s growing body of suicide-media research. On the other hand, the tenets of journalism, enshrined in documents like the Media and Entertainment and Arts Alliances Code of Ethics, discourage biased or persuasive journalism and call instead for a dispassionate reporting of facts.

The academic questions raised by editor-activism cut to the heart of the question about culture in the sense of Hall’s (1996) “shared meaning” – as an interpretation of the world, held in common by members of a defined community – and the potential of magazine editors to influence both their communities of readers and the broader culture that those readers also belong to. Discussing British women’s magazines in the 1980s and 1990s Gough Yates (2003) argued that editors were selected for their ability to communicate with their target market groups because they were “quite literally – part of them”. Veteran Australian editor Ita Buttrose (1985) made a similar assertion in her first autobiography, saying that she was chosen for her role because she fit the target reader demographic.

To unpack the complexities of this issue it is useful to turn to Foucault (1972) and to talk about ‘culture’ in terms of discourses, or discursive fields (defined as the body of knowledge or field of what can be said and thought). The notion that the editor is wholly immersed in the discourse of her own readership is problematic in that it is incompatible with the notion that the editor is a gatekeeper, bringing something into the field that was formerly outside of it. At best it allows the editor to function as a pot stirrer, bringing elements from the edges into the centre.
Contrasting with this view that sees editors confined by their membership of their readership’s discursive field, is the view that editors may be members of separate and potentially overlapping discursive fields and engaged in a process of blending them. Foucault (1977a, p. 131-132) acknowledged the power of the media (along with other institutions such as universities and the military) to produce and control the transmission of what a community perceives to be truth. In his (1977b) book on the prison system, he wrote about the ability of the media to transform discourses, and to function as a battleground between opposing discourses. The example he gave was of broadsheets issued in eighteenth century France that the King sanctioned for a while on the grounds that were intended to legitimise brutal executions, but that instead iconicized the criminals they wrote about into folk heroes.

While asking editors about these issues and tensions is intuitively a good starting point in the process of introducing understanding of them into the academic sphere, the question of what to do with their answers is clearly more complex. In order to organise the comments, disclosures and insights offered in the qualitative phases of this study into forms that can be carried forward into the quantitative and analytical phases an approach to data analysis was required that would preserve as much of the richness as possible. Again Foucault has something to offer in this regard but, as he wrote so much over his life, I see some merit in explaining here which elements of his work in particular sit behind the approach taken to handling the swathes of material produced in the early stages of this study.

Foucault’s 1972 book *The Archeology of Knowledge* is a text that begins the work of carving out a new methodology for describing the world, including the fluid socio-cultural elements of it that tend to defy the usual categories used by historians. He describes these elusive elements as:

> those shady philosophies that haunt literature, art, the sciences, law, ethics and even man’s daily life; … those ago-old themes that are never crystallized in a rigorous and individual system, but which have formed the spontaneous philosophy of those who did not philosophize. The history not of literature but that of tangential rumour, that everyday, transient writing that never acquires the status of an
oeuvre, or is immediately lost: the analysis of sub-literatures, almanacs, reviews and newspapers, temporary successes, anonymous authors. (p. 136-137)

Magazines are, by their hasty and transient nature, part of this shady socio-cultural slurry that has been so slippery to study. Foucault’s focus in studying the most transient elements of culture was not on what knowledge they contain (or used to contain) but on how they arose and fell. In The Archeology of Knowledge Foucault is not looking at the thoughts, representations, images, themes and preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses in order to establish an unassailable version of the history of the world. Instead, he seeks to establish a way of studying the way conversations and ideas emerge and travel through culture, losing or gaining credibility as they are whispered or broadcast along. His interest is in the invisible and often unspoken rules that enable or restrict different kinds of conversations at different times and the processes that mutate those rules.

His vision can be described as cartographic. The positions the speakers occupy are dots, the things they say are lines that join dot to dot. Some speakers are located in positions that give them greater access to more people than others; some are located in positions privileged with more authority than others. The webs or matrices formed by the adjoining lines are called ‘discourses’ or ‘discursive fields’. It is important also to stress that Foucault’s approach does not look at particular people as exceptional individuals, instead it focuses on the positions from which they speak. The discourses he analysed were often described as institutional, focussing on the institution of medicine or discipline. In that context, this study is focussing on the institution of media, more specifically magazine media, and the position and function of women’s magazine editors within that institution. Other positions within the institution of media are readers, advertisers, publishers and other kinds of journalists.

The act of speaking is something Foucault called “enunciating” (1972, p.88) as it is a term that holds more than just the act of vocalization. It includes things said, written, sung and broadcast, and things that are true and untrue because, from his perspective, as the creator of a methodology, the truth of each enunciation is not
what is being investigated. The question is: who is speaking and who is listening, and what currency or power does the enunciation have, and what endows it with that power and/or that fluidity?

Explaining the process of enunciation, Foucault painstakingly defines the lines between the dots on his virtual map as something that he calls “the statement” (1972, p. 79). In brief, it describes an utterance by someone about something, that may or may not be true, but that nonetheless indicates that the someone and the something have some kind of relationship (such as observer and observed). What he achieves by doing this is a lifting of the statement away from arguments about truth onto a table where it can be spread out and investigated.

He distinguishes the statement from “the sentence” and “the proposition” (1972, p. 88-89), which he calls units of grammar or logic that can be characterized by the elements that figure in them and the rules of construction that unite them. Making it clear that the statement is something different he writes:

In relation to the sentence and the proposition, the questions of origin, time, place and context are merely subsidiary; the decisive question is that of their correctness (if only under the form of ‘acceptability’). We will call statement the modality of existence proper to that group of signs: a modality that allows it to be more than a mere object made by a human being; a modality that allows it to be in relation to a domain of objects, to prescribe a definite position to any possible subject, to be situated among other verbal performances and to be endowed with a repeatable materiality.

(1972, p. 107)

He then uses this definition to clarify his signature term “discourse”, defining a discourse as “constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements” (1972, p. 107).

Foucault’s notion of the statement is a critical element in this project as it is statements that will be considered, carried and compared between the various phases. Rather than just considering the ‘truth’ or ‘acceptability’ of what is said by myself, in phase one, and by the other participants in the subsequent stages, the project looks at what they say as statements from the origin, time, place and context
of the position and function of a contemporary Australian magazine editor. Compared and contrasted with each other and presented as an array, the collection of statements that this study yields will represent the discourse of magazine editors about the position they occupy, in relation to “a domain of objects” (1972, p. 107), in this case meaning the magazines they produce and the topics that they bring to light or leave to languish, uncovered in their glossy pages, and by extension in the spheres of the readerships and the public domain.

Moving to the second point in the list of features of the statement in the quote above, the statements this study yields will also make it possible to “prescribe a definite position to any possible subject” (1972, p. 107) in this case taken to mean other players in the industry such as publishers, colleagues, and readers. The study will elicit statements from editors that will illuminate the relationships between these various positions in the institution of magazine media.

Foucault’s third point is that statements are situated among other verbal performances. This means acknowledging that the participants are constantly speaking/writing and listening/reading. In this context this means that the conversations captured for analysis in this study are just fragments of the whole discourse of magazine media and it is important to consider what distinguishes them from other statements. The key distinguishing feature of phase one of this project is that it is autobiographical, which endows it with both a particular kind of authority and contingency. The features that distinguish the phase two interviews include that they are responses to questions not normally asked – questions derived from a comparable (if not similar) experience of being an editor – and they were conducted by me (a trusted former colleague) under conditions of signed and agreed confidentiality, which can be expected to enhance their credibility. In phase three confidentiality agreements are again used, as well as personal contact aimed at increasing both response rates and honesty in completion of the questionnaires.

Finally, the “repeatable materiality” (1972, p. 107) of the statements yielded by the study will be explored as I progress from phase one to phases two and then three, testing the extent to which they can be generalized beyond the discursive field
prescribed by me and the WA-based editors to the industry as a whole in Australia and perhaps beyond.

In summary, the aim of looking at the data gathered for this study as statements is to focus on the relationship editors perceive that they have with the magazines they produce and the topics that they do or don’t cover, as well as with other players in the industry such as publishers, colleagues, and readers. It acknowledges the processes of data gathering that may enhance the validity (truthfulness/honesty) of the data and it seeks to test the data’s statistical reliability (consistency) by testing the extent to which the substance (materiality) of the statements is repeated by a bigger, broader group of editors. Most importantly though, this study does not seek to find the average response of editors, or to create a composite model of the ideal magazine editor. Instead it seeks to describe the parameters of the range of views that occupants of the position of editor can hold in contemporary Australian women’s magazine media about their cultural role.

It was hoped at the outset that by using this framework the outcomes of the study would mesh with other Foucauldian research and help to provide a larger, more complete picture of the place magazines occupy in our culture. Specifically this study’s aim was to invite magazine editors into the process and to allow them to show their world from their perspective.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research questions this project seeks to address are steps on the way to answering a larger question about the role of magazines and their editors in contemporary culture. It needs to be stated at this stage though that this study is about magazines as solid glossy print products and that it does not delve into the world of the ‘new media editors’ who handle the interactive websites and news services that are starting to appear as co-branded sister publications to some magazines. While new media writers, such as *Lifehacker* editor Gina Trapani and *The Madison Avenue Journal* editor Tim McHale, suggest that there is some common ground between online editing and magazine editing (Stern, 2006; Maltoni, 2007) further research into the similarities and differences of print magazine and e-zine editing is beyond the scope of this project.

Perhaps the major limitation of this study, worthy of acknowledgement at the outset, is that it is not asking how much editors do influence their readers – it is asking editors how much they think that they are influencing their readers. It may be that without this hope their role would be less exciting, rewarding and appealing and that their belief in it may therefore be exaggerated and self-serving. Regardless of this risk, however, it is counter-intuitive to think that a picture of the role and responsibilities of the so-called ‘high priestesses’ of feminine culture could be obtained without at least speaking to them about it.

In addition to the key line of investigation, which involves asking editors to describe their work roles and their perceptions about their cultural roles, this study will also yield a demographic description of women’s magazine editors in Australia and compare the data gathered from the participants with population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2001; 2006). This will help to locate the editors as a subgroup within Australian culture.
It is hoped that this project will serve to illuminate the in-house culture of women’s magazine editors in Australia, to describe who these people are, how they ascended to their positions and what they do with the power that they think they have.

It will ask them to describe themselves, their professional responsibilities and their self-perceived roles in terms of their contribution to cultural mores. It will also ask them to speak about the other influences that shape their publications – influences such as directives from publishers and colleagues to include ‘advertorial’ copy, to push particular political lines and to present themselves as typical of their readerships. The editors will also be asked to speak about issues that they actively promote, the degree of artistic freedom they feel they have and how connected they feel to mainstream journalism.

It is also hoped that this study, by allowing magazine editors to speak about their experiences, will contribute to our overall understanding of the changing roles and functions of women’s magazines within Australian culture.
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter presents a brief overview of the design of the study, including the logic underlying the selection of research participants and the processes used to refine the vast amount of material gathered. More specific details of the research process are given later in the chapters devoted to the various phases of the study.

Overall Design

The proposed methodology for this study is one that drew on the principal strengths and experiences of the researcher. It included reference to the six years I spent working as a magazine editor, using that experience, in combination with a review of the relevant literature, as a source of questions for investigation. It also drew on connections I made with other editors during that time in order to access a network sample of participants for qualitative research. Beyond that it reached out to other editors, media commentators and stakeholders in the magazine industry through data-based and deliberative methods. This project is primarily qualitative, although it includes some quantitative elements. It is anthropological, and more specifically ethnographic, in that it is attempting to describe the culture of a specific group of people – women’s magazine editors in contemporary Australia. Becoming still more specific, it is an insider ethnography because the researcher was a member of the group under investigation from 1998 to 2004.

Confirmation of the applicability of these kinds of methodologies to this type of research has been offered by a number of media scholars including Anna Gough Yates (2003) who cited Cottle (1995) and Helland (1996) and wrote: “Qualitative investigation has long been recognised as a valuable method for exploring and analysing the nature of media organisations and media practice” (p. 21).
Gough Yates noted that within the tradition of qualitative research in media research “ethnography has been especially distinctive” (2003, p. 21) and “valuable in highlighting the dynamic and unpredictable nature of processes of media production.” Citing Cottle (1995, p. 22), she added:

Ethnographic method is especially adept at highlighting the subtle complexities of media industries. Rather than depicting the processes of media production as ‘billiard ball smooth’, ethnographic research has painted a picture that is ‘less clean, less tidy, more happenstance, more leaky’ (and therefore more accurate) than the sterile and mechanical image that emerges from accounts based around theoretical abstraction.

Media law academic Mark Pearson (2007) also voiced support for the use of anthropological tools in studies of media production writing:

There is no doubt that the daily editorial conferences in major news organisations sometimes feature ethical discussion over whether a particular photograph should be used and whether certain facts about a person should be revealed. A full anthropological study of such meetings might give an insight into the processes and language used when discussing such decisions. This author’s experience of such meetings is that they would benefit from some basic tools to help guide discussion and ensure all bases are covered when reaching a privacy-related news decision. (p. 402)

And bringing home the relevance of ethnography to questions about magazines McRobbie (1991) discussing her own text-based study of magazines for teenage girls wrote:

Perhaps the single most interesting change in the publications has been the result of the outlook and editorial values of those working inside them and the attention they pay to the girls who make up their readership. To pursue this further it would be necessary to examine the ideas and values of those working on the magazines. Such an ethnography of production values is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. (p. 186)

Seen collectively, comments like these indicate a sentiment of generalised academic interest in the outcomes of insider ethnographic research into magazine media production.
Phase One Sampling: Selecting the self

This study comprises four phases. The first is a self-reflective process in which I described my experiences as an editor, including my designated and implied job description, the workplace dynamics and key trials and tribulations, as well as changes in my perception of the role of editor over that time. The inclusion of this section parallels the practice in ethnographical writing of autobiographical volumes or introductions that contain personal narratives. This practice persists because it “mediates a contradiction within the discipline between personal and scientific authority” (Pratt, 1986, p. 32). It is a contradiction that naturally exists in a study such as this one. The advantage of ethnographic research by insiders is that the intimacy, familiarity, shared vocabulary and context produce what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) called “thick description” of the group being studied. He wrote about a richness present in the descriptive data yielded by insider ethnography but also acknowledged its contestability. There is always a chance that an insider-researcher will lack sufficient distance and perspective to clearly describe the group being studied. In order to address this potential weakness the later stages of this study sought to test the “thick description” to establish the reliability and validity of the assertions it makes.

Phase One Analysis: The challenge of self reflectivity

The starting point of phase one was a series of broad questions raised by early readings of autobiographies (Dapin 2004, Buttrose 1985) and other literature. What followed was a self-reflective writing process that yielded the text that is presented in the next chapter. This text is followed by a section that presents the reasoning behind the questions used to guide the phase one writing process and summaries of the answers (produced by reflecting on them as Foucauldian statements, as described in the literature review and in more detail in the phase one discussion.) Phase one concludes with an explanation of what was taken forward out of this process into phase two of the study.

Phase Two Sampling: Looking for reflections

The second phase of the research broadened the study of one editor (also the researcher) via a series of face-to-face interviews with a network sample of seven
current and former editors of a range of WA-based magazines. All of these editors wore the mantle of ‘editor’ at some stage between the years 2000 and 2006, and the magazines they edited had predominantly female readerships, as defined by in-house readership surveys, by the editor’s perceptions and/or by the publisher’s intention. They were also all already known to the researcher so their participation was drawn from the context of an existing friendly and professional relationship. More details about the nature of those relationships, the participants themselves and the interview process are given in the section of this thesis dedicated to phase two of the project.

**Phase Two Analysis: Rendering rich data**

The seven interviews were guided by a set of 20 questions derived from phase one of the study and they yielded 42,000 words of ‘thick description’ – too much to be presented as raw data. Foucault’s notion of the statement was again invoked as a rationale for grouping enunciations by different editors together to formulate meaningful summaries of their positions in relation to the questions asked. Each of these summaries is followed by an explanation of which elements were taken forward into phase three, and which were left behind to be picked over by other researchers looking for justifiable starting points.

**Phase Three Sampling: Seeking validation**

As most of the magazines produced and printed in Western Australia are owned by small publishing houses and have relatively low circulations (<40,000), in order to generalise these results to all Australian women’s magazine editors it was necessary to compare the results from phase two with the perceptions of the editors of large circulation women’s magazines – most of which are produced and published in NSW and owned by larger media companies such as ACP Magazines and Pacific Publications. It was thought at the outset that similarities between the small and large circulation magazines would indicate homogeneity of editorial experience, whereas differences would indicate scope for more research into the cultures of large versus small scale publication houses, which is beyond the scope of this project.
Selection of editors for this phase of the study was based on 2007 readership data generously donated to this project by Roy Morgan Research. The 50 editors targeted were drawn from a list that sorted magazines by readership and by the proportion of that readership that was female. They topped the list of most-read magazines whose readerships were more than 70% female. These editors were contacted and the 46 who expressed interest were emailed a link to a questionnaire that was drawn from the phase two data.

**Phase Three Analysis: Pattern recognition**

Responses to the questionnaire are included in this thesis as graphs, tables and lists and the results are compared and contrasted with the phase one and two data and discussed in relation to the literature underpinning the study.

**Phase Four Sampling: Listening for echoes**

The phase three discussion was compressed and contextualised into a 2500 word article that was sent to a selection of key industry stakeholders in order to elicit their responses. The logic behind this process was that it would give an indication of how much the editors’ views of themselves resembled or differed from how they are viewed from other positions within their discursive fields as this will provide an indication of how contested their position is. The people chosen to participate in the phase were all public figures with current relevant roles. They included a feminist scholar, a newspaper journalist, a publishing company executive, a media commentator and an MEAA Union official. Details of the people selected (and three who declined) are given in the phase four methodology section.

**Phase Four Analysis:**

Responses to the summary article are presented, along with the article itself, and are then compared and contrasted with reference to the rest of the thesis and the surrounding literature.

**Ethical Considerations**

As this study involved human participants, permission to gather data was required from the Edith Cowan University Research Ethics Committee. When the proposal
was submitted to the committee in 2005 it was approved subject to the subsequent approval of the questionnaires to be used in phases two, three and four. This approval was sought and granted as the phases of the project proceeded.

Ethical considerations woven into the fabric of the project include the decision to protect the identity of the phase two and three participants. While more detail is always desirable, this imperative was weighed against the odds that participants would be less likely speak openly about conflict, difficulties and taboo subjects if their comments were going to be firmly attributed to them by name.

This risk was highlighted when one of the former editors I approached with regard to phase two declined on the grounds that she didn’t want to be known as someone who had spoken out against a former employer as it may have impacted on her future employment prospects. As obtaining ‘rich’ data was the primary objective of phase two of the study, it was deemed to be more important that the participants felt safe about disclosing information than naming them. Another reason for masking their identity in the study was a desire to keep the focus of the study on the role of magazine editors rather than on individuals occupying the role.

This type of masking was not appropriate, however, for phases one and four of the study as the participants’ specific roles were the fundamental rationale for their inclusion.
PHASE ONE INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The decision to commence this study with a lengthy self-disclosure has two rationales.

This first is that there has been mounting pressure on anthropological ethnographers to abandon their once-held notions of the neutrality of their points of view and to publicly declare their backgrounds and social identities at the outset in order to allow their readers to evaluate critically any implicit or explicit value judgments that their texts may express. Pratt explained this line of logic writing:

    Personal narrative mediates this contradiction between the engagement called for in fieldwork and the self-effacement called for in formal ethnographic description, or at least mitigates some of its anguish, by inserting into the ethnographic text the authority of the personal experience out of which the ethnography is made. It thus recuperates at least a few shreds of what was exorcised in the conversion from the face-to-face field encounter to objectified science. (1986, p. 33)

In this sense, the autobiographical section of this project will allow my critics to suggest that I may be favouring the perspective of magazine editors because I identify myself as one of them. This risk is inherent in all insider ethnographies. On the other hand, this may be a fair criticism (despite my best efforts at neutrality) and it may also explain to readers why I have judged certain topics to be amenable to discussion.

The second rationale is that my own lived experience, of working as a magazine editor, contrasted with my earlier background as a newspaper journalist. Academically-fuelled by my university studies (including undergraduate psychology), that experience sparked my interest in this research project and informed the pursuit of the line of questioning that it follows. From a psychological
perspective the project can be seen as a personal quest to find answers to the questions that working as a magazine editor raised, in order to extract meaning from my experience and to resolve residual confusion about whether or not I made the right decisions at the time. Looking around for reading material that could help me make sense of the ordeal, via comparison with how others found and handled the experience, I only found autobiographies, such as Buttrose (1985) and Dapin (2004). While these texts soothingly echoed my own feeling of shock at the intensity of the experience, they are too anecdotal and perhaps too much commercial (rather than academic) products to represent a serious body of literature on the topic to answer my academic questions. These questions include debate about how and in what ways the practice and power of producing a magazine differed from the public, or pre-inhabitation, expectation of it and discrepancies between journalism practice as extolled by the industry’s code of ethics and the coal-face experience of producing a sustainable publication.

As authors of autobiographies to be sold for commercial gain, one can wonder whether Dapin and Buttrose stretched certain tales a little taller for dramatic effect and whether delicate areas were avoided because they simply didn’t serve the publications’ purposes. Conversely, it could be that their stories were told straight and true and that the role of editing a magazine is sufficiently misunderstood that their stories were captivating enough to be commercially viable in their own right. Perhaps both are true to some extent, but the uncertainty about them points to a need for research that can paint a more credible picture of what happens inside the editorial box.

Rather than disregarding the autobiographies, however, or turning my back on my own experiences, this project uses both my own story and theirs as a primordial swamp of ideas that can be refined and evolved in order to yield reliable and valid descriptions of the role as a whole, and the experience of occupying it. Having decided to use autobiographies, I was faced with the option of delving more deeply into these texts and analysing in more detail the socio-historic, institutional and cultural contexts of the authors building on the work of academics such as Whitlock (2000) and Gilmore (2001) who have looked at autobiographies as texts with the
potential to uphold or resist the constraints of hegemony or discourse. This would have limited the sources input into this project to just a few editors and substantially altered its course and so a decision was taken to take only the statements forward,

This approach, taking experience “not as the origin [or evidence] of our explanation, but [as] that which we want to explain,” was advocated by post-structuralist philosopher Joan Wallach Scott (1992). In using this approach I am not claiming that my experience (or Dapin’s or Buttrose’s) represents the universal truth about magazine editorship, but by allowing our voices and vocabularies to start a conversation, that is continued by drawing in other editors, it presses an ear to the door of the discourse of magazine editors in Australia. In addition, in documenting the discourse, this project begins to formulate the role as a distinct entity (distinguishable from other types of journalism) that can be discussed in terms of what can be done from it, and how it impacts on and shapes individuals who inhabit it.

This project will present the anecdotes and vignettes from this autobiographical section, and it will draw from these stories questions that will be used as bait to draw the voices of other editors into the discussion. While, in some sense this is about testing consensus on certain topics, it is more about exploring the terrain and the boundaries of the discourse of magazine editors in all its diversity.

In its final phase the project incorporates comments from industry commentators with a range of perspectives in the hope that they will offer a range of alternative readings. This part of the plan circles back to Scott’s (1992) argument that experience, even the collective experience of many people, as documented by one person, cannot be said to represent an unassailable truth. For her, “whatever counts as experience … is always contested.” Therefore I am aiming to bring the experience of magazine editors into the arena so debates about what they say can begin.

Before this work could commence, however, the data that exists in my head as memory needed to be captured in a way that could be seen by others, and discussed.
Having committed to the process of self-disclosure, I was faced with the challenge of giving the piece some kind of structure that would lend itself to further analysis.

My first instinct was to apply the clichéd, but undeniably useful, news writing questions: who, when, where, what, how and why. The first three gave rise to the demographic set of questions that can be used to locate me on a number of socio-economic measures as an individual within the general population. The results of these questions are graphically displayed on the following pages.

In order to explore the what, how and why questions, and to bring into the field of enquiry the discomforts that my time in the role had left me with, I worked creatively by constructing a questionnaire, in part from my own experience and in part inspired by my readings to date. The content of the questionnaire is explained later, in the phase one discussion, alongside the material it generated. Once the questionnaire was constructed I left creativity aside and wrote back into it, answering the questions. While this process is clearly questionable in that I may have avoided asking myself questions I didn’t want to answer, all I can say is that I have left the subsequent stages of the research project open enough that other editors can challenge or add to what I have said, hopefully filling any gaping omissions.

Without further ado, here is the phase one data:
PHASE ONE DATA

Demographics

Gender
Female
Age
Editing from 1998-2004, while I was aged 31-37.
Education level
BA Psyche (Hons) completed 1995
MA (Eng & Comp Lit) completed 2003
Ethnicity
Australian born, (to English migrant parents)
Religion
Christian, no denomination
Income as editor
$45-75,000 pro rata

Comparable population demographic data from ABS WA Census (2001)*

Gender
50.1% of respondents were female
Age
WA median age overall 34
Median age of women 35
Education level
9.9% of females 15+ years old and
9.4% of all respondents over 15 had bachelor degrees.
1% of females over 15+ years old and
1.4% of all age 15+ respondents had post graduate degrees.
Ethnicity
67.8% of WA respondents were Australian born
9.1% were born in England
Religion
63.4% of respondents (66% of women) identified as Christian,
but only 1.7% (1.8% of women) as Christian with no further detail.
Income
90.5% of women earned less than $41,600pa ($800 per week)
9.5% of women earned $41,600pa or more.
4.6% of women earned $52,000pa ($1000 pw) or more.
1.2% of women earned $78,000pa ($1500pw) or more.

(NB: this income data excludes people younger than 15, overseas visitors and
people who did not state an income. This leaves 675,072 women in this equation.)

Simple comparison of my demographics with the 2001 WA Census Data shows me to
be typical of the majority of the population in terms of age, ethnicity and religion,
but in the minority in terms of education level and income.

*Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census of Population and Housing,
Western Australia, persons (excluding overseas visitors), 1,832,008 respondents
Relevant experience as a magazine editor

February 2001 – March 2004
Editor in Chief with Consolidated Business Media/Shields Media (stable included *Perth Woman, Australian Vital and Bridal Style*). The experience relevant to this study is that of being editor of two issues of *Perth Woman* (Feb-Sept 2001) and eight issues of *Australian Vital* (Sept 2001- March 2004).

August 1998 to January 2001
Editor of *Conscious Living*.

Relevant education or training for the position of magazine editor

Cadetship on *The West Australian* commenced the year I finished High School.
Worked as a journalist on major newspapers and TV Agency work in London until I was 23. My major newspaper work included editorship of weekly ‘animals’ and ‘commercial property’ sections. Then four months as editor of a suburban weekly.
I then had a six-year break from journalism (apart from freelance work) for studying and parenting time before commencing the editorship of *Conscious Living*.

Describe the magazines

*Conscious Living*, issues 46-54
64 or 72 page, colour, staple-bound, glossy, quarterly, distributed nationally by Gordon and Gotch, circulation 16,000 (not CAB audited).
Subtitle: Australia’s leading health and lifestyle magazine.
Regular sections: news, features, body, mind, spirit, planet, home, and reviews.

In the publisher’s words (as published on the credits page of issues 48-54):
“*Conscious Living* is a vehicle for the dissemination of information, products and services to improve people’s quality of life and level of consciousness. *Conscious Living* focuses on areas of natural health, environment and self development and provides access to a better way of living in health, harmony and balance with the earth and with one another.”
*Perth Woman*, issues 1-2

144 and 160 pages respectively, colour, perfect-bound, glossy, quarterly, distributed in WA (mainly metropolitan Perth) by Gordon and Gotch, circulation 40,000 (not CAB audited).

Subtitle: The complete magazine for every woman.

Regular sections: fashion, artscape, health and beauty, local grazing, mind/body/soul, career/money/finance, travel, social butterflies, sport and fitness, homebodies, reviews and competitions.

*Australian Vital*, issues 1-8

160 or 176 page, colour, perfect-bound, glossy, quarterly, distributed nationally by Gordon and Gotch, circulation 60,000 (not CAB audited).

Subtitle: Caring for your health.

Regular sections: news, products, people (profile articles), cutting edge (medical breakthroughs), eating well, getting fit, relaxing, world medicine, reviews, giveaways.

**What made them specifically women’s magazines?**

At *Conscious Living* our impression that our readership was mainly female was reinforced by a strong majority of female subscribers, entrants into competitions, writers of letters to the editor and from the results of a reader survey run in issue 45.

*Perth Woman* was specifically targeted at women in Western Australia. Feedback from readers in the form of letters, emails and invitations to speak at women’s group functions confirmed that it was reaching this target audience. Both issue one and two sold out within a few weeks of publication indicating that the target market was responding to the publication.

*Australian Vital* was targeted at a mainly (but not exclusively) female readership, worded on the advertising rate card as: “Everyone who wants to feel healthy, vibrant and full of life ~ including doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, natural therapists, counsellors, parents and sports lovers.” As with *Conscious Living*, our
impression that our readership was mainly female was reinforced by a strong
majority of female subscribers, entrants into competitions, writers of letters to the
editor and from the results of a reader survey run in issue 7.

Workplace dynamics

Conscious Living
At the time I joined the Conscious Living office there had been recent organisational
restructuring. A male general manager took maternal charge of the running of the
office, including making tea for everyone and making sure we were comfortable and
paid on time. The male art director had been working on the magazine for two years
and needed no guidance. He contributed creatively, gently educated me about the
necessary sequence of activities and readily acknowledged that the editor’s word on
an issue over- rode his opinions. The rest of the team was mixed gender. Sales staff
turnover was high with few lasting more than two issues. The owner/publisher was
regarded as a chaotic influence on the production process, but the overall office
dynamic was friendly, co-operative and warm. Dress was casual and we socialised
together. Decisions were made through conversation/consensus over meetings but
were sometimes later overturned by the publisher. In some cases this led to heated
arguments, but her dictatorial rulings were usually tolerated and accommodated.

Perth Woman & Australian Vital
At the time when I joined Perth Woman, the all-female team of art director,
advertising manager and copy controller had been working on the publication for
around six months and had developed a strong sense of ownership of it. The
publisher met with each of us separately and sometimes gave us conflicting briefs.
Rather than establishing a clear line of command, or encouraging us to make
decisions collaboratively, disputes were settled by each person presenting their case
to the publisher who would then make a final decision. As this decision was often in
favour of the last person he spoke to, the workplace environment was sometimes
acrimonious. As the stable of publications grew, more journalists were employed,
until there were seven in the editorial department. At that stage there was a sense of
camaraderie amongst the editorial team and, while disputes with other departments
still arose, they seemed to be taken more lightly and there was a sense of relations being more peaceable than they had been in the early days.

Designated job descriptions (roles and responsibilities)

Conscious Living
My key role/responsibility was supplying content for the magazine. This meant writing most of the stories (some came from contributors) and editing all of them, ensuring they fit on their pages, had headlines, pictures and captions etc. It also included some writing and editing of advertorial copy. (In this context advertorial is defined as text explaining or promoting the products or services of advertising clients. Advertorial was sometimes paid for and sometimes used as a ‘free’ incentive to encourage clients to purchase advertising space.) The editor role at Conscious Living also included writing copy for expo programmes, and for other occasional company requirements.
Each issue I had a budget of $1000-$1500 to spend on freelance articles, images and proofreading. I was responsible for the legal compliance of the publication and for meeting deadlines. Except for having to accommodate the publisher’s wishes, I had final say on what was and wasn’t included in the magazine.

Perth Woman & Australian Vital
(From CBM Job Description Document, written August 2003)
Editor in Chief Responsibilities:

Head of Editorial Department, responsible for supervising/assisting/training other editorial staff.

Responsible for arranging for all publications to be proofread.

End of line responsibility for the legal status of all copy and ads in all publications with regard to defamation and breaches of TGA rules etc.

Involved in consultation with regards to deadlines, storylists, etc. for all publications.

Editor Responsibilities:

Layout and storylisting

Writing, commissioning and subbing stories and sourcing images.
Sign-off on magazines.

Negotiating of expenditure (on images etc) with publisher.

Other tasks (implied responsibilities)

Conscious Living: Promoting the magazine at Conscious Living Expos, sometimes working as MC or in other key roles at the expos. Writing expo programmes. Participating in corporate planning sessions. Representing the magazine at public functions and media events.

Perth Woman & Australian Vital: Writing promotional, brochure and website copy for the organisation. Participating in corporate planning sessions. Representing the magazine at public functions, as well as addressing public functions in the capacity of editor, such as breakfast meetings of the Executive Women’s Forum and the Soroptimist International Perth group.

What influences, other than your own personal choices, shaped the voice of your publication?

Publishers certainly impacted on the content, mainly by explicitly requiring me to include advertorial copy. I was also always considerate of the magazines’ target audiences and what I thought they wanted. The other group I was careful not to offend or insult was the kind of people and companies who advertised. This meant that there was a tolerance of fuzzier science in Conscious Living than there was in the other magazines because it matched the lingo used by the Conscious Living community, which had ten years of history before my arrival.

Were there directives from publishers to provide ‘advertising’ copy for advertisers?

Yes, with both companies it was made clear by publishers that some unlabelled advertorial had to be worked into the publications, that without advertorial support there would be fewer ads sold and that would impact directly on the financial viability/survival of the magazine and therefore directly on my employment. In both cases I was allowed editorial control over the content of the advertorial to the extent that I could ensure that no unsupportable claims were made and that the tone was not too sycophantic. With both publications I negotiated internal
arrangements that allowed the advertising staff discretion to allocate a specific number of small advertorial articles or promotions in particular sections of the magazine (such as “New Products”, “Subscription Prizes” and “Giveaways”), other deals involving advertorial feature articles were negotiated with me on an as-needs basis. Where possible I would accommodate these requests, particularly in cases where a feature article, that was not obviously advertorial, could be written about the company, person or product. In some cases though, I refused, particularly when the company had previously had advertorial features published, or when I had a specific dislike, doubt or concern about the product or service. In these cases I would argue that, because of my concerns, it was essential that the advertorial either not run, or run labelled as ‘advertising feature’. Occasionally this led to disputes that were taken to the publisher for arbitration. Sometimes he took their side, sometimes he took mine, and whichever party lost in these cases usually felt angry and wronged.

If so, did you do anything to moderate the pressure to provide advertorial?

Advertorial was certainly the subject of most of the arguments in both workplaces. As either the sole journalist, backed and supported by the designer/s, or one of a team of journalists, there was a sense of outrage at having to include so much advertorial content because we felt that it undermined the credibility of the publications and took up space that we would rather have given to more worthy stories. Both organisations were small businesses though, and there was a sense of constant threat of financial failure that prompted me to accept the necessity of advertorials. Also refusing to allow advertorials created an acrimonious rift between the editorial and advertising departments that was uncomfortable given that we were occupying the same office space.

Pressure in this debate was increased by the fact that in many cases the advertising staff were paid partly (sometimes significantly) by commission, and they were always under pressure to meet sales targets. This meant that they were highly motivated to get sales and often the success of their deals rested on whether or not they could promise advertorial. An answer of ‘NO’ was therefore often interpreted as a personal slight or attack on them. It was also the case that in many instances the
publisher would overrule a ‘NO’ answer from me, if the advertising person took the request over my head and pleaded a case that involved money. In order to maintain my power so that I could use it in cases I felt were really important, I avoided entering into petty frays as much as possible.

So, given that I did edit publications that contained advertorial, my strategy (once I had agreed to write about a company that advertised with us) was to disguise it as much as possible. This meant speaking with the advertorial clients and explaining that a well-disguised advertorial would serve them better as it would make them appear more newsworthy. Speaking with them I would try to find a genuine news-feature angle into their story and write or commission the story as if there was no obligation to promote the company. This meant using a journalistic writing style focussing on facts and avoiding expressing opinion about the company or product. In commissioned stories (written by freelancers or other staff) any comments clearly favourable or unfavourable towards the company were excluded or removed at the subbing stage. The companies were usually afforded the privilege of hearing their story read to them over the phone before publication to minimise complaints and withdrawal of advertising, if/when on publication they found that their advertorial was less effusive than they had hoped. In many cases this process yielded stories that were genuinely interesting and worthy.

**Were there explicit directives from publishers to push particular political lines?**

Yes, with both companies. Although many journalists advocate personal political neutrality or non-disclosure, I have never concealed my involvement with Green politics. Having stood as a Greens candidate for (unwinnable) seats in 1996, 1998 and 2001 my involvement was known to my employers. The publisher of *Conscious Living* was supportive of the Greens political movement and she encouraged me to write articles supportive of both The Greens (WA) and The Australian Greens and their philosophies. In contrast, the first publisher of *Perth Woman* and *Vital* explicitly warned me not to be ‘too Green’ in my editorial stance. He is a staunch supporter of the Liberal party and its business philosophies and expressed concern that my previous involvement with the Greens and *Conscious Living* would cause me to target the magazine to a more fringe audience than the mainstream audience he
envisioned. He dealt with this concern by vociferously questioning my choice of stories about social issues and natural health products. I therefore shied away from some stories that I would otherwise have suggested and/or run, for fear of being criticised for pushing my own political agenda. When *Perth Woman* and *Vital* were sold in 2003 the new owners expressed enthusiasm for environmental and social justice stories and I therefore included more of them in my publications.

**If so, did you do anything to moderate those pressures?**

At *Conscious Living* I felt that I could have pushed my political beliefs harder in the publication but as I was the guardian of its credibility I restricted my political editorial to a selection bias in newsgathering rather than writing promotional text or deliberately seeking stories. My involvement with the party meant that I was privy to a flow of Green news, however, and many of these news items found their way into the *Conscious Living* news pages. My reason for selecting/neglecting particular Green news items usually depended upon timing and the relevance of the item at the date of publication, which was quarterly. At *Perth Woman* and *Vital* I dealt with my fear of being accused of being overly Green by asking freelance or other staff writers to write as many of the social comment or environmental stories as possible. I think both publishers would have been content for there to have been less political content in the magazines but I included a section in *Conscious Living* called ‘Planet’ and a section in *Vital* called ‘World Medicine’ that were able to accommodate feature articles about initiatives to combat poverty, international peace initiatives, The World Bank, The Grameen Bank etc. While many of the issues covered in these sections were not overtly Green, raising awareness of them is part of the generic Green agenda.

**Were there explicit directives from publishers to present yourself as a typical reader?**

The publishers I worked for, as a magazine editor, seemed to me, even at the time I was working for them, to have poorly formed ideas about who their target audiences and typical readers were. Neither paid for market research or expressed interest in the results of readership surveys for editorial targeting purposes. Both were primarily concerned with using any readership data I gathered to promote the reach of the magazine to potential advertisers. Both based their opinions about the success
or failure of particular issues on sales figures and feedback from people involved in the business of producing the magazine; many of these people were advertisers or potential advertisers. In both organizations the publishers sometimes assisted with advertising sales but neither wrote articles nor participated in editorial processes such as proofreading. Both identified more closely with the advertising staff and paid heed to the feedback they gave, which again often came from advertisers and potential advertisers. When asked who the target audience for Conscious Living was, the publisher used to say “everyone”. Similarly the founding publisher of Perth Woman explicitly said that the magazine’s target audience was “every woman in WA”. These blanket statements were embraced and expressed in the subtitles of the magazines, which were written by the publishers, despite having no basis in any kind of market research or other hard data. (The subtitles were Conscious Living: Australia’s Leading Health and Lifestyle Magazine; and Perth Woman: The Complete Lifestyle Magazine for Every Woman. As an aside, it seems relevant to mention that given the opportunity to write the subtitle for Australian Vital I chose Caring for Your Health, as I felt it was a claim that could be substantiated on the grounds that it described the magazine’s editorial intention, rather using lines that could not be substantiated and therefore felt to me like mistruths.)

At the time I worked for these publishers I attributed the difference between their perceptions about the readership and market and my perceptions to our generational differences. I believed that they, being typical baby boomers, assumed more homogeneity in the market place than I, being a Generation X person, did. I felt that their insistence on appealing to everyone meant that they were in danger of failing to appeal to anyone, given that I believe that choice of magazines by readers is part of a process of exploring, claiming or expressing personality or identity traits. Returning to the question, I felt that I was being asked to represent myself/the magazine as being interested in and enthusiastic about a wider range of issues, products and services than I felt was realistic for a single individual.

If so, did you do anything to moderate those influences and pressures?
In the magazine newsrooms I worked in we used the term ‘fluffy text’ to describe editorial or advertorial copy with an effervescent tone, copy that shies away from
being blatantly promotional, but that nonetheless has a cheerful and positive lilt to it. I’m not sure who coined the term but it worked for us. We tended to hate writing fluffy text. It was exhausting and unsatisfying, but necessary when you have to pretend to be enthusiastic about a wider range of issues than you actually are enthusiastic about. Where possible we would ask other staff members (students on placement, etc.) to write the fluffy text, but, as there’s a bit of an art to getting it right, it often had to be done by the editor. It could be that the process of labelling it ‘fluffy text’ and the venting and grumbling that we did about it helped to moderate the pressure on a personal level.

The other writing that seems relevant to this question is the writing of the editor’s letter for each issue. My approach to making these letters relevant to a wide range of readers was to speak about universal experiences, such as seasonal shifts. I also on many occasions invoked the stereotype of the multi-tasking busy modern person in need of relaxation. It was a stereotype I felt I could personally relate to and that as most of the people I spoke to in my social circles could relate to it, I assumed that most of my readers would also.

**Are there ideas or themes, products or services that you sought to promote through your editorship? What are they and why are they important to you?**

There are a few things in my life that are favourite topics and areas of interest, things that I have strong, heartfelt opinions about. As a paid up member of a political party I am comfortable with considering myself to be an activist for social justice and environmental causes and I am comfortable with sometimes using my journalistic/editorial power to promote those issues, even though within journalistic culture – embedded in things like the journalists’ union’s code of ethics – there is the ideal that journalism should be unbiased and should never give undue emphasis to one side of a story. I learnt first hand when I was editor of a community newspaper that even when I try to be unbiased, my bias creeps through. That was before I was a member of the Greens. I had pushed through a few crazy months of hectic deadlines giving front-page coverage each week to what seemed to be the biggest political issues for the area each week and when at the end of it I lined up all my papers I saw that there was an environmental or social justice issue on every cover. That was when I was 24 and at that point I gave up on the idea of being an
‘unbiased journalist’ and I joined the Greens, having decided that being honest about my bias felt more comfortable than denying it.

My biases aren’t just political though, although to some extent everything is politics. To list all of my biases would be a bit of an endless process but here are three that I remember having to ponder as an editor, about whether I was pushing my barrows or reporting on things that I thought my readers would relate to and enjoy.

1. My son went to a Waldorf School, a school based on the education philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and I was involved in the school community. I was on his school committee as the media representative and did, and still do, think that it is a far superior education system to the one the state offers. These schools struggle to find funding and enrolments, though, because what they do and why and how is largely unknown or misunderstood.

2. I was the first of my peer group to have a child and as my friends approached parenthood I fell into the role of support person a few times. I have attended homebirths, small hospital births, large hospital births and caesareans and I think that if more people knew about how good home and small hospital/natural births are, then more people would have them. I hate it when magazines portray birth as something terrifying because I believe that fear makes the process more painful and difficult. I also hate it when the media portray homebirthers as crazy people, and I don’t mind being a campaigner for a more realistic portrayal of that subculture.

3. I believe that people should take more responsibility for their health care and that there should be a moving away from the idea that as soon as you have a symptom you go to the doctor and you only do what the doctor says. I think that’s based on the old stereotype of the family doctor who knows all and cares, and that most doctors these days aren’t able to give that level of care. Doctors are important for serious conditions but I like the idea of kitchen medicine for smaller complaints, such as curry to cure congestion. Lemon, salt, garlic and ginger all used properly can replace some of the more common pharmaceuticals for everyday woes and they
bring an empowerment back to the individual, to the mum, to the family hearth. I perceive the loss of the (metaphoric) hearth as a root cause of many of society’s current ills and I believe that there is value in reminding people about it and encouraging them to re-establish it and giving them the tools (information, handy hints) that they need to do that, or at least to start doing that when they are in the fried-out, busy, disconnected state that so many people seem to be in.

**How did you seek to promote those ideas? How did you work them into your publication? What kinds of stories did you use to promote specific values?**

In general my practice was firstly to select stories that I liked. As an editor the task of filling a magazine is much more a task of selecting stories from a flood of input than having to actively search for ideas to fill pages. The difficulty was in finding reasons to say ‘no’ to so many ideas that would have been suitable for the publication so it seemed like a fair enough place to let my own personal preference play a part.

The publications I have worked for have been small company publications and so, as editor, I have done the bulk of the writing. With the exception of especially robotic hard news reporters, all journalists write with a particular individual voice that resonates through their copy, through their vocabularies and their syntax. Mine is a kind of gentle nurturing (mother hen) voice. It makes admonitions about relaxing and thinking about others. One of the ways that my values shine through my copy is that I twist things, even if I am writing about a hotel or a fruit juice or a protein powder, or whatever else I am being advertorially urged to write, I wrap it in something nice.

When writing longer news or feature stories the professional imperative to be unbiased and factual is still there. You give voice to both sides but given that one or the other gets to have the last word, I don’t mind letting it be the one I like best.

Another way was to give space to people who voiced opinions that resonated with my own. Rodney Vlais is a good example of this in action. He is a friend I met through Green events at the time I worked for *Conscious Living*. He had heard
Robert Theobald speak about his ‘Reworking Tomorrow’ movement and been so impressed that he organised an Australian speaking tour for Robert. I too liked Robert Theobald’s ideas, which included focus on the need to re-establish human-scale communities, to move beyond consumerism and on the potential to create social change via conversations. I wrote a big feature story about him and ran it in *Conscious Living*. When I took on *Perth Woman* I wanted to get these ideas across but didn’t want to be writing them myself, because I needed to be seen as less alternative and so I invited Rodney to write a column called ‘Voluntary Simplicity’, a philosophy close to Theobald’s. That column was canned by *Perth Woman*’s second editor, but by then I was editing *Vital*. When Robert Theobald’s partner Anne Deveson wrote and had published a book about her time with him, I assigned it to a journalist who I knew shared my enthusiasm for the philosophy and I ran it long. I also ran a couple of pieces by Rodney on his peace activist work, including a long piece on his work as a human shield. At the time he was struggling to get media attention for what seemed to me to be amazingly good causes. I was happy to be able to help; the amount of coverage I gave him over the years was disproportional; it was more than other editors were doing; it was unfair to other people trying to get their voices in the press – but I tended to get good feedback on those pieces. I thought it was important information to be getting out to people and I had the power to do so and I felt that running those pieces was using that power to do some good.

Another way I dealt with getting copy that I liked into my magazines when I felt it would be too obviously ‘my stuff’ if I wrote it myself was to assign those stories to other journalists (which was often the same thing as just saying ‘yes’ to things suggested by colleague journalists/freelances I liked). Examples of this include commissioning Rob McGlynn to write lots of things about yoga, Roberta Shaw to write about women’s refuges and homebirths, and Sarah Szabo to write about artists and Capoeira.

This leads onto a fourth mechanism. It’s about the selection of staff. At all three publications I was able to put together my own crew of contributors, and at CBM (*Perth Woman* and *Vital*) I selected the other journalists who joined the team (with
the exception of the second editor of *Perth Woman*, who was appointed by the publisher). Given the choice, I chose people whose worldviews aligned with mine.

**Do you feel that as an editor you speak from a personal position, creatively expressing your own views, values and opinions through your magazine? Or, do you speak from a corporate perspective as a medium for the expression of the ideology that will most benefit your employer?**

I think it’s a balancing act. It is very odd being on the phone everyday saying “Hello, *Perth Woman* calling”, you start to feel like the voice of all women in Perth, not just a person in a job. No one draws neat lines inside your head saying this is your professional opinion about what is interesting and this is your personal opinion.

You are constantly asked to react to stimuli. An avalanche of story ideas comes past you and you have to discern and decide on the spot, what does *Perth Woman* want? What suits the readers? What will work on the pages within the production timeframe and budget? What will spark arguments in the office? When you find something that works on all of those levels you feel excited, a rush of enthusiasm hits you and you like it, but it’s hard to tell if you’re only thinking it will look great on the page and the readers will love it because you, as an individual, like that topic, or if it really is an unbiased professional call that any editor would make.

There’s also the matter of there being many stories in each magazine, which allows room for some of them to be your self-indulgent babies that you’re slipping in to make your friends happy and the ones that you’re running to keep the boss sweet and the others that are there because they seem perfect for the readership. With this in mind I can answer this question with: “both, simultaneously”, and I think that’s why I was good at the job, because I could maintain the balance.

**To what extent does your style of professional practice remain consistent across different publications that you have worked on?**

I think I am consistent to a very large extent. I feel that who I am and how I work doesn’t change much, even though the content of my publications can differ a lot. I have written publications about mining, fashion, health, all sorts of things and the
stories are very different, but the way I organise myself, and the voice in my text is always me. I was asked by the Wanneroo Inc Royal Commission in 1995 about how I came to write certain stories that were in a local paper I edited in 1990. A lot had happened in the intervening years and I no longer had any notebooks or other evidence, but I was able to talk about processes in my work that have remained constant since I first started in journalism. These include practices such as how I check facts, how I actively seek a range of opinions on controversial issues, how I ask open-ended questions as well as pursuing questions based on hearsay to get usable answers to them.

Of the various publications I have written for and edited, Conscious Living, Perth Woman, and Vital are a fairly homogenous trio. In all of them I would have been gathering news from similar (partially overlapping) sources, researching and writing in my own style and expressing my various personal themes about the importance of relaxing, feeling confident, spending time with loved ones, eating well, exercising and being open-minded about ‘alternative’ things.

Do you change your style or make concessions to differences in the readership’s preferences of different publications you have worked on?

It’s not that I say different things in different publications. It’s just that I would omit things from one publication that I wouldn’t omit from another, if I thought it wasn’t appropriate to the readership. I didn’t write about Steiner schooling in Perth Woman because the magazine was directed at a mainstream audience. I thought that later issues could have carried the story, once the magazine was known for being a mainstream publication, but by then I had relinquished control over the storylist. I kept the power to veto stories on legal grounds as editor-in-chief, but most storylist decisions were made by the editors. As editor of the first two issues of Perth Woman, I stayed away from too much alternative content while the magazine was establishing itself, as well as from content that could prompt other people to accuse me of being too alternative to be its editor. Similarly there were some issues that I conceded to write about in Conscious Living (when encouraged to provide advertorial) that I refused to write about under similar circumstances for Perth Woman or Vital. These topics included aliens and various kinds of ‘spiritual
therapies’. While I didn’t like these topics anyway (except for comic relief) I was glad to be able to cite differences in the target audiences as reasons for rejecting them in the later publications.

**What role do you believe magazines and their editors play in the lives of readers?**

A magazine is a business, the advertising is what companies pay for and what makes it work as a business. The editorial content is what makes the buyers buy it. The editorial therefore has to be what the readers want. So this question is really: What do you think readers want their magazines to be? I think that readers want the voice coming out of a magazine to be the voice of a friend, a friend who will give trustworthy advice, a friend who understands that life can be hard, a friend who has faith in your good intentions and a friend with lots of curious anecdotes and interesting tales to tell.

I think that there will continue to be a role for magazines in the world because no matter how useful our computers become, there is something nice about walking away from the computer and making a cup of tea and sitting on the couch or in the garden with a magazine. There is something symbolically indulgent about sitting down with a magazine. It represents “me time” in a way that reading a book or an article online doesn’t – you don’t read magazines to make yourself better educated (that would make them into work) you read them because they’re nice and you like them. A magazine is what a woman turns to when she needs a five minute break in her busy day, whether she’s been folding washing or running a company. She is still a woman who likes to know that other women understand what’s challenging about that, and also why she’s working so hard. This doesn’t mean that I think all women overwork and only ever have five minute breaks; there are some readers who have time to read the whole mag cover to cover, but I think that it is the contemporary thing for everyone to think of themselves as busy even if all they do is shop and read magazines.

With this in mind, as an editor I saw myself as a friend to my readers, a friend who is always free for a chat, even if their tea-break happened at a time when all their other friends were asleep or at work. I also saw myself as someone whose advice they
would consider taking, and that made it incredibly important to couch that advice carefully in order to not give wrong health information. I think they also turned to my pages to hear about curious things that they hadn’t heard about before and that’s why I liked writing about things that were on the fringes of mainstream culture, like Capoeira and different kinds of yoga.

Sometimes a story in a magazine can be a turning point in a reader’s life. I had a few letters to the editor that said that particular stories I’d written had given them hope in moments when they felt they’d lost hope. As an editor I held awareness of that thought and I tried to make my stories as therapeutic, in that sense, as possible. Sometimes I ran stories about survival and recovery after serious illness or injury, and these were probably the most blatantly therapeutic stories, but sometimes my encouragement took the simpler form of acknowledging the difficulties of modern living and providing incentive for readers to eat better, exercise more and to have more fun.

**Do you think you contributed to cultural change? If so how?**

This is a really difficult question because it’s hard to make the jump between who the readers are, as a group, and who the word “culture” refers to. I think I did influence my readers to the same extent that any conversation that they may have had with anyone would have changed what they know or how they thought about an issue. The difference between saying something in a magazine and saying something in a conversation, though, is that as an editor you are speaking one-to-thousands, not one-to-one.

I guess I see my readers as a subgroup within our Australian culture, which is made up of roughly 2 million people in WA and 20 million Australia-wide. These figures make the magazine circulations of 16,000, 40,000 and 60,000 seem insignificant, but it is said that on average three people read every magazine and if all of those people take something that they’ve read into conversations with others, who then talk to more people, then you get the network flow-on effect of conversations-for-change that Robert Theobald theorised about. Looked at from this perspective then: Yes, I think it is possible that I contributed to cultural change, legitimising certain ideas.
and attitudes, popularising certain practices and helping people connect with
groups, services and products that could have life-changing effects.

Thinking about the way I gathered and presented the stories in the magazines I feel
that I was literally stirring the cultural pot, mixing ideas and information from the
fringes into the middle.

The other mechanism through which I may have contributed to cultural change is
by influencing others in the media. I suspect that no one reads magazines as
studiously as other editors. It’s possible that in writing about the things I wrote
about I legitimised them as magazine content, and inspired other editors to copy a
bit and to offer these ideas to their readerships, creating a ripple effect.

What (if anything) limited your impact on cultural change?
Mainly the scale of the magazines I worked for. I feel that I was drowned out to
some extent by larger circulation magazines that go to hundreds of thousands of
readers every week, as opposed to my 40,000 per quarter. These mainstream
magazines could also afford to be distributed at checkouts and other impulse sale
points, which cost more, but gave them much easier reach into readers’ lives. They
offered voices different from my own, influenced by different publishers and other
incentives and they were in competition. Sometimes, mainly at Conscious Living, I
felt that our readers were different people from mainstream media consumers and
that there were competing groups within culture, but at Perth Woman I thought our
readers were the same women who read the other magazines and it was my voice
that was competing to be the most influential.

Did your perception of the role of editor change over your time in the role?
I think I had my main epiphanies about the role when I was working as editor of a
community newspaper called The Wanneroo News. Before then I thought that the
editor would do all the important and glamorous tasks and the other reporters would
do the menial tasks, but working in the job you soon realise that it’s often the other
way around. When you work for a company that is so small that, as well as being
the editor, you are also the only journalist on staff, you realise that you actually do
everything. Even when there are other writers around, ironically, the editor usually ends up doing many of the most menial tasks because they are the hardest to farm out to contributors or staff writers. As an editor I would often cringe at the necessity to write so much advertorial and, being cognisant of the difficulty of making good stories out of sow’s ears, I held back on assigning these stories to freelances and usually wrote them myself.

Reflecting on this, it’s interesting to note that the stance I took as editor of *The Wanneroo News* was fairly uncompromising. There were shady shenanigans afoot, sufficient to warrant a Royal Commission, and I was diligent in reporting the facts. Shortly after we started running these stories on our front page the local council, which was the subject of the contentious stories, withdrew its advertising support. The council advertising had represented a significant proportion of the paper’s revenue and it was sorely missed. The paper was competing in its market against a better-resourced publication that was not as energetic in its pursuit of these particular contentious stories. That paper continued to sell large ads to the council and it’s still there today. *The Wanneroo News* folded while I was on maternity leave, only months after the council ads were withdrawn.

I think that this experience taught me to be mindful of the need to balance a desire for journalistic purity against financial realities when working for a small company that is in danger of going bankrupt.

**Having worked as an editor do you have a perspective on the role that you think differs from the public perception of the role?**

To some extent I blame Patsy from *Absolutely Fabulous* for perpetrating the myth that magazine editors do nothing except swan around making seemingly random decisions. A similar perception emanates from the TV series *Just Shoot Me*. While these portrayals are clearly caricatures, they fail to illustrate the fact that the bulk of the work of editing a publication involves sitting at a computer writing or subbing copy. In my experience the next largest task is the proofing of pages, which again fails to be glamorous. It involves poring over pages with a red pen in hand marking up spelling and typographic errors. Then there are hours spent on the telephone asking people to send you information, images or products to be photographed, but
again this happens behind the closed doors of the office (which, unlike the TV magazine offices, is usually a cramped and messy place littered with teetering piles of magazines, sample bottles of shampoo, books to be reviewed, bizarre products to be photographed, mock-ups, page proofs, bubble wrap and overflowing intrays).

One of the highlights of the job is that you do get invited to things such as openings, launches, lunches and cocktail functions. While you physically only get time to attend a small fraction of these events, when you do you are treated well and probably perceived as being powerful and privileged. The real power embedded in the position is that your word is final (unless your publisher over rules you). If you say “Yes” to a story idea it is in and if you say “No”, then it isn’t. This causes some people, who want coverage in the publication, to kowtow, beg and bargain. Often they try to seduce you with elaborate presents and this adds to the perception that the role is privileged and glamorous. It can seem as if you have people who love your work so much that they shower you with gifts. In reality you are drowning in a sea of graft manufactured by the public relations and marketing sectors. Your job is to resist temptation, to stay balanced and unswayed by it all.

I think the main difference between my perception of the role and how I think the public see it is that it is less glamorous and involves more hard work than it seems – and that the joyous novelty of an unlimited supply of shampoo wears off.

**What did you like least about being a magazine editor?**

My first thought is that the worst thing is seeing errors in the publication when it comes back from the printer. It’s the dread of being publicly humiliated by errors printed 60,000 times that drives the push for perfection that is a huge portion of the task of editing.

There are other irritating aspects to the job such as having to write advertorial and having to deal with suppliers of copy or images who don’t respond quickly enough and disagreements with other staff, but these are the small daily dramas. The bigger issue is probably the pressure itself, the feeling that you, alone, are responsible for
making something large happen on time and on budget, completely free of errors and brilliant enough that thousands of people will want to buy it.

**What did you like most about being a magazine editor?**

It’s nice to have in your hands something that you have made, something that looks attractive and appealing and to hear other people talking about your work and giving positive feedback. I imagine that any craftsperson or artist would say that though. Editing a magazine is a creative act and it brings a sense of artistic satisfaction.

I also enjoyed the feeling of being in communication with my readers. I loved it when they wrote in and there were some letters that got pinned on to notice boards in the office that were about specific stories that had helped them overcome particular challenges.

I liked the freedom of being able to make decisions in my workplace about where I am at any given time, and about what I am working on. Within the bounds of meeting deadlines I’ve always, as an editor, been free to set my own work schedule. I also like having the power (again within bounds) to decide what I will cover and what I won’t, and how I will do it.

I also enjoy journalism. It’s always new, always different, always interesting. If it doesn’t seem to be, then it’s the journalist’s job to make it those things. I enjoy writing and feeling like I’m good at what I do.
CLOSING COMMENTS

This concludes the self-administered questionnaire. Today is March 7, 2006 and after today I will not work back into this data.

I am closing this chapter in this way because there is a danger that as I read more academic literature about magazines and discourse that my perceptions about my time as a magazine editor will change and evolve. This may have already happened to some extent. I left the editorship of *Vital* in March 2004 and commenced this PhD in July 2005. The passage of time and the reading that underpinned the research proposal may already have coloured my thoughts or added ways of interpreting events that were not part of the workplace perspective I sought to capture with this line of questioning. At this stage, that can’t be helped though. I have attempted to be as honest as possible in answering the questions, and sealing the chapter to protect it against modification as my perspective shifts seems to be the best way to preserve its validity as data.
PHASE ONE DISCUSSION

The task of this section is to present the reasoning behind the questions used in phase one, to summarise and discuss the answers to those questions and to explain what is being taken forward out of this process into phase two of the study.

In the literature review section of this study, I introduced Foucault’s (1972) definition of the statement. He was quoted as saying that it is the details of where a statement comes from that characterize it. He said that while analysis of sentences and propositions turns first to the question of their correctness, study of the statement looks at the “origin, time, place and context” (1972, p. 81). With sentences we ask first: “Is it true?”, while with statements we ask: “who said it, when, where and in what context?” and it is this approach that facilitates the study of the slippery social-cultural elements that otherwise defy the grasp of history.

Coming from this perspective it was important at the outset of this study to identify myself as the author. This gave rise to the set of demographic questions that I used to provide a snapshot of where I sit amongst the general population on some of the most commonly discussed measures used to categorise people. Care was taken to word these questions so that the answers could be lined up squarely and compared with population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Simple comparison of my demographics with the 2001 WA Census Data shows me to be typical of the majority of the population in terms of age, ethnicity and religion, but in minorities in terms of family type, education level and income.

Later in the study, this demographic data will be compared with the data from the editors in phases two and three, providing scope for discussion about the demographic roots of differences between the findings at difference phases of the
study. It is this kind of thinking about comparisons with data from later phases that underpinned the process of writing the phase one questionnaire. Many of the questions were added, not because I thought my opinion on them was definitive enough to have value on its own merit, but because I sought to establish a precedent for discussing them in later phases. (This intention explains the use of the term “asking the editors” in this section, as I explain my reasons for including particular lines of questioning).

Moving beyond the basic demographics, I next sought to outline my location as a professional within the media industry by documenting my relevant work history and professional education and training. Beyond that, the questions delve into the specific magazines that I edited and the time periods involved because, just as I am situated among other journalists, the magazines themselves are located amongst other publications in the market that have different readerships, circulations, budgets and corporate traditions that all impact on the experience and process of being an editor.

I also asked what made these magazines specifically women’s magazines. As discussed in the literature review, magazines can be categorised as women’s magazines by more than one means. They may be women’s magazines because their target or actual audiences are mainly female, or because they are categorised by circulation audit organisations into a specific category labelled “women’s”.

The phase one data reveals me to be a newspaper-trained journalist who worked as a magazine editor for five and a half years between 1998 and 2004 for two small publishing houses. The magazines I edited were defined as women’s magazines by their target audiences, rather than circulation bureau classification, or readership surveys. I share this newspaper background with Buttrose (1985), who started a cadetship with The Daily Telegraph when she was sixteen, but not with Dapin (2004) who, other than writing some freelance pieces for newspapers, started his journalism career as a magazine sub-editor.
The line of questioning then moved onto workplace dynamics, in order to explore the webs of relationships between editors and other colleagues. Within workplaces there are mechanisms that endow different employees with varying degrees of autonomy and power, including varying pay rates, office and desk locations and intimacy with corporate details. As these details differ between workplaces, so too does the relative status of the roles – and so, even though two magazine offices may have the same set of job titles, the status of those positions relative to each other in the different offices may vary considerably. Workplace relationships can also be a meaningful source of either enjoyment or irritation and this question sought to bring this dimension of editorial work into the study.

In answering these questions interesting similarities emerged between the descriptions of the two workplaces under discussion. Importance was placed in both on relating well with art directors. This reflects the pressure on magazines to both look attractive and read well, which can lead to conflict between design issues and text issues. Several times a day editors and art directors debate whether a story should be cut to make the page look less cluttered or run long because the copy makes good reading, and so harmony in this relationship understandably impacts on enjoyment of the role. In both workplaces the publishers’ styles of dispute resolution were mentioned, implying that disputes were a natural part of the process of magazine production and direct disputes with advertising staff were not mentioned as these were mediated by the publishers. It is also interesting to note that warmth/camaraderie was mentioned in both cases. These observations echo the experiences of Dapin (2004) and Buttrose (1985).

The inspiration behind the inclusion of the workplace dynamics question was personal and reinforced by Dapin (2004) who talks about both camaraderie among his team and fights with advertising staff, and by Buttrose (1985) who admitted in this passage that her concern about her relationships with other staff was so intense that it impacted on her physical wellbeing:

having got the job I became apprehensive. The nerves in my stomach played leapfrog for a week. I couldn’t sleep. The size of the job didn’t worry me: I relished its challenge. But there were many other factors.
First, I worried if I could do the job as well as was expected of me. Then I worried about the staff. All of the top people were older than I and had been on the magazine for years. They regarded it, naturally enough, as their magazine. I hoped that they would like me and that I’d get along with them. (p. 123).

These comments from the autobiographies confirm the existence of matrices of power dynamics in magazine newsrooms more complex than a simple model of hierarchical authority may imply. These dynamics will be discussed in the subsequent stages of this project.

Another issue raised by both Dapin (2004) and Buttrose (1985) centres on what is actually meant by the job title ‘editor’. What job descriptions go with it? What are the tasks expected and the responsibilities involved? The lists of tasks in the phase one data from the different workplaces are similar, but this is to be expected as I was employed in the second workplace as the first editor of the company’s first publication on the grounds that I had experience in the role. The biggest difference between the two was that I had less control in the second workplace over the overall look of the publication because the art director was more assertive, disputes were mediated by the publisher, and I didn’t always get my way. In contrast at the first workplace, when there was a conflict of opinion, the art director deferred to the editor’s decisions. Anecdotally, I believe that it is more common for editors’ decisions to take primacy over art directors’. The point about legal responsibility was stressed in both lists, not because the publishers insisted on it but because the legal system regards the editor as responsible, and consequently I saw it as an issue of personal, as well as corporate, safety.

Both lists of editorial tasks also included non-journalistic tasks such as managing editorial budgets and performing public relations and marketing tasks that were taken on because, given the size of the companies and the overall number of employees, I was the most qualified and appropriate person to handle those tasks. Looking at the task lists and comparing them with the training I had received prior to entering the role, it’s clear that while my journalistic training was gained during my newspaper cadetships, my editor training happened on-the-job on a suburban newspaper and this was enhanced to include magazine specific details in my first
magazine editing role. This supports Ferguson (1983) and Dapin’s (2004) claims that editors are trained on-the-job and hence often start in their roles with little understanding of what they are doing and how it should be done.

At the outset of the study I felt a little embarrassed about the extent to which I felt I had made-up my job description as I went along – proclaiming this or that to be within or beyond the scope of my job title – and I wondered if this was how it was for other editors. Dapin expressed a similar feeling and wrote:

Several times I asked Brad [Boxall, publisher] what were my responsibilities as editor.
“Whatever you like,” he said.
He meant I could involve myself in any area I thought I might be useful, but I didn’t want involvement, I wanted control. I told him I wanted to run Marketing and Advertising, and he gave me a thin smile of aggressive benevolent tolerance. He said I had no chance. (p. 130)

This quote also raises the issue about the curious dynamic between editors and publishers, executives more senior than themselves, advertisers and marketing staff that prompted the inclusion of the next few questions that deal with pressure and resistance from editors. Specifically these questions ask about pressure from publishers to push political lines, from advertising staff (and their clients) to provide advertorial content and from the marketing department (or publisher, depending on the size of the company) to present themselves as typical readers (even if they didn’t feel that they were typical of the target readership).

This last point harks back to Gough Yates’s (2003) revelation that in the 1980s and early 1990s in the UK “all the major magazines, particularly the new launches,” marketed themselves to their potential readers and advertisers by publicising “the magazine editor’s working style, lifestyle and career trajectory.” She added that “most frequently, the editor’s claim to knowledge of her reader would be justified by an attempt to demonstrate her lifestyle ‘fit’, and consequent ‘in-tuneness’ with the tastes of the magazine’s target readership” (p. 118).
As well as seeking confirmation of the existence of these pressures, I also made a point of introducing questions about: how editors resisted them; whether or not resistance was successful; and how – if they did print these pressure-elements or allow other personal hobby horses into their magazines – did they actually incorporate them into the magazines through what mechanisms, and in what parts of the publication?

In phase one, listing influences on my magazines other than my personal choices, I mentioned ‘publishers’, ‘advertorial’ and ‘not offending potential advertisers’. This was then expanded into the question about pressure to include advertorial and the deals that were done in workplace discussions between publishers, ad managers and myself. These included provisions such as editorial control over tone, content and placement. This felt like a risky confession given that the IAJA Code of Ethics includes a number of statements that can clearly be related to advertorial, specifically in clauses 4-6 which state:

- 4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.
- 5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.
- 6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

Established in 1910 the Australian Journalists’ Association (AJA) published its first Code of Ethics in 1944. In 1992 the union merged with Actors Equity and became the Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance (MEAA) and in 1994 it commenced a review of the code of ethics. The review committee included journalists and non-journalists, drew on submissions from local and international sources and resulted in amendments to the code including more enforcement options and openness about complaint procedures. The national union continues to actively promote the code in
newsrooms and through contact with universities that teach journalism. In this context the MEAA Code of Ethics is interpreted as a statement emanating from the discursive position of the journalism profession. The Australian Press Council, in contrast, represents the media industry, as its members are the companies that produce Australia’s newspapers.

It is worth noting that although there are slight differences between the MEAA code and the Press Council guidelines for journalists, the MEAA code points mentioned here are clearly echoed in the Press Council guidelines. While this has traditionally been interpreted by journalists as ‘don’t touch advertorial with a stick’, UK academic Gough Yates (2003) blew the whistle on it to some extent writing (initially about the early 1990s):

One of the most successful techniques for attracting advertisers to women’s magazines was the ‘advertorial’. Advertorials incorporated the advertised product into magazine editorial with the hopes that the sales pitch would be read as the objective comment of a ‘trusted friend’. Advertorials had traditionally been seen as ‘tacky’ and associated with the cowboy end of the publishing business … By the mid-1990s, however, magazine publishers were taking substantial portions of their revenues from magazine advertorial services … Indeed, the ‘Big Four’ took the advertorial sides of their businesses very seriously. Condé Nast, for example, offered advertisers the services of an in-house copywriter, house photographer and stylist for each title, and National Magazines a centralized advertorial promotions department of thirty staff. (p. 135)

She went on to explain the evolution of advertorials through the 1990s as editors started to weave them into magazines in the form of interviews with company-sponsored celebrities who made references to the company’s products or were photographed in the company’s branded clothing. Recipe pages started to carry advertorial as proprietary processed foods became key ingredients, and travel companies started sponsoring travel sections of magazines by paying for journalists’ airfares and accommodation. Magazines also started to include sample products, as inserts or glued to the covers, because they worked well for both the advertisers and the magazines by boosting the perception of value received in return for the cover price.
In small publishing house magazine work, where the scope for the existence of a separate advertorial department simply isn’t there, it falls to the editor to manage advertorial content. While this type of work may sit well with people who consider themselves to be marketing professionals, it is an uneasy task for someone who considers herself to be a journalist. This sense of uneasiness may well have risen over the last few years in the light of the mainstream media frenzy that surrounded the outing in 1999 by the ABC show Media Watch of advertorial-style promotions by a number of high profile radio talkback presenters. The Australian Broadcasting Authority launched an inquiry into the issue that was by then being called “the cash for comments scandal”. The upshot was that the talkback presenters excused themselves from being bound by journalism’s codes of practice by claiming that they were ‘entertainers’ and not ‘journalists’ (Hirst & Patching, 2007). This result has discomforting implications for magazine editors who work in publications that have for the last couple of decades routinely run advertorial, sometimes in the surreptitious, subtle product-placement ways described by Dapin (2004, p.130). This discomfort has imposed a sense of taboo around discussion of the topic that this project seeks to explore, and possibly dispel.

The trickiness lies in the range of possible wrongdoing that needs to be balanced against dangerously tight profit margins that restrict how much money can be spent on journalism and photography. There seems to be very little wrong with sending a book from a particular publishing company to the writer of the best letter to the editor if it increases how much money that publishing company is prepared to spend on advertising. But there is a lot wrong about endorsing a health product that has no scientific backing in order to attract advertising dollars. From a journalistic perspective, the art of judging wrongdoing in the grey scale between these two extremes seems to be about mindfulness of the code of ethics in the context of corporate requirements for revenue.

Looking at point four of the code of ethics, this may mean running a story about a company that advertises, but adamantly stating only the facts of the case and not peppering the copy with praise. With regards to point five, it may mean disclosing
that you were a guest of a particular travel company and refusing offers from marketing professionals seeking to win your favour with luxury treats; and with point six it may mean running a story that is critical of a modality or product despite potential outrage it may cause among advertisers. Highlighting the pressure applied to editors in regard to advertorial Dapin wrote:

Senior media buyers tend to be in sales; the best negotiators spend their time smooth-talking money out of clients, rather than arguing down advertising rates. They wheedle ad reps to wheedle editors to squeeze the client some ‘added value’, which usually takes the form of horribly disguised editorial endorsements. (p. 132)

The labelling of all advertorial copy is the only solution that would satisfy the code of ethics criteria and yet this is only a simple solution in the case of direct payment. When indirect payment, such as good will or ‘added value’, is involved labelling is inappropriate (and technically inaccurate) and boundaries are less distinct, especially when a journalist seeks to balance a critical story by allowing an advertising company to have right of reply, in this case half of the resulting copy could be considered to be sycophantic advertorial (binding a journalist seeking balance into a lose-lose situation).

In phase one I outlined some of the ‘rules’ I implemented in my struggle with these kinds of issues, such as appeasing the advertising department by allowing them to do deals with regards to gifts for letter writers and new subscribers while insisting on editorial control over all advertorial copy. Strategies employed by other editors will be explored in the subsequent sections of this study, further opening the box on this contentious area of magazine journalism in Australia.

With regard to political pressure from editors I reported that one publisher actively encouraged me to write stories supportive of The Greens, because she, I and the publication’s readership (as we perceived them) leaned that way politically. As a journalist more used to living by the mantra of unbiased copy, I found this odd and I shied away from blatant electioneering, but I did include many stories about Green events and people. In the second workplace my publisher sternly warned me against being “too Green” and so I carefully avoided political issues. The only politicians
who were featured in those publications were covered in the context of being
empowered women with several children balancing busy lives and I didn’t write any
of these stories myself. For my own part, this indicates that pressure from publishers
about the political slant of the publications did have some impact and the extent to
which this holds true for other editors will be explored in the rest of the study.

Answering the question about presenting myself as a typical reader, I struggled
because I didn’t feel that the “typical reader” was well understood by either of the
two publishers I worked for. By describing their target audiences respectively as
“everyone” and “every woman in WA”, and refusing to spend money on audience
research, the publishers set up a requirement for the magazines to cover a wider
range of interests than could reasonably be encompassed by an individual. I suspect,
however, given the market trend towards more tightly nichéd publications, that
this too-broad positioning was an error that contributed to the publications’
financial woes. It will therefore be interesting to discover what editors of more
financially successful publications have to say about this issue.

Responding to the questions about how I moderated the pressures, I mentioned
disguising advertorial, which runs against the Code of Ethic’s admonitions about
disclosure, but I also spoke about seeking balance in the stories, looking for genuine
news angles and refusing to make false claims. This drives the issue into the grey
zone despised by journalists who would rather keep the practice of journalism
untainted by commercial pressure. This idealistic position is clearly expounded in
Hirst and Patching’s journalism text book, *Journalism Ethics: Arguments and Cases*
(2007) that repeatedly states that the major fault-line in journalism ethics is the rift
between the social-motivations of journalists and the capitalist motives of media
owners. Rather than defending my practices here, though, further discussion of this
and comparisons with the practices other magazine editors will follow as the study
progresses.

On the topic of other hobby horses or pet topics that I brought into my work as an
editor I listed a number of subjects that I liked and wrote about because they were
things I had encountered in other areas of my life arising from my role as a parent, a
psychology graduate, and as a member of my extended family and social circles. Many of these ‘other’ areas involved small subcultures (such as my son’s Waldorf schooling and Capoeria class) that I felt were newsworthy because they were unusual and some were connected with activism and social change movements that created a clear tension between my desire as an editor to be unbiased and my capacity to assist these movements by providing coverage. Further confusing my internal debate about my professional practice was movement within journalism itself encapsulated by activist and journalist David Berman:

Classic tenets of journalism call for objectivity and neutrality. These are antiquated principles no longer universally observed … We must absolutely not feel bound by them. If we are ever to create meaningful change, advocacy journalism will be the single most crucial element to enable the necessary organizing. It is therefore very important that we learn how to be successful advocacy journalists. For many, this will require a different way of identifying and pursuing goals.

(p.1, 2004)

This optimism about advocacy journalism brought into question the value of old rules of the profession and legitimised experimentation with new ways of assessing newsworthiness that could include personal passions and attachment to causes that I believed were socially benevolent.

In order to expose more details about this process my next question dealt with whether, as an editor, I spoke as myself or as a corporate mouthpiece. The answer is that it is a question of balance that required constant weighing and juggling of many competing demands and continual questioning of my own motives. Delving deeper into this notion that editors may bring some nuances from their personal lives into their editing work, I asked the question about how consistent the editor’s work has been across different workplaces and whether the editor’s style is ever modified to express a corporate, rather than an individual’s, voice. The thinking behind these questions is that being a corporate puppet is likely, in the long run, to be less satisfying than being an empowered artist and so the extent to which it is required may impact on job satisfaction, as well as on what editors actually say through their publications.
The questions about how consistent I am in this approach across workplaces confirmed that I have a sense of how I operate as a professional that is independent of which employer I am working for and this reinforces the notion of the role being something that requires occupation by someone who brings something extra to it, rather than it being a production-line position that anyone who can go through the motions can fill.

The line of questioning then broadens out to take in the readers and the impact editors think they may have on them, and beyond the readers to culture itself. The readers (and the rest of the populace with whom they interact) may, according to Sheridan’s (2000) study on the content of The Australian Women’s Weekly, be prompted to change attitudes by the tone of coverage of certain issues in magazines. While asking the editors what impact they think they are having on their readers and on culture clearly won’t indicate what impact they are actually having, it will shed some light on the extent to which editors live in either hope or despair about the importance of what they do.

My answer to this question dwelt on the notion that the magazine (and by extension the editor) is a ‘trusted friend’ who can provide inspiration, nurturing and support in times of trouble. This notion now sits at the heart of many magazines marketing strategies with ACP magazines describing all of its magazines in terms such as this claim from The Australian Women’s Weekly online ratecard (ACP, 2007): “The Australian Women’s Weekly offers you an intimate relationship with your target audience forged over many years. We give you all the authority and influence of the one-on-one dialogue with a trusted friend.”

This stated aim is interestingly different from the equivalent pitch from The Australian newspaper’s online ratecard (News Ltd, 2007) that claims its “editorial values focus on leading and shaping public opinion on the issues that affect Australia … [and providing] the impartial information and the independent thinking that are essential to the further advance of our country” and The Age’s (2008) “strong analysis of domestic and international news, thought-provoking editorial, [and] dynamic special interest sections”.

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As an editor, the difference in the roles that magazines and newspapers play in their readers’ lives creates a need to use a different set of ‘newsworthiness’ criteria. It means that as a magazine editor you ask “will my readers enjoy this and find it useful, inspiring, empowering and uplifting?” and “Is this the sort of thing I would discuss with a close friend?” Rather than the more news-oriented (sometimes fourth estate inspired) questions of “does this need to be exposed to public scrutiny and will this affect how citizens vote?”

Phrases that arose in the phase one answers to questions about the cultural role of magazines include “stirring the cultural pot, mixing ideas from the fringes into the middle” and inspiring other editors to write about similar content thus “creating a ripple effect”. These both evoke images of the fluidity that echo Foucault’s description of the realm of conversation, tangential rumour and transient writing that “never crystallized” (1972, p. 136). Asked what limited my impact on cultural change the answers were similarly fluid and included the feeling of being “drowned-out” to some extent by other voices. Stretching the watery metaphor, the overall impression is one of feeling like a drop in the ocean that could be part of a turning tide.

It is interesting to note, though, that I also raised the point about magazines being perceived by readers as a luxury to be enjoyed in “time-out” moments. This was echoed by International Federation of the Periodical Press president Donald Krummerfeld in 2007, who (in explaining why magazines were the fastest growing media sector internationally) said: “it’s a new phenomenon called ‘escape from the screen’. People spend most of their day in front of a computer, so the last thing they want to do at home is pull out a laptop” (Leong, 2007).

Exploring this relationship with readers and broader culture further, the next questions are about how well editors think the public understands what they do. The fact that a number of editors, including Dapin and Buttrrose, have published autobiographies about their professional lives indicate that publishing companies perceive that it is a role that the public is curious about, but given that it has been
flippantly portrayed in television comedies such as *Absolutely Fabulous* and *Just Shoot Me*, there is also scope for it to be misunderstood. These questions sought to explore the openness of the editor-reader relationship in order to find a starting place for looking at how seriously readers might take the content of their magazines. The phase one data suggests that the role is not well understood by the public and that it is seen to be more luxurious and glamorous than it really is.

The final two questions that asked only what was most liked and disliked about the role were deliberately open-ended. In the spirit of qualitative data gathering, they sought to elicit material that the participants throughout the study may want to offer that was not covered by the questions already asked.

The first answer to the question about the worst part of the job relates directly to the truism about doctors burying their mistakes, lawyers jailing theirs and journalists publishing theirs for all the world to see. Other downsides included advertorial, sourcing issues that in larger organisations would be handled by editorial assistants and the overall pressure of the responsibility inherent in the position. The upsides included creative freedom and satisfaction and interest in the always-new nature of the material.

Insofar as this project is an attempt to describe the discourse of magazine editors, this phase one data is inadequate in the same way as the autobiographies of editors, such as Dapin and Buttrose, are.

Scott (1992, p. 23) described the act of documenting personal experience not as a way of claiming unassailable authority but as a means of making the existence of social institutions visible in order “to render historical what has hitherto been hidden from history”. Once that is done, the process of seeking, and contesting, explanations can begin. While from an experimental perspective, this first phase is a case study of the experience of one person who may or may not be typical of magazine editors (as a group), and whose answers may or may not represent what magazine editors, in general, think or say. From Scott’s perspective it is a starting
point. It has shone a light into a sphere that was not previously visible from the outside and from here the enquiry begins.

From both perspectives it is clear that the next task was to ask the same questions of a broader group of editors in phases two and three of the project. The next section will explain the phase two participant selection and interviewing methodology in more detail, but before going into those details, the final component of phase one was the creation of a questionnaire that could be used in that next phase.

As ethics approval was required before the phase two interviews could commence, each question needed to be carefully considered and its inclusion explained. The process of question-by-question contemplation produced rationales for each question that I have included in this thesis alongside the summarized phase two data in the next section. Here it is suffice to say that each question was carefully considered.

A key evolution of the questionnaire between phases one and two was that the questions were numbered to facilitate note-taking during the interviews, and thought was given to the order in which they should be asked to maximise disclosure on the most taboo issues. The same demographic questions were used as the rationale for wanting to line them up against census data remained valid. Other questions were grouped together in a way that seemed likely to facilitate a flowing conversation. Most of the phase two questions were drawn directly from the phase one questionnaire, as the latter had been written with the later stages of the study in mind.

The only new additions to the phase two questionnaire (shown in Appendix 1) were questions 13 and 18 that asked “How do you feel about the celebritisation of magazine editors? Is it deserved? Is it appropriate?” and “Is there a sense of camaraderie with other magazine editors and/or with other journalists in general?”

The question about celebritisation arose from reading subsequent to the completion of phase one and was asked in order to connect this study with existing research, such as Turner et al (2000), on the celebritisation of media professionals. Question 18
emerged from thoughts expressed in phase one about the differences between
magazine journalism and newspaper journalism that include different approaches to
issues as dearly held as those enshrined in the MEAA Code of Ethics.

Thought was given in the ordering of the questions to the gradual build up of trust
and engagement over the course of an interview, and the questions considered most
likely, (based on my experience of writing phase one), to be confronting were
positioned towards the end in the hope that this would enhance the participants’
willingness to disclose their thoughts.

With the phase two questionnaire complete and approval granted by the ethics
committee, phase one was over and it was time to move on.
PHASE TWO INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Based near Albany on WA’s picturesque south coast, Mt Romance is not only a sandalwood processing plant that supplies extracts to some of the world’s largest perfume brands; it’s also one of the largest cosmetics factories in the southern hemisphere and it has won tourism awards for its guided tours, restaurant and gift shop facilities.

In 2001 Mt Romance flew a small plane full of journalists from Perth to Albany and treated us to a tour, a slide show and a sumptuous lunch in the hope of piquing our interest sufficiently for us to write about them. At the time I was editor of Perth Woman and I shared my lunch table with the editor of Scoop and the editor of Postcards. We laughingly acknowledged that our bosses would not have approved of the company we were keeping. We avoided talking about the big stories we were working on for our next issues and we bonded over our shared frustration with various aspects of our daily work.

While daily life saw us isolated in our own workplaces (working alongside other editors only when they were with stable-mate publications), editors with different companies encounter each other sporadically on the job. When they do they have a lot to discuss, in part because they follow each others’ work by looking at each others’ magazines with an understanding that only comes with familiarity with the production process. This familiarity creates a sense of intimacy that allows the sharing of information about the role of editor that is not usually expressed in public. It is less purposive and contrived than the version of ‘what-my-job-is-like’ that editors would usually share with their employers or readers, given that there is
something to be said for presenting an image of bullet-proof professionalism and certainty to both of those audiences. In contrast, conversations with colleagues in the same boat can be a source of support and reassurance.

The participants
Considering the need for this phase of this project to test assertions made in the phase one (and other) autobiographies, against a larger group of editors it seemed logical to tap into the frank and open conversation that I knew occurred within networks of editors working in the same town on similar products. I compiled a list of people I knew to be either current or former magazine editors now living in Perth and called them to ask if I could interview them. Of the eleven I called, eight said ‘yes’. Two declined because they were too busy and one said she was unwilling to discuss her former employers. Seven were interviewed as one said ‘yes’ but due to her overseas work commitments we failed to find a mutually convenient time. By the time I had completed the seven interviews – that yielded around 42,000 words of material – I felt that I had captured the range of possible responses on each topic and decided against the eighth interview. The seven interviews were conducted between May 20 and September 28, 2006.

All of the eleven editors I called were people I had already met. Of the seven I interviewed, three I had worked with in workplaces other than the magazines under discussion; one had worked with me as editor of a stable-mate publication; one had published some freelance pieces I had written; and two I had never worked with. The editor who said ‘yes’ but wasn’t interviewed was a former stable-mate editor, as was one of the three who declined. The other two who declined had previously published freelance pieces I had written. As these people were part of my professional network of colleagues, the participants were a traditional network sample (as opposed to a sample contacted through social networking websites), albeit subject to the contingencies and vagaries of availability and interest in this research.

The interview process
In order for it to be possible to compile, compare and contrast the editors’ comments it made sense to ask them all the same set of questions, but it is also obvious that asking questions too tightly can restrict responses in a way incongruent with a
process seeking to allow them to tell their own stories. It was therefore decided that the interviews would be structured by a list of questions, but that I would also allow and follow tangents raised by the editors in order to capture perspectives not covered in the list of questions in the study. In order for the data gathered to be discussed in relation to the phase one data and the literature that preceded phase one, the questionnaire used was, naturally, the one produced at the conclusion of phase one of the study (Appendix 1). I conducted the interviews myself, in person, in familiar and convenient settings.

Two interviews took place in the participants’ homes, one in my home, one in the courtyard of a restaurant/bar, one in a coffee shop and two in the participants’ offices. As both I and the editors were familiar and comfortable with the process of interviewing (as part of our work as journalists) these were relaxed events and took between one and two hours, with coffee and biscuits and/or a glass of wine consumed in the process. All of the interviews were recorded on an iPod and I took shorthand notes as we went (as insurance against iPod failure and out of habit as a journalist).

An additional feature of the interviews was the signing of the consent forms. I showed the forms to the participants at the beginning of the interviews and left them on the table suggesting that they sign them at the end in order to be able to make note of anything that they had said that they wanted to exclude. All signed the forms at the end of the interviews with no specific requests for content to be excluded over my stated aim to de-identify them, and their workplaces, by not naming either. This confidentiality process was added to minimise the risk that honest disclosure about their employers and taboo subjects, such as advertorial, may have posed to the participants. It was hoped that minimising this risk would also reduce skewing of their answers that may have resulted from fear of exposure.

In addition to sound psychological rationales for why one-on-one interviews with a familiar, liked and trusted person in familiar settings with signed confidentiality agreements may enhance honesty in disclosure (Bolton, 1979), it is also worth adding that these procedures, along with judicious self-disclosure about my experiences as an editor, were used to prompt recall of the time when I was an editor. This stepping
back into the role was deliberately done in order to evoke the intimacy of familiar editor-to-editor conversations and our shared experience of the editorial environment. In Foucauldian terms (1972), this makes a world of difference as statements are characterised by who says them to whom, and so one could expect different things to be said editor-to-editor in an established relationship, than might be said between an editor and an unfamiliar researcher who has not demonstrated a familiarity with the territory under discussion. It is worth noting that the privilege of access to these editor-to-editor conversations is one of the key features that distinguishes this study from previous research in the field of magazine journalism.

Data processing and analysis
As each interview was completed the iPod recordings were transcribed in full, ensuring that nothing said was lost before it had been properly considered.

When all seven interviews were complete, the transcripts were taken apart and reassembled into 20 documents with each one dedicated to a question and containing all seven answers to it. In cases where a comment relevant to a question was intermingled with an answer to a different question the comments were duplicated so that all that was said on each question by each editor was contained in each of the question-focussed documents.

The answers to the demographic questions are presented graphically in the next section, showing comparisons with both myself, as the phase one subject, and the general population as described by ABS data.

The next task was to reduce the 42,000 words of raw qualitative data from the other questions into manageable portions. To achieve this I returned to Foucault’s notion of the statement as something that is “identified with neither grammatical ‘acceptability’ nor with logical correctness” (1972, p. 115). One of the things a statement requires, if it is to function, is a ‘subject’ which Foucault describes as “not the speaking consciousness, nor the author of the formulation, but a position that may be filled in certain conditions by various individuals” (p. 115, 1972). In this
study that position is the role described by the job title, ‘editor of a women’s magazine’.

The other three elements a statement requires are a referential, an associated field and a materiality (1972, p.115). Unpacking these, a referential can be a fact or a fiction, but more basically it is whatever the statement is talking about. An associated field is the domain of other statements it exists within. (Returning to the virtual map analogy with its dots and lines, an associated field is a matrix of speakers and things they say.) Having a materiality means that the statement exists, it was spoken-and-heard, or written-and-read, rather than being just a thought that was never articulated and/or never received.

Coming from this perspective I sought to group together, compare and contrast the statements coming from the seven editors, not by the specific vocabulary that they contain but by their meanings (referentials), in particular in terms of the references they make to various other parties (other dots on the virtual map), such as publishers and readers. This process aimed to present in a meaningful way the range of answers that emanate from the subject position of editor. Beyond that, it is hoped that looking at these answers from this Foucauldian perspective this project will show not only how the editors see themselves, but how they see themselves situated in the matrix that is their field of discourse or operation.

Before proceeding to the phase two data, something needs to be said about conventions employed in the transcription and presentation process. Please note that all quotes are verbatim except where the spoken words were inaudible on the iPod recording, in which case a guess at the word is inserted in square brackets, and in many cases phatic-spacing words such as “um” and “y’know” have been deleted to aid the flow and readability of the text. In accordance with the confidentiality agreements when participants have used the word “owner” or “publisher”, or used their employer’s or their publication’s name, I have substituted those words with the terms [the boss] and [the publication], in square brackets to denote the substitution.
Each time more than one publication is mentioned by name in a paragraph, the first mention is recorded using terms such as [publication 1] and the second as [publication 2]. This numbering system starts fresh each time more than one publication is named in a paragraph and so the term [publication 1] does not always refer to the same publication.

That said, the phase two data that follows is formatted to present first the demographic data, shown graphically, then question-by-question summaries that commence with a brief rationale for the inclusion of the question. The second component of the summaries are quotes from the interviews grouped according to their content (such as positive or negative responses), with contextualising comments and headings. This data is then further reduced into lists of main points derived from the responses to each question. These main points are then unpacked into a brainstormed list of possible questions that could be derived from them for use in the questionnaire to be taken forward into phase three of this study.

These lists of possible questions will be explored and processed in the phase two discussion, for now here is the phase two data.
PHASE TWO DATA

The editors in phase two were asked a few broad demographic questions and that data is graphically presented here alongside national Australian 2006 census data to show how closely the editors represent the populations from which their readerships were drawn.

Figure 1: Population by Gender

While there are slightly more females than males in the population this trend was exaggerated in the editors group. Four of the editors were female and three were male.

Figure 2: Population by Age

This graph shows, in blue, how old the editors were while they were working in the positions discussed in this study, against the purple line that shows the proportion of the population at each age in 2006.

Figure 3: Population by Education

While the 2006 Census data showed that Australians have a range of education, the editors in phase two all had undergraduate degrees.
Figure 4: Population by Income
The horizontal blue bars on this graph show the income ranges of the seven editors in their time in the role against the purple vertical bars showing the income earned by percentages of the population.

Figure 5: Population by Ethnicity
The editors were all from Anglo-Australian or English families, and as such, they represented the largest ethnic group in Australia.

Figure 6: Population by Religion
Three of the editors described their religion and “Anglican” and four said they recorded it on Census forms as “Not Specified”. This places them in the two largest majorities.
The seven editors interviewed for phase two not only opened spaces in their busy schedules to have these conversations but they also opened up their professional lives to interrogation, and none of them declined to answer even the most invasive questions, although some questions required pause for thought. All said they enjoyed the interviews and that they had been asked questions that had never been put to them before. All of them expressed an enthusiasm for the project. They shared my hunger for answers about the role and how it is experienced by others, about what we have in common and what about our work, as individuals, can be described as unique or personal.

**Phase two – Question Three**

Question 3 asked the editors about their designated job descriptions in terms of their roles and responsibilities and other tasks they were expected do. It also asked them about workplace dynamics and how this influenced their time in the role.

These questions aimed to elicit information that would illustrate what is involved in being an editor, what tasks are undertaken under its banner and how the role is positioned in relation to the other roles involved in the production of magazines.

It will be interesting to compare this data with the phase 3 data to see if the work done by the editors of small circulation, independently-owned, magazines differs from the work done by editors of large, group-owned magazines. This comparison will show whether editorship across the industry is homogenous as an experience or in name only.

Another rationale for including this question was that it served to set the tone of the interviews as intimate and person-focused, rather than being about professional appearances.

**Make it up as you go along**

Regarding designated job descriptions most of them said that they were NOT given any specific details about what their job required them to do, or the processes they were expected to employ (or not employ) in order to achieve the vague goals that they were given.

Comments on this theme from five of the seven editors include the following:
There was never a specific brief on any of these magazines. I guess it was implicit that you knew the thing and sort of knew what it did. ... the [boss] who appointed me, just kind of said “well there it is, get on with it, do what you like”.

It was very, very loose. It basically just said: You will continue to put out a product that lives up to a certain standard and aim to beef up the features element of the magazine and the overall standard of the editorial. There probably is a document somewhere but I’ve never seen it. The [boss] literally gave me a one-page thing with about seven points on it which basically said how I’d be paid ... I think he thought with me, oh she’s experienced and so I’ll let her do it and if I don’t like it then I’ll tell her.

Q. Were there designated job descriptions?
A: Absolutely none.

Q. So how did you know where your responsibilities lay?
A: If you had to be taught this you never would have become an editor. You knew what you had to do. I knew what I had to do. I had to fill the bloody magazine with stories.

Q. Were there designated job descriptions? To put together the magazines.

Q. Are there job descriptions? Is it really clear what you are expected to do?
No ... I think that to work in a company such as [this] you need to be able to wear many different hats and you need to be able to be flexible, because at the end of the day we all work together as a team to put a product out and sometimes that means you’ve got to accept responsibilities that are outside the boundaries of what your original job description is, or what it is on paper. I don’t think you can be too bolshy about sticking to that physical job description because then your product just won’t hit the shelves. There are job descriptions in the sense that we know what each other does and we know what each person’s specific role is within the company but everyone is expected to step outside the boundaries a little bit.

This question was omitted from one of the interviews because of interruptions and time pressure. The seventh editor, however, gave the radically different response that follows. It is interesting to note that at the time he was in his early 20s, employed as a graduate as editor of a relatively young publication by an owner/publisher:
The job description was very specific, because [the boss] is the kind of guy who documents everything. It was much more than just fill up the mag, a large part of it was working with the sales team which largely involved advertorial, to be honest, and there was also a large PR role where I was expected to attend a lot of functions and see a lot of clients. Q. What was the ‘seeing clients’ about? For our biggest clients [the boss] just liked me to call them up regularly and go and see them regularly and ask what they were doing, to maintain relations with them and become mates with them, which I did. I was a bit cynical about it at the time but having said that I did become quite good friends with a few of them.

His admission of feeling cynical about the requirement of befriending clients is interesting because it points to the uncomfortable conflict between the realities of magazine life and the journalistic taboo regarding relations with advertisers.

Another interesting aspect of this comment is that it opens up discussion about expectations that editors do other kinds of work, apart from selecting, commissioning and editing stories. These tasks, as reported by the editors in this study, range from journalistic reporting and writing work to managing people and public relations.

Jacks of all trades

This is a theme that was mentioned by all of the other editors except the one who worked as a magazine editor with a large Sydney-based national publication. Three of the editors raised the issue of their diverse workloads as follows, using terminology suggesting that it is, or was, overwhelming:

- I have a huge PR role and now with my assistant there’s a management role. I think you are as much a project manager as you are an editor because you’re handling commissions, you’re finding writers, and you’re liaising with people. There’s a lot of relationship building. You are constantly having to fix errors, whether they are yours or other people’s because you are seen as that sort of ‘top dog’, even if you are not.

- Particularly working on a publication with no staff and a shoestring budget. I do a million things that I wouldn’t have had to dream about doing when I was a [big publishing house] editor because we had unlimited budgets and lots of staff – and so the implication is that if you can’t find someone to do it for nothing, as in someone junior to
you in the organisation, and the budget won’t allow you to pay someone, you’ve got to do it yourself.

- The amount of writing that I took on was huge. A lot of it should have been commissioned out and I took on a lot more of the styling than I think an editor normally would but I was always mindful of the budget and the company’s need to not overspend so I just did as much as I could do myself.

- I also played a part in strategic planning for the company. Like, for example, I was pretty active in the conversations to launch [our second magazine] when it was getting too big as a section in [the first magazine]. It was kind of my baby in a way.

Asked what she liked least about her job, one editor said that she disliked the expectation that she would play a PR role (other dislikes are covered in the summary of question 19):

- I’d rather not be pressured to be out and about as much as I’m supposed to be out and about in my role, because I’m not a small talk person and you have to be really good at that.

While another said that he enjoyed that aspect of his work:

- I think there are some nice responsibilities with it, where you might be asked to open an art show or speak at this or speak at that … I think that is part of the job and I think it’s very nice to be involved in that sort of thing.

**Flirting with burnout**

It’s interesting to note that one (but only one) of the editors said that she had taken a stand against the expectation that she would do whatever needed to be done to get the publication out on time:

- **Q.** What else do you do? Do you write things like the suppliers lists?
  
  **A.** No, we get the admin girls to do all that sort of stuff because I flatly refused when I walked in there. It was “I won’t be doing this” and “I won’t be doing that” and he’s been ok with that as long as I’ve employed people to do it for me. I certainly haven’t been in the industry this long so that I can write a list.

In contrast to this comment are statements from five editors alluding to the potential for, or experience of, burnout due to the excesses of the workload expectations:
it’s quite demanding and thankless.

I would describe the dynamic as being high-paced. I think it is a very high-pressure atmosphere. … It got to a point where I had been doing everything on my own and finally I have an assistant – which is absolutely brilliant and it’s been long overdue. I think … with any company of this size, that is growing rapidly, there’s always that need for support long before you actually get it, until it gets to almost breaking point.

I don’t think anybody in editorial or production would have lasted as long as they have without the support of one another.

I was on a much lower salary than the art director and the marketing manager. That didn’t bother me much at first, but after four issues – just knowing the colossal amount of work I put into those issues – in the end the salary gap did grate on me … The fact that the editor actually managed the overall publication and was legally responsible for it seemed to be overlooked.

I edited the magazine for nearly eight years which is a long run, and at the end of eight years, it was finished with me and I’d finished with it… The fact is that you’ve basically used all of your tricks and it needs to move on, and the easiest way to do that is just to change the box of tricks.

Fun in the toyshop

Balancing this sense of the work being all consuming and exhausting were comments from all seven editors that alluded to the workplace atmosphere being fun and exciting and about the camaraderie and friendships that arise in magazine newsrooms playing a significant role:

- Oh it’s a fantastic environment, unlike other places I’ve worked at where it’s very dog eat dog. The way I see it is that the women in there and it’s mainly women, see themselves as prospective life long friends…I think that we value those relationships as much as we value the product.

- We work very closely as a team, so it’s a very tight-knit atmosphere. Within our production team we have a lot of respect for each other and we’ve really kind of got each other’s backs, strong camaraderie … Without the people, I can honestly say, that if it wasn’t for the people I work with I may not have been here at this point, because of the pressure, but the people make it worth it, definitely.

- I found it exciting.
The environment was really good there. It was too good at times and got in the way of how much work we did. Occasionally there were times when morale was a bit low, but that was rare and in the main we had a lot of fun.

The work dynamic is actually really important, that we all get on and support one another. It wouldn’t work otherwise, particularly with such a small team we wouldn’t be able to get the magazine out if one team member was letting down the rest. So it’s actually a very supportive workplace.

It was both friendly and competitive... We fought like sisters but loved each other like sisters and I’m still friends with all of them.

…very, very strong teams, very strong family feeling. …We still are very close friends. It is intense and it is a creative bond as well, and we would do very creative things, which aren’t necessarily mainstream media…. The magazine had its own independent budget, it reported separately financially and so to all intensive purposes we were just left in the toyshop to play.

Main Points
The editors were not given clear job descriptions.
Their roles included project management, PR, writing, corporate strategic planning and a range of other tasks on an as-needs basis.
Most made mention of the job being high pressure, demanding and/or exhausting.
All mentioned that the work was enjoyable or exciting and most said that workplace relationships/friendships played an important role in their job satisfaction.

Implications for Phase Three of this study
Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:
Do you have a job description document that clearly outlines your responsibilities and work practices?
Is your work confined to journalistic tasks?
Are you responsible for managing a budget?
Are you involved in corporate strategic planning?
Is there a public relations component to your work?
In your daily work are you more often a project manager than a journalist?
Do you consider your workload to be unusually demanding?
Do you consider your workload to be unusually fun and exciting?
Do you consider yourself to be at risk of burnout?
Does camaraderie in your workplace impact on your ability to withstand pressure?
Do your workplace friendships contribute significantly to your job satisfaction?

**Phase two – Question Four**

Question 4 asked what influences, other than their own personal choices, shaped the voices of their publications.

This was asked because of an assumption arising from part one of this study that supported assertions by Dapin (2004), Buttrose (1985), Ferguson (1983), and others, that editors’ personal choices played a major role in shaping the voices of their magazines. It also opened the door for a range of answers to be given and served as a prelude to the next few questions that deal with specific kinds of editorial pressure.

**All about the readers**

The response that arose in all seven interviews was that the readers were a key consideration, and that the aim of this consideration was not to influence readers but to give them what they perceived that they wanted.

These comments from five editors in answer to question 4 took the following form:

- I think that as editors we were looking more broadly at what the readers wanted to read about …
- Underpinning it is … an understanding of the readership
- It was the close interest in and sort of understanding of the psyche of the Australian female buyer of that time.
- I guess when we are putting together our commissions and our briefs to our writers your target audience has to be first and foremost.
- I definitely always had to consider the target audience, that was a criteria.
- It’s interesting to also note the following comments from the remaining two editors offered not in response to this question but to question 5.

- I come in on the same approach each time and that’s “is there a story there, is it interesting, is the readership going to appreciate it, is it something that the average readers would like to know about?”

- the only way they [companies that advertise] will get in is if they have something new or current that is of interest to our readers.

All about me
On reflection it may have been better to ask to what extent the editors’ own personal choices influenced the content of their publications and then to tease out what other influences came into it.

This conclusion arises from the fact that one of the most senior editors volunteered that his own interests played a major role, while another, younger, editor said that she deliberately avoided putting in content just because it interested her personally.

The two comments were:

- It’s so much what I like. I think that, you know, it really is overpoweringly if I’m interested in it. If I think: “Yes, that’s really interesting, that’s cool, I’d like to know more about that.”

- Towards the end I was thinking about the market the whole time. The editor who came after me didn’t do that, she was just writing about all the young and funky stuff and for some reason it really bothered me! It was like ‘I wanted to write about the fun stuff too but I thought about the readers and so should you.’

One of the others added, as an afterthought to his comment about focussing on relevance to the readership, “and other than that it was just whether it was going to be interesting, which I guess every editor does.”

Team efforts
Given that in question 3 most of the editors said that they were broadly given responsibility for filling their publications, it’s interesting to note how much they were on their own in that and the kind of input their colleagues/team had.

(Note that at this stage we are not yet talking about advertorial or political pressure.)
In a small publishing house the team can include the owner/publisher, staff writers and/or freelances, editors of other publications in the stable, the artistic directors/graphic designers, the advertising sales staff and even the office and admin staff. In a larger organisation, the word “team” it is more likely to refer to the publication’s journalists and section editors.

Four of the editors made reference at this point to the impact of their colleagues on the voices of their publications:

- *would the /boss/ have any input?* No, … he wouldn’t have got into it. No, it was really amongst the team of us, we’d talk and we’d have ideas and people would bring in ideas and y’know, we’d theme editions.

- [The boss] is not involved with the production of the magazine once we get going, other than if he gets something and feeds it to us. But with that initial discussion when we are deciding what goes in and what doesn’t, I go to him with a list of what I think we should do and he usually has a few ideas and then we toss them around and so that’s probably the number one thing.

- While the storylist was the editor’s choice and it wasn’t openly challenged if [the design and marketing staff] didn’t like an idea, you’d second guess the idea if there was no positivity about it. It was difficult because everyone was so passionate about the magazine, which was good because everyone did have a vested interest in it being successful. The problem was that staff couldn’t separate themselves from this passion and be objective.

- The decision on what goes into that magazine is very much driven by me but it’s collaborative, we have regular meetings with sales people and admin people and with [the boss] and myself and sometimes with the other editors and the creative people. Because we all work in the same room, as editors, we often throw off ideas to each other and bounce them off. “What do you think about this?” or “What do you think about that?” So the ideas come and then I will present them in our editorial meetings and they will either be agreed upon or they’ll be disputed. Mostly it’s agreed upon but often I get ideas from elsewhere and we discuss them, so that’s how it generally works.

It’s about the mix

While stories can be assessed individually in terms of their appropriateness to the readerships and the publication and their degree of appeal to the editor, three editors
mentioned the need for stories to fit with a preconceived range of topics/styles, so that the overall publication is not dominated by a particular kind of story that would make it even more tightly niched than it already is.

These comments included:

- We always try to have a mixture of features, one that is more issues-based, one that’s a bit more arty and one that has a strong community flavour to it and then generally one that might be a personality profile or something like that. So we just try and look at the balance of stories and how we can get the best kind of mix for the magazine.

- We did these bigger ideas (themes) to break it up because week by week you’d have a mix. … You have to believe that if any reader, every reader picks up the magazine for two consecutive weeks and can’t find anything even vaguely interesting then you’ve lost. That’s the sort of fundamental reasoning.

- Storylists were done by me and [the boss], but we had quite a strict structure so there was very little room to move, we had so many regular sections. We would have a wine segment where we were doing a series for about two years where we’d focus on a different wine-growing region in WA and so we’d just plough through it. I did get to have a hand in that process, especially in the first year when I did get to say “let’s develop the wine section” and “let’s develop the men’s section”, and then once we’d found the formula that seemed to be working for it, it was almost like I only had to think of three or four stories per edition for the front section.

Another specifically mentioned a number of broad themes that were always popular ingredients in his publication’s editorial mix. These snippets were part of a longer explanation about recurrent themes or stories that were always in the running for publication:

- These were stories concerned primarily and totally with people
- They really, really wanted to hear what was going on in the country…
- These people wanted to read about hardship and how people overcame it…
- There was also a great attendance on celebrity…They wanted to know who’s up whom and who is paying the rent.
- Another mentioned the importance of matching the type of stories selected with the overall subject matter of the publication saying: If you don’t look at what your magazine is really about at its core then you’re missing it. I mean we could do a travel magazine that was serious and straight-laced and down the line but it wouldn’t work, because it doesn’t reflect the subject matter.
Reality bites

Foreshadowing question 5, two editors volunteered that their decisions about the content of the publications were influenced by consideration of the advertisers. It’s interesting to note the acknowledgement of mixed feelings in the first of these comments:

- I would hate to say this but in a way you do need to consider your advertisers and I am not talking about making these pieces advertorial but you need to be sensitive to the way that a feature may affect large groups of advertisers, but most specifically your readership.

- I’d also have to consider advertising and whether the feature was going to be attractive for advertisers.

Creative control

Finally, an interesting insight into the importance that editors place on the task of selecting stories was offered by one who has since left the role:

- The publisher brought me in to make changes and I made changes and once I’d done that then my scope for creativity was reduced. [In the initial employment interview] I just said what I thought, I said all the things I didn’t like about the magazine and I was the only one who said anything like that and that was one of the main reasons why he hired me, so I kind of had that in the first year and I got to style it up a bit and introduce new features and use professional photographers and things like that, but once it was done, after a year, it just kind of narrowed and narrowed and narrowed my impact on the mag so it made it kind of frustrating…. I was so stifled by the end of it. I had absolutely no flexibility to influence editorially what was going on with the magazine and it resulted in [the boss] and I just having so many arguments about the editorial direction of the mag that it was a really unenjoyable place to work, and I don’t know if that’s common for editors.

Main Points

All of the editors said that their editorial choices were influenced by what they thought their readers wanted.

Two editors mentioned that in addition to considering readers they prioritized stories that were personally interesting to them, while one said that she deliberately prioritized consideration of the readers above her personal interests.
Four of the editors raised that input from their colleagues, including bosses, impacted on their story choices.

Five mentioned that content-selection was influenced by governing short or long term themes specific to the publication.

Two mentioned that impact on advertisers was a consideration.

One said that restriction of his freedom to control the content of the magazine contributed to his departure from the role.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

When you are deciding what to put in your publication are your choices influenced by:

- Your perceptions of what your readers want to read?
- What you personally find interesting”
- What your boss wants?
- What your journalistic colleagues want?
- What other colleagues such as marketing and admin staff want?
- The mix or balance of stories you feel the magazine needs?
- The core focus or theme of the magazine?
- How the stories or features may impact on advertisers?

**Phase two – Question Five**

Question 5 asked if there were directives from publishers to provide ‘advertorial’ copy for advertisers and if there was what the editors did about it: did they uncomplainingly or enthusiastically comply, or did they stand by their industry’s code of ethics and refuse to be part of it?
There are 12 points in the Australian Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) Code of Ethics for journalists, and Points Four to Six clearly speak against the idea of publishing advertorial. (It is worth noting that this particular code of ethics is similar in its content to other codes advocated by other national peak bodies guiding journalistic practice.) Inclusion of these points in the code seems to suggest that this kind of behaviour doesn’t happen in reputable media, and consequently that media that do engage in this kind of behaviour are by definition disreputable. Advertorial happens worldwide though, and Anna Gough Yates (2003, p 135-6) blew the whistle on it for the UK writing that: “by the mid-1990s … magazines were taking substantial portions of their advertising revenues from magazine advertorial services.”

While she discusses the financial side of it frankly, she doesn’t address the conflict that editors may be feeling, given that as journalists writing and running advertorial represents a breach of their industry’s clearly stated code of ethics. This question was included in these interviews because it was an issue raised in part one of this study and because I am interested in exploring how editors cope with the conflict of interests that advertorial presents them with.

The first part of the question specifically sought to breach the taboo about discussing advertorial and the second part aimed to elicit information about the editors’ coping strategies in the light of pressure to provide advertorial.

3 x Yes and 4 x No but…

Confronted with the question about whether handling advertorial was part of their work four of the editors first answered “No” and three answered “Yes”.

It’s interesting to note that the three who answered in the affirmative were the three youngest in the editor role and all were in their first jobs as graduates and had not worked for any other media organisations (although two had had more junior roles in the same organisations prior to becoming editors). Here are their rationales:
• I hate doing it but you gotta – because without these clients I don’t have a job.

• I always understood that it had to be there because it made the difference between the advertising dollars coming in or not.

• I’m probably different from most journalists in that I never had a big problem with it, for a number of reasons but mainly I thought “this is a lifestyle publication, no one is going to get hurt and we’re not breaking stories here”.

All three spoke about the importance of finding an editorial angle for the advertorial and making it into a story that they thought would be of interest to the readers:

• We would never just profile a business for the sake of giving them a profile in the mag, it would have fit, in some unique and newsworthy way. … But I think there’s an angle in anything, I really do, with one or two exceptions but I think there’s pretty much an angle anywhere, and you’ve just got to dig and you’ve got to find it.

• Q. Are you saying there are good stories everywhere and just because they happen to be advertisers doesn’t mean you can’t write about them? Yeah and you know that’s often a good place to look a lot of the time because it’s appropriate to the audience.

• Advertorial is definitely part of industry but the skill is in how to handle it. When you are writing about lifestyle, great ideas are everywhere and just because someone has bought an ad it doesn’t mean they don’t have a good story to tell.

Of the four who said “No”, two said that they ran stories about advertisers when requested, only on the condition that a good angle could be found:

• The ruling kind of is now that it’s “yes” if they have a new treatment or something that nobody else has, or if they’ve moved premises and we need to tell people that, so there’s a legitimate reason for them being in the magazine. Otherwise “no”, because I just don’t believe that it serves the magazine in a commercial sense in the long term.

• Well it has to be new, it has to have some kind of reason for being, I mean [for example] we missed an ad off the magazine last time just because of some ridiculous logistical thing that happened, and so we owed these people big time and so they were saying, “oh you’ve got to do it, it would be great if you could do a story” and as always non-journalists don’t understand what that means. And so I said “well if there’s a story there, what’s their news?” – and I find out the guy’s
just won a national award and he’s got some Spanish designer on board, I mean, I should have known about that anyway. But y’know what I mean, I will look hard in that situation. I’ll go out and find something. But I’m certainly not going to put something in that’s just shit.

Of the two left, one said this about advertorial copy in his publication (which is produced by a relatively large media organisation):

- I’m not involved in it, but I’m a great advocate for doing advertorials well. You might as well have a really good way of doing that, so that you can say: “You don’t want me, you want them and they’ll do the job well.” Q. So you’ve got people who do advertorials and you label them advertorials. A: Yes that’s right.

That leaves one editor who worked with a large national magazine in the 1980s who answered the question about writing advertorials:

- No. There’s no doubt that that is an American originated phenomenon and I have no doubt that it exists now. It didn’t when I was there. If we were doing advertorial it was clearly identified and it was a most unusual circumstance.

**Keeping the sales staff satisfied**

Given that these answers leave us with a consensus of seven out of seven about the practice of magazines running advertorials (with or without labelling), it’s interesting to note that three of the editors volunteered that the pressure often came from the advertising sales staff, and that it was a part of the culture of the organisations rather than resulting from specific directives from the owners or publishers. (Note that these editors are referring to at least three different magazine workplaces):

- Well, it is not just from our [boss]. The sales team keep going out and obviously meeting new people and signing up new clients and they will continuously be bombarding you with information about those clients subtly and indirectly pressuring you to give those people editorial.

- The sales staff was under enormous pressure to reach their targets and sometimes they’d write whatever they had to on the contract to get the deal. But doing that put editorial staff in a tough position – left to deal with how to word this advertorial and maintain credibility.
In some ways pressure never really came directly from the [boss]. It tended more to come from the culture within the sales department, the people who had their past in the sales and who probably had this indication from the boss anyway, because he does have this ethos that we are a small business and we should support other small businesses. So he doesn’t necessarily see it as advertorial, or he hasn’t in the past. He has seen it as helping out small businesses who help us out.

Another mentioned that it can be tricky distinguishing a genuine story suggestion offered by the boss or a colleague from a request for advertorial, saying:

- I’ve had instances where in my mind it’s [sounded like] a proposal for advertorial, but in the [boss’s] mind it’s absolutely not. He’d say: “This is a fantastic story, these people’s story needs to be told” – but, in fact, behind that there would be some agreement or some arrangement or some kind of indebtedness there on some level. So I have to distinguish between what’s there because someone’s made a mistake, or somebody owes somebody something and what’s there on its own merit.

**Bad for business**

It’s also interesting to note that two said they thought the advertorial-trend may be waning as a business strategy, or at least that they had devised a way of discouraging advertising staff from being so insistent about it by apparently successfully arguing that it was not in the long term interests of the publication:

- When I first started at [the magazine] I think there was definitely an element of that, even though there is a policy that we don’t do advertorials, I think in some ways lip service was paid to that – but I think the more professional the organisation has got, the more they’ve realised that you might get an advertiser in for one issue if you make, not even a promise, but if you give them the suggestion … but that you won’t get them for the long term. … So the more we become about brand – you want to advertise your product in [the magazine] because it’s the right brand for you – and we are increasing becoming that – it doesn’t happen any more. [And the shift is] reflected in our advertising sales. Q. They’ve gone up? Oh yes, remarkably. Because you don’t just get somebody on for one edition – you get them for four editions.

- I think advertorial has kind of softened, I mean there was a big advertorial thing, five or six years ago everything was going to go advertorial and some things did. … I have a fundamental belief that the readers see through it though, but you’ve heard that 1000 times.
… We have got an advertising manager, and I work a lot with him, we work very well together. But he has the same fundamental belief that all you are doing is undermining your strength. If you’ve got something to sell, if you’ve got a very strong loyal readership that values you, why would you undermine that, why would you give it away? Why would you do something stupid?

Looking for angles

Looking next at how advertorial impacts on the editors who do accommodate it, it’s interesting to note that four of them referred to it as an ongoing struggle or a battle in their work routine:

- Most of the time you can do something with it, but if it’s not doable or it’s bad for some reason then I’d fight to get it out. Q. Did you win? Most of the time, no. If advertising dollars were riding on it, it was going in.

- But my argument from minute one was that well, actually, without credibility you are nothing … Q. It sounds like it’s been a battle. Oh it is.

- Having just said that we don’t do advertorial. The number of times I have waved the “we don’t do advertorial” flag in the last two years I wouldn’t be able to count. Q. Do you spend a lot of time and energy working on it? Yes. A lot of time.

- [Sales staff] are told that they are not allowed to promise it under any circumstances but you get the feeling that they have led a client to believe that, “if you send me this material, I will send it on to the editor and I will basically make sure that she considers it seriously”. And it’s very easy for a client to misinterpret a positive suggestion as a promise. (And when that happens, occasionally the client will get back to us after the edition and they won’t have got that editorial because I would have looked at it and thought it was not editorial-worthy so it won’t go in, it won’t make the cut, and they’ll get upset and because they thought they were promised it, and refuse to pay bills etcetera.) But in my time as editor we’ve had only one example where the sales rep actually contractually promised and that caused huge drama – and I wasn’t told – because if I had been I would have blown up!

The contentious grey zone

A final point about the vexed nature of the advertorial issue is evident looking at the first of the following comments from the oldest editor (whose career included a long stint in newspaper journalism) next to the subsequent three comments from the
younger editors without newspaper backgrounds discussing their practices of
disguising advertorial so that it is not blatant in the publication.

Older journalist:

- If we were doing advertorial … it wasn’t ever dressed up, there was no
  cheating to try to dress advertising up as editorial. If there was
  something to be done, you know if Qantas wanted something done
  about trips to bloody somewhere it was clearly identified that Qantas
  were doing it. We might have supplied reporters to report on it but it
  was never dressed up in a deceitful manner. But bear in mind that’s
  going back a while.

Younger journalists:

- the only places that I would object to it was where it was going to look
  blatantly like advertorial and would therefore make people not want
  to buy the magazine….so I guess our kind of rule at the time was to go
  with the product first and the stores [shops owned by companies that
  advertise] second, so it looks like you’re writing about the product not
  about the advertiser.

- When advertorial is done well it’s fine – it’s when it doesn’t work and
  when it’s not a good story, and it’s obvious, it looks terrible … It
  might be something like running the advertorial in another edition so
  it wasn’t in the same one as the ad, or at least moving it so they were
  not on the same page. If you explained things like this to the client in
  a positive way they were often ok with it. If you said do this and it’s
  like getting twice the value they’d say ok, it’s all about how you word
  it.

- I consider my role to be kind of a gatekeeper, and part of my role is to
  ensure the quality of the magazine remains high, even if I need to
  include an editorial or advertorial or whatever you want to call it. I
  don’t actually like to call it advertorial because at the end of the day it
  ends up being editorial, because you find the angle, and as long as I
  have control over that I can still ensure the quality side.

This seems to indicate a shift in the industry over time but the older journalist said
the following later in his interview, as the conversation wandered once again towards
the issue of the age-old war between advertising and editorial. Note, however, that
he was not contradicting what he said earlier, because at this point he was speaking
about his whole career over many publications with different employers:
Q. Have you ever actually walked out, have you ever actually taken it to that line and said: “No I’m not putting that in my publication, no I’m not allowing that advertorial through”?

A. I can’t think offhand of a time when I’ve said this is NOT going in the magazine or the paper. I can’t think of an example. But there are many times when I’ve said “I don’t like that, modify it.” So I guess the answer is that you look for a compromise that won’t make the editorial side look entirely compliant or won’t make the advertising side look entirely victorious.

But look there’s always a conflict, there’s always a tension between the side of the company that earns money and the side of the company that earns bugger all, which is editorial. You have to be a bit sensible and be careful, and “a bit sensible” is open to any interpretation you like. I know what my standards are and I managed to survive many, many years in journalism without seriously compromising them. I mean there have been times when I’ve been really vexed about things and perplexed and said “oh shit, I don’t like this”, and a couple of times when I’ve been told to do things, but not told in a way that utterly compromised me, but just told in a way that the company has said this is just the way that company works. So you work for the company, you accept some of their principles, and unless they totally, totally oppose yours you find a way of living with it. It’s like politics you know, you never get one side completely or the other side completely.

Main points

All seven editors said that advertorial copy was run in their magazines. Two, who came from larger publishing houses, said that it was rare, clearly labelled as advertorial and/or handled by another department. Two said they only ran it on the condition that it was newsworthy and three said they ran it, but always sought newsworthy angles.

Two of these cited understanding of the need for the associated advertising revenue and the other saw it as harmless.

All three, along with two who said they ran it on the condition of newsworthiness, said that when asked to include advertorials they worked on finding angles that would be of interest to readers.

Three editors said the pressure to run advertorials came mainly from the advertising sales staff and that it was part of the organisational culture and one added that it
could be difficult distinguishing story suggestions from colleagues and requests for advertorial.

Two said that their advertising staff understood that advertorial did not serve the long term interests of the publication.

Four said that advertorial was a contentious topic in their work lives and equated it with a battle, fight and/or struggle.

One referred to disguised advertorial as “cheating” and “deceitful” while three said that it was important that it was not blatant and that it was made to appear (or be) indistinguishable from other editorial articles.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study:**
Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:
Do you run advertorial in your magazine?
When you do, is it written by journalistic staff or other advertorial writers?
When it runs is it labelled advertorial?
Does the pressure to run advertorial come from the sales staff?
Does the pressure to run advertorial come from the organisational culture?
Does the pressure to run advertorial come from directives from your publisher?
Are sales staff allowed to contractually promise advertorial?
Do sales staff encourage you to write about their clients?
Is advertorial a contentious topic in your newsroom?
Are disagreements about advertorial common in your workplace?
Can you successfully refuse to run advertorial if you don’t think it’s newsworthy?
Do you work on finding newsworthy angles about clients when advertorial is requested?
Do you try to disguise advertorial and present it as indistinguishable from other copy in the magazine?
Do you think disguised advertorial is deceitful?
Do you think advertorial is damaging to the long term interests of your publication?
Do your sales staff think advertorial is damaging to the magazine in the long term?
Does your publisher think advertorial is damaging to the magazine in the long term?

Given the vexed nature of this topic, most of these should be posed as ‘always’-
‘sometimes’- ‘never’ questions.

**Phase two – Question Six**

Question six asked if there were there explicit directives from publishers to push particular political lines and if there were, did the editors comply or do anything to moderate those pressures. This question sought to generate information about the relationship between editors and publishers and to explain how issues that arise in that space are managed.

**Not an issue**

Of the seven editors, five said simply that the issue of pressure to promote a particular political perspective had not arisen in the course of their work:

- Never.
- No, not at either place.
- We never had politicians, we only had a politician in the magazine once in nearly eight years and that was just for a photograph that we did. We just didn’t have politics.
- No, I think basically being a small business we are obviously a little more right wing than left but having said that, there is no pressure, no – and I’ve never copped any flak for supporting or not supporting a project by the public. Now whether there is a perception out there that we do, I don’t know, but I’m yet to come across it.
- No, not with this kind of magazine – but I wouldn’t be surprised if that’s the area we were going into if [the boss] had an agenda in a particular area that he felt passionate about, I wouldn’t put it past the situation for that to happen.

**Not a comfortable issue**

The other two said that the situation had arisen and they both said that they had objected and spoken against it, one successfully, rendering the situation tolerable, and the other unsuccessfully, making it a contributing factor in his decision to leave the role of editor.
The one who argued successfully said:

- Not actually a political line. [The boss] is conservative, by nature, I think if he was going to go into politics it would definitely be with the Liberal Party. He tried to do some political stories, like he keeps wanting to do one about tax and why we are all being fined – he doesn’t call them taxes – but they kind of haven’t happened because I said it is the wrong kind of story for our magazine anyway.

- He does get issues that he gets passionate about … and when he does try to bring up something like that, like about a year or so ago he did say to me “I’d love to run a story about getting all the Labor Party and getting the Liberal Party to tell us who they are and what their values are and who they stand for” and I go “people don’t want to read that”. To me the argument is: that’s fine and that’s a good story for someone, but it’s not really a … story [for our magazine].

Q: *When there is pressure you speak against it?*

A: Yes, probably to my detriment a lot of the time, I’ll argue with the [boss] about things that I just don’t think belong there. But I’m not arguing it necessarily because I think he’s wrong and I am right, it’s more what I think is right for the product. He might have a perfectly valid story and perfectly valid argument and it might just be his opinion, but still be perfectly valid but I just think well, hang on a minute, are we putting out a magazine just for you or are we putting out a magazine that is supposed to appeal to a broad range of people and what are we in the end? We are a lifestyle magazine and not a political barrow magazine. So yes, we’re frequently fighting about things that I don’t think should be in the magazine.

Q: *So you are holding strongly to being aware of your readers and of the type of magazine it is?*

A: Yes and it’s a strong argument. Since I’ve been there my aim has been to make it better and better editorially and you can’t just suddenly switch tactics and become something totally different – unless what you are doing isn’t working for you, and it’s working for us at the moment, and we haven’t done any research to the contrary to show that it’s not.

The editor whose arguments were not so successful said:

- Yes, but it was not explicit, it was very much that [the boss] was very pro-Liberal and we interviewed [the leader of the Liberal state opposition party] once, and that was one of the things we had a huge argument about. And I could sort of see why he did it because the majority of the readers are likely to have been more right wing than left. …[But] I remember with that story I said: “fine but next issue
we’re interviewing [the Labor Party Premier], because we have to because otherwise it’s going to look stupid” – but it never happened. He wouldn’t even let me interview him. Q: So you argued back but you didn’t particularly get anywhere with that? No, and to be honest but that was one of the main motivations for me wanting to leave.

It is interesting to note that in both of these cases the editors based their arguments not on their own political views but on the belief that political stories (particularly one-sided ones) were not of interest to the readers or that they did not contribute to the balance and quality of the editorial content of the magazine. In both cases they assumed that they have more knowledge about, or focus on the importance of, the desires of the readers than their employers.

**Main Points**

Five out of the seven editors said the issue hadn’t arisen for them.

The two that had been asked to push a political line objected and assumed that they had greater knowledge of, or focus on, the needs of the readers than the boss applying the pressure.

Success in this argument led to one of the two remaining in her role, while failure in the other case contributed to his departure.

None of the seven said that they were complicit in pushing political lines.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Have you ever been asked to push a political line, or position on an issue?

Did you comply?

Did you resist the suggestion?

Was your resistance successful?

Was your resistance based on your understanding of the readers’ interests?

Was your resistance based on your own political views?

**Phase two – Question Seven**
Question 7 asked the editors if they had ever been given explicit directives by their publishers to present themselves as typical readers, or as being representatives, or ‘natives’ of their target markets and, if so, how they responded to those pressures.

This question took a little explaining and in all of the interviews Ita Buttrose’s appointment as editor of *The Australian Women’s Weekly* as a young woman, more representative of the target demographic than her predecessor, was cited as an example. Midway through the series of interviews I found that asking: “Do you write as if you hang out with the readers, and were you expected to?” conveyed the question more easily than using more academic language.

One of the motivations for including this question came from Dapin’s (2004, p. 236) amusing but serious inclusion in his ‘ten immutable laws of magazine publishing’ of rule nine, which states: “Writers who adopt alter egos eventually grow into them.” This prompted me to wonder if other editors found that pressure to comply with the stereotype of the readers impacted on their self-images or wellbeing.

The issue of editors being pressured to present themselves as typical readers was raised by Gough Yates (2003, p. 119) in her discussion about the business end of the magazine business. As with the issue of advertorial though, she didn’t delve into how this impacts upon the editors. With editors like Dapin (2004) and Buttrose (1985) speaking openly in their autobiographies about how stressful the job is and mentioning the high rate of editor burnout, I wonder if this pressure to present oneself as a particular type of person (and risking growing into that type of person out of professional necessity rather than personal choice) was a contributing factor.

**Professional understanding**

When asked if he was expected to represent himself as part of the readership one editor, who works for a relatively large organisation, said:

- No, I was not expected to be part of the readership but someone who understood the readership. And that’s probably more to do with the [company] environment where people move around and a motoring writer this year might be the editor of horse racing next year, it’s more
in that mode that we are career editorial people … that’s what we do, so it’s probably more to do with this type of organisation.

People like me

The other six editors said that, in at least some respects, they felt that they were actually and naturally part of their target audiences. Their statements to this effect included:

- I’m probably on the fringes of it in some ways and I’m probably smack bang in the middle of it in other ways.
- [The publication] is probably the only publication in Australia which actually is part of its readership and is not pretending to be part of it. The whole of its staff was absolutely integrated with the audience. There was no question here of artifice.
- The group at [the publication] was fairly representative of the readership.
- [Having described her target readership as anyone who wants to or has travelled.] Q. Do you make yourself come across as someone who is well-travelled? Well, I have travelled a lot. I consider myself well-travelled, definitely, so that is not a problem.
- I do think I was the kind of person who should have been reading [the publication] – I was a bit of a foodie and I was into wine in a big way, and I had a strong interest in fashion (less so these days), so much of the editorial in the magazine was very interesting to me, which I think helped.
- I think I’m smack bang. In many ways I am, I’m the right age, I’ve got reasonable disposable income, I’m interested in home wares, I’m interested in design, I’m constantly renovating, I’ve just bought an investment property. I think I represent it really well.

Describing the readership

It’s interesting to note that the characteristics of target audiences that the editors raised included, age, income, and interests in food, wine, fashion, travel and home wares. This raises the question of how editors learn about their target audiences and come to have a good enough understanding of what they are interested in reading about to select content for them. One editor spoke to this issue:

- Unfortunately there was no research to really clarify [who the readers were] but I’m a bit skeptical of research anyway. At [the publication] it was fairly indicative from the letters to the editor and I think it’s a trait of a good editor to be observant, to observe people including people in the target market, also being open-minded about age groups and genders and drawing on what you know and the people you know to create a mental picture of the readers.
The group at [the publication] was fairly representative of the readership and that’s why it was interesting when everyone had their own ideas about what should be in the magazine. But at the end of the day as an editor you just had to develop a thick skin and be the one to make the call on who the target market is and then to speak to the target market, even if it’s an unpopular decision. You can’t please everyone. As the saying goes, if you try to please everyone you’ll end up pleading no one so you might as well please yourself. When everyone else is arguing about wanting the target market to be more like them, you have to just block that and say: “No, this is part of the bigger plan”, that’s the editor’s obligation, to think of that target market.

Old enough?
The three youngest editors raised the issue of age and said that in that respect they felt that they were not part of their target markets and that this had represented a professional difficulty for them:

- I have struggled in the last couple of years because of my age. I feel like I have to work twice as hard to gain respect, so I find the best thing you can do is just be honest and admit when you are not sure about something and ask questions when you haven’t had an experience that maybe someone older than you has.

- I was actually outside the target audience for most of the time that I was there, because I was so young. [The Boss] used to love me going to certain things but not everything. Which I can understand, because sending a 25-year-old kid out to people who are like 45 can make you look stupid, so he was certainly more of a figurehead for the magazine than me. But I did fill that role in some things, like all the fashion things, I had to go to all of them and he wasn’t interested in that side, that was how it worked.

- [The publication] had a demographic of 35+ and so the publisher was always talking about putting in things that older people liked. I’m 29 but I’m married to a 43-year-old and my friends are all ages and I really don’t see there being a clear distinction between what people like between the ages of about 25 and 65. Whenever I did something that he didn’t like he’d say I was pitching it too young, but I’d say my husband likes that kind of stuff and he’s in the demographic. It made me angry because I think you’re underestimating people when you make those old fashioned assumptions. I think many publishers in Perth are afraid of offending people. There seems to be a belief we’re all so conservative, but no one is really testing that theory.

Rich enough?
One editor made the point that with regard to income she was not in the target market for many of the goods and services advertised in her magazine, but that she felt that the high income bracket was only part of the total target market:

- I am more in the demographic of knowing what professional, reasonably intelligent people would like to read and the product side of it definitely, I’m not in the same league as the people we’re pitching the Bentleys and BMWs and Gucci handbags to … [But] we understand that probably a good proportion of our readers actually can’t afford to buy those things any more than we can, any more than readers of Harpers Bazaar or Vogue or any of those really. I think the percentage of the market that actually has that kind of money to throw away is quite slim, and I think that even the people who advertise those products recognise that, but they just want to reach them through that vehicle, so I don’t think it is as bad as all that because we know that we are read by a lot of people who don’t buy them as well … It’s about a dream world for a lot of people. It’s like you can’t look like that model and you can’t wear what she’s wearing – but you can look.

**Just be yourself**

Three of the six who said they felt that they were part of their readerships added these comments about the acceptability/importance of editors presenting themselves without pretension:

- Well you know what. In the 80s that might have been the case but now people are a lot more open to individuality, to taking people for who they are, not for what they represent. I think that I would have felt that pressure if I’d been doing this job 10 years ago, but I totally don’t now. I think it’s quite ok. Often when I go to an art gallery opening they’ll be someone there with long hair and thongs and a tattoo, d’you know what I mean, things have changed – we’re not as stuck in our moulds.

- I don’t feel that with anything I write I have to compromise the way I write. … I think because we write lifestyle type stories then professionals, whether they’re earning $50 thousand a year or $450 thousand a year, can identify with a lot of those kind of issues and ideas. I don’t feel that I have to be anything else while I’m writing it.

- I don’t find there’s any particular sort of person I need to be when I’m with people. In fact, when I stopped trying to be a certain sort of person, back in my fashion-writing days, that is when I found things, and life, started to get a lot easier. I just think that the best thing you
can do is be upfront. I was given this responsibility and this role for being myself, well not FOR but by, and so that’s what I’m still doing.

Main points
One editor said that as “a career editorial person” he was expected to be able to understand his readership rather then to be a part of it.

Six of the seven said that at least in some respects they were part of their magazines’ target markets and that in those respects no feigned representation was required.

Three editors said that they were younger than their target markets and that this had been an issue for them in their workplaces, in terms of having to work harder to gain credibility.

One editor said that not fitting the top-end income target market of certain aspects of her magazine was not an issue because most readers were also not in that income bracket, and the magazine served not only as a shopping guide but also as escapism and a source of imagery for dream lifestyles.

Three editors added that they felt it was important to represent themselves simply as themselves.

Implications for Phase Three of this study
Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Are you part of the target market by age and income demographics?
Are you part of the target market because of your interests?
Have you had to write as if you are older, younger, richer, poorer than you are?
Have you been provided with information about what your target market is interested in reading about?
Do you make assumptions about what your readers are interested in based on what you are interested in?
Do you feel that as an editor portraying yourself to your readers it is important to genuinely “be yourself”?

**Phase two – Question Eight**

Question Eight asked if there were any particular ideas or themes, products or services that the editors sought to promote through their editorship and, if there were, what were they and why were they deemed to be important.

This question was asked because the image of an unbiased, objective journalist stands as a stereotype despite the beatings that post-modernism and psychology have given to terms like ‘unbiased’ and ‘objective’ over recent decades (Heywood, 2005). Seen through contemporary eyes, the best a journalist can do is to write from a ‘neutral point of view’, and accept that everything that you report, or omit, aligns you with one or another perspective (Whittaker Ramsey & Smith, 2000; Hirst & Patching, 2007). This question sought to identify what kinds of social causes and physical things of purely personal (as opposed to professional) interest were promoted by editors, and which ones risk raising accusations about bias.

The answers the editors gave went beyond just what ideas or themes, products or services they promoted and why. They also raised the issues of the need for integrity and self-awareness, the need to balance the inclusion of items of personal interest with items that may not be of personal interest and other limiting factors, as well as the difficulty of separating personal choice and professional creativity.

In most cases the editors gave different responses for products and services from their answers for ideas or themes, so I will address them separately.

**With regard to products and services**

Five of the editors said ‘no’, three of them did not elaborate more on this point. One added:

- I just can’t think of examples where it might have come up. I just can’t and probably that’s the point. I mean I look around inside my head and I don’t feel an agenda to push any type of product or anything apart from generally being a decent human being.
Another said:

- It’s more about that sort of thing for me [themes about people]. I certainly don’t want to talk about any particular product or places.

Two of the younger editors said they had sometimes plugged products and services.

One said:

- There were a couple of small things like that [plugging particular bands], and a couple of restaurants that opened up that I went to a lot that I gave some editorial to, but I thought they deserved it and yeah, a couple of local bands that got a write up.

The other said:

- You know when you meet people and you get a great rapport with someone you meet, who is representing a product or business, I will bend over backwards to try to support that person with editorial.

**With regards to ideas or themes**

Five said yes, with varying degrees of comfort about this issue. One adding:

- Yes, absolutely, and it’s part of the fun of being an editor … there are certainly recurring themes in what I was interested in and did.

And another saying:

- A little bit, I would like to, and I have a little bit this time.

One said ‘yes’ to products and services (bands and restaurants) but ‘no’ to themes and ideas and one denied ever pushing any barrows but said that his publisher used to request the inclusion of items that he, as an editor, would not have selected:

- I never had a barrow to push, but [the Boss] certainly did and we had these things on [the magazine] called PMs, Publisher’s Musts, … she’d go off and have lunch with some bloody group and come back and suddenly say that we had to publicise this because they were a worthy cause and it would come down from [the Boss] to go and interview so-and-so and cover this and we’d do it. So [the Boss] was an absolute bloody cow for that, someone would get her ear and it would go out … she’d fall for anything, such a soft heart.

_Q. But not you? A: Not me, no._
Barrow loads of themes

So what themes were the five yes-to-themes editors pushing?

Their answers included:

- Well landscape, or our position in landscape is a very important thing to me. And I think family values was something that came through pretty strongly. I think multiculturalism is such a bad word, but basically just being cool about other people, whatever they are, was very much part of our sort of ethos and those were all pretty consistent, and then just a sort of obsession with photography came through quite strongly.

- What motivates people, why they do the things they do. The stories I always find most fascinating for the magazine revolve around community issues … or even if we are interviewing someone who is quite well-known to get behind the whole glitz and glamour of their lives and to find out what makes them tick as a person … it is very much about connections for me … and inspiring people. We do a lot of features that tell stories about people who are inspirational in one way or another and I always find that fascinating — people who might have come from nothing and built up something or just got a brilliant idea and got the right group of people together and done it. And telling West Australian stories that make people feel proud that they come from here.

- With me it was always animal stuff, RSPCA and the Cat Haven, that and the Good Sammies. I plugged them shamelessly… and my own cat was in the mag three or four times, popping up like a little ‘Where’s Wally’ in every issue. It’s something that I feel really strongly about. Personally, I’m always rooting for the underdog and always supporting charity.

- Responsible tourism is a bit of a thing of mine at the moment.

- The idea that it worries me deeply that only five percent of the houses that are built in Australia are designed by people who know about design, who understand what a space feels like to live in, the psychological impact of a space. … I also like to push the idea, and this is a little bit parochial, but I like the idea of pushing the talent that’s happening in Perth that’s being recognised overseas. I like that and I think that’s always really good for the people involved and for the people who live here because it’s always felt like a bit of a backwater. And I like the idea of pushing sustainability not as an add-on for architecture but as part of the responsibility that everyone has.

Integrity and self-awareness
Two raised the issue of the potentially tempting opportunity to use the discretionary power they had to promote certain businesses in order to gain free products or services for themselves saying:

- I never used that power to get anything for myself ever, but I did it for causes that I like all the time. … I think that basically I’m a good person but I wonder about that power of voice being given to people who are not so nice or not so moral.

- I’m happy as long as it’s not corrupt what I’m doing. I mean, if I had any of my own self interest in there, I would think that that’s really quite a scary thing to be doing….and I could, I could do it tomorrow and I never have done and I never will!

Two others expressed a sentiment about personal ethics saying that they thought that being aware of their agendas was an important part of their work.

One said:

- Well, we do all have an agenda, the best thing you can do is recognise it and factor it in. … I’ve looked for these things very hard, so I believe this whole idea of being neutral and everything is ridiculous. I’m Anglican background wealthy, white, western suburbs and well, y’know I might as well recognise that.

The other said:

- I was so mindful of pushing my own agenda that I shied away from it a little bit. The funny thing was that two editions after I left they did a big story on [the music industry association he had been involved in], and I remember thinking that I would have loved to have done that but I never would have suggested it.

**Going too far?**

In terms of defining the limits of how much material of purely personal interest can be included, one said:

- I love to read about celebrities and stuff as much as the next person but we are not that kind of magazine.

Another added:
• However, you do need to be careful though that you’re not repeatedly profiling the same businesses because it is noticed by advertisers, by readers, by staff. … And I think that if you think you are overdoing it, you probably are.

A third contributed that, as well as enjoying being able to run stories that were of personal interest to him, he had also often run stories that didn’t interest him personally but that he thought his readers would like:

• You have to factor in doing pieces on things that you’re not particularly interested in as well. I’m sure there are magazine editors around the place who are not interested in the footy but who are doing profiles [of footballers] this week.

And one raised the issue of being careful about offending potential advertisers, saying:

• …but I have to be careful [pushing this theme] because we’re actually trying to get [industry businesses] on board as advertisers.
  Q. But if someone said something about it, then you’d say “oh good!” and jump on it.
  A: Yes, Yes.

Another expressed a retrospective discomfort about the difficulty of knowing how far is too far to go with opinions and personal judgements in magazine production:

• Now when I think back on it, if I had my time there again I’d be more cautious … I hadn’t yet learned to not let too much of my own voice into it. Q. Why is that bad? A. Because editors are journalists and journalism rests on the tradition of objectivity. Magazines aren’t about news but it’s still from that background and we should still respect it. There’s no way of knowing how far is too far. But now that I’m working on a newspaper, I look back and I feel that the scope for libel in magazines is huge because it is based so much on opinion. Now when I’m writing I’m protected by a layer of subs and I look back and think about how much of my voice was in the magazines and I wonder how much was too much.

A personal stamp on a creative project

Two editors raised the issue that editing a magazine is a creative process and that it can be hard to separate personal and professional-creative interests and inputs.

One said:
• But that’s what being a writer is sometimes about, you’re objective of course, but if you’re influenced by something and you think it’s great and worthwhile why wouldn’t you write about that, it’s honest and from the heart.

The other poetically summed it up saying:

• They are hand-made things and it’s a cottage industry and it’s a craft. It’s like weaving a basket or something every week and you put this thing together every week. Well yeah, you want everyone to like it and you want it to be successful but you are still sitting there weaving it every week, so it’s got to be your way.

Main Points

With regards to promoting products and services, five editors said ‘no’ and two said ‘yes’. Of the two who said ‘yes’ one said that it was only occasionally with small things that he felt deserved it anyway and the other said that she did when she met people she had a great rapport with and they were representing a product or business.

With regard to themes and ideas five editors said ‘yes’, one said ‘no’ and one said he didn’t but his boss made regular demands for causes and businesses to be included in the publication.

The following issues were raised by the editors, rather than being given in response to specific questions:

Two editors mentioned the issue of the potential for corrupt or immoral actions with regards to promoting things for personal gain.

Two editors said that they consciously practiced self-awareness with regard to the extent to which they pushed their own agendas.

Four editors mentioned factors that limited how much of their personal agendas they put into their magazine. Their four issues were: the character of the magazine; potential repetition of content related to individual businesses; the
need to include stories of interest to the readership (that may not be of interest to the editor) and the potential to offend or discourage particular types of advertisers.

One mentioned retrospective concern about the potential of ‘libel’ (defamation) arising in magazine work because of the freedom she had, as a young editor, to say whatever she wanted to in the magazines she edited and the difficulty of judging how much is too much, in terms of expressing personal views through the pages.

Two editors justified their enthusiasm for expressing their personal views through their magazines by saying that it was part of the process of being creative and being honest with the readers.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Have you ever promoted products or services through your magazine for personal rather than professional reasons?

Are there themes, ideas or causes that you promote through you magazine because you are personally passionate about them?

Is there potential in the industry for corrupt editors to use their power to promote things for personal gain? If not, what is the mechanism that prevents this from happening?

Do you consciously seek to be self-aware with regard to personal agendas that you are tempted to promote through your magazine?

What factors limit how much of the material in your magazine is there because it promotes causes or themes that you feel passionate about:

- the character of the magazine?
- repetition of content related to individual businesses?
- the need to include stories of interest to the readership (that may not be of interest to the editor)?
the potential to offend or discourage particular types of advertisers?

fear of libel/libamation?

Is the inclusion and expression of personal passions in the pages of your magazine part and parcel of your professional creativity and honesty as an editor?

Phase two – Question Nine

Question Nine followed the question about whether there were products, services, themes or ideas that the editors sought to promote through their publications. It asked about their methods and how these things were worked into the magazines, and what type of stories they appeared in.

This question, like the ones about the moderation of pressures, acknowledges the agency of editors and gives them space to talk about the creative aspects of their role and their ability to intentionally manipulate the content of their publications for specific reasons.

The five editors who said that they did incorporate ideas and themes, that personally interested them, into their magazines, gave the following answers:

- Through everything really. Everything individually gets attention. So the philosophy is always do everything well, which is not necessarily pragmatic and practical … but everything, everything was part of the philosophy.

- I think it’s probably possible that it would leak into all areas, from headline writing to stand-firsts, to choice of stories, to order of stories, to the people I get to write the stories, to the editor’s notes, to the contents and to everything, because it can.

- Mainly through feature articles and also wherever I could sneak them in. On the back page we had this ‘10 Things’ section, ‘10 Things to do this season’, or ‘10 Things to do for your mum’, and I’d always say “Go to the Cat Haven”, or “Get a cat from the Cat Haven for your mum”.

- Popping it in where appropriate definitely. And I guess if it’s something that you are passionate about, for example a type of travel or a type of experience, I can always lobby to run a feature based
around that theme or idea. It doesn’t mean that it is necessarily going to be passed because I don’t solely settle on the feature ideas, it’s a group decision, but I’d certainly push it.

- That varies a lot, depending on the story … We’ll tell a story and hope it’s entertaining and informative but if, for example, you wanted to go that next step and act upon the story and take up volunteering or go to that restaurant or make that dish, you know, we try to give that bit of extra information that enables you to incorporate it into your lifestyle.

The one who said that he had occasionally promoted products or services answered:

- It was really minor so it probably doesn’t apply to me, it was just a couple of restaurants or a couple of things for retail stores because I liked the managers but it was pretty minor.

The editor who said he did not ever include anything that was of personal interest, but that his boss did, said:

- There was a little column of things called ‘publisher’s musts’ and we’d sort of ration them so we didn’t get too many in one issue. We’d get these pages where you have like half a dozen items on it and we’d put these PMs in there.

**Main points**

The five editors who said that they incorporated promotion of themes or ideas into their copy said they did this throughout their magazines, including expressing this as ‘wherever it was appropriate’ or ‘in a variety of ways’. One added that she sometimes tried to get approval from her publisher to run feature sections on topics she was passionate about and another said that she included action-oriented information at the end of long articles to encourage/enable readers to get involved in particular causes.

The one who said he had only promoted products and services said the cases when he had done this were so minor that the question didn’t really apply to him.

The one who said his publisher insisted on promotions being included said that it was done mainly on pages with several small items.
Implications for Phase Three of this study

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Do you promote themes or ideas through your whole magazine?
Do you promote themes or ideas just through feature articles and spreads?
Do you promote themes or ideas just through small news items?
Do you promote products and services through your whole magazine?
Do you promote products and services just through feature articles and spreads?
Do you promote products and services just through small news items?

Phase two – Question Ten

Question ten asked: Do you feel that as an editor you speak from a personal position, creatively expressing your own views, values and opinions through your magazine, or do you speak from a corporate perspective as a medium for the expression of the ideology that will most benefit your employer?

At first glance this question appears to double dip into the subject matter covered by the one that asked: “What influences, other than your own personal choices shaped the voice of your publication?” While it is a similar question in some ways, instead of asking about influences external to the person of the editor, it is asking about the intra-personal situation.

It is a personal question that, like some of the earlier questions, will allow insight into the relationship between the editors and their workplaces. By giving the editors the opportunity to speak about dual or multiple roles that come into play it will hopefully provide useful data for understanding the editors and how they create products in the midst of a field of competing demands, while keeping as many stakeholders happy as possible.

As with question eight, this question was initially phrased in academic terms that the editors questioned and sought clarification of (one went as far as to describe it as “a prick of a question”). As the series of interviews progressed I found that the most
effective way to ask this question was to ask: in whose voice they spoke/wrote as an editor, their own or the company’s?

**My voice, their framework**

Five editors replied that the answer was ‘both’ because the creative nature of the job required some personal input, but they were conscious that it wasn’t solely their creation because of other constraints, including the input of others into the magazines. Their explanations follow:

- Both. I was employed into their framework but inside of that frame you can’t help but use your own voice, although it is of course a bit guarded and a bit constrained, and you always know that if it really was your own magazine that it would have been a completely different product. I can’t even give it percentages but you are being yourself in someone else’s framework.

- I don’t think you can always separate the two because it is an art in a way. It’s artistic in all senses of the magazine because it is words and pictures and as an artist I don’t think you can completely separate yourself from your product or from your work. That sounds really wanky but I think basically I go out there to be the voice of [the magazine] and to create a voice of the publication rather than the voice of myself, because there is more than me in that magazine, there are many of us who make that thing work.

Exploring this further I asked this editor if her publication would change if another editor took over her role. Her answer reinforced her response about the difficulty of separating personal and professional work as an editor, especially after being in the role for a number of years:

- Yes, but change is great. It actually did change a little from when [the first editor] was there for the first two editions, but having said that, it was still a baby publication and in its inception it’s always going to have a few teething problems and it is still a baby, and it’s growing, it’s growing with me and I’m growing with it and you can’t help that. I mean you can’t completely separate the two, and I don’t try.

Another editor said:

- I suppose subconsciously I am speaking from [the publication’s] position more than I think but I actually can’t write a story with that consciously in my head because it wouldn’t come across as my story, it
wouldn’t be mine. It would come across as a boring flat story because I couldn’t invest anything of myself in it. So while I might have it in mind when I’m coming up with the concepts of ‘what will this demographic be interested in’ and ‘will they get anything out of this story’ ... But having said all that, I can’t write a story if it does not appeal to me in some format. It wouldn’t ring true and no matter how well-pitched the original idea may have been to the demographic, if it’s written flat as a tack they’re not going to read it anyway.

This editor added that she understood that the question was asking about the deliberate effort that sometimes goes into distinguishing personal from professional impulses:

- It’s when you’re having arguments about it and you do have to think, well hang on a minute: “I’m arguing about this but am I arguing about this because I personally feel that it doesn’t work, or am I arguing about it because I don’t feel that it’s right for [the magazine]. And if I’m arguing about it because I personally don’t like it then I’ve kinda gotta let go and say ok, you’re right but I’ve got to find a way to make it work for [the magazine]”. And y’know if there’s something that I really don’t think I can personally write then I will find the right person to write it, if I still think it’s appropriate for [the magazine]. So yeah, you do have to be aware that what you like and what is appropriate for the magazine don’t always fit perfectly.

One editor elaborated on this and explained that the shift from being a voice of the publication came gradually as he grew into the role:

- Q. Are you a voice of [your publisher?] A: No, it was very personal, but there’s a certain cusp there ... You get to a point, perhaps it’s within 18 months or two years of a seven or eight year editorship where, if you’ve got it right and it’s really doing its thing, they’re just happy about that. Q. And they are like, go for it, do your magic? A. Yeah, do your magic and let it go. So in the beginning you know you are sitting within the corporate house and you’re wondering how, and you want it to be right, and you want people to think that you are the right person for it, that the thing is going all right, everyone’s responding to it and the readers like it, business is good, so y’know when you suddenly hit your straps ... Q. Is it when they become your readers and not the corporation’s readers? It’s like you inherit a shell and it has its readers, and then they become your readers? A: Yeah, you’re quite right, they do develop with you, and if they go with you then that’s all well and good, if they don’t then I guess someone else comes and does it. There is a moment, there is a change there that the readers go with you, and of course with the readers come the advertisers and the business. I mean suddenly there is this whole spiral that happens and
there is a point where it is above and beyond the corporate thing because it is just working very well.

One explained that his degree of personal voice depended on the story and that when there was a story that he had a personal connection with he felt involved but that most of the time he was speaking from a perspective other than his own:

- I think it depends on the story. I remember writing a story once on apartment living and I was living in an apartment at the time and it was very pro being in the inner city and I kind of relished that story because I was very passionate about it. I was very much writing from my own perspective and promoting inner city living in a way, but then most of time there were stories that I wrote on [3 named businessmen] where it was very much taking the perspective, by the tone of the article, trying to be focussed towards middle-aged businessmen.

All for the readers
Two editors offered that they felt it was neither, and that their decisions made in the role, including what they wrote, were focussed on their perceptions of what the readers wanted to read:

- I’d have to say it was absolutely neither of those. The decision to proceed with something or to interview somebody was made on the basis that this would be of interest, and possibly of benefit, to the readership of that magazine and it was a massive readership.

- I think it’s really important to hear in mind the readers, the readership and that’s another flag that I’m constantly waving under the nose of the [Boss] ... because our training in media is all about what’s good for the readership in news.

His train set, my integrity
One raised the issue of her boss wanting to bring his personal interests into the publication and added that her role was to ensure that the magazine remained appealing to a broad readership and not to just a small group:
At the end of the day it is his baby. And we’re fond of saying “it’s his train set and you’ve got to let him play with it” and you do have to realise that it’s obviously something that he is passionate about and he does mix with people who have big money so they obviously are discussing that sort of thing and we’ve just got to find a way to make that work so it doesn’t turn into an internal conversational piece of journalism [between him and the small slice of the readership he is speaking with].

Another editor (one of the two who said that the interests of the readership drove her decisions more than corporate considerations or personal preferences) raised the issue of integrity as a personal quality sometimes required as a counterbalance to toeing the company line:

- Well y’know my job is to look after the company that pays my bills but also I need to have some integrity as well and not just become a mouthpiece. I’m not a public relations manager.

**Main points**

Five editors said that they spoke with both their own voices and the companies’ in their text and story choices, framing this as “being yourself in someone else’s framework”, being unable to separate oneself from one’s work and/or unable to write a story without investing “anything of myself in it”. One also mentioned that she was “creating a voice for the publication” as distinct from her own, but that it was still something that she was creating.

Another said that it was important to acknowledge that sometimes one’s personal choices didn’t match what was right for the magazine and the importance of recognising that and doing what was right for the magazine.

One added that in the early stages of his editorship he had been “sitting in the corporate house” and trying to fit the mould and do what his employers wanted, but that as the product had succeeded he had felt more freedom and eventually reached the point of feeling that he had creative control over the product. Another said that his degree of personal input depended on the story and whether it was something that he felt passionate about and connected with.
Two editors said that they felt that their writing and decisions were more coloured by their perceptions of what the readers wanted than either concern about what the company or what they personally wanted to say.

Discussing this question further one editor raised the issue of needing to maintain a focus on the interests of the broadly defined readership in the face of requests from her boss for the inclusion of stories that were of specific interest to him and his friends.

Another said that she need to have some integrity, and posited this as a counterbalance to being a corporate mouthpiece.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

- Do you think of the process of editing a magazine as a creative or artistic project?
- Do you think of the process of writing magazine articles as a creative or artistic project?
- If so, can you be creative in this way without putting a personal voice into your work?
- Do you monitor how much of your own voice you put into your publication?
- Do you include other people’s voices in your publication?
- Does your publication have a voice of its own?
- Do you, at times, consciously speak with the voice of your publishing house in your writing and story choices?
- Do you feel that you need to have a sense of personal professional integrity that is distinct from your role as an employee of a particular company?

**Phase two – Questions Eleven and Twelve**

Question 11 asked the editors to what extent their style of professional practice remained consistent across different publications they had worked on and question 12 asked about the same issue of consistency, but also asked about changes in their
style that they may have made to accommodate differences in the readership’s preferences between different publications they had worked on.

These two questions are asking about editors’ perceptions of their ownership of the work they do and the degree to which they feel that they make their mark on their publications. If there is a strong sense of professional pride, creative satisfaction and/or personal self-expression felt about editing work, then these things may function as mitigating factors against the difficulties inherent in the work. The inclusion of question 12 is an acknowledgment that perceptions about the preferences of the readership are important drivers in editorial decision-making.

Because most of the editors referred to different readerships when they answered question 11, I have rolled the answers to both questions together and will deal with them both here.

**My copy – My voice**

Five editors said that they had a sense that their own “voice”, meaning their phraseology, tone and their sense of humour, was discernible in their copy and that this remained consistent in their work:

- Does your style remain consistent across different workplaces? A: Absolutely 100% Q. *Does it come across like a voice in your copy?* A: Yes, it probably would if you looked at it.

- Hugely! Someone said when I started in my current job, “it’s great to see you’re here, I recognised your style straight away.” And that’s strange because I can’t see what makes my writing or ideas so recognisable but other people can, even when I make a conscious effort not to put my voice into things. I can see it in other people though and I can immediately tell your style or [another specific journalist’s], even when you’re writing for different places. I’ve been noticing how much everyone has their own rhythm in their writing. It’s like with an artist like Robert Juniper, even if he used a completely different medium and tried doing something that had never been done before it would still be recognisable as a Juniper. You can’t help but be yourself. That’s what you’re paid for. *Q. Did you change your style when you were writing for a different magazine?* A: I didn’t really. I don’t think you should speak to different people, or people of different ages, differently, which is why I
used to argue with the [Boss]. I used to say “If you want to employ someone else then do it, but this is me” … when you have one person compiling a story list it’s going to reflect how they view the world, what they see as important, you can’t get outside of that, it’s impossible. The editor is the person who makes the call, and when you’re working on a quarterly lifestyle magazine you can pick anything really. It’s not like working for a newspaper where you’re limited to dealing with the news. You can choose anything and so that’s bound to reflect on yourself.

- One would like to see it as being consistent. I mean I’m still working with some of the same people and the people I have worked with all this time still think of me as being the same, whatever I’m doing. I mean I think there is a consistency there but I don’t think I’m the sort who could be said to: “Well this is the sort of box that you have to climb into and you have to be like that”. I don’t think there’s strength in that. I mean I’m sure some people can do it, but why? Q. Do your ethics, morals, passions always travel with you? They do and I just take the approach, even with what I am doing now, that they do. I mean you get the job because they want you to do it, earrings and all, :o) so that’s the gig and if they don’t want you that’s fine.

- I think some would be able to pick it as my writing. I think I have largely been moulded by [my magazine] though, so I think I have an extremely conversational style. I don’t think I am particularly humorous, but I think I have a warm style. But that reflects my personality too. I don’t think I’m particularly humorous, I consider myself to be more warm.

- I think I’ve always tried to write as if I’m pitching at somebody intelligent who wants to be entertained, as well as informed, and so from that point of view I don’t think I change it terribly much.

Sometimes a recognisable voice in the copy

One of those five then qualified her response and gave a ‘sometimes’ answer, similar to the sixth editor:

- I have a certain style, but I am conscious of my own voice in the way I write and sometimes I will let me be in there and other times I won’t. … Generally speaking if I write a story with a little bit of humour. I’ll have me in there but if it’s a much more straight up and down story, my voice isn’t recognisable, as in there’s no “I”, there’s no “me”, because I like to have a little bit of fun with myself and I think I am much more recognisable in that format, but when I’m writing a straight kind of feature, not so much. And I am conscious of toning that down. I think it works sometimes and doesn’t work at others. … I think it’s easier, to be honest, to have your own voice in there in a lifestyle publication as opposed to in straight journalism, and I’ve
done that for years too, and you can’t have a voice in there. So a good
thing about having newspaper training is that you can switch from
one to the other reasonably effectively.

- I think my style is something that you’d see in a feature story that I’ll
do for [a more general magazine] more than in [my] magazine. I mean
you can, you can put yourself into those sorts of stories but it doesn’t
lend itself quite as well. So you can’t really read copy in the mag and
tell it’s me. It’s a little bit more bland, a little bit more
monochromatic. Q. Are you adapting to the needs of the publication? A:
Well, you sure do need to. You certainly can’t just do whatever you
want to. I mean that’s one of the first lessons you learn. You don’t
come into journalism because you can write. You come in because
you’ve got tenacity and perseverance and you’re prepared to work
hard and you have curiosity. And people who try to flaunt their style
get squished into the ground like a bug! :o) So it took me 10 years to
get the guts to put myself into my writing after the horrors of [a major
newspaper]:o) Q. So do you feel that you’ve found that voice now? A: I
certainly do in the features I do for [a lifestyle publication], yeah, and
in the other features that I do.

No consistent voice in the copy

Only one editor said he felt that he had no personal voice in his copy or consistency
in his approach to different journalistic genres:

- They were such different magazines; editorially I don’t know that
there was much similarity at all. At [publication 1] I was writing band
reviews and there was so much to do each one took about an hour and
it was formulaic having to write so many of them – I’d just churn
them out – whereas at [publication 2] it was all about being aware of
the audience and taking time with the article and that sort of thing,
even though you were still under pressure. Q. But what about the voice
in your copy? Yeah, but that’s the thing, they were so different. At the
time I was also writing for [publication 3] and doing stories for TV
about music and I used to adapt my style very much for the
publication. I don’t think you would have been able to tell that some
of the TV articles I wrote were by the same person who wrote features
for [publication 2].

Consistent approach – Different results

Explaining in more depth two editors, one of the consistent five and the inconsistent
odd-one-out, added that it was their approach to the task of editing that was
consistent, more than the tone of their text or subject matter they covered:
In terms of my approach to the job I try to maintain a kind of professional, or ultra-professional, approach to work at all times, but that’s not so much to do with editorial. That’s about my approach to work in terms of time and dressing appropriately and that kind of thing, but that’s more of a corporate approach than an editorial position.

In editing what I want to do is get the thematic gathering of stories which will be of maximum interest to the potential readership and if that coincides with the publisher’s desire to maximise his circulation then so be it, that’s fine. I love it, I mean I think the idea of identifying a public, identifying an audience and then tailoring your publication to that audience is the most exciting thing you could do. It is really bloody fantastic and I’ve done it in many, many different areas, I mean hugely different areas in publishing but always [with] exactly the same approach. Identifying your audience and going from there. Q. Is there a sense that by being completely consistent in your approach you are completely inconsistent in what you produce, always adapting to suit the readerships? A: You’re saying that it is my personal view, and my personal view is irrelevant really. What I’m looking at is the publication and as a professional journalist that’s my job, whether I’m working for The bloody Times or The Weekly or somewhere else. With me it was always identifying the audience, and understand the product, the newspaper or magazine, study it and understand it and then apply your journalistic skills to that publication, so the approach is always exactly the same. What changed was the publication.

Main points

Five of the seven editors said that they did think that their own voices came across in their copy and their magazines. Two said that it did sometimes, but that they were able to turn it off at other times. One said that he had always adapted his style of journalism to suit different publications and media products.

Two elaborated that there was more consistency in their approach to managing the magazines than in their actual editorial choices or styles.

Implications for Phase Three of this study

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:
Defining ‘voice’ as your phraseology, tone and sense of humour:

Is your voice discernible in the copy you write?

Is it discernible in your selection of stories and images and other editorial choices?

Is it artistically satisfying expressing yourself through your copy?

Is it artistically satisfying expressing yourself through the whole magazine?

Do you think that expressing yourself through the magazine is a requirement of your current position as editor?

Has your individual style been consistent in your work across a range of publications over the course of your career?

Can you mask your style and make your copy unrecognisable as your own?

Do you mask your style occasionally, sometimes or never?

Are you consistent across different workplaces in the way you approach the organisational and management aspects of the editing role

Phase two – Question Thirteen

Question thirteen asked the editors how they felt about the celebritisation of magazine editors, and whether they thought it was deserved and/or appropriate.

This question was not included in part one but it was discussed in Gough Yates’ (2003) book about magazines. It was added into this part of the study in order to provide entry into the issue of celebrity, into the presentation of editors as celebrities or personalities and into what editors think about the matter. Do they tend to crave, shun or ignore the spotlight?

That bloody word

First reactions to this question included comments on the use of the word ‘celebritisation’, both negative and positive, ranging from:

- A: Drop that bloody word for a start. Q. Celebritisation? A: Oh for fuck’s sake ~ you’re a journalist Kayt don’t lose sight of that :) ~ Ok go on. Q. Well ok ~ how do you feel about making them into figureheads and putting them up front?
To:

- celebritisation, which I think is a good word, …

Beyond commentary about the word, this question triggered some clear answers and some lengthy and tangential conversations.

Three editors expressed that they thought that celebritisation was not appropriate or appreciated.

**Not appropriate**

- I always believed that the best way to be an editor was NOT to be friends with the top end of town or anybody in a position of power and influence because if you were, whether you thought it or not, you were influenced by that, so to me it was the best thing to stay aloof, at an arm’s length from all those people. I just never went in for the celebrity thing. In fact, I laid down that reporters at various publications I edited should not accept, you know, free lunches, well not lunches so much, but free trips overseas and free this, that and the other which could influence their point of view and I never willingly joined in the celebrity thing.

- It’s crazy. Editors are just people who work very, very hard – normal, real people. Nothing glamorous about this gig whatsoever!

- I don’t really understand why the [editor’s] photo is in there. I just think that’s a habit that’s stuck that doesn’t have any real function. And no I don’t think there should be any celebrity at all. I think that’s just a big wank from the 80s really – and it comes in handy not for any reason other than people do go “Oh it’s the editor so it must be…you know, we’re chuffed” and it maybe works for public relations for [the magazine] that you made it, you showed up and they get a little bit of a thrill because they’ve seen a picture of you and then there you are, but I think it’s inappropriate. We should be making celebrities out of our fabulous scientists or you know our bio-ethicists, or people who actually make a difference to the world.

**Glad-handing**

A further three editors said that they disliked or felt indifferent about being treated as celebrities but acknowledged that a certain amount of PR/glad-handing was
expected of them in their role and they equated this with their acquiescence with regard to their attendance and behaviour at social engagements:

- No, quite frankly. I find it embarrassing most of the time. I think it is obviously appropriate that you get invited to lots of things, because it is important for an editor to be across what’s going on in their community, particularly if you do edit something lifestyle-y in nature. I don’t have a problem with being invited to that sort of stuff but I don’t think an editor needs to be known at all. I mean it wouldn’t bother me at all if you did a voxpop along the street and no one could tell you who I was, but they all knew who [the magazine] was. To me it is far more important that the product is recognised than the person behind the product. … I mean, obviously there’s a certain amount of PR/glad-handing you know and you’ve obviously got to be pleasant to people and handle any potential problems with as much finesse as possible :o) But, I don’t like the whole celebritification of our society, let alone of editors! :o)

- No, not really. I don’t think it’s appropriate. I certainly know it exists and back then I think I was really attracted to it initially, I think a lot of people are. I liked the fact that I got invited to things and I wanted to go to them, and my ego was getting stroked the whole time which was attractive, but towards the end I remember it being a real drag, like I was actually kind of sick of what came with it and I often just wanted to do the job. And also the PR aspect of the job became more and more of a drag because I didn’t want to keep going to things anymore. I didn’t want to keep going to stupid fashion events that I didn’t care about :o) and pretend that I did. That was really draining actually. One of the most draining things about the job was that kind of semi status that you get from it. It’s interesting as soon as you get out of it – it’s amazing how quickly it disappears.

- I mean generally, with events, people are just desperate for someone to turn up and the same sad sacks turn up, so none of that means very much to me. Q: Are you a bit bored with it? A: I’m not bored with it. I’m not really anything with it. I think there’s a nasty side to it, where people can get caught up with it and that it’s an important perk for them and I’ve seen that. I mean, I see it all the time in people and I don’t really buy into any of that. I think there are some nice responsibilities with it, where you might be asked to open an art show or speak at this or speak at that and I like that, and I think that is part of the job and I think it’s very nice to be involved in that sort of thing and it’s stimulating to me (NB: this quote is also used in Q3) … But the general celebritisation, you know we do it to everyone else so I don’t see why anyone shouldn’t do it to magazine editors, but I don’t think they’re that special.
No one knows or cares

One spoke from personal experience and said she didn’t see much evidence of it:

- I don’t feel like a somebody when I go out. I’ll often go out and introduce myself to people and they certainly won’t know me by face. Occasionally they’ll know me by name. Maybe that’s because [the magazine] is too young a product to really have that celebrity.

Delving deeper

Discussing the issue further one editor, who had previously said she thought the celebritisation of editors was inappropriate, added that she thought it was more of an English phenomena than an Australian one and that she didn’t really see evidence of it in Australia:

- I think that the people in our industry know who the editors of /The Australian/ Women’s Weekly and Woman’s Day and all those sorts of things are, but I don’t know that the average person would know or care. I think Ita [Buttrose] was a bit of a phenomenon, there isn’t anyone else really. In the same way, obviously to a lesser extent and for a lot less money, but in the same way that Oprah is a great phenomenon in the US. But I think the average person wouldn’t be able to name a single editor. I think us people in the media industry are obsessed with who edits what, and who does what and we all know it, but I don’t really think the average person is. But I think it depends, I think /The Australian/ Women’s Weekly probably may be a bit more so because Deborah Thomas made a conscious decision, when she had her baby to be splashed all over the front pages of it, “Here’s me and my miracle baby” because she took so long to have a baby and all that, so if you make a conscious decision to do it, well then, I guess you can only expect that that’s the outcome. But I really don’t think the average person cares, as long as they’ve got a good magazine to read. Usually they only want to know who the editor is because they want to make a complaint :o). So frankly, I’m quite happy if they don’t know :o).

Another predicted that the trend of marketing the personal leadership of publications would continue, saying:

- I don’t disapprove at all. I think that increasingly that these publications should have a much more personal leadership than they did in the past. People are much more accustomed now to the idea that there is a personality in everything. I mean we’re talking about
television here and there’s personality all over the place in television, whether it’s Eddie McGuire or whoever it is, I mean it’s becoming much more personalised, in a previous generation, or one or two back, you didn’t have that. It was almost a little bit non-U, to use the Nancy Mitford term, it was sort of poor form to promote self, but it’s now part of the whole thing to do it. Now, Ita started a magazine called *Ita*, and that was kind of the ultimate. It didn’t work but that was for a whole lot of other reasons, …but I think that it’s inevitable that magazines will get more tied up with people’s names and that if you launched a magazine in America called *Hillary Clinton* that you’d probably do quite well and if you launched a magazine in England called *Elizabeth* you’d probably do quite well.

Another editor also raised the issue that raising the profile of the editor and putting a face to the magazine was a tool used to foster trust in the publication and he connected that with the notion of ethical practice as an individual. The conversation follows:

- *Q. And what about your little photo in the front and your spiel?*
  A: Oh, well, y’know … But you know there’s another interesting thing in there, in all seriousness and that’s slightly away from the celebritisation, which I think is a good word, and that is that people watch Suzannah Carr, they don’t particularly watch Channel 7, they watch, they like Suzannah Carr, or they like Geoff Newman or whatever it is and TV stations are very clear on promoting personalities because we are loyal to people, not necessarily to companies. That may be not quite true but y’know, it’s the human thing, the recognition and I think that newspapers and magazines often shy away from that a bit but the fact is, as we’ve just been discussing for all this time, that the magazine is a handmade personal thing, so yeah, well I want to know who made it. I think that’s fair enough. “Oh, is that what he looks like, well, but who is he?”

* Q. *Like asking who is this person telling me how to live?*
  A: Yeah, so I think it’s fair enough. …

* Q. *I mean you could have someone pushing other values.*
  A: Exactly – and getting into the house … lying around all week and preaching other values and so it was a kind of scary thing.

* Q: *Is that why you got into examining your own motives, because it was a bit dangerous and scary?*
  A: Well it’s true you could have someone who had absolutely opposite views to me editing a magazine like that … it was an important responsibility.

**Main Points**
Three editors said that they felt that the celebritisation of editors was not deserved, appropriate or appreciated.

Three said that while they felt negative or indifferent about being treated as celebrities, they thought that attendance at events and socialising was part of their role. One regarded this aspect of her job as a chore, one had become bored with it, and the third was indifferent about most of it, but enjoyed some aspects of it.

One said that she did not feel that she was treated as any kind of celebrity.

In further discussions about the issue one said she thought that celebritisation of editors was relatively uncommon in Australia (less so than in the UK), and that it was rare for the people outside of the media industry to know the names of magazine editors.

One predicted that the trend of marketing magazines on the basis of the celebrity-status of the editor would strengthen in the future.

Another also made this point and added to it that he thought, given that magazines contain the views and values of their editors, that readers had the right to know who was behind the publication, and that this in turn inspired him to act responsibly in the role.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Are you ever treated like a celebrity because of your role as editor?

Do other media report your attendance at events?

Are you invited to events for reasons other than in order to report on them?

Do you enjoy attending events in the role of editor?

Do you consider attending events in the role of editor a chore?

Do you resent this aspect of your work because it feels more like PR than journalism?

Are you indifferent about this aspect or your work?
Do you sometimes feel honoured to be invited to attend or speak at events?

Do you think the readers of your publication are curious about you?

Do you think that the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter adds credibility to your magazine?

Do you think that the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter adds personality to your magazine?

Does the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter make you feel more personally responsible for the content of the magazine than if it were not there?

**Phase two – Question Fourteen**

Question fourteen asked what role the editors thought they and their publications played in the lives of their readers.

This question and the one that follows sit at the heart of this study. They are located towards the end, but not at the very end, of the question set, which corresponds in therapeutical counselling with the time when rapport is at its peak in the hope that the participants would give frank and considered responses. The editors were invited to explore the questions and expand upon their answers, broadening the scope of the questions. Both questions are about the perceptions that the editors have of their own power and influence. In question fourteen this focus is on the microcosm reader-by-reader level and in question fifteen on the macrocosm cultural level.

**Tour guides and info-tainers**

All seven of the editors initially or only responded saying that they provided their readers with information and/or entertainment.

One initially responded that his publication was a provider of “truth”. The others’ responses follow:

- The big balance in all of these things is between information and entertainment, that’s what we do, that’s the crux of it. And you need entertaining information, you need informative entertainment, you need pure entertainment and you don’t need as much pure information.

Three used the word ‘guide’ to describe their role:
I guess it depends on the person and how much they are influenced by what they read. Maybe someone went out and bought a cat. I actively tried to inform people about some things, some of the things I think are worthwhile. Also in a way, especially at [the second magazine], I was like a tour guide, or a getting-to-know-you-in-five-minutes speed-dating host for Perth [as a tourism destination].

I think basically a credible source of information that they would go to. [The magazine] tries to be a functional guide to travel in the State, or experiencing the state full-stop really, which for many people means travel. So we need to be seen, and I hope we are seen, as that source of information, and the best, most credible, source of information and the most comprehensive as well.

I personally think that a lot of people use us as an events guide for the season ahead and for restaurants. I think a lot of people use us to find out about restaurants just because it’s all there in a magazine that lasts for three months, as opposed to the disposable nature of publications that come out weekly.

And two others added more about how they helped readers make buying decisions:

I guess it would depend on the person, but there are people, particularly women or some women and a lot of their existence is dominated by what’s in these magazines, what’s being written about and what’s the latest trends and so on. Also because [the magazine] was so diverse it meant different things to different people, like our food and wine section, for example, I think was excellent and because of that we had a real foodie following and people from that particular area really looked forward to [the magazine] coming out because it told them about all the new places that had opened. Q. Do you think some people became foodies because of it? A: Yeah, a little bit and even I did by being the editor of it. I just got sucked up into it and that was probably the part of the magazine that I loved most in the end. It was just that whole food and wine aspect which came with it. It was great.

Q. What role does the magazine play in their lives?
A: Well, quite a considerable one in some cases. We get some people telling us that they have bought our magazine and quite literally bought houses, employed builders and bought everything inside their house on the basis of what they saw in the magazine, down to the last piece of art.

Q. That’s a much more concrete impact than many people have been able to speak about.
A: Oh, we have that a lot, we have people who picked up the mag, travellers who pick it up in a hotel room, and walk down to the art gallery and go: “I want that one”. And they put $80 grand worth of cash down and off they go. So that’s how they see it, they see it as a quick guide. People are often quite lazy, and they’re looking for
someone to answer those quandaries of what to do with all this money :) and I’m happy to oblige.

Q. It’s a nice affirmation that you have a relationship with them.
A: Yes, it is – and it’s not just what we say. I think they’re responding as well to the look of the magazine, the design, the production qualities, the whole thing.

But there’s also something else

Invited to expand on this question, and asked if information and entertainment were all that the magazines provided, four editors continued and provided these answers:

- I think it’s a bit more of a constant companion than some publications, it’s an investment people have made and it looks beautiful, it’s glossy and its aim is to sit on your table and be your companion for a few months but I really do think people still mostly use us as a guide. Our main criteria are 1) to provide a comprehensive guide to the season ahead and 2) to entertain and inform and 3) to inspire and perhaps give you things to aspire to and finally it’s to make you proud to be living here.

- Escapism, maybe. I think travel is the ultimate escapism, imagining yourself escaping the daily grind and taking off to somewhere different, or driving off into the sunset is very romantic and I think even to those who aren’t actually travelling. I’d like to think that they pick up the publication and use our features and our ideas as that source, or to motivate them to dream, and I guess you’re only going to do that if you feel that what you are reading is real and it’s true and honest and I think you still need to be credible. You still need to be comprehensive.

- Q. In terms of the lives of the readers, what was [the magazine] to them?
A: Truth.
Q. Why did they need that? And why did they need it from that publication?
A: It gave them succour, s-u-c-c-o-u-r. It gave them confidence. It gave them a sense that they were safe.
Q. All pretty big things, and they fall outside of what you traditionally would say that journalism provides.
A: Oh shit yes, utterly!
Q. I’m interested in that divergence when you identified yourself as a journalist and said that you’ve always worked for your readers, providing what your readers wanted and yet what your readers were wanting was not what journalism provides. Journalism provides news, information, but here you are providing succour and confidence and safety.
A: Are they mutually exclusive? I think not.
Q. So what kind of information do they need from it? A: So information, well if we continue to use that idea, then landscape. They need to understand where they are. They need to understand how people live here. Not just in Perth, but further out, and they need to understand a bit about the background of the place and how it works. I mean to make a good community you sort of have to understand some of those sorts of things. You need to understand perhaps why Kings Park is where it is and what it is … and you need to know that Abdul down the road came from some shithouse country and that’s why he’s here. So it’s sort of about need-to-know things, and now it might be, if I take an example like Ningali Lawford, who you obviously know. I mean with Ningali there’s [the stage show] Bran Nue Dae, lots of shows blah blah blah, so that’s a valid little celebrity profile, she came from Christmas Creek Station and went on to become an actor and all that, I mean it shows that not all Aboriginal people are f’kin’ hopeless; that’s the background message. I mean the fact that someone sits and reads 1000 words about Ningali in their little lounge room in Ballajura or wherever they are, whatever suburb they’re in, you know you’re doing something there. … So that’s what I mean by education.

So that’s what you’re doing, you’re doing information and education, but people basically want entertainment.

Q. But aren’t people naturally curious, don’t they want information as well?
A: Well they are and just entertainment falls a bit flat after a while.

Q. Because it’s not feeding their curiosity?
A: So Ningali was a good example, it’s about finding someone who is a celebrity but who also has something to say as well.

Uneducated guesses

One editor added that the question was difficult to answer because of the lack of research done by the company into buyer and reader behaviour, saying:

- I think that is a difficult question to answer because [the boss] has never done any research and so we are kind of guessing and he really does need to do some research, even if it’s just amongst our subscribers to find out why they subscribe. But with previous magazines that I have worked on they did quite a lot of research and we knew who our readers were and we knew why they bought the magazine. It was quite disheartening to find out that such a huge number of them bought for it for [the] Stars – I don’t think I really wanted to know that :o).

Not about me
Most of the editors shied away from commenting on the role they played in their readers’ lives and focused more on their magazine’s role. The editors who did answer this part of the question gave these responses:

- **Q. Do you think editors are characters in their readers’ lives, like a newsreader is? A:** Well yes, in a way, but I don’t think to the same degree. I don’t think a lot of readers identify with me personally. I think they identify with the publication. I think they identify with the product.

- I think I’m something to them that’s not real actually. I think that what I am to them is someone who is some kind of style guru, which is just not the case at all. Quite the contrary. I know how to get style gurus on board, and I know where to find people who know about style and who know about design, but I’m certainly not that person. I’m the one who pulls it all together.

**Main Points**

All seven of the editors described their role in their readers’ lives as being about providing information and/or entertainment.

One framed this as “truth”. One launched straight into the question of finding a balance between information and entertainment. Three used the term guide (tour guide, functional guide and events guide) and two spoke about informing their readership about products and services that could be purchased or patronised.

Invited to expand on this question, four offered another layer of response adding that their magazines offered a source of:

- companionship
- pride (and by extension contentment) in their state
- inspiration to dream (and aspire)
- escapism from the daily grind
- succour
- confidence
- a sense of safety and
- understanding about where they are and how people live here.
One editor added that she felt that the question was difficult because her boss had not done any formal research among the readers or subscribers but she also added that a readership survey done at a magazine she had worked at earlier in her career had not yielded encouraging results.

Five of the editors completely shied away from claiming that they, as characters or personalities, played a role in their readers’ lives. Of the other two, one said that if it happened it was to a lesser extent than the role a newsreader played and that her readers had more of a connection with the publication as a whole than with her as the editor. The other said that if there was a perception that she was the expert in her field it was a mistaken one as she was just collating and presenting the views of the relevant experts.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

What do readers get from your publication?

Tick if you think your readers use your publication as a source of:

- pride and/or contentment in where they live
- information about things to do and places to go
- inspiration to aspire
- information about new and unusual products they could buy
- escapism from the daily grind
- education about other people in their community
- succour
- companionship
- confidence
- a sense of safety
- education about where they are, and
- information about community services that are available

Using the same list, tick if you deliberately *aim* to be a source of these things.
Do you think your publisher should do more research to gain a better understanding of what the readers get from the publication?

Do you think that you as a character/personality play a role in your readers’ lives to a greater, lesser or equal extent than a television newsreader?

Do you think your publication plays a role in your readers’ lives to a greater, lesser or equal extent than a television newsreader?

**Phase two – Question Fifteen**

Following on from question fourteen and tapping into the editors’ perceptions of their power and influence, question fifteen asked the editors if they thought that their editorial work had contributed to cultural change.

The question was not one that most of the editors had a pre-considered answer for and in most cases it needed to be put to them a few times in order to give them time to understand the context of the question and to formulate responses. This resulted in some editors being asked specific questions that others weren’t asked as the line of discussion around the question evolved differently in each interview.

**Leading**

Three editors, interestingly three of the older editors, said that they did think that their work had contributed to cultural change:

- **Q. Is magazine editing something that can have an impact on culture, can it contribute to cultural change?** A: It does … It can be and should be.

- I think so, definitely, but I don’t know how quickly that happens or how subtle or how overt it is. You know, a lot of media run with campaigns and that is a lot more of an immediate response, like: “Should we introduce daylight savings, 57% of the people say ‘no’” or whatever, those sorts of things are more immediate. But yes, I think so.

- I think so, yes. I don’t know how important that role is, given that we only have four magazines a year. But I think it all happens by
osmosis, it all gets absorbed in different ways and at different rates and I think it all plays a role.

**Stirring the pot**

In contrast, three of the younger editors said that rather than introducing new elements into culture they were involved in moving ideas around and bringing ideas that they found interesting to the attention of their readers, who may otherwise not have come across those ideas, or presenting the ideas in a way that they thought would attract their readers’ attention, appeal to them or encourage them to think.

- **Q. As an editor, are you bringing new things into the cultural mix, or is it that you are just creatively stirring around the elements that we already have, bringing things from the fringes into focus?**
  A: Yeah for sure, that was going on. You tend to always think of culture as being about what is new and what’s at the forefront but there’s a lot of other things evolving within it.

- **Like anything, travel is in some sense fashion, it is fashioned – in that one day this destination might be all the go and everybody is writing about cruising and the next day it might be about environmentally-friendly travel options. We’ve really got to stay abreast of international travel movement. So going back to the responsible travel I was talking about before, that’s something I hadn’t even heard of really, that phrase that’s been coined, I hadn’t heard of that five years ago, and now all of a sudden that’s something that I’m really interested in [and writing about] … and I’m predicting that that’s the way travel is going to go.**

  **Q. But you’re not only predicting it. You’re moving it from being something that you hadn’t seen to something your readers have seen.**
  A: Well, I can play a part in convincing people that this is an idea that should be seriously considered, and promoted, yeah of course, and that’s a responsibility, but I don’t take it too seriously to be honest, that responsibility. But I think it’s more important to reflect businesses that are credible and businesses that are doing the right thing by the environment and by community and this is what I think is one of the biggest responsibilities, the businesses that are profiled and if I feel good about that.

  Look, someone’s going to not like what I write one day, or [more] often, or they are going to like what I write. Whatever. As long as I feel good about the words that are written, or the words that are written by other people that I’ve ok-ed to publish, then I’m ok with it – because everyone needs an opinion.

  **Q. And that’s you playing a role in moving ideas around?**
  A: Yes, and causing a bit of controversy. There’s nothing wrong with that, as long as it’s for the right reasons.
The third of these three editors gave a reticent initial response about his publication’s impact, but as he discussed it he acknowledged that he had imported some style ideas and introduced them to the Perth market:

- *Q. As an editor do you think you influenced cultural change?*
  
  A: No, not at all. It was a very conservative magazine and I don’t think we were pushing boundaries in any way. I don’t think a lifestyle magazine can. But the magazines that I was buying at the time, like *Surface* magazine, which was a fashion magazine out of New York that I thought was absolutely cutting edge, and I just appreciated that about it … and I modelled a lot of what we did on like a Perth version of [the design magazine] *Wallpaper*, that was a real kind of benchmark for us. I guess overall for Perth the magazine was quite cutting edge, but only for Perth, not compared with anything else that was happening internationally.

- *Q. And Wallpaper did push boundaries?*
  
  A: Oh yeah, they were really innovative initially.

**Industry support**

Adding to his initial response, one editor added that he thought his publication had provided practical support to a budding industry at a critical time and that this had had a lasting impact on the culture of Perth:

- I think [the magazine] helped to keep the food and wine industry in WA healthy, to a point, because it does promote them, especially back then because there wasn’t anything else that was really pushing it, so I think it … helps nurture that industry a bit and to a lesser extent with fashion as well because we tried to showcase a lot of WA designers, so we perhaps helped to nurture that industry a little bit.

**Following, enabling, processing and supporting progress**

The initial response of one of the young editors was consideration of whether magazines led or followed cultural change. The notion of magazines as followers and reporters of change was taken up at greater length by one of the older editors who started with it but came around, towards the end of his response, to the idea of magazines promoting progressive ideas and through that mechanism being involved in cultural progression.
The younger editor’s initial response was:

- That’s a really broad question. I’m not sure, it depends on whether magazines are documenting change or affecting it.

The older editor’s response follows:

- The [magazine] doesn’t lead at all. [It] follows and represents. It also provides [the readers] with a voice.
  
  Q: You have said that your magazine was about the readers and for the readers. Is it that the people who spoke to you, the subjects of your stories were they the ones whose voices you transmitted through the magazine?
  
  A: Yes. However, you’d have to put on top of that that you wouldn’t take someone with some sort of Nazi-Fascist view in Cunnamulla that everybody should be hanged if they stole a loaf of bread, I mean you wouldn’t go to that extent.

  Q: Would you couch that as “someone has said…”?
  
  A: Well, you’d probably just disregard it. You’d have to have in your mind that there’s a central theme [or worldview] that middle Australia [holds], …you’d have to think that they had a valid point of view and you’d reject things that were obviously out of whack, totally out of whack. But you did take into account genuinely conservative views, ‘conservative’ meaning people who don’t welcome change, people who like things the way that they are and there’s a lot of people who have that view and I think that they have a valid point of view. I don’t agree with it necessarily, but they feel safe with what is happening now and they don’t like things happening that are going to change that and they really don’t like things happening in a hell of a hurry, which is why the Whitlam Government is a case where I would argue that it was an absolutely essential part of Australia’s social development but many people said that it was an affront, an absolute bloody appalling assault on the people of Australia, and you get these….

  Q: Different views?
  
  A: Yeah.

  Q: So in terms of cultural change, when it happens do people need to chew the fat about it and get comfortable? With things like attitudes towards migrants, or homosexuals or cosmetic surgery do we need to go: “Oh that was shocking, what do we think about that? – and mull it over a bit, is it that role of magazine writing?”

  A: Well the most significant area I can think of here is [the magazine] and its views on abortion. As I said earlier, [the magazine] didn’t editorialise but it certainly gave a sort of favourable thing to the idea that women should have choice rather than that there should be the Catholic view that anything vaguely abortion is punishable by death or excommunication or whatever.

Subtext and satisfaction
Two editors were asked by what means they thought their work impacted on or shifted culture. They both answered that it was mainly through subtext:

- **Q: Was it in ways like food fashion changes, like are we eating focaccia or bruschetta this year, or is it something deeper?** But see the subtext of that is that multiculturalism is good and eating Italian food is cool, which 20 years ago it wasn’t. So in all of these things there’s this other cultural interestingness. And just as an aside, even with [my] job now, I mean people basically go on holiday, you know, but travel pages are a wonderful opportunity to discuss religions in different places and all sorts.

- **Put it this way, from a female magazine point of view, if you push the skinny blond as the ideal forever and a day, then anyone who is not a skinny blond is bound to feel less than perfect. So yes, but probably more subtly than people think but it does bring about change.**

Tapping into this issue with the editor of a design publication I asked: **What about in the sense that magazine editors get blamed for causing anorexia?** Her answer echoed the two above in that it recognised the power of subtext, but she drew an interesting personal moral line between subtext about body images and subtext about residential tidiness:

- **Well, I suppose the only analogy for that that I can think of for my mag is that people could be forgiven for feeling really bad about their homes because they’re not perfect, … and we’ve actually had comments about that, that we are representing an unrealistic kind of way of life. Most people are much more chaotic and disorganised than the houses shown.**

**Q. Like: “Where’s their junk?”** [**This was asked because stylists routinely remove personal household effects for photo shoots**].

**A:** Yeah exactly, well unfortunately a lot of people are getting rid of anything that y’know … It’s a whole new way of living that people are getting rid of the heart and soul of their life. I mean, we do houses where people have got rid of everything and just started from scratch. So there’s nothing of their history there.

**Q. When you get a stylist in do you sometimes try to leave a few of those homely things in there?**

**A:** Only if it looks better. We only do it if we like it because it looks good. That’s what it’s all about, looking good and looking alluring, and you know, skinny models sometimes do look better in clothes, but [our fashion editor] is particular about not having too skinny girls, because she’s just morally and ethically opposed to it. But I have no
moral or ethical opposition to having a stylist in to make a house look good.

Asked if the sense that they were contributing to cultural change increased their job satisfaction the first two of these three editors said yes and that they may not have stayed in the role without it:

- If you’re just producing candyfloss – [and] I know I can’t spend my life doing that anyway, and neither would I – then there’s just no point and you might as well just be making baked beans or something. Unless you are thinking about it and trying to do something useful with it, what are you doing?

- Well you’ve got to work to pay the bills! :o) But … if I didn’t get to write the sort of things that I do get to write through [this magazine], and that I have got to write and/or edit over the years then I wouldn’t still be in this industry. And I think that’s one of the reasons why I’m still at [this magazine], and not, say working for [a major newspaper], because I don’t want to write those kind of news stories, I’d rather write, not necessarily “feel-good” stories (that kind of denigrates them a little bit), but things that have a bit more depth and a little bit more humanity to them. Q. Stories with a bit more point to them? A: Yes, definitely! Because it is such a demanding role anyway. It’s not the sort of role where you can just go in at nine and leave at five and switch off. You’re always kind of carrying it around in your head, so if you weren’t carrying all the good things around and it was all the dross then you wouldn’t hang on to it.

Limiting factors

Four of the editors were asked: What, if anything, limited their impact on cultural change? Their answers follow:

- Nothing really.

- The problem I guess comes down to volume, the volume of people that read things that some people consider to be “worthy” versus the volume of people who read Almost Famous or New Idea, you know that sort of celebrity-type gossip or the they-look-normal-like-us stories because they’re going out without their make-up or they’ve got pimples or something. I mean that’s hard to know, but yes I like to think that it does [contribute to cultural change], but I think that’s a very hard thing to measure.

- Well our readers are intelligent and they would notice a particular bias if it’s blatant, and by blatant I mean if I’m pushing it in too many places in the magazine. Yes, first and foremost the readers, also lack of
space. I mean, I come out twice a year now and I need to have as much good material in there as possible and so if I’m filling up too much space with my own little bias towards certain products or people then it’s not really doing the right thing by the readers or the publication.

- We can’t hope to be THAT influential that what we say… I mean no one’s under the delusion that we have that. I think it comes back to what I said before that you can say what you think and you can couch it in a way that’s going to be listened to and taken on board but you can’t expect people to act on it straight away and if they do act on it they might not feel as wholeheartedly about it as you do.

**Main points**

Three editors said that they thought that their work had contributed to cultural change. Asked how, they said that it was mainly through the power of subtext promoting particular values. Two added that this power was an important element of their job satisfaction. One of these noted that while she recognised the power of editorial subtext to influence people and/or cultural beliefs, she viewed the morality of exercising that power as a personal decision by editors in terms of their feelings about the issue at hand (such as body image or house image). She also expressed that editors also needed to consider the need for the magazine to be attractive enough to be commercially successful and that this concern could override the desire to fill a publication with opinionated subtext.

In contrast to these views expressed by three older editors, who had worked in the industry for longer, three of the younger editors commented that they didn’t feel that they had added new or novel material to, or progressed, culture (as a vaguely defined whole) but they discussed their role in bringing ideas from other countries or subcultures to the attention of their Perth readerships and contextualising them, thereby contributing to a kind of localised cultural progression.

One added that he felt that his publication had provided important marketing support to WA’s wine and fashion industries at a time when they were struggling to become established.
Two editors raised the question of whether magazines followed and documented cultural change or led the way. One of these raised it briefly as a question and the other stated that his publication perceived itself as a follower, committed to documenting and reflecting conservative cultural views but he conceded that on some issues (he gave the example of the abortion debate) that the publication had taken and promoted a progressive stance.

Four of the editors were asked: what, if anything, limited their impact on cultural change? Their answers ranged from “nothing” to comments about the relatively high volume of reading material on the market promoting different values, space limitations, the need to be seen as not too biased or opinionated in order to remain credible and a humble acceptance of the inability of the magazine medium to consistently make people spring into action wholeheartedly and immediately.

Summarising, this means that all seven editors said that they felt that they had contributed to cultural change. Three answered ‘yes’ (and citing subtext as the mechanism), three said that they were involved in moving ideas around and helping localised cultural progression and one said that while his publication’s primary objective was following and reporting culture that on some issues it took and promoted a progressive stance.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Does your magazine seek to reflect and/or report on culture

Does your magazine seek to influence and/or change culture?

Which of the previous two is the primary aim of your publication?

Because the editors struggled to quickly grasp what question fifteen was asking, I think there is value in including examples in these questions, because it will make the question less ambiguous.
Do you feel that your work as an editor has contributed to cultural change because:

- Everything in your publication has some kind of subtext behind it (such as international recipes promoting multiculturalism)?
- You have made more people aware of emerging social movements (such as the Responsible Travel movement)?
- You have framed social movements (such as pro-choice about abortion, or gay marriages) that appeal to you in a positive light in your publication?
- You have provided promotion (marketing support) for fledgling businesses or industries?
- You have presented cutting-edge styles or ideas from other countries, not previously seen in Australia, to your Australian readers?

Are there some particular issues (such as body image) that you seek to influence cultural attitudes about, and other topics that you are less passionate about?

On what topics are you actively promoting cultural change through your magazine?

**Phase two – Question Sixteen**

Question sixteen asked the editors if their perceptions of the role of magazine editor had changed over their time in the role?

Ferguson (1983) called editors the high priestesses of the cult of femininity. High priestesses are occult, their work happens in secret. This question, and question seventeen, were asked in order to explore whether there is a feeling among editors, that while their products are visible to the public, their processes are either hidden from the public view or simply not exposed. This question asks about how much of the role they knew about at the time when they stepped into it and whether (and how) time in the role had changed their understanding of it.

Six of the editors were asked this question. In one interview it was skipped because longer answers were given to other questions and time ran out. Answers from the six editors asked covered the spectrum from no perceived change to change for the better and change for the worse.
No change

Q. Did your perception of the role of magazine editor change over your time in the role? A: No, I don’t think so, not in my mind. I think it depends on where you work, obviously. I think our role is still to come up with good ideas and produce a high quality, readable magazine that fulfils all the right demographic criteria for your publisher as well. But obviously there is a certain celebrity associated with some magazines and some editors and perhaps that’s changed a little bit over the years but I certainly haven’t felt it. What I do at [this magazine] is not a lot different from what I did in my previous magazine except that there I had unlimited resources and a bigger budget, so if I wanted something done it could happen fairly quickly. I’ve just have to learn to be a bit more inventive [here] and stretch resources – so I don’t think it’s changed at all in that time.

Brilliant, but unimaginable

Q. Did your perception of the role of magazine editor change over your time in the role? A: Yes, it did, because if you’re not an editor how the fuck can you understand what an editor’s role is. And this comes back to your thing about do you train people to be editors and the answer is ‘no’, you’ve got to throw somebody in there and in the end you sink or swim and you do, that’s what it is all about. And if you want to be an assistant editor or a deputy editor you can be that all your life, but if you want to be the editor, y’know you’re certainly taking on a huge amount.

Q. How is it different from how you expected it to be?
A: Well it was much better actually … Being an editor is a brilliant area to be in. It’s the best thing you can do in publishing it really is, and I think that I’ve loved every editorship I’ve had. They were all challenging and they all had their own rewards, none particularly financial, but they were all terrific and I loved them.

From glamour to grunt work

Three of the younger editors noted that the job was a lot less glamorous, hip and creative than they had thought it would be before they took up the role:

- I started off so enthusiastic, just bubbling with ideas, and it was always my dream job, but I’ve come to think that a good editor has a shelf life of about a year with a publication, especially in Perth. After that I felt I’d used up all of my good ideas and media needs to be fresh so both mags needed a fresh person to bring a fresh perspective. I know it’s a bit controversial to say this but I felt that after a year on a publication that I really had nothing left to give. I never say never,
but right now I doubt that I’ll ever edit anything again, it’s just so draining.

Q. Why had it been your dream job?
A: It just seemed like the pinnacle of writing, I remember reading that Mia Freedman, editor of one of the ACP mags, said that she’s aimed to be a magazine editor by the time she was 25 and she made it and I thought she was so young and hip and cool that it would be a great job.

- Q. Did your perception of the role of magazine editor change over your time in the role?
A: Yes absolutely, far less glamorous. A lot more diverse than what I thought the job description for an editor would be. A lot less writing than what I imagined an editor would.

- Q. Did your perception of the role of magazine editor change over your time in the role?
A: Yes, certainly initially when I got the gig at [the magazine] I thought it would be a case of putting together as much interesting shit as you could and making and selling magazines and by the time I left it was about trying to please an awful lot of advertisers, trying to appeal to a very, very select audience and a li-ttle bit of creativity in the middle. It certainly wasn’t the creative job that I perceived it would be.
And it’s almost like to me – I’m very negative – I almost stopped even trying to do anything new with the mag because I felt it was so limited what I could achieve with it. It’s probably a good thing that I got out of it. I didn’t have that drive at the end for keeping it fresh and changing it that I had when I came on board.

Q. One of the other editors said that she thought a good editor had a shelf life of about 12 months and then you should change publications.
A: Really!! I can sort of understand y’know, that’s a really interesting point and I think I’d agree with it, because I was much more interested at the beginning. I even think there are some magazines in the UK that get a new editor in every issue, I wonder if that’s why.

On the subject of burnout, it is interesting to note that one of the older editors said the following as part of his response to question 3 about the roles and responsibilities of being an editor:

- I think there’s always a feeling that a new editor would change things a bit and put their mark on it and whatever that was … because that’s what choosing editors is largely about. It’s that everything needs a bit of a dust-off and a change, to evolve and, I mean, I edited the magazine for nearly eight years which is a long run, and at the end of eight years, it was finished with me and I’d finished with it.

What is really changing?
This same older editor took a more philosophical and personal approach to answering question sixteen, offering that he wasn’t sure whether his perception of the role had changed, or whether the industry itself had evolved, or whether he was just getting better at it and more relaxed about it:

- **Q. Did your perception of the role of editor change over your time in the role?** A: Well age is a big leveller isn’t it. I mean yes it has changed. I think the arrogances of youth do dull and that with time you get a bit more sensible. And also the nature of publishing has changed. I mean now we are all business managers too. I mean we are responsible, or seen as responsible, for the financial success of things as well and all that sort of stuff which wasn’t the case 20 years ago. I mean we were at war, us and advertising and it was great, and now we’re all looking for a similar outcome. So I mean the nature of it has changed too.

**Q. As well as your perception?**

A: Yeah, and I see myself and think that where I was very headstrong, I see a mellowing and I see myself more as a facilitator between readers, what the reader wants and me having the ability to find people who can answer that. So it’s more a pulling together of things rather than coming down from a fairly monolithic position which probably is an age thing, but it’s also it’s a bit of a smarter thing too I think. Suddenly you say, “well what do these people really want and let’s go and research and get some insight and say well that’s what they want, how can I enhance that with what I know, how can I work this to give them that”, and so I say probably words like ‘facilitate’ just didn’t exist in this industry 20 years ago but I see more of that now in myself, more sort of pliable and perhaps a bit more willing to be more malleable in my words and thoughts and practices.

**Q. Is it about refining how responsive you are to the readers?**

A: I think it is. It’s fine tuning, and you can drop away a lot of the sheer, full-on headstrong energy because you actually learn to sit back and play more quietly and it’s a bit more beautiful.

Same philosophy and same thing, it’s just like sailing, and Perth is a classic for this, everyone pulls everything in really tight because they want to go really fast, but the best way for you to go fast is to ease it off a bit and let the sail fill up and suddenly the boat takes off, and I guess there’s an element of that that is just an age thing too.

**Main Points:**

One editor said that time in the role had not changed her perception of it. Although in different workplaces she had access to different amounts of financial and staff support, she said that the fundamentals of the role had remained relatively consistent.
One editor said that his understanding of the role had changed because no one who had not been in the role could actually appreciate what the job entails.

The three youngest editors all said that the job was less appealing than they had thought it would be. They contrasted words and phrases like: bubbling with ideas, dream job, hip, cool, glamorous, pinnacle of writing and great job – against: used up, nothing left to give, draining, a lot less writing, a li-ittle bit of creativity, an awful lot of advertisers, a very very select audience, so limited and stopped trying.

One editor raised issues about changes in the industry actually changing the role over time, as well as his own maturation and professional experience playing a part in how his view of the role had changed over time.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study:**

In collating the answers to this question I noticed inconsistencies between the editors who interpreted it to mean over their time in the role and the ones who took it to mean from before they were in the role to the present. As a result this will be clarified in the next stage. Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Before you became an editor did you have expectations of what the role would entail?

Is your view of the role now significantly different from that initial view? Is it:
Less glamorous; Less interesting; Less creative; More draining; More interesting;
More fun?

While you have been an editor, do you think that the industry and your employer’s definition (and expectation) of the role of editor has changed?
While you have been an editor do you think that you have personally changed or developed in a way that changes your approach to the task?
Phase two – Question Seventeen

Question seventeen delved deeper into the subject area opened up by question sixteen and asked the editors whether they thought that the public has a clear understanding of what their role entailed.

They have no idea

Five editors said they thought the public had little to no understanding of what their daily chores actually involved. Five of them used the word glamour, or a derivative of it, to describe the most common misconception:

- I don’t even think a lot of the people who have a loose association with our industry understand what we do. I mean, the volume of material that I get from PR that should never ever come across my desk, it makes you think: “Well if they’re loosely associated with us, in the sense that they should understand what we do and what goes in our magazine and they’re not meeting those criteria, I don’t understand how the general public would figure it out.” I think they’re often quite surprised to see the variety of things that you do too. That you don’t just sit in an ivory tower and the work comes in and you go yep-no-yes,. … I think a lot of people who want to get into our industry, younger people, might think that and think “I’d love to have that job, that’s a fairly prestigious job, you must have a lot of influence” but I don’t think the average person thinks that. If they think about it at all, they probably think it is a glamorous job, particularly if you’re associated with a glamorous looking publication, so they’d be quite shocked with the reality.

- Totally, totally. Yes, I get inundated with young girls who “want to be in magazines” and they want to come in and look at the glamour we live in – and, well, there’s no glamour in there. There is no glamour. And that’s because of those TV programmes like Just Shoot Me. Like yeah, I’ll bloody shoot it myself, just...There is no glamour and it’s different to how people perceive it and it’s all about how the media portray the industry to be. Q. Is it more or less work than it’s perceived to be? A: Oh much more work. Much more fussing over detail and getting the detail right than anyone imagines. They think you just flounce in and wave a wand.

- Before I did the job I was very aware of editors because I was aspiring to be one, but I don’t think many people give it that much thought. People think it’s a glamorous job and it’s really not. I suppose some
people consider it to be prestigious. I consider it to be like project management.

- I think earlier [in my time as an editor] I had the public perspective, definitely, you get all sorts of comments like: “Oh I thought you’d do this…” Oh and you earn a lot less money too, that’s a big one. You get all these comments like: “You must be on a great wicket”, or “how glamorous” and “Oh wow”– but you know I don’t take it for granted. I’m extremely fortunate and I’ve got a brilliant job and yes it is a unique job – but it’s certainly not what people imagine it to be.

- Yeah, a significant difference. I think along the lines that it’s seen to be a very glamorous role to people who aren’t working in that position and it’s seen to be a very creative role and I don’t think – while there are aspects of that – but particularly in Perth I don’t think that it’s particularly like that. This is the thing though, the editor of Wallpaper magazine probably is a fucking celebrity y’know. Like Tyler Brule or whoever who was in charge of that for a while was a huge celebrity and deservedly so, but he was writing a magazine that was international and bought by millions of people and really cutting edge and in Perth that’s not ever really going to be possible to do something like that.

Yes, but it is exciting
One editor echoed the belief of the previous five that the public perceive the role of editor as glamorous and exciting but argued that, in relative terms, it is those things:

- I think they have a reasonably good idea and I think part of the publicity that has happened around editorships has contributed to that. I think they understand and I think they’re a bit excited by it and we should never underestimate that – that if you are working in, well, pick a thousand jobs, if you are working in a shoe shop, and I’m not deriding any of these, or you’re welding 44 gallon drums or you’re selling stuff in Officeworks, then shit yes, this is an exciting job.

Q. Do you think that’s part of the repetition factor: I mean to a point our products are never repetitive?
A: That’s right and, you know, it’s groovy. It’s cool, it’s a cool thing to do and I think you should never underestimate that or be less excited by it. It is a really cool thing to do and it’s interesting because, well, my wife is an artist and we have a lot of artist friends and you know and they’re all putting together an exhibition for next year or whatever it is, and the magazine to me is like putting up an exhibition every week.

You are a curator and you’re curating this stuff together and every week, instead of 300 sad sacks coming into some gallery at the back of wherever, you’ve got a million people a week going to look at your
exhibition and going “well I like it” or “I don’t like it” or “I know what I like and I don’t like that” y’know, everyone’s going to judge it. They like the magazine, they don’t like the magazine, they like this story, they don’t like this story, they like this picture, they don’t like this picture, and you are the chief artist and curator of this huge exhibition every week, and so it makes me smile and it makes me laugh when there’s this huge fuss about some exhibition or other and you think, yeah well what bigger exhibition of your writing, photography, ideas, passions is there?

The seventh editor said he thought that the role was little understood but added that:

- It probably shouldn’t be [understood], because the moment that you start to lay down rules and regulations about what an editor should be you destroy a lot of the reason, a lot of the bases on which people edit. I’ve told you some of mine and certainly they’ve remained consistent across a great deal of different publications I’ve worked for and employers, who have had different views and so forth. It’s a difficult one.

This conversation then moved to the issue of editorial power and this question emerged:

- Q. *Is the all-powerful editor a myth because the editor has to answer to the advertising people, to these and those people so that when you are actually working as an editor it is not like being all powerful?*
  A: Answer to or listen to? It’s not answer to. You don’t answer to the advertising manager, you don’t. You take into account, you take into consideration that person’s view but you don’t answer to that person. You answer to the boss.
  Q. *Ok, that’s a nice way of putting it.*
  A: And I would never…..
  Q. *You’d have the argument?*
  A: Oh always Kayt, always. And I don’t believe that an editor who is an editor is subservient to the advertising or the circulation or to any other manager. Take what they say into account and have a bloody great debate. I’m not saying that the editor is above them, but in the end the editor is.

**Main points:**

Answering question 16, the three youngest editors said that their views of the role had changed from an early naive perception of it as glamorous to a perception of it as a diverse and difficult role. Those views were re-iterated here. Two other editors
agreed that the public perception of the role was that it was a glamorous and relatively easy job. These two older editors specifically said that this view was commonly held (and voiced) by young people who wanted to enter the industry.

One editor agreed that he thought the public viewed the role as being more interesting than many other jobs, but argued that they were correct in this judgement as the role is less repetitive than many other work roles, it was creative and involved showcasing creative achievements to a wide audience.

One editor raised the issue of mystique being valuable as it helped to protect the freedom of editors to base their decisions on their personal principles. He also argued that the myth of the all-powerful editor was a valid stereotype, because real editors refused to be subservient to commercial managers within their own companies.

Implications for Phase Three of this study:
The views expressed by the five editors who said that the public perception of the role was more glamorous than the role they experienced will be tested for broader validity via the questions formulated out of questions 16.

Additional questions arising out of responses to questions seventeen are:
Is your role as editor of a magazine more glamorous and creative than the jobs held by most of your readers?
Does maintaining a sense of mystique about your role make it easier for you to make and defend your editorial decisions?
As editor, do you occupy a position of power within your organisation?
As editor, do you control the content of your publication?

Phase two – Question Eighteen
Question eighteen asked if there was a sense of camaraderie between magazine editors and/or with other journalists in general. The question was included because feelings of belonging with a group and desires to act in accordance with the norms of
a group can influence behaviour. It was also hoped that this question would reveal how much magazine editors feel like a part of the journalistic community as a rift between the groups may explain differences between some journalists’ and some magazine editors’ attitudes towards practices, such as the inclusion of advertorial copy which the journalistic Code of Ethics decries.

The open nature of the question elicited a range of reactions which were followed by other questions, asked in response to the answers initially presented. As a result not all of the editors were asked all of the questions that follow. It is also worth noting here that the editors themselves come from a range of backgrounds. Some had previously worked in newspapers where they would have worked with other journalists while others had gone straight from university into small independent publishing houses that only produce magazines. This difference is likely to have impacted on how connected they felt to the rest of the journalistic community.

**Camaraderie between magazine editors**

Five editors including the three youngest in the position spoke about the friendly and supportive nature of communication between editors of both rival and stable-mate publications:

- **Q. Is there a sense of camaraderie with other magazine editors?** A: I think so, I think every magazine obviously operates a little differently depending on A) who the publisher is and B) what the team around them is like and C) what they are like personally, but I think nobody really understands better than somebody else who has edited, or is editing another magazine. So yes, I think it is generally a fairly unique little environment and unfortunately, just by the nature of our game, we don’t get to associate with one another very much, though to the extent to which we’re all kindred spirits I don’t really mind to be honest :o).

- Absolutely. I think we have an understanding of what the gig is really about, the highs, the lows. It’s not something you can explain to someone not in the industry.

- Yes and I have been trying very hard in this role to not show any competitive streak. I think it is important, that exchange of information, in a way. I think not only do I benefit from that, but other editors benefit from my experiences as well and I think that for
the industry as a whole that’s a good thing. I don’t like being on bad
terms with anybody. I like to feel like I am making friends
particularly with other editors who completely understand my world,
who understand what I’m going through from day to day, the
pressures and the stress. So to have a good camaraderie with these
people is almost like creating an external support network.

- Editors yeah, I sort of became friends with [another female editor],
we’d see each other out, and certainly when I was at [the first
magazine] I’d see [another male editor] out and I had this
conversation with both of them, that we’d let the advertising people
fight it out and we’d just be mates and like they can go head-to-head
and that’s fine and we’ll just not worry about it.

- Q. Do you feel that there’s a difference between the camaraderie between
journalists and the camaraderie between editors? A: Totally. It’s a very,
very different relationship. Between journalists I felt regularly that I
couldn’t trust people because the competition was so intense that
there was a sense of schadenfreude if you didn’t do well, there was a
sense of gladness out there that they’d pipped you to the post or to the
front page story – well not that I ever had many – but that the scoop
fell by the wayside, whereas here, in this environment, we are working
together for the common goal.

Competition between magazine editors

In contrast one of the older editors mentioned a reserved and distant style of
relationship:

- I mean, they’re not my friends. I mean we all get on and we chit chat
but, like the guy at [another magazine] who is my opposite now, we’ll
chit chat but I’m not going to tell him anything and he’s not going to
tell me anything. You know I mean we are competitive and I was as a
magazine editor, and even with my ideas and my attitudes, I don’t
want to share them with them because it’s my gig and I want it to be
better and different to everyone else’s in the nicest possible way and so
in those situations when I’m with other magazine editors I’m not a
particularly outgoing person. I’m competitive.

Not part of the journalistic crew

Two editors said specifically that they did not feel like they were part of the
journalistic community:
I don’t really feel it and I’ve never felt it. I just feel like me. And I generally (is that the right word? – yes). I am generally embarrassed by it, or often embarrassed by the behaviour or the attitudes or the overconfidence of some people in the media. Q. Of the journalistic community? A. Yes, y’know I just don’t do that. I mean now there are lunches and there’ll be a mix of people from various publications and that’s all well and good and we get on fine and that’s fine. I go to the lunches because it’s something that I need to do with whoever it is that is hosting the lunch or whatever and I want to see them, not for the media company, and I get on fine with lots of people in those positions but I don’t really feel part of the crew.

Q. Did you feel like you were part of the journalistic community? A: I never really did … I always considered working in lifestyle publications to be a sort of second-rate kind of journalism, because it wasn’t really journalism to me, it was more just writing fluffy stuff, that was how I saw it anyway – which once again is probably a bit harsh – but I never felt that I was part of that journo crew that worked on newspapers, I felt that that was a very different kind of role, a different group of people.

Do you call yourself a journalist or an editor?

Five editors were asked this question.

Two said ‘journalist’:

- A journalist, but I am more likely to think that because I’ve got a newspaper background. I think a lot of people who come from a purely magazine background would probably say I’m an editor. But in fact a journalist is a reporter or an editor or both. There are people, even junior people in the industry who don’t understand that a journalist means everything. It’s really quite interesting, and they are generally people who are new to the game or haven’t had newspaper training. But no, I apply the same skills as an editor that I did as a reporter and/or as I did as an editor in newspapers, I do as a magazine editor and so I still think of myself as a journalist.

- Always a journalist. Q. Is that because you started as a journalist? A: Don’t know. I did start as a journalist. Q. So there’s always been a sense that your work comes out of, and sits well with, the journalistic sense of ethics and that you do what other journalists do? A: Yep.

Two said ‘not sure’:

- Someone called me the other day and said “we’d like to invite you or a journalist”! :o) This may be a very personal answer but I don’t really mix with other magazine people, so I don’t really know.

- That’s a very good question and I’ve been at pains to answer it in my own mind – since I went from an investigative reporting role at a
weekly tabloid to editing a home wares magazine. *Q. Are you in-between or both?* Well, I just see it as being, in lots of ways, a good opportunity to get into the pointy end of the media, because I felt at this age that I probably need to move on from getting out there and getting stories and having nothing to show for it but the last story because everything else is disregarded.

Another who, like the last two, saw journalist and editor as different, said ‘editor’:

- Initially, for the first couple of years, a journalist and now an editor. In fact, I would like to be able to write a lot more and if I was to ever not be an editor and to be a freelancer, it would be because I’m missing the writing a lot – and now I am missing it a bit, just a bit, y’know, there’s a trade off.

**Misunderstood by newspaper people and other journalists**

- I don’t think a newspaper editor has the same understanding of editing a magazine. They probably think we’ve got it easy because, generally speaking, they have to do 2 or 3 editions a day or a night and we only do one a week or a month or whatever. So I don’t think they understand those different kinds of pressures.

- There’s definitely a division between the two, between [work] places like [another lifestyle magazine] and [my magazine] with independent publishers and big newsrooms from major publishing houses. There’s a huge difference between what they do, so there has to be a difference between the communities of each. And think people like [another small publishing house editor] and I were hired because we were young and cheap and that just wouldn’t happen with a major publishing house. I always had complete respect for other magazine editors because I knew what they were going through, but also respect for other journalists.

*Q. Do you think the bulk of journalists would understand what the role of editor in a small publishing house is?* A: No, and I saw something that [a former newspaper editor] said recently. He said he would never, as the editor of *The West Australian*, employ someone who had been in public relations because you can’t go out there spruiking something for someone one day and come back and write a story the next. So once you’ve gone to “the dark side” you’d had it. And I think in journalism, in the main, I’ve dropped off the radar for all of the people apart from a few friends, I am completely off the radar, because what I do is akin to going on to the dark side, it’s another version of spruiking something.

**Main points:**
Five of the six editors who were asked about how magazine editors relate to each other spoke about there being a strong sense of camaraderie between magazine editors and most said that they thought that the role could not be understood by people who had not worked in it. The editor who wasn’t asked this question had said in answer to question 16 “if you’re not an editor how the fuck can you understand what an editor’s role is”. The seventh editor answered this question saying that he was cordial but reserved around other magazine editors because he felt that he was in competition with them.

Asked specifically about whether they considered themselves to be part of the journalistic community two editors said ‘no’, one citing embarrassment about the behaviour of the journalistic community and the other saying that he felt that he was working in a different role.

Five were specifically asked if they considered themselves to be journalists or editors. Two of the older editors who had previously worked for large newspaper companies described themselves as journalists. Two others who had also worked for large companies said they weren’t sure and one of the younger editors who had only ever worked in magazines described herself as an editor. The other two young editors who weren’t asked these questions had said in answer to earlier questions that they didn’t feel like they were part of the journalistic community.

Three were asked if they thought that magazine journalism was well understood by journalists and editors working in other media and all three said ‘no’.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study:**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

As an editor, do you consider yourself to be a journalist?
Does the journalistic code of ethics apply to the work you do?
Is the work you do substantially different from newspaper journalism and editing?
Is the work you do well understood by journalists working in other media?
Is there something about the news-oriented media in Australia that you dislike? Would you prefer to be working for a paper or other ‘hard’ news-oriented media? Do you feel that you connect with other magazine editors (and that you are therefore part of a magazine-media community)? Is the magazine media community separate from the journalistic community? Is the magazine media community a subset of the journalistic community?

**Phase two – Question Nineteen**

Questions nineteen and twenty asked what the editors liked least and most about being a magazine editor. These questions were asked in order to allow the interviewees to add unexpected content to the study.

Their answers about their least favourite aspects of the job included:

**Ugly advertising**

- I’m struggling with that, umm. Bad ads. Bad ads and we have our share. Y’know, ads that look like someone has taken a shopping bag from Coles full of things and run over it with a lawnmower and stuff everywhere. I mean that’s all I can think of. Bad ads, because I want the ads to be beautiful too. I can’t think of anything else that I don’t love about it.

**Administration**

- Administration. I can’t stand it. It takes up more and more of my time and the volume of emails that you deal with these days. That’s probably about it.

**Responsibility and burnout**

- The weight on your shoulders and being so overworked, taking on so many roles and writing 70% of it. It was like that with both publications. I think a true editor should just be designating and overseeing and if I’d been able to do that I would have been able to keep it up but it just wore me down. I lost a lot of weight that has never come back on but it was such an adrenalin rush having to get everything done.

- I don’t like that the job keeps growing and growing and growing and yet it takes getting almost to breaking point to get support. Now I don’t know if that is just being an editor necessarily or being in my current place of employment. Q. Do you think editors often burnout? A. The weak ones yes. The ones who are able to stand up and ask for help or demand it and stand their ground, no. Don’t put up with any
shit basically…. I’m getting stronger as I get older, and as I grow with the role. I used to be extremely weak, in terms of saying yes, thinking that I was a shearer, and that I was Wonder Woman or something and that I could take on all this responsibility and do the job, but I’m realising now that I’m not. I still think that I am extremely efficient; it’s just a job too big for one person.

Celebrity

▪ Toward the end the thing I liked least was that celebrity part of the role, but initially that was one of the things I was most attracted to, so that changed.

▪ I’d rather not be pressured to be out and about as much as I’m supposed to be out and about in my role, because I’m not a small talk person and you have to be really good at that. I don’t like that that much.

Other people and a lack of total control

▪ What I like least about being an editor is having to fix problems with clients which are problems that I feel could probably have been completely avoided and I hate having to feel in some ways that I am grovelling to fix a completely avoidable error. And that contradicts what I said earlier about loving the PR side … because I do – but not where it is unnecessary and I just I feel like … And I don’t like that I don’t get to write as much as I used to.

▪ I despise having to go back and forth changing copy and adding things after the pages are made up, the minutiae of it. I’ve set a deadline, the story’s come in, the story’s laid out and I’ll get copious emails saying “no I wanna change this, I wanna change that.” I just hate this last minute rush, and I think: “Have I been trained to do this?” So I hate that.

▪ One of the things I liked least, and I think this is quite specific to working with [the boss] was the lack of freedom to be able to do interesting things with the magazine, that was the reason why I really left [the magazine] in the end, that was frustrating butting heads with [the boss] and it was almost a daily thing by the time I left and so that was what I hated about being editor of [the magazine] at that time was the input [he] had. I think [he’s] more hands on that most publishers though and I sound like I’m bagging him but I’m not. He’s an amazing businessman and he’s helped me out so much with so many things since I left. I’m not criticising him, but for me I found it incredibly frustrating working in that environment.

▪ Just the usual journalistic sort of thing where you think that they’re all a mob of fuckwits … it’s just that it’s difficult when you have to
deal with people above you who don’t necessarily share your views. That’s the best way I can put it.

Main points:
Two of the older editors who were very positive about their time in the role struggled to answer this question and offered up ugly advertisements and the time they spent doing admin work as their darkest moments.

Two of the younger editors cited their heavy workloads as downsides to their time in the role.

Two said that the celebrity and “out and about” requirements of the job were their least favourite aspects of it. One qualified this though, saying that early in his time in the role it was something that he had enjoyed.

Four editors cited frustration at having to deal with other people’s mistakes, demands and/or differing views.

Implications for Phase Three of this study:
Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:

Do any of the following detract substantially to your job satisfaction, to the point that they motivate you to leave your position when other aspects of the job otherwise motivate you to stay:

- Being forced to allow ugly advertisements on the pages?
- Time-consuming administrative work?
- Exhaustion or burnout?
- Pressure to be out and about, attending events and making small talk?
- Having to fix mistakes made by other people?
- The last minute rush of deadline?
- Disagreements with colleagues and/or the publisher?
Phase two – Question Twenty

Mirroring question nineteen, question twenty asked the editors what they liked most about their role. In addition to allowing unplanned content to enter the study, it was also hoped that these questions would allow the editors to explain what about the role held them in it or prompted them to leave it.

Favourite things

Most of the editors named more than one favourite thing. Here are their responses, loosely grouped into categories:

The final product

- The feeling when it comes back from the press and you see it as representing all the blood, sweat and tears and you think “I did this”. There’s pride in that.

- I love having that product in my hand and feeling so proud that all that blood, sweat and tears has finally paid off. And look, it’s what I was saying earlier, I enjoy telling people that I edit these publications. If I wasn’t proud of the publications, I probably wouldn’t but I am proud of them and I’m proud of the job and proud of being able to say that I’m the editor of this great publication. It makes me feel proud.

- The final product. It’s kind of satisfying in a strange kind of way because you don’t want to dwell on any of it too much, in case you find something wrong with it :o) but that notion of, not quite the final product but just those last few weeks or days depending on whether you’re weekly or whatever, when it’s all coming together and you can get quite excited about that combination of the words and the pictures and seeing an original idea that you had, not that there’s necessarily such a thing as an original idea any more, but a concept or idea that you had, come to fruition and you think “that’s exactly what I had in mind, that looks fantastic”. That’s really satisfying.

The people

- I love the people contact.
- There was also the camaraderie at [the publication] where it was a very female environment. We fought like sisters but loved each other like sisters and I’m still friends with all of them. It’s good catching up because it’s like family, you don’t have to explain a joke, and it’s a bit hard to explain what it was like to someone who’s never been involved with something like that.
Communing with the readership

- It’s the most intimate um, connection I’ve ever had with an audience; sorry I’d say equal. Let me qualify that. [The publication] was fantastic and the only thing that I’ve ever had that equalled it was local newspapers, community newspapers where you’ve got the same sort of thing. But on a national scale normally you’re so detached from your readership, in a paper like The Australian or in any major newspaper you’re just so bloody far away, but [the magazine] was absolutely in their bloody post boxes every week, in their psyche, in their way of doing things, and it was amazing, it was absolutely extraordinary just how close you were.

- And I love working on a product that gets so much good feedback from people. That’s very satisfying. Y’know, from people who don’t know me and I don’t know them and they are not even aware that I edit [the publication] and they ask you about where you work, as people do, and they say “I love that magazine” … especially having worked in newspapers for quite some time and reporters often aren’t liked. I think journalists get quite a hard wrap, we are not very well regarded in society. So it’s a very interesting concept and I can understand why a lot of editors do say “I’m an editor” and not a journalist because editors, particularly magazine editors perhaps have a higher regard or a social standing in the eyes of the average person than a journalist does because they associate it with y’know 60 Minutes or some crime reporter or something.

Management

- This is very personal and I don’t know if you’ll find this with other editors, but what I really enjoyed most about the job, even more so towards the end was the organisational managerial side of it. … When I started out writing and subbing were something I enjoyed doing, but by the time I left writing and subbing were something that I hated and I had decided that I was not the best writer in the world. I mean I can write ok but I just wasn’t interested enough in writing to put the time in to make myself into the best writer in the world and once I’d kind of decided that’s when I decided I really should get out of there, but the thing that I enjoyed, on the flip side of that was the kind of organisational aspect of putting a magazine together, co-ordinating the photographers, co-ordinating the writers, getting stuff in, working to deadlines – I really enjoyed that pressure and even now that’s why I’m in the job that I’m in because I really enjoy the managerial side of things.

Creative freedom

- I like the fact that it’s a cottage industry, it’s hand-made. To me magazines are hand-made things and they come out as slick glossy things but they are basically hand-made, they are hand-stitched and it
is just a complete rarity in this homogenised multinational world, they are handmade and they are specific.

- Control. Not in a bad way but now as a writer I’m being subbed and I have to write what I’m told to write. Control is probably the wrong word, it’s really about freedom. I definitely miss that.

- I love being able to generate these ideas and being able to translate that into copy that I’ll see in print.

- I really enjoy the process of pulling all these different ideas together, speaking to all these different people, having a vision for something and seeing it out into something that I can hold onto, an actual product that we’ve produced together, it’s come out and its going to be there forever. I do enjoy that. … It’s not necessarily a work of art, I wouldn’t ever say that, but it’s a creative process and each magazine has its own personality and it doesn’t emerge until the eleventh hour. Each edition has its own personality and it kind of works or it doesn’t, and it’s not something that you can predict. You think you’re moving towards something that’s going to be the best ever and for reasons that are beyond your understanding and control, it doesn’t. It doesn’t gel, whereas one that you’re not too sure of just works a treat, and it sells better and people respond more to it and yeah. I feel like I’m working towards that every edition. Q: Do you see each edition as a whole? A: Yeah. And it’s walk away, don’t look back, and onto the next one :) like an ill-advised sexual liaison :o).

**Main points**

Three editors said the pride associated with holding the finished product was their favourite aspect of the job.

Two mentioned contact with people, one of these specifically talking about the camaraderie within the office, and another two mentioned the sense of communicating with the readership and the product being appreciated by the readers.

One said that over time he came to enjoy the management side of the role and four said that they enjoyed their engagement in a creative process, bringing ideas to fruition.

**Implications for Phase Three of this study:**

Questions for the quantitative Phase 3 questionnaire that could be drawn from this data include:
Do any of the following contribute substantially to your job satisfaction, to the point that they motivate you to stay in your position when other aspects of the job would otherwise motivate you to leave:

- Pride in the final product?
- The people you deal with as an editor?
- The people you work with in your office?
- The readers and your relationship with them?
- The management aspects of your work?
- The creative aspects of your work?
PHASE TWO DISCUSSION

This section delves deeper into the answers given by the seven editors in phase two than the summaries presented previously and it seeks to place the editors’ answers into context via references to other research. It will also present a rationale for decisions about culling the list of potential phase three questions in order to construct a questionnaire of a feasible size.

The framework that underpins this discussion was, broadly speaking, inspired by Foucault’s (1972) book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (specifically the chapter on the formation of enunciative modalities). A brief introduction to this framework was given in the literature review using a metaphor of a map representing a field of discourse, with dots (representing roles, also called enunciative modalities) and lines representing ‘statements’ the subjects in the discursive field utter. Statements, in this case, being units of meaning, rather than sentences that can be judged by their grammar, or propositions that are judged by their accuracy.

While the phase two responses could be subjected to deeper layers of Foucauldian analysis in the future, more extensive engagement with Foucault’s model is beyond the scope of this project. However, with this future potential in mind, and in order to lay the groundwork for further research, the notion that the position (enunciative modality) of editor may have agency in a number of different discursive fields was used. The term ‘discursive fields’ in this context refers to an array of everything that can be said and/or thought between the enunciative modalities in areas under investigation. In this case that means the position of editors, the position of publishers, the position of advertisers etc. within the field engaged in the production of women’s magazines in Australia are pertinent.
The answers given in phase two show the position of editor to be relatively similar across a range of contemporary workplaces (and therefore ripe for investigation as a coherent enunciative modality), but in order to see more clearly how the position is constituted, it is useful to tease apart some of the different, more tightly defined, discursive fields that editors operate in.

This process will involve looking at where the editor is situated in relation to other positions in three specific (but overlapping) fields that collectively constitute their working environment. This first of these is the discourse within magazine offices. In this setting editors communicate with others occupying a range of other positions in order to fulfil the requirements of their position. These interactions can be social and emotionally supportive, as well as being based on specific corporate responsibilities and cultural norms governing professional conduct.

The second discursive field is the space in which editors engage with and write for their readers. Questions about this field focus on how much a part of the readership the editors are and how separate they are. How can they share the limitations and discursive practices of their readers and stimulate the thoughts and enhance the knowledge of the group at the same time?

The third field of discourse is the space where journalists converse and where magazine editors share a professional identity distinctly different from other kinds of journalists, such as political journalists, newspaper editors and daily news reporters. The nature of magazine editors’ relationships with other journalists is important because it may shape the way magazine journalism is judged by other media workers and affect the extent to which magazine editors are prepared to comply with, or rebel against, journalistic codes and mores. (It is worth noting at this point that it may be interesting to later consider these three tightly defined discursive fields in relation to Foucault’s writings on points of diffraction of discourses but that is, again, material for future research).

Heading now into the first of these three discursive fields, the demographic data will be used to answer a set of questions Foucault (1972) described as a starting point for
the exploration of an enunciative modality. The logic behind this approach is Foucault’s claim that shifts in what can and can’t be said from different enunciative modalities at different times in history underpins cultural change. He was interested in what changes the rules about what can and can’t be said. Pursuing this, he stated that before one can examine why some things can be said and others can’t, in a particular discourse, “we must first discover the law operating behind all these diverse statements, and the place from which they come.” In order to explore this, Foucault explained:

First question: who is speaking? Who among the totality of speaking individuals is accorded the right to use this kind of language? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige and from whom in return does he receive, if not the assurance, but at least the presumption that what he says is true? (1972, p. 50)

Looking at who is speaking from the position of magazine editor, the most obvious answer is: people who have been appointed to the positions and who have it as their job title. That said, it is still interesting to use the demographic data to explore other ways of describing ‘who is speaking?’ – whether we use it to consider how these individuals synthesize or homogenize their home and work lives; draw on their home (target market) life to inspire their work; or to illustrate the potential for difference in the way they handle discontinuity between their home and professional discourses.

The phase two demographic data showed most of the seven editors to be women, but only just, with the gender balance split three male to four female. In terms of how representative this is of the whole WA population, it fits fairly well with the fact that 50.1% of West Australians are female. It’s also interesting in that this gender split challenges the vision conjured by Ferguson (1983) that woman’s magazines are created for women by women and are a site where secret women’s business is communicated. The existence of male editors may raise the eyebrows of a few very old school feminists who may wonder if they are peddling anti-feminist philosophies
or inaccurately representing women’s interests but feminist McRobbie soothingly addressed the issue of ‘gender not necessarily correlating with feminism’ by citing male as well as female journalists as examples of media workers who “on several occasions have asserted their commitment to gender equality and to creating a more confident femininity on the pages of the magazine” (1991, p. 186).

The current ages of the seven ranged from 28 to 62, but their ages at the time that they were editors ranged from 23 to 44. This makes them fairly typical of the WA population which had a median age in 2001 of 34. It interestingly places them in the midst of the population by age, as opposed to being older and wiser, as Ferguson’s (1983) vision assumed.

In terms of their Anglo-Celtic ethnicity and Christian or non-specified religion the seven editors were unremarkable in comparison with the WA population data. This means that in terms of ethnicity, religion, age and gender, the editors resemble most people in the population their readers are drawn from. This may translate into an ability to understand and therefore to successfully ‘hail’ – or to use Althusser’s (1969) term, to interpellate – their readers because they are familiar with the rules of the discourse of the specific population they are drawn from.

Although six of the seven editors interviewed said they had tertiary qualifications, when asked what kind of training they had that prepared them for the position most said either: ‘none’, ‘only on-the-job training’, or ‘learning via working on other magazines’. One mentioned that she didn’t even finish her journalism major at university (and had switched to a creative writing major); one said his BA major in journalism hadn’t helped to improve his writing but it had helped a bit with the management skills; and another cited casual work she did while she was a student as helpful, but made no mention of her degree. This should serve as a red flag to journalism educators in terms of the ability of their programs to prepare graduates to work in the world’s fastest growing media sector.

Further research into this mismatch between academic journalism training and the practice of magazine editing could delve more deeply into whether university
education imparts thinking skills that help to prepare editors to deal with complex
decision-making, self-monitoring and other more subtle aspects of the position that
may have been skimmed over at this stage of these interviews, aside from the more
mundane tasks easier to learn on site, such as how to organize fashion shoots and
administrate freelance work.

Of the seven, most had spent three or four years in the position. One had spent eight
years and one twelve years. This presents magazine editorship as a mid-career
position, rather than a career-end point which, in turn, suggests that it is a position
that people move through, develop with and then grow (or fall) out of. Supporting
this sense are comments from the editors such as “after eight years I’d finished with
it and it had finished with me” and “I started off so enthusiastic, just bubbling with
ideas … but I felt that after a year on a publication that I really had nothing left to
give … it’s just so draining.”

Given that the interviewees claimed to have no specific training, it is interesting to
look at how they came to be in their positions. Four had worked previously as
journalists in other media and three had started their careers working in lowlier
positions in magazines. So how did they get to be editors? As one of them put it “you
rise to that position because you’ve shown some aptitude for being an editor”. It
may be interesting for further research to explore this notion of “aptitude” and how
it can be fostered in journalism courses.

At this stage it is important to consider income because the salaries the editors
reported receiving varied enormously, from $38,000 to $130,000 per annum. This
range suggests that in some cases the ability (and willingness) to live on a low
income is a necessary pre-requisite for the position while, at the other end of the
scale, a desire for the lifestyle afforded by $130,000 may make it tempting to stay,
despite other motivations to move on. The relevance of income to habitation of the
position was raised specifically by one editor who said: “well, you’ve got to work to
pay the bills”. This statement embodies what motivation psychologist Beck (1990)
called the ‘rational-economic man’ perspective. Another editor raised the issue of
income saying: “I was on a much lower salary than the art director and the
marketing manager. That didn’t bother me much at first, but after four issues – just knowing the colossal amount of work I put into those issues – in the end the salary gap did grate on me.” This comes from a perspective more closely aligned with Adams’ Equity Theory of job satisfaction (cited in Beck, 1990) and it is important to consider this most mundane rationale for functioning as an editor, alongside other motivators such as cultural power and creativity, firstly because the editors raised it and secondly because without it I could simply be missing the point in this attempt to find out why editors do what they do.

While more detailed exploration using a psychological framework is beyond the scope of this study, research along this line could tap into theories such as Herzberg’s (1968) notion that work motivation is complex and it results from the interplay of satisfying and dissatisfying elements of work. He categorised: recognition; responsibility; feelings of achievement; prestige; pleasure from social interactions; stimulation and challenge as “satisfiers”, and low pay; excessive supervision; uncomfortable working conditions; low status and lack of job security as “dissatisfiers”. Combining this basic line of logic with more contemporary theories of motivation that take individual differences in what workers expect and value into account (cited in Beck, 1990), could contribute a psychological profile to the crude demographic profile offered here of the type of person who can occupy the position of magazine editor.

Foucault (1972, p.148) describes discursive formations as things that appear and disappear over time, but he stressed that the analysis of discursive formations was not an attempt to claim that at “a certain moment and for a certain time, everyone would think in the same way, [and] in spite of surface differences, say the same thing”. He argued that instead of making that kind of claim, this form of analysis described a level of homogeneity, or agreement, among people occupying the enunciative modality that changes over time reflecting the development of knowledge and understanding, the development and formalization of the industry or field being studied and also reflecting changes in language.
While the content of magazines, the magazine industry and language are evolving rapidly, this observation doesn’t answer the question of whether or not the discourse of magazine editors has fundamentally changed (in terms of its rules and structures). An answer to this question could only be found by comparing the discourses of editors at different times and that, as a research mission, is beyond the scope of this project. Some input towards it can be offered, however, by describing where the editors in the current study are located in time.

The years that the seven interviewees were in the editor position span three decades. One who edited a range of publications over a long career, discussed the time he spent working on a large circulation magazine between 1980 and 1982, the other six occupied their positions in the years between 1991 and 2006. Being specific about these dates will allow comparison (in meta-analysis) with studies such as Sheridan’s (2000) which plotted shifts in attitudes expressed in The Australian Women’s Weekly during the 1950s and 1960s, McRobbie’s (1978 & 1991) investigations of the content of a UK magazine called Jackie in the 1970s and again more recently, and Gough Yates’ (2003) investigation of British women’s magazines in the 1980s. Some comments contributed by the editor who worked in the early 1980s begin this process of chronological comparison. For example (in question five), discussing advertorial copy he said: “I have no doubt that it exists now. It didn’t when I was there.” Specifying the dates of editorship under discussion is also an important component of identifying the particular field of discourse that this study is seeking to illuminate. It is the field of discourse of Australian magazine editors between 1991 and 2008, encompassing the smaller fields of the discourses of magazine workplaces, editors and readerships, and magazine editors with journalism.

As the editors in phase three will be asked about their current 2008 work there may be differences in the workplace experiences they describe that are a function of time. As well as the kind of social progress the studies mentioned above illustrate, there has also been industry-wide technological advancement. While faxes were part of newsroom life in the early 1990s, many newsrooms no longer have fax machines and tasks like podcasting and blog-monitoring are encroaching on editors’ time. While this would be an interesting area to study further, tracking the advancement of
technological shifts like this is beyond the scope of this project, which is focusing more on what editors say and less on the mediums through which they say those things.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the editors in this phase of the study the magazine titles are not included in this thesis. By way of description, however, the 14 magazines they had worked for were, in the main, lifestyle, travel and homewares publications. Three were distributed through major newspapers, and one was a national magazine produced by a large publishing house. Eleven of the publications were WA-based and all of the editors had worked, or were currently working, in WA.

The magazines were considered by the editors to be ‘women’s magazines’ because they believed that more women than men read them and they aimed to appeal more to women than to men. This confirms their relevance to this study.

In order to explore how editors interact with other players in the discursive field of magazine production, phase two asked further questions about, and confirmed the relevance of, particular ‘others’ mentioned in phase one. These others included publishers and senior managers, advertising sales staff (and, by extension, advertisers) and other team members, (such as art directors, stable mate editors and freelances), who collectively are other participants in the workplace field.

The question about job descriptions sought to clarify the ground rules that were established between the editors and their employers (who were either senior executive managers or owner/publishers) at their time of employment. The main points raised by the editors in response to these questions resonate strongly with the phase one data. These editors, like myself, Dapin and Buttrose, were not given clear instructions and this makes it precarious to assume that all of them were doing the same job, especially as the editors varied considerably in age, income, experience and training. That said, most of them said, in some form or another that their job was to “fill the magazine with stories”. It is interesting to note that while many of them had journalistic experience that underpinned their employment, they didn’t articulate that they were employed to serve the ideals of journalism.
They listed other tasks though, with some commonality between workplaces, and in most cases their jobs overflowed the boundaries of journalism – in that they involved much more than selecting, writing and sub-editing articles, which are usually solitary tasks (or at least tasks requiring a limited amount of human interaction).

The other responsibilities the editors listed included project management, PR, writing, corporate strategic planning and a range of other tasks on an as-needs basis. These extra tasks are all highly interpersonal and require the editors to adopt a range of positions (or personas). For example, successful project managers are authoritarian but also conciliatory enough to keep other stakeholders compliant; successfully promoting a magazine (PR work) requires a form of well-mannered avarice; corporate strategic planning requires specific industry knowledge and board room negotiation (fighting) skills and writing good magazine copy requires an ability to focus on the readers and imagine their lifestyles which is usually radically different from life inside a magazine office.

Coupling the diversity of these interpersonal requirements with a heavy workload results in the intensity described by Dapin (2004) as “fantastic, frustrating, exhilarating, all-consuming” and something like “falling in and out of love” (p. 120). This sense of intensity was echoed by the phase two by editors who described their work as “demanding and thankless”; “fast-paced”; and “not the sort of role where you can just go in at nine and leave at five and switch off.”

The ability of this kind of tension to impact on the wellbeing of editors was flagged by Dapin (2004) who spoke about his own physical exhaustion and by Buttrose who documented that it was concern about how she would fit into the workplace matrix that caused her sleeplessness: “The nerves in my stomach played leapfrog for a week. I couldn’t sleep … I hoped that they would like me and that I’d get along with them…” (1985, p.123). The potential for the work-stress to impact physically on editors was also raised in phase two with this comment about her least favourite aspects of the position: “The weight on your shoulders and being so overworked … I
lost a lot of weight that has never come back on, it was such an adrenalin rush having to get everything done.”

Countering this exhaustion and stress that detract from the appeal of the position, the editors in phase two confirmed the importance of emotional support from co-workers with comments such as “I don’t think anyone would have lasted as long as they have without the support of each other,” and “it’s a tight knit atmosphere … we’ve really kind of got each others’ backs.” This speaks volumes about the shape of the discursive formation, illustrating a deep channel of intimate communication and emotional support between editors and other intra-workplace colleagues.

While much of the workplace satisfaction research in psychology (cited in Beck 1990) has taken a top down view of power, seeing it as a mechanism of control and repression, Foucault (1980) argues that social networks are infused with power dynamics that can be productive as well as repressive. He posits that every person in a discursive field takes up a position in the overall power structure, and that everyone, even the lowliest player, has power. His vision is comparable to the notion that every life-form in an ecosystem plays a part in its sustainability, and that the loss of the algae can undo the largest carnivore. This view makes sense of the emphasis the editors in phase two put on interpersonal workplace relationships in terms of support and encouragement, as well as more nuanced dynamics expressed in statements such as: “I don’t believe that an editor who is an editor is subservient to the advertising or the circulation or to any other manager. Take what they say into account and have a bloody great debate, I’m not saying that the editor is above them, but in the end the editor is.” And: “While the storylist was the editor’s choice and it wasn’t openly challenged if they [the designers] didn’t like an idea, you’d second guess it if there was no positivity about it.” This second statement is interesting because it highlights the gap between power/responsibility as it was delegated by management and as it is sometimes practiced in the newsroom.

These statements may indicate that there are times when the importance of maintaining harmony amongst the team – in order to preserve its supportive functions – outweighs other professional editorial considerations. Another possible
reading, consistent with the way the editors spoke about their colleagues, is that while we think of the position of editor as something filled by the person who bears the title ‘editor’ it may be a montage created via a process of negotiation by a team of people and merely fronted by the person with the designated title.

The answers to the questions about political pressure and advertorial cut across the discursive fields of both the workplace and readership. They are enmeshed in the former because they concern pressure from within the workplace and the latter because the editors cited their readers’ interests as their rationale for resisting pressure.

While much has been said about the manipulation of media content by publishers with political bias by writers like Herman and Chomsky (1988), Pilger (1998) and Hamilton and Maddison (2007), five of the seven magazine editors said the issue had simply never arisen for them, one said it had and she had successfully argued against it saying that the readers would not appreciate the article and the other argued unsuccessfully and the experience contributed to his decision to leave the publication. This result is interesting in the light of the political connection made by Sheridan (2000) in her study about attitudes towards ethnic minorities in *The Australian Women’s Weekly*. The study found that shifts of attitudes in the magazine pre-dated political changes in a way that suggested that the magazine may have been achieving its stated mission of “modernizing femininity and domestic culture generally”. While this is a political achievement in the broad sense of the word, the editors’ failure to identify this kind of work as political may stem from a narrowing of the common use of the word ‘political’ to refer only to electoral, parliamentary and party political issues.

The questions about advertorial provoked lengthier responses from the editors. While by the end of these discussions all seven had admitted that advertorial ran in their publications, initially only three answered with a definitive “yes”. This in itself supports my earlier assertion that journalists are uncomfortable with advertorial as it sits outside the strictures of the journalistic codes. Media law writer Mark Pearson (2007) went as far as pointing out that advertorial is not only ethically outside
journalism, it is also outside of it in some legal respects. Referring to exemption
7B(4) of the Privacy Act he wrote:

We live in an era where media companies do much more than just journalism. This exemption is related to their journalism activities. It will be unlikely to apply to the commercial activities sometimes expected of reporters, such as the research and writing of advertorials and company promotions. (p. 380)

Given the clarity of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) Code of Ethics and the Australian Press Council’s guidelines on the subject of advertorial, and the controversy over the cash-for-comments scandal mentioned earlier, magazine editors have cause for self-interested concern about advertorial as negative rulings by either of these two bodies can result in potentially career-damaging bad publicity, via the organisations’ name-and-shame disciplinary procedures. In addition, the MEAA wields the threat of a personal fine of $1000 and expulsion from the union, placing them in a position of top-down power over journalists who value their professional reputations.

This sets editors up for conflict over workplace requests for advertorial and four of the editors confirmed this, equating discussions about advertorials with battles, struggles or fights. Three of the seven editors said that requests for advertorial often came from sales staff rather than from their publishers or managing editors. This again challenges the notion of a simple top down management structure in which editors handle editorial and a hygienically separate department handles advertising, and editors are again placed in the position where journalistic purity needs to be weighed against the value of harmonious office relations.

An interesting point of difference that the editors’ responses revealed centres on whether advertorial should be clearly labelled and identified as separate from the publication’s editorial content or worked on enough to be indistinguishable from other articles. The Australian Press Council (2008) is unequivocal about this and says: “Advertorials should be identified by such terms as ‘advertisement’, ‘advertising feature’, ‘special feature’, ‘sponsored feature’ and the like, so that
readers are not led to believe that their content is based on editorial news-values free of commercial influences.”

It defines advertorial as “newspaper and magazine content that looks like editorial content but is published under a commercial arrangement between an advertiser, promoter or sponsor of goods and/or services and the publisher” and goes on to say that it regards advertorials as advertisements, considers them to be covered by regulations and guidelines that apply to advertisements, and usually redirects complaints about them to the relevant advertising or trade practices authority.

Cryptically though, it adds (in its guidance on advertorial) that: “Where publication of material is not part of a commercial arrangement or not deemed to be 'advertorial', or is said to mislead readers as to its provenance, and is the subject of a complaint lodged with the Council, it will be dealt with under the Council's Statement of Principles.”

This appears to be an acknowledgement of the unhygienic grey zone the editors spoke about where no documented commercial arrangement exists but pressure (or strong encouragement) is applied to add value to deals with advertisers or to make amends for errors by giving stories away. The provenance of the story is then confused by the question of whether it is worthy of inclusion on its own merit, or if it is only included because of the relationship with the client (or potential client). The editors raised the question of whether a requested story about a client that has editorial merit it is technically advertorial or not – in other words, whether newsworthiness can transform a no-contract advertorial into honest editorial, and, if so, is it necessary or appropriate to label it ‘advertorial’? They also raised the notion that companies that advertise can be a good source of stories because they are local and relevant to the readers, and if one chooses on merit to write about a company that advertises, is that, or is it not, ‘advertorial’?

The diversity of responses from the editors on this topic, especially between the younger and older editors, suggests that more discussion in media circles and media courses about best practice in these real-world circumstances may lead to a more
unified (and less stressful) approach than the haphazard practice arising in the communication vacuum of the taboo around the topic.

Collectively the phase two responses about intra-office dynamics show that editors’ interactions with others include pressures that they resist, input that they value and encouragement that they enjoy. In turn, they actively engage with a range of others in ways that can be seen as patterns of communication.

Turning now to the relationship between editors and readers, all seven of the phase two editors said that their primary focus in selecting content was their readers. The emphasis they put on the importance of giving the readers what they want raises questions about how they can possibly know, with any certainty, what their readers want. Traditionally the media rely on sales figures to indicate reader approval but as people can buy a magazine because of a single article or image out of hundreds in the publication, in research terms it is a clumsy instrument. This problem is now the subject of industry debate with peak advertising industry bodies questioning the value of audience measurement research because it doesn’t measure ‘engagement’ with media products (Sinclair, 2007).

Discomfort with the lack of information about readers was expressed in phase two by one editor, working for a small publishing house who had previously worked for a large one, with these comments: “[the boss] has never done any research and so we are kind of guessing and he really does need to do some research, even if it’s just amongst our subscribers to find out why they subscribe.” Possible sources of information about readers include in-house surveys, professional market research and informal feedback, such as letters to the editor and comments from friends and family. Complicating the reliability of these sources of information are issues such as politeness (and wariness about perceived negativity) and potential conflicts of interest when prizes are offered for the “best” letter to the editor, or other feedback.

Phase three will ask more clearly about whether editors’ views about what readers want are shaped by reliable research; or by their own knowledge of the readership that arises from their location within the target market (as discussed by Gough
Yates, 2003); or whether the task of ‘imagining’ the readership is part of the editor position. This third possibility was offered by one of the phase two editors who said:

It’s a trait of a good editor to be observant, to observe people including people in the target market, also being open-minded about age groups and genders and drawing on what you know and the people you know to create a mental picture of the readers … At the end of the day, as an editor, you just had to develop a thick skin and be the one to make the call on who the target market is and then to speak to the target market, even if it’s an unpopular decision … When everyone else is arguing about wanting the target market to be more like them you have to just block that and say “No, this is part of the bigger plan”, that’s the editor’s obligation, to think of that target market.

The hit and miss nature of writing for an imagined audience and the potential risk (of job loss) for the editor was raised by one who said: “[the readers] develop with you, and if they go with you then that’s all well and good, if they don’t then I guess someone else comes and does it.”

The notion that editors of women’s magazines can accurately target their readerships because they are part of those readerships was identified by Gough Yates (2003, p. 119) as a strategy that magazine publishers used to appeal to advertisers keen to put their products in front of the target audiences.

There are clearly problems with this idea though, if it is taken too literally or too tightly. The only person identical to the editor is very clearly only the editor herself, and so some loosening of the definition and subsequent loss of representative accuracy is logically required. The next problem is that if the editor is wholly immersed in the same discourse as her readers, then how can she possibly bring magazine content or ‘news’ defined as ‘new information’ to her readers? It makes more sense to envisage the editor as someone who is like the readers in some ways and different in other ways and this notion was supported by the demographic data discussed earlier and the editors’ answers to question seven about pressure to represent themselves as typical readers. The issue that this raises is one of pretence. How much are editors asked to exaggerate their same-ness with the audience and to down-play their different-ness? (While still using that different-ness to access and bring new content to the readers) And how does this development of a typical-reader
alter-ego impact on the editors? Dapin (2004, p. 236) warned that: “Writers who adopt alter egos eventually grow into them.” Is this true and is it a good or bad thing? While the phase two editors didn’t raise ‘pressure to be like the readers’ as a stress-factor they spoke in positive terms about being able to “be themselves” in their writing work (in cases where they matched the readership) and about struggling to gain credibility in cases where they were younger than the target market.

One also raised the idea that the ‘resembling-the-typical-reader’ requirement may have been a characteristic of magazine work in the 1980s that is diminishing with the more contemporary trend of valuing individuality and personal character. Offering interesting support to this image of the editor as a character or unique personality was the force of the affirmation by five editors that their style of work (voice) is identifiable and consistent across different workplaces with different readerships; (q12) expressed with terms such as: “Hugely!” and “100%”.

While the editors seemed to enjoy being able to express themselves in their magazines, the trend towards permitting more of an editor’s ‘personality’ into the position and allowing an editor to differentiate herself from a broadly defined readership may be a reflection of the shift away from mass media to more nichéd media that requires more than simple demographics to establish a ‘fit’ that results in engagement with the product and the ensuing commercial success. Turow (1997) raised this issue in his apocalyptic essay on the increasing hyper-segmentation of media markets saying: “Personality and lifestyle labels are also put into play with the aim of uncovering individuals who are both predictable media users and useful customers” (p.3).

Turow (1997) focused on the practice being adopted by a growing number of publishing houses of producing many smaller, rather than fewer larger, publications that are specifically targeting readers in niches of ever diminishing size. He expressed concerns about the impact this may have on how much people in these differentiated market segments know and care about each other and he raised questions about the uses that readers make of magazines. Are magazines sources of
information about ourselves or about other groups in society (who we may not otherwise meet) and/or do they serve more subtle purposes, such as self-identification and definition? All seven of the phase two editors said they saw themselves as providers of information and entertainment but they also expanded on these statements and suggested that they and their magazines were also sources of pride, inspiration, companionship, confidence and succour. These functions align with Pinkola Estes’s (1992, p. 14) description of the cultural function of stories as things “embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life”; Winship’s (1987) claim that magazines have offered women readers “help and, above all, hope in a world where the odds are stacked against them”; and Ferguson’s (1983) description of editors as “high priestesses” who educate and empower women.

The spiritual imagery invoked by Ferguson to describe the position of editors emphasizes her point that much of what editors do is ‘occult’, in the literal sense of meaning that it is “kept secret … beyond the range of ordinary knowledge … [and] not obvious on inspection” (Oxford Dictionary, 1976). Asked if the public perception of the editor position meshed with their perception of it, six of the editors said the public (their readers) had little or no idea about what they did. In this sense their work is occult. Most of the editors added that the public thought that the work would be more glamorous than it is. By extension this means that the public don’t see, and don’t imagine, the editor working long hours in a humble and messy office thinking hard about how to invoke pride and inspiration and how to provide succour to their readers.

Editorial intentions like this are reminiscent of The Australian Women’s Weekly’s mission of “modernising femininity and domestic culture generally” discussed earlier and cited in Sherdian (2000). Most of the phase two editors said that, while they didn’t use the privilege of their position to promote products or services, they did talk about themes and ideas that they actively promoted through their pages, both directly and as subtext guiding their selection of images, recipes and text throughout the publication. These themes included multiculturalism, family values, appreciation of landscape, community issues, inspiration and achievement, animal care, charities, responsible tourism, family-oriented building design, local pride and
sustainable architecture. The implication that arises from considering these themes in the light of Sheridan’s research (that suggested that magazines could contribute to shifts in cultural attitudes) is that these and other magazine editors may be selecting the agenda for the next phase of ‘modernisation’. If this is the case, some support is offered to Ferguson’s claim that “It is these editors, in deciding what their magazines will deal with, who are deciding what will be included or excluded from the agenda of feminine concerns” (1983, p. 131).

With concern being voiced in the independent media (Dyer, 2008) about increasing concentration of cross-media ownership, including ownership of large stables of magazines, and the possible implications of mass media ownership for ‘democracy in Australia’, the questions asked in phase two about whether magazine editors spoke with their own voice or a corporate voice are increasingly topical. The phase two editors, who worked predominantly for small, independent publishers, said it was a balancing act using phrases like: “I was employed into their framework but inside of that frame you can’t help but use your own voice”; “you can’t completely separate the two”; “there’s a certain cusp there”; and “I think it depends on the story”. One editor expressed an understanding of the rights of the owner/publisher saying: “It’s his train set and you’ve got to let him play with it” while another gave voice to the other side of the equation saying: “I need to have some integrity as well and not just become a mouthpiece.” In the phase three discussion these comments will be compared with comments from editors who work predominantly with large publishing houses, to see if the concerns about democracy are supported because there is more publisher-control in those workplaces. The question that this raises is whether greater good is served by having the agenda for modernisation set by editors or publishers – but that is beyond the scope of this project. For now though, it is important to acknowledge that the phase two data indicates that publishers and the corporate structure do impact on (perhaps constrain) what editors say through their publications to their readers, but only to some extent and mainly through the imposition of a framework and a requirement to be commercially successful.

While this raises an uncomfortable spectre of the manipulative model of media (Windschuttle, 1988) in which journalists churn out propaganda that suits the needs
of their employers, it is less disturbing in the context of the editors’ answers to questions about how they think they have contributed to cultural change and what limited their impact. Six of the editors said that they thought that their work had contributed to cultural change either by introducing new ideas to their Australian readers or supporting marginalized or fledgling ideas or groups of people. The topics that they discussed in conversations about their impact on culture aligned with the ‘inspiration, pride and confidence’ themes they had said earlier that they personally sought to promote through their magazines, rather than about political objectives suggested by their publishers. When asked what limited their impact they suggested the volume of competing media messages, physical page-space limitations and the intelligence and agency of their readers. No Orwellian publishers were mentioned.

It is important to note that while most of these seven editors were talking about their work for small independent West Australian publishing houses, three had worked as magazine editors for large media companies, suggesting that absence of pressure may not be a function of company size alone. None of these larger publishing houses were Murdoch-empire companies though – a point worth making in the light of accusations of political interference by Rupert Murdoch in Robert Greenwald’s 2005 documentary Outfoxed.

The third discursive field editors operate within concerns the journalism industry and professional relationships between and among journalists working across the array of media businesses. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the responses of the phase two editors to questions about whether they thought of themselves as journalists or editors was their different interpretations of the meaning of the words. One attributed her self-definition as a journalist to her prior newspaper experience, two said editors were a subset of journalists (as were reporters) and two thought of them as exclusive categories that they moved between (being either a journalist or an editor). This opens up a series of questions: Are magazine editors journalists? If not, then what about editors who also write most of their magazines? And if so, then what about editors who also write advertorial and promotional copy?
It also opens up questions about the position of magazine editors in the journalism industry, as it is framed by NGOs such as the MEAA and the Australian Press Council. Confusion among editors about whether they are counted as ‘journalists’ on the merit of their magazine work, may be indicative of more widespread confusion in the industry about whether their work counts as journalism and whether they deserve to be heard and represented by these bodies. This in turn may contribute to a sense of being disenfranchised, or poorly represented, that could translate into a lack of engagement and loyalty to their codes and guidelines. As three of the phase two editors said that they didn’t think other journalists understood what they did or the kinds of pressures involved in their work, disengagement with industry bodies may also make the workplace support mentioned earlier more important to magazine editors, than it is to other journalists who have industry-body support.

With the magazine sector thriving and growing, the industry may like to consider whether this kind of disengagement is in its (and the public’s) long term interests – especially as a precedent for active disengagement was set in closing chapters of the ‘Cash-for-Comments’ scandal when the talk-back radio hosts evaded discipline (and pressure to conform to industry standards of practice) by identifying themselves as ‘entertainers’, and not ‘journalists’.

So far this discussion has dipped into the rich data yielded by phase two of the study to begin exploring the position of editor in three different but connected fields of discourse. The first of these was characterised by the office and workplace dynamics, the second with the readers and the third by connection with the journalism profession. The aim of this process has been to illustrate editorship as an enunciative modality shaped by its relationships with other enunciative modalities. While the next phases of the study will provide more information about how editors interact and communicate in these fields, in the meantime, explanation of the process of constructing the phase three questionnaire is required.

The previous chapter presented the phase two data as rationales for the questions; summaries of the editors’ answers; and lists of brainstormed questions that could potentially be taken through to phase three for further exploration. While all of the
150-or-so brainstormed questions have reputable provenance from phases one and two, rendering them suitable for further research, selective culling was required in order to write a questionnaire brief enough to have a reasonable chance of engaging busy editors.

This process involved copying all of the questions into a single document and trawling through it looking for repetition. While all of the questions were unique in their specificity, some that asked about similar issues such as: “Is advertorial a contentious topic in your newsroom?” and “Are disagreements about advertorial a common in your workplace?” were noted and amalgamated. Another example of this kind of culling was the deletion of the first two of these three questions: “Do you think that the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter adds credibility to your magazine?”; “Do you think that the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter adds personality to your magazine?”; and “Does the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter make you feel more personally responsible for the content of the magazine than if it was not there?”

The need to further shorten the list then led to culling based on ease of communication and some questions – such as: “Does the pressure to run advertorial come from the organizational culture?” and “Is your role as editor of a magazine more glamorous and creative than the jobs held by most of your readers?” – that could be misunderstood (without a description to provide context) were removed.

The question: “Do you think your publication plays a role in your readers’ lives to a greater, lesser or equal extent to a television newsreader?” was removed because it implies that newsreaders have a known and constant value. “Are there some particular issues (such as body image) that you seek to influence cultural attitudes about and other topics that you have less passion about?” was dropped because the answer seemed obvious.

Next some questions were dropped because they fell outside the themes of discussion emerging in this thesis. This cull included: “While you have been an editor do you think that you have personally changed or developed in a way that changes your
approach to the task?” While this question is interesting from a psychological perspective, the answer to it falls beyond the Foucauldian mission of this project.

The list left was still large and so the next task was squeezing it into a questionnaire with as many multiple choice and matrix-answer questions as possible. This tactic compressed the list into 34 questions. Considering 40 to be an acceptable number, that left room for five demographic questions to allow comparison with population and phase two data and a question to confirm informed consent (as required by the ECU Research Ethics Committee).

The questionnaire was then created online and 12 people (family and friends) with no connection to magazine editing were invited to pilot test it for readability, typographical errors and to time themselves reading and clicking through it. Their feedback included recommendations for clearer instructions (such as “tick for yes”, and “tick all or any that apply to you”), they spotted some clumsy wording and a couple of typos and they reported that it took them between 7 and 25 minutes.

Their recommendations were incorporated, ethics approval to proceed was granted and phase three commenced. The methodology and the data it yielded are presented in the next section.
PHASE THREE INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Having decided to ask the editors of Australia’s 50 most read women’s magazines to complete the questionnaire, I was faced with the task of locating them.

The Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), the Circulation Audit Bureau (CAB) and the Magazine Publishers Association (MPA) offer circulation data for all audited magazines. Two shortcomings of this data are that, firstly, it excludes non-audited publications and, secondly, that, as this study deals with women’s magazines, a means of defining and separating out the women’s magazines was required. MPA has categorised the magazines available in Australia into classes (including as ‘Women’s Interest’, ‘Food and Wine’, ‘Home and Lifestyle’) to provide newsagents with guidance on how to display them and I could have used this categorisation in combination with the ABC circulation data to generate my list of 50. The other option was to use Roy Morgan Research’s readership figures. The advantages of this system include the way it avoids the vagaries of inferring readership from circulation and of missing publications read by large numbers of women because they are either not audited or categorised by MPA as ‘Food and Wine’, or ‘Home and Lifestyle’, publications, rather than as ‘Women’s Interest’.

Roy Morgan Research kindly contributed to this study a magazine readership spreadsheet (Roy Morgan Single Source, 2008) listing the Australian readership between October 2006 and September 2007 of all magazines sorted by the number of female readers and as well as showing male readers and the total readership. It also calculated the proportion of female to male readers. For example: 2.17 million women read The Australian Women’s Weekly and 593,000 men read it. The total readership is 2.7 million and the female to male proportion is 78% to 22%.

Progressing down this list the top 54 highest magazines with a proportion of female readers of 70% or more were selected for inclusion in phase three. I then found phone
numbers and the names of the editors for those magazines. This process eliminated three magazines (Notebook, Health Food Guide and Vogue Entertaining and Travel) that had no current editors as previous editors had left and the companies were in the process of appointing new editors. It also eliminated Melbourne’s Child, Brisbane’s Child, Adelaide’s Child and TV Hits because these magazines shared editors with other magazines higher on the list and I only wanted one questionnaire from each editor. This left 47 magazines and I proceeded to phone them all.

The protocol employed involved phone contact with the editors to briefly explain the project, this was followed immediately by an email that further explained the project, the degree to which their confidentiality would be protected and included a link to the online survey. The editor of Nature and Health declined involvement on the grounds that she was too busy and almost all of the others agreed to complete (or at least look at) the questionnaire and were sent the link. The exceptions were the editors of Cosmopolitan, Cleo, Donna Hay, Good Health and Medicine, Madison and Harpers Bazaar. I spoke to the personal assistants to the editors of these magazines daily for two weeks and left messages but did not hear back from the editors. On the advice of their personal assistants, I sent the explanatory email with the link to the survey, to six of these editors without having made personal phone contact. The time period over which the calls were made began on January 31, 2008 and the survey was closed on March 12, 2008.

Combining these six (who may have followed the emailed link) with the 40 I succeeded in contacting by phone gave 46 possible respondents. In the three weeks following the bulk of my phone calls I sent out three cheerful reminders to the editors I had spoken to encouraging them to find time to complete the questionnaire.

By March 12, 2008, the questionnaire had been started by 33 of the 46 editors and 30 of them had clicked all the way through to the end. Not all editors answered all 40 questions, but 33 questions were answered by 29 or more editors, and 39 by 20 or more. The Roy Morgan list showing the 46 possible respondents and copies of my telephone script and emails are included as Appendices 2 and 3.
PHASE THREE DATA

The following 20 graphic tables present responses given by the 33 editors who completed the questionnaire. Not all of the editors answered every question and so the number who skipped and responded to each question is recorded, along with response counts for each option, and those counts converted into percentages.

1. When you started in your role were you given a job description that clearly describes what you’re expected to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 32
skipped question 1

2. As editor, do you control the editorial content of your magazine?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have complete control</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost complete control</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contribute to it, but so do others</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have very little or no control</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 32
skipped question 1
3. As editor, are you a senior staff member with management and strategic planning responsibilities within your company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I'm involved in corporate decision making</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I'm solely focused on the content of my magazine</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Does your work include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic tasks such as choosing stories, writing, commissioning &amp; subbing</td>
<td>100.0% (33)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing a budget</td>
<td>100.0% (31)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting your magazine</td>
<td>100.0% (32)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management (coordinating staff, photo shoots, schedules etc)</td>
<td>96.8% (30)</td>
<td>3.2% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. When you are choosing content for your magazine are you influenced by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What your readers want to read</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>100.0% (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you personally find interesting</td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td>60.0% (18)</td>
<td>36.7% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What your boss (publisher/managing editor) wants</td>
<td>25.0% (8)</td>
<td>85.6% (24)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What your journalistic colleagues want</td>
<td>25.0% (8)</td>
<td>59.4% (19)</td>
<td>15.6% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other colleagues, such as marketing and admin staff, want</td>
<td>37.5% (12)</td>
<td>56.3% (18)</td>
<td>6.2% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mix or balance of stories you feel the magazine needs</td>
<td>3.0% (1)</td>
<td>3.0% (1)</td>
<td>93.8% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The core focus or theme of the magazine</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>9.4% (3)</td>
<td>90.6% (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the stories or features may impact on advertisers</td>
<td>12.5% (4)</td>
<td>81.3% (26)</td>
<td>6.3% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Please tick any of the following that are true in your current job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are part of your magazine’s target market by age, gender and</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are part of the target market because of your interests</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your company does (or commissions) market research to find out who your</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>readers are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your company does (or commissions) market research to find out what the</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>readers want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You base your assumptions about what your readers want on what interests</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Have you ever been asked to push a political line (or position) on an issue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, and I had no problem agreeing with the request</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, and I agreed but not happily</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but I resisted the request</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I’ve never been asked</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. If you resisted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was your resistance successful (did the piece get spiked)</td>
<td>33.3% (2)</td>
<td>66.7% (4)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was your resistance based on your readers’ interests</td>
<td>100.0% (5)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was your resistance based on your own political views</td>
<td>40.0% (2)</td>
<td>60.0% (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 9. Is advertorial a contentious topic in your newsroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 31

skipped question: 2

### 10. Do you run advertorial OR copy that supports companies that advertise with you in your editorial pages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30

skipped question: 3

### 11. If yes: Is it written by your journalistic staff (as opposed to advertorial writers)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic staff</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff from advertising or marketing</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 26

skipped question: 5

### 12. Is advertorial in your magazine always clearly labeled "advertorial" or "special advertising feature" etc?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We never run it</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30

skipped question: 3
### 13. Which of the following applies in your newsroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising staff can (are permitted to) contractually promise advertorial to their clients without consulting you</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising staff can contractually promise advertorial to their clients, but only if you approve</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising staff can not promise advertorial, but they encourage you to write 'friendly copy' about their clients</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising staff never speak to you about advertorial</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**answered question**: 31  
**skipped question**: 2

### 14. Do you work on finding newsworthy angles about clients when advertorial is requested?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**answered question**: 29  
**skipped question**: 4

### 15. Can you successfully refuse to run advertorial if you don’t consider it to be newsworthy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**answered question**: 30  
**skipped question**: 3
16. Does anyone in your company think advertorial is damaging to the long term interests of the magazine?

- You think it is: 25.0% (7)
- Your advertising sales staff think it is: 9.6% (1)
- Your boss (publisher/managing editor) thinks it is: 14.3% (4)
- No one thinks it is damaging: 75.0% (21)

Answered question: 28
Skipped question: 5

17. Have you ever promoted products or services through your magazine for personal reasons – such as getting discounts on goods, or to secure tickets to events.

- Yes: 9.7% (3)
- No: 90.3% (28)

Answered question: 31
Skipped question: 2

18. Are there themes, ideas or causes that you promote through your magazine because you are personally passionate about them?

- Yes: 60.0% (18)
- No: 40.0% (12)

Answered question: 30
Skipped question: 3
Four editors used the **Other (please specify)** option. Their responses were:

- It just wouldn't work - it'd be obvious and detrimental to the publication and my reputation.
- not relevant to readership and not my role
- Protecting the magazine’s integrity and trustworthiness and focusing all content – whether editorial, advertising or advertorial – around the readers’ best interests is central to my decision-making and I would never allow personal opinions or financial interests to over-ride this.
- I will only run editorial that I am passionate about if my passion is one that readers of my magazine would/could also be passionate about. I would never run anything just because it interests me.
20. In this question 'voice' is defined as your phraseology, tone and sense of humour. Tick all or any of the following that are true for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your voice is discernable in the copy you write</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is discernable in the overall look and feel of your magazine</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your publication has a voice of its own, distinct from yours</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You restrict how much of your own voice you put into your publication</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your personal voice/editorial style have been consistent throughout your career</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your work as an editor is artistically satisfying</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 31

skipped question 2

21. These questions are about magazine work in the context of journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider yourself to be a journalist?</td>
<td>80.6% (25)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the journalistic code of ethics apply to the work you do?</td>
<td>83.5% (29)</td>
<td>8.5% (2)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the work you do substantially different from newspaper journalism and editing?</td>
<td>80.6% (25)</td>
<td>19.4% (6)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the work you do well understood by journalists working in other media?</td>
<td>53.3% (16)</td>
<td>46.7% (14)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer to be working in hard news-oriented media?</td>
<td>8.5% (2)</td>
<td>91.5% (29)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you share camaraderie with other magazine editors?</td>
<td>83.9% (26)</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the magazine media community separate from the journalistic community?</td>
<td>64.3% (18)</td>
<td>35.7% (10)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the magazine media community a subset of the journalistic community?</td>
<td>76.7% (23)</td>
<td>23.3% (7)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 31

skipped question 2
22. Tick any of the following that apply to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is an element of celebrity that comes with your role as editor</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The readers of your publication are curious about who you are</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other media report your attendance at events</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You get invited to events because you are a public figure, not just to report on them</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 answered question 27  
 skipped question 6

23. Do you enjoy attending events in the role of editor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 answered question 31  
 skipped question 2

24. Does the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter make you feel more personally responsible for the content of the magazine than if it was not there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 answered question 31  
 skipped question 2
26. What do readers get from your publication - and is that something you deliberately aim to be a source of?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My readers may get this</th>
<th>I aim to be a source of</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pride and/or contentment in where they live</td>
<td>80.0% (12)</td>
<td>53.3% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information about things to do and places to go</td>
<td>72.2% (13)</td>
<td>72.2% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspiration to aspire</td>
<td>72.0% (18)</td>
<td>94.0% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information about new and unusual products they could buy</td>
<td>84.0% (21)</td>
<td>66.0% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escapism from the daily grind</td>
<td>68.6% (16)</td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education about other people in their community</td>
<td>76.5% (13)</td>
<td>88.2% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>succour</td>
<td>69.2% (6)</td>
<td>84.6% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>companionship</td>
<td>81.8% (18)</td>
<td>72.7% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence</td>
<td>79.2% (19)</td>
<td>87.8% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a sense of safety</td>
<td>80.0% (12)</td>
<td>90.0% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education about where they are</td>
<td>71.4% (10)</td>
<td>78.6% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information about community services that are available</td>
<td>85.7% (12)</td>
<td>78.8% (11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anything else you aim to provide? 14

answered question 30

skipped question 3

Fourteen editors used the **Anything else you aim to provide?** option.

Their answers were:

- Empathy
- Entertainment, inspiration and emotional replenishment
- Humour
- Information so they can carry on great water cooler conversations, even with people they don’t know
- Help to provide healthy, fast meal options for their family
- Support
- Inspiration, aspiration, chance to win life-changing prizes, competitions and puzzles
- Health and weight loss information
- Information that will help them to lead, full, active, happy, healthy lives in every respect.
- Entertainment, health advice, an insight into interesting people, financial advice
- Visual pleasure, sense of appreciation of this country
- My aim is for readers to feel good about themselves and their lives after they have read my magazine
- Inspiration
- Simple healthy recipes on a budget

Broken down and regrouped this list reads:

**Emotional support**
- Empathy
- Emotional replenishment
- Support
- My aim is for readers to feel good about themselves and their lives after they have read my magazine

**Encouragement**
- Inspiration
- Inspiration
- Aspiration
- Inspiration
- Sense of appreciation of this country

**Community bonding**
- Information so they can carry on great water cooler conversations, even with people they don't know

**Practical facts**
- Help to provide healthy, fast meal options for their family
- Health and weight loss information
- Information that will help them to lead, full, active, happy, healthy lives in every respect.
- Health advice
- Simple healthy recipes on a budget
- Financial advice

**Entertainment**
- Entertainment,
- Humour
- Competitions and puzzles
- Entertainment
- An insight into interesting people
- Visual pleasure

**Prizes**
- chance to win life changing prizes
### 26. Does your magazine seek to follow events and reflect/report on culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Answered question: 29
- Skipped question: 4

### 27. Does your magazine seek to lead the way and influence/change culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Answered question: 29
- Skipped question: 4

### 28. If you could only do one of these which would it be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Answered question: 29
- Skipped question: 4
29. Do you feel that your work as an editor has contributed to cultural change because:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>everything in the magazine has some subtext behind it (such as international recipes promoting multiculturalism)</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have publicized and framed particular social movements (such as responsible travel or cruelty-free products) in a positive light</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have provided promotion (marketing support) for fledgling businesses or industries</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have presented cutting-edge styles or ideas from other countries, not previously seen in Australia, to your Australian readers</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three editors used the Other (please specify) response and offered these thoughts about their contribution to cultural change.

- My magazine is better represented by the word community than culture.
- Increased awareness about the obesity problem in Aust.
- Our magazine celebrates everyday, ordinary Australians

30. In your magazine, on what topics (if any) are you actively promoting cultural change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question was answered by 20 editors who gave the following responses:

- child-friendly communities, disability, role of parents in workforce
- eco-awareness, charitable causes, injustice, tolerance
- overweight and obesity, health issues
- interiors, travel and beauty
- food politics: organics, slow food movement, fair trade
- environmental & charity support, supporting young talent, quality perceptions of celebrity media
- design
- food and wine
- breastfeeding, paid maternity leave, valuing motherhood
- tolerance
- exercise, healthy eating and weight loss
- organ donation, preventative healthcare, consumer action
- travel
- environmental consciousness, appreciation of ‘Australian-ness’
- diet and lifestyle change to improve health
- environmental responsibility
- access to dental health care, campaigning for tougher sentences for people who abuse animals, strengthening communities to prevent child abuse, fighting against domestic violence, promoting tolerance for difference.
- marriage, weddings, family relationships
- I hope we do this in a very subtle way - just influencing the way people perceive food in their daily lives
- I Can Make A Difference editorial campaign

Broken down and regrouped this list reads

General Sentiments
- tolerance
- tolerance
- promoting tolerance for difference
- charity support
- injustice
- appreciation of ‘Australian-ness’
- valuing motherhood
- [attitudes towards] disability
- consumer action
- fair trade

Specific social causes
- charitable causes
- access to dental health care
- campaigning for tougher sentences for people who abuse animals
- strengthening communities to prevent child abuse
- fighting against domestic violence
- paid maternity leave
- child-friendly communities
- supporting young talent
- role of parents in workforce

Environmentalism
- eco-awareness
- support of environmental consciousness
- environmental
- environmental responsibility

Encouraging specific behaviours
- travel
- marriage, weddings, family relationships
- organ donation
- food politics: organics, slow food movement
- influencing the way people perceive food in their daily lives
- ‘I Can Make A Difference’ editorial campaign. [promoting activism on issues related to: environment; school; community; friends and family; animals and wildlife]

Aesthetics and pop culture
- interiors
- design
- quality perceptions of celebrity media
- beauty
- food and wine

Public health
- health issues
- breastfeeding
- exercise
- healthy eating and weight loss
- preventative healthcare
- overweight and obesity
- diet and lifestyle change to improve health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>About the same</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less glamorous</td>
<td>51.7% (15)</td>
<td>31.0% (9)</td>
<td>17.2% (5)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less interesting</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>24.1% (7)</td>
<td>75.9% (22)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less creative</td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>24.1% (7)</td>
<td>72.4% (21)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More draining</td>
<td>57.1% (16)</td>
<td>21.4% (6)</td>
<td>21.4% (6)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More interesting</td>
<td>60.7% (17)</td>
<td>35.7% (10)</td>
<td>3.6% (1)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More fun</td>
<td>39.5% (11)</td>
<td>50.0% (14)</td>
<td>10.7% (3)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Comparing what you now know about the role of editor with how you saw it before you started working in magazines, is it:

answered question 29
skipped question 4
Nine editors took the **Something else (please specify)** option and offered:

- difficult personality on staff
- people's perceptions of you when they've never met you
- compromising for advertising dept
- dealing with advertising requests – in which money wins
- not always being able to do everything to the standard I'd like
- millions of emails to deal with on a daily basis – there's never enough time to respond to all of them
- the relentlessness of deadlines therefore no down time
- the fact that the pressure of the day-to-day restricts opportunities for strategic planning and the fact that I don't have the answer for the next big thing in magazines!
- salary is not commensurate with responsibility level and stress

A tenth editor wrote in this section “While all the above are factors, hate is far too strong a word”.
Two editors took the **Something else (please specify)** option and offered:

- adrenaline, creating something every week that people want to buy, telling stories about people readers care about, giving young professionals a chance.... I could go on and on!
- having the encouragement and support within my company to innovate.

The responses to the age question were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>35 x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>36 x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>42 x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>45 x 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>46 x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>47 x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 in their 20s</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 in their 30s</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 in their 40s</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 in their 50s</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. How many years have you been an editor for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answered</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 said 6 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 said 1.5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 said 2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 under 2 years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 said 3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 said 4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 said 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 said 9 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 said 10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 said 13 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 said 8 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 said 15 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 said 26 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 said 28 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 said 6-10 yrs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 over 10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. What level of income does your editor job pay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $70,000 pa</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $70,000 and $120,000 pa</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $120,000 pa</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38. Gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 29
skipped question 4
The sixteen editors who answered yes also disclosed their major fields of study. Arranged thematically they were:

- Journalism
- Journalism, Communications and Management
- Three - Sociology, Political Economics, Journalism
- Media Studies
- Media Studies
- Communications
- Communications
- BA, Grad Dip Communications
- English, plus masters in media
- Undergrad was Education & History, post-grad was Journalism
- Commerce, design
- Literature and psychology
- Post-grad business management
- Food & Nutrition
- Education
- Classical Literature
PHASE THREE DISCUSSION

The 40 questions in the phase three questionnaire were grouped into nine sections. The titles of those sections are used again in this chapter to structure discussion of the editors’ responses. Also note that as the raw scores were all listed in the previous section, in this discussion I refer to proportions, percentages (rounded to the nearest whole number) and actual numbers of editors interchangeably, in each instance using which ever figure most effectively communicates the shape of the data. Also please note that there is still one more stage of this project to go. Phase four will seek the opinions of a range of stakeholders on this data and their comments will expand on the descriptions of the data and preliminary analysis offered here.

You and Your Job

The questions in this section began with a simple yes/no enquiry about whether editors had been given job descriptions. It was included because it was raised by Dapin (2004) and Buttrose (1985) in their autobiographies and five of the seven editors in phase two said they had not been given clear job descriptions. The question was omitted from one of the phase two interviews and one said he had been given a job description. In phase three the group was split with 59% saying they were not given job descriptions and 41% saying they were. While this indicates that the assertion that editors are frequently not given job descriptions holds true, to some extent, across the sector, it seems to be not as universally true amongst the larger publishing house titles represented by the phase three editors as it was amongst the predominantly smaller publishing house editors in phase two. This may also be a result of the relative longevity of some of the larger publishing house magazines that see a succession of editors, as opposed to the smaller publishing house work that is (because of their financial vulnerability) more often to do with starting new publications.
The next question asked the editors to indicate how much control they had over the editorial content of their magazines. This question was answered by 32 editors and 31 of them (97%) answered that they had either almost, or complete, control over their publication’s editorial content. The ‘complete control’ answer was given by half of the respondents and only one answered with the less empowered answer: “I contribute to it, but so do others.” This question was asked because the questions that follow are based on the assumption that editors have control over editorial content, and consequently it seemed prudent to test this assumption via a clearly worded question. This confirmation was delivered, as none of the editors responded that they ‘have little or no control’. This answer is particularly interesting in light of answers to later questions that establish that editors are cognisant of the need to consider impacts on advertisers and readers and the way that this gives rise to conflicts and limits their freedom in terms of editorial content.

Comparing these responses with phase two, it is interesting to note that four of the seven editors in phase two made mention of collaboration with their colleagues in the process of generating editorial story lists, using terminology like “throw off ideas to each other” and “toss them around”. This collaborative sourcing, however, could be accommodated within the ‘almost complete control’ answer as the editors gave many reasons for including or excluding specific content, other than colleagues’ or bosses’ opinions.

The next two questions were asked to clarify the work done by editors. While only one of the phase two editors proactively said they were involved in corporate decision-making, 55% of the phase three editors responded to a direct question about it with an affirmative answer. The remaining 45% said they were solely focused on their magazines. The phase two editors also mentioned budgets, PR work, writing and project management. The phase three editors unanimously included: journalistic tasks (such as choosing stories, writing, commissioning and subbing); managing a budget; and promoting their magazines as part of their work. In addition, all but one claimed project management (coordinating staff, photo shoots, schedules etc). This suggests homogeneity of the actual work done by editors between small publishing house Western Australian publications and large
publishing house national publications. It also establishes that while magazine editors do journalistic tasks, they also do a range of other tasks that are not specifically related to journalism, again illustrating potential for evaluation of magazine editorship using a framework other than journalism.

The editors in phase two were asked the open-ended question: “What influences, other than your own personal choices, shape the voice of your magazine?” Their answers included: unanimous concern for the readers’ interests; four of the seven considered input from their colleagues; five mentioned either the mix of stories in the publication or its overall theme or core message; and two raised the issue of impact on advertisers.

The unanimity of concern for readers’ interests was echoed in phase three and the next highest ranking concerns in phase three were the mix of stories (94%) and the core focus or theme of the magazines (91%). Input from colleagues was separated into two parts, dealing first with journalistic colleagues and, secondly, with other colleagues such as administrative and marketing staff. The first question received a mainly positive response with nearly 60% saying they were ‘sometimes’ influenced by journalistic colleagues and 16% saying they were influenced ‘a lot’. Only 25% said ‘not at all’. Input from other colleagues fared slightly worse, again with nearly 60% saying they were ‘sometimes’ influenced but this time only 6% said ‘a lot’, and 38% said ‘not at all’.

While this difference may seem to indicate a degree of resistance to pressure related to commercial concerns, it is interesting to note that while only two of the editors in phase two mentioned ‘impact on advertisers’ when discussing this topic, in phase three 81% of the editors said they were ‘sometimes’ influenced by impact on advertisers, and 6% went further and said they were influenced ‘a lot’ by this concern. Only 13% said they were ‘not at all’ influenced by how stories or features may impact on advertisers. Overall, the combined ‘sometimes’ and ‘a lot’ scores for influence by journalistic and other colleagues (75% and 63% respectively) indicate that editors tend not to operate in isolation from other people within their workplaces, and that the input of colleagues influences choices about magazine
content. It is worth noting, though, that contrasting the 81% ‘sometimes’
influenced by advertisers with 97% with ‘almost or complete control’ over editorial
content, shows that words like ‘control’ and ‘influence’, in this context need to be
explored in more depth.

While influence and pressure from publishers on specific issues is expanded later, it
was included here because two of the phase two editors proactively mentioned their
publishers’ participation in the creation of story lists. Attempting to quantify the
extent of this top-down influence, the phase three editors were asked if their content
choices were influenced by what their boss/managing editor wanted and only a
quarter said ‘not at all’, 66% said ‘sometimes’ and 9% said ‘a lot’. Again, this is
interesting juxtaposed with the same editors’ almost unanimous (97%) claim to
having ‘almost’ or ‘complete control’ over the content of their magazines. It implies
a degree of agreement, or complicity, between editors and their managers/employers
– with responsibility abiding with editors while guidance flows down from above.
However, looking differently at this data, it could be argued that the independence
of editors, and the degree to which they are the ones who make the call, is illustrated
by the 91% who claimed they were not influenced ‘a lot’ by their bosses.

The final avenue of influence on content tapped by the phase three questionnaire
was what editors found ‘personally interesting’. Of the 30 editors who answered this
question only one concurred with the phase two editor who said she didn’t allow her
personal interests to impact on her editorial choices. Eleven editors (37%) concurred
with the other phase two editor who said, on this issue: “It really is, overpoweringly,
if I’m interested in it”. These eleven recorded an ‘a lot’ response and a further 18
(60%) recorded a ‘sometimes’ response to whether they were influenced in their
content choices by what they found personally interesting.

The appropriateness of using personal interest as a gauge of goodness-of-fit with the
magazines’ mission is linked to the idea of whether or not the editor is part of the
target audience. Despite the 97% of phase three editors who said that their editorial
choices were ‘sometimes’ or ‘a lot’ influenced by their own personal interests, only 12
editors (38%) said they based their assumptions about what their readers wanted on what interested them. While this seems incongruous, it could be explained by the 91% affirmative response to whether their companies do (or commission) research about their readers’ demographics and 78% affirmative response about publishers researching readers’ interests. The existence of this research may be reducing the extent to which the editors feel they need to rely on ‘assumptions’ and it contrasts with complaints from editors in phase two about a lack of market research that left them “guessing” about who their readers were and what they were interested in.

Gough Yates (2003) raised the issue of editors in the UK in the 1990s either being selected because they represented their readerships or being pressured to emphasize their membership of the target market in order to attract advertisers. Asked if they considered themselves to be part of their publications’ readerships, six of the seven editors in phase two said ‘yes – at least in some respects’, and one said ‘no’, but that he was expected to understand the readership. A similar spread appeared in phase three with 72% claiming to be part of their readerships by age, gender and income demographics, and 69% claiming inclusion because of their interests. This may indicate that the trend Gough Yates spotted has spread to Australia and that there is now an expectation within publishing houses that editors should be representative of their readerships.

**Politics and Power**

While much has been written about the manipulation of the media by publishers with political agendas (Hamilton & Maddison, 2007; Pilger, 1998; Herman & Chomsky, 1988) and about journalistic resistance to this pressure, women’s magazines are usually considered to be too detached from politics and involved with personal and domestic matters to be included in these discussions. This dismissal of magazines was challenged, though, by Sheridan’s (2000) study on the attitudes towards migrants expressed in The Australian Women’s Weekly that concluded that the editorial content was foreshadowing the move towards the multiculturalist discourses and policies of the 1970s and 1980s.
In order to clarify the ability of editors to independently and proactively promote certain discourses and polices it was important to ask about pressure from publishers and managers. In phase two, five of the seven editors said they had never been asked to push a political line and one said that while she had been asked, she had successfully resisted the pressure. In phase three, 31 editors answered the question and of those 90% said they had never been asked. Three said they had been asked but they had resisted the request. Confusingly, six editors then answered a set of further questions that explored what happened when editors resisted pressure to push political lines. Of the editors who answered the further questions (which allowed more than one response), 100% said their resistance was based on their readers’ interests. Asked if their resistance was based on their personal views two said ‘no’, and three said it was. Most disturbingly, while two said their resistance was successful, four said it wasn’t and the article in question was not discarded. While this supports the argument that publishers can and do push political lines through magazine media, it is worth noting that this answer was given by four editors, compared with 28 editors who said they had never been asked.

Addressing Advertorial

Given that an odd number of editors answered the question: “Is advertorial a contentious topic in your newsroom?”, the split could not have been more even. Of 31, 15 editors answered ‘no’ and 16 answered ‘yes’. This bears some similarity, with a slightly different tilt, to the four out of seven in phase two who described conversations about advertorial with words such as ‘fight’ and ‘huge drama’.

While all seven of the editors in phase two said that advertorial ran in their publications, in phase three only 83% (25 out of 30) said it did. Five editors (17%) said their publications did not run advertorial. This small but interesting figure runs counter to Gough Yates’ (2003) claim that since the mid-1990s advertorials have become an accepted and integral part of the magazine business in the UK. It may be an indication that advertorial is a passing phase (as two of the phase two editors suggested it might be) or that it is not universally part of magazine business or possibly that, despite the identity-protection built into this research process, it is
such a contentious topic that there are editors who are not prepared to admit to its use.

As with the questions about political pressure, a quirk in the data appeared with this question. In phase three 25 editors said that advertorial was run in their magazines but 28 gave details on who wrote it when it ran, with 17 answering ‘journalistic staff’ and 11 answering ‘other staff from advertising or marketing’. This discrepancy could be accounted for by confusion about the meaning of the word ‘advertorial’, with some editors at first considering text-heavy advertising not to be advertorial but on reflection, seeing that an option for inclusion of copy written by the advertising department was offered, answering the second question with an affirmative.

This sense of the editors’ evolving appreciation of the term in the context of this study develops further when looking at their answers to the next question, specifically where only one editor gives the response “we never run it” (as opposed to five in the previous question). This echoes the phase two process where four editors initially said they never ran it, but within a few minutes were talking about how it was handled in their publications.

Contrasting sharply with five of the seven phase two responses, a whopping 87% of the phase three editors said that advertorial in their publication was always labelled with terms such as ‘advertorial’ or ‘special advertising feature’. It is interesting to note that the two editors in phase two who said advertorial in their publications was always labelled were referring to work with large publishing house publications. The other five said their advertorial was unlabelled and only ran if it was newsworthy or if they had sought newsworthy angles for it. The correlating data from phase three is the response from three editors (10%) who said that their advertorial was not always labelled. It is important to note the timing of these responses as the phase three editors were in the main referring to editing experiences prior to 2004 – the year that the ‘Cash for Comments’ scandal erupted when the ABC TV show Media Watch reported that radio announcers were being paid to subtly endorse products. The phase two editors’ claim that undisclosed advertorial was common was supported by
Dapin’s (2004, p.132) claim that he was often pressured to allow “horribly disguised editorial endorsements” into Ralph, the ACP magazine he had edited. This may mean that the phase three editors’ statement that unlabelled advertorial does not run in large publishing house magazines reflects a tightening of industry standards in response to the ‘Cash for Comments’ scandal and the new Press Council guidelines issued in response to it. This is supported by the fact that the phase two editor who described advertorial as outdated was still currently working as an editor, while some of the others in phase two had moved on from the role. On the other hand, the critical media attention the ‘Cash for Comments’ scandal garnered (Hirst and Patching, 2007) may have reinforced the taboos around discussion about unlabelled advertorial.

Seeking to test the phase two editors’ assertions that pressure to run advertorial came mainly from advertising sales staff, the next phase three question asked: how empowered sales staff were to contractually promise advertorial; whether editors put work into finding newsworthy angles; and whether they had the power to refuse to run it. The answers to these questions give a more nuanced picture of the contention around advertorial and the work editors put into it. The most interesting statistics from the first of these questions are the smallest. Only two (7%) of the 31 editors who answered said that sales staff never spoke to them about advertorial, and only three (10%) said the advertising department could promise it without consulting the editors. This leaves 84% of editors having conversations about advertorial, either to approve contractual promises or because sales staff are encouraging them to write client-friendly copy.

Echoing the phase two editors, 79% of the phase three editors said ‘yes’ or ‘sometimes’ when asked if they worked on finding newsworthy angles when advertorial was requested and only 47% of them said they were able to refuse to run advertorial, with 53% answering either ‘yes’ or ‘sometimes’, effectively stating that they are sometimes or always lumbered with advertorial that they can’t refuse to run even if they want to.
Interestingly, a clear contradiction can be seen between this figure (of 47% sometimes or always able to refuse advertorial) and the 65% who said that advertorial could only be contractually promised with their consent. This implies that there may be a difference between the power the editors are said to wield and the power they wield in practice in their workplaces. Hirst and Patching (2007, p.49) used the term ‘fault line’ to describe disconnects, such as this one, between ideological positions (in this case editorial freedom from financial influence) and practice, based on commercial realities and corporate loyalty. Highlighting the existence of established lines of contention in newsrooms, they wrote:

Ideological positions and arguments don’t impact on journalism ethics in an abstract way; they manifest themselves in very real fault lines – not only between the news media and the public it serves, but also in arguments between reporters about personal conviction, political beliefs, and loyalties. Drinks have been spilled often, and blood occasionally, in disputes between reporters. (p.49)

This locates the argument about advertorial within the field of journalism, and it also illustrates the potential for magazine editors who deal with questions about advertorial to be engaged in disputes with journalists from other media who are not obliged to consider advertorial on a regular basis.

The final question in this section asked about perceptions of the harmfulness of advertorial that were raised in phase two as the logic underpinning the editors’ opposition to it. Despite the fact that half of the phase three editors said advertorial was contentious in their newsrooms, only 25% of them answered that they thought advertorial was damaging to the long term interests of their magazine, and 75% answered that no one in their company thought it was damaging in the long term. The other figures yielded by this section included a measly one response claiming that sales staff thought it was long-term damaging and four responses (14%) claiming their publisher/managing editor thought it was. It is interesting to note that while Hirst and Patching (2007) cover a broad range of topics in their journalism ethics text book, advertorial barely rates a mention. Illustrating the profession’s disdain for it, it appears in a chapter called ‘Issues of Deception’, in a section called ‘Freebies, Junkets and Compromising Positions’. Hirst and Patching
(p. 212) quote former Melbourne Age editor Creighton Burns saying that “the Arts and Travel pages of all major newspapers would be blank if journalists were not allowed to accept the hospitality of commercially interested parties” but they then ask “when does this sort of sponsorship cross over into advertising copy and become advertorial?” (p. 213). Burn’s comment illustrates that advertorial is not only an issue for magazines and Hirst and Patching’s question draws attention to the way it manifests as a ‘fault line’ between ideology and practice.

**Passions and Purposes**

In phase two the editors were asked if there were any ideas, themes, products or services that they promoted through their editorship. What emerged from their answers was a differentiation between the idea of promoting products and services for personal gain, (that was described by some editors as “not so moral” and “corrupt”) and promoting ideas and themes, that was more common and looked on with less suspicion. In phase three the questions about products and services and ideas and themes were teased apart. Asked if they had ever promoted products or services through their magazines for personal reasons, such as getting discounts on goods or to secure tickets to events, 90% of 31 editors said ‘no’ and just three said ‘yes’.

As in phase two, the number of editors prepared to admit to pushing ideas, themes and causes was higher than for products and services. Of 30 respondents, 60% said ‘yes’ and 40% said ‘no’. In answer to an earlier question, 97% of the phase three respondents answered that they had either almost or complete control over their publication’s editorial content. This, considered alongside Ferguson’s assertion that “it is these editors, in deciding what their magazines will deal with, who are deciding what will be included or excluded from the agenda of feminine concerns” (1983, p131), raises the question: what stops editors from filling their magazines with causes and opinions that they feel passionate about? Given the opportunity of giving more than one answer, 31 editors responded to the question and 90% of them ticked ‘the need to prioritize stories of interest to the readership that may not interest the editor’. This implies a sense of separation and distinction between the editors’ interests and the readerships’ interests that is curious in the light of earlier responses
that saw 72% of the phase three editors claiming to be part of their readerships by age, gender and income demographics, and 69% claiming inclusion because of their interests. This emphasizes the sense in which editors appear to see themselves as being simultaneously part-of, and not-part-of their readerships.

At 84%, the next most popular reason for holding back on filling the magazines with personal raves was ‘the character of the magazine’. Only 23% ticked ‘desire to avoid repetition’, which was raised by a phase two editor in the context of it being okay to promote ideas a bit, but that one had to be careful about “overdoing it”. Only 10% echoed the phase two editor who mentioned caution about offending or discouraging advertisers, while this number is small it indicates a cognizance of potential financial consequences among, at least, some editors. This highlights the dual nature of the task of editing a magazine, keeping both readers and advertisers happy and the complex relationship between the two. In phase two one of the editors said that being sycophantic to advertisers was a short term strategy in that it eroded credibility, turned off readers and that, in the long run, meant a loss of advertisers. The upshot of this was a ‘treat ’em mean, keep ’em keen’ strategy that, in practice, manifested as apparent disdain for advertisers’ interests, and a whole-hearted focus on the readership. This attitude appears to serve a dual purpose in aligning the editors’ positions with the ideals of journalism (Hirst and Patching, 2007) and, to the extent that it works, in making sense financially.

The four responses in phase three given by editors who opted for the ‘other, please specify’ option echoed the passionate tones of some of the phase two editors. One offered the cool-headed but decisive phrase “not relevant to readership and not my role”, and the other three evoked reputations and used fighting words like “detrimental”, “never” and “integrity”. The emotional intensity implied by these responses supports Hirst and Patching’s claim that conflicts, or dialectics, about media ethics lie “at the heart of journalism” (2007, p.49) and in this sense these statements associate the experience of magazine editorship with the journalistic profession.
Character and Context

In phase two, one of the editors justified his inclusion of material that was of interest to him personally saying: “They are hand-made things and it is a cottage industry and it’s a craft. It’s like weaving a basket or something every week …and you want it to be successful but you are still there weaving it every week.” This brings the question of the creativity and artistic appeal of the role of editor into crisp focus. His statement was supported by another phase two editor who equated writing about things that she considered to be “great and worthwhile” with being “honest and from the heart”, but both of these stand opposed to the wariness of the editors who stridently back away from the idea of considering anything other than their readers’ interests (including their own personal interests or expressive impulses).

The next question explored this separation of the editor as an artist and the editor as a reader-feeder a little more. Initially phase two included the question: “Do you feel that as an editor you speak from a personal position, creatively expressing your own views, values and opinions through your magazine, or do you speak from a corporate perspective as a medium for the expression of the ideology that will most benefit your employer?” Through the process of discussing the question with editors it evolved into the more digestible form: “As an editor, do you speak with your own voice or the company’s?” In response to the question, the editors described feeling like “being yourself in someone else’s framework” and about having to work to find a balance or synergy between the dual requirement of being both creative and obliged to serve a corporate function.

In phase three the editors were asked to tick all, or any, of a set of six options that arose out of phase two. Echoing the difficulty the phase two editors had with giving a clear answer, the two most popular options, (ticked by 77% and 65% respectively), were “Your publication has a voice of its own, distinct from yours” and “Your work as an editor is artistically satisfying”. This is puzzling if you equate artistic satisfaction with self-expression, but it makes sense in the light of the editors’ role in creating the “voice of the publication” – if that voice is seen as a product in its own right. It also matched well with the response to “You restrict how much of your own voice you put into your publication”. Only 32% ticked this option, implying that
around two thirds of editors don’t restrict how much of their own voices they publish, and this matches the proportion who feel artistically satisfied. These editors could therefore be feeling that they are self-expressing but that, as others are also working on the magazines, the magazines have voices of their own that are collaboratively created. This is supported by the fact that more editors think their voices are discernable in their own copy (55%) than in the overall look-feel of their magazines (39%)

In interesting contrast to the five (out of seven) phase two editors who said that their personal voices had been consistent throughout their careers, only a third of the phase three editors said that their voices had been. This difference may reflect confusion about how much this question was about personal style, as opposed to being about professional mutability and maturation, as these issues were discussed with reference to this question in phase two.

The next question dealt with magazine work in the context of journalism and it took the form of eight questions that were each answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’ by between 28 and 31 editors. These questions contribute to the debate about whether it is appropriate to judge women’s magazines by the criteria of journalism by illuminating the relationship between the community of women’s magazine editors and the community of journalists.

Answering the first question, 80% said that they considered themselves to be journalists, leaving 20% who think they are not. It is not clear from this answer whether the 20% ‘no’ vote reflects a sense of distance from everything that journalism represents or a sense of a fine distinction between editors and journalists. The 94% ‘yes’ vote for ‘Does the journalistic code of ethics apply to you’ suggests, though, that there is a split and only two (7%) of the ‘no’ respondents see themselves as outside the whole journalism community. Their sense of alienation, however, appears to be reflected by other magazine editors, as 81% said their work was substantially different from newspaper work and 53% said their work was not well understood by journalists in other media. While this seems isolating from the whole journalistic community, 94% expressed contentment (that runs counter to the
view of magazines as inferior media products) by saying that they would not prefer
to be working in hard-news oriented media. The phase two editors who said they
shared camaraderie with other magazine editors were echoed by 84% of the phase
three editors.

The sense of alienation is again confirmed by the 64% of editors who answered that
the magazine community was separate from the journalistic community.
Interestingly while 36% answered this question with ‘no’ (saying that the
communities were not separate), the question: ‘is the magazine community a subset
of the journalistic community’ drew a more decisive 77% ‘yes’, and a 23% ‘no’. This
conveys both the sense of connection, implied by the strong agreement with ‘does
the code of ethics apply to you?’, and the distance arising from their sense that their
work is different and not well understood by other journalists.

Reader Relations
The sense of confusion and discomfort expressed by the phase two editors about the
celebritisation of editors was evident in the phase three responses with a clear
majority (89%) answering that they thought the readers of their publications were
curious about who they are, but fewer (only 63%) describing that as job-related
celebrity.

The editors’ answers weren’t definitive enough to rule out celebrity as an element of
terwork, though, as 48% said that they were invited to events because they were
public figures, not just to report on them, and 33% said that other media reported
their attendance at events. In phase two, one editor described attending events as a
chore, another had become bored with it, and one was indifferent. Others in phase
two were more positive or accepting of it. The phase three editors were less negative,
with none of them responding ‘no’ to the question “Do you enjoy attending events in
the role of editor?” but the third who said ‘yes’ were outweighed by the two thirds
who were indifferent about it.

This indicates that despite the hype and depiction of magazine editorship as
glamorous and celebrity-like, that aspect of their work isn’t seen by the editors as
particularly desirable. On the other hand, they accept it (usually with a sense of indifference) as something that needs to be done in order to satisfy their readers’ curiosity about them, which, according to the phase two editors, they understand as part of their relationship with their readers.

The convention of including the editor’s photo and a signed letter at the front of each magazine was discussed in phase two with one editor questioning it and saying: “I think that’s just a habit that’s stuck and doesn’t have any real function.” Another said it was fair enough to want to know who made the magazine you’re reading and a third offered that he thought “publications should have much more personal leadership than they did in the past.” It is interesting to note that according to Turner et al (2000) the practice of including a personalised editorial message dates back, in Australian magazine culture, to Ita Buttrose in the late 1970s. Commenting on the rationale for including it they wrote: “She used her own celebrity – constructed through newspaper interviews, television programs, social pages and even a song by Cold Chisel as well as in her own editorials – to promote and personalise her magazine” (p. 123). Focusing on how the practice, that has now become a convention, impacts on editors, phase three asked “Does the inclusion of your photo and editorial letter make you feel more personally responsible for the content of the magazine than if it was not there?” Most editors (77%) agreed that it did.

While it has been said that the aims of journalism are broadly to inform and entertain (White, 1996), this thesis posited at the outset that magazines may not fit within that framework and that in order to assess their quality it may be necessary to consider other functions that they serve. The next phase three question cut to the heart of that matter and asked the editors what they thought their readers got from their publications and whether that was something they deliberately sought to be a source of. The question was asked in this double-barrelled way to make it possible to see what editors strive for and whether or not they see themselves as successful in their endeavours. It also sought to tease out their understanding of the different ways that readers might interpret their work, as discussed by Ang (1990) and McRobbie (1991).
The question used 12 options derived from the phase two editors’ responses to an open-ended version of the same question and also allowed editors to contribute other things they aimed to provide. Each of the 12 options was ticked by between 13 and 25 of the 30 editors who answered the question.

The 12 options are listed here in order of the percentage of the 30 editors who ticked either or both of the two boxes related to it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>% of editors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration to aspire</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about new and unusual products they could buy</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escapism from the daily grind</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about things to do and places to go</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education about other people in their community</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride and/or contentment in where they live</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of safety</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about community services that are available</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education about where they are</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succour</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the responses it is most important to notice that there was not much difference between the numbers of editors who ticked each of the two boxes offered for each option. The largest gap between the ‘readers get’ and ‘I aim to be a source of’ scores as a percentage of the total number of editors who ticked that option was 26%, the average was 12% and the smallest was zero.

The only option that was marked equally in both boxes was ‘information about things to do and places to go’, that received 13 ticks in each box but as 18 editors ticked that item it is clear that not all of them ticked both boxes. This ambiguity indicates that this kind of research could be revisited with more sensitive instruments to tease out more information about what editors are trying to achieve and whether or not they think they are succeeding.
Splitting the list into options that received more ticks on the ‘readers get’ side, and options that received more ticks on the ‘I aim to be a source of’ side is interesting in that the first list contains the more mundane options, while the nobler and more altruistic ones are on the second list. The word ‘information’ appears twice on the first list, while ‘education’, that implies more nuanced understanding than simply being informed, appears twice on the second list.

More ‘Readers get’ responses
Pride and/or contentment in where they live
Information about new and unusual products they could buy
Companionship
Information about community services that are available

More ‘I aim to be a source of’ responses
Inspiration to aspire
Escapism from the daily grind
Education about other people in their community
Succour
Confidence
A sense of safety
Education about where they are

Looking at the list of other responses given by the 14 phase three editors who clicked on the ‘Anything else you aim to provide’ option, many of them can be seen as simple repetition of options already on the list:

- empathy; emotional replenishment and support are all comparable in meaning to the word ‘succour’ that was on the list derived from phase two;
- “My aim is for readers to feel good about themselves and their lives after they have read my magazine.” is synonymous with ‘confidence’ from the list; and,
- the responses that I grouped under the heading ‘encouragement’ are all about ‘inspiration to aspire’ and the last is about ‘Pride and/or contentment in where they live’ or about ‘Education about where they are’.

The others break new ground though. The statement “Information so they can carry on great water-cooler conversations, even with people they don't know” is reminiscent of the “around the village well” conversations Pinkola Estes (1992)
raises in her discussion about the function of stories in bonding and “setting aright” communities.

The phase three editors raised a list of health-related information services, reminiscent of Radimer and Harvey’s (1995) research that showed that women frequently use magazines as sources of nutritional information and Kassulke et al’s (1993) study that recorded women’s claims that magazines were their principal source of health information. One phase three editor added financial advice to the list and it would be interesting to test how seriously that aspect of editorial is taken by readers via research such as Radimer and Harvey’s and Kassulke et al’s.

The phase three editors also said that they aimed to provide entertainment in the form of insight into interesting people and visual pleasure, as well as humour, competitions and puzzles. While this could be equated with the ‘escapism from the daily grind’ option, it has a more playful quality, free from connotations about the laboriousness of daily life. One editor upped the ante, however, and added “chance to win life-changing prizes” which could mean that in some cases magazines operate as lotteries in the lives of readers, complete with their complex gambling dynamics.

**Cultural Curiosities**

The preamble to the MEAA Code of Ethics includes the following: “Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy.” The intention of the passage is clearly to emphasize that journalism is about reporting events and reflecting culture back to itself, so that the citizenry can make decisions. Point four of the code states: “Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.” If this point was followed wholeheartedly it would be impossible for a journalist to promote causes or to seek to influence culture.

Against this backdrop, the questionnaire asked the editors if their publications sought to follow events and reflect/report on culture; if they sought to lead the way
and influence/change culture; and if they could only do one of the two, which would it be?

The first two were answered in the same way, with 55% answering that they sought to both report on culture and to influence it. While 45% said that they were not trying to do either. This latter result may be because these editors see their readerships as being niche groups differentiated from the whole of culture. It may also mean that these editors don’t see themselves in the sense that Ferguson (1983) described them, as being responsible for deciding what is included and excluded from the agenda of feminine concerns.

The question that most tellingly differentiates magazine editors from ‘journalists’ as defined by the MEAA Code is ‘If you could only do one of these which would it be?’ More than two thirds (69%) of the editors, in defiance of the Code, answered ‘influence’. (This is especially interesting given that answering question 21, 94% of the phase three editors said they thought the code applied to their work.)

Burrowing in to how editors think that they influence culture, the next question offered four options derived from phase two and offered an option for input of ‘other’ ideas. The question was answered by 23 editors and three contributed other ideas. In all, 49 responses were given to the question indicating that some, or perhaps all of the 23 editors, ticked more than one option. The response supported by the largest proportion of phase three editors (65% of the 23) was “you have publicized and framed particular social movements (such as responsible travel or cruelty-free products) in a positive light”. This clearly contradicts the Code’s edict: “Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment … to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence” – if ‘personal interest’ is taken to mean personal interest in an issue; or if ‘belief’ is belief in the worthiness of; or if ‘commitment’ is a commitment to supporting and promoting; and if ‘fairness’ is about being dispassionate and presenting social movements in a neutral light.

The second most supported option was; ‘you have provided promotion (marketing support) for fledgling businesses or industries’ with 57% of editors ticking that
option. The other two options ‘you have presented cutting-edge styles or ideas from other countries, not previously seen in Australia, to your Australian readers’ and ‘everything in the magazine has some subtext behind it’ received 48% and 30% support. In further research, it would be interesting to delve into the correlation between time in the role, tertiary education and support for the notion that all magazine content contains subtext, as much magazine analysis – from Fergusson (1983) to the Marxist-inspired scholars such as Winship (1987) and Hebron (1983) – has been based on the assumption that there is subtext in magazine content. I am using the term ‘subtext’ here in the broadest sense, meaning “an underlying idea or motivation behind what is said, done or written” (Macquarie Dictionary, 1999). It was introduced to this project in phase two by an editor who claimed that there was subtext in everything he included in his magazines. He offered examples of recipes bearing subtext about multiculturalism, and profiles of actors challenging stereotypes of ethnic groups they represent. I suspect that the lack of stronger support for this item stems from an unfamiliarity with the notion of subtext among the younger editors, but it could be an echo of antipathy towards the deconstructionist sentiments encapsulated in Derrida’s (1976) famous statement: “There is nothing beyond the text.” More research is needed to better understand this response.

The three ‘other’ responses raise interesting new issues when rendered down, as the phase two responses to the question were, into more broadly applicable statements. “Increased awareness of the obesity problem in Aust” could be stripped of its topicality and rephrased as “raising awareness of health and social problems”. In turn “Our magazine celebrates everyday, ordinary Australians” could be expressed as “providing positive reinforcement to people who are living socially co-operative, but otherwise unremarkable, lives.”

The third ‘other’ response was “my magazine is better represented by the word community than culture”. This point is reminiscent of Turow’s (1997) notion of ‘image tribes’ or niche markets engaged in a sense of community by tightly targeted magazines, but also detached from a sense of involvement in culture as a larger entity. Turow expressed this as “sharing fewer common views of the world”. While
nurturing specific communities sounds wholesome in some respects, Turow’s take on it is dark and foreboding, and he concluded with:

> Once the emerging system is solidified, it will not be easy to change. Media technologies and formats that have been shaped by the values of social division will reinforce those values even when leaders in their rhetoric are trying to bring people together. Like heavy gates separating one community from another, the very structure of the American media world will drive people apart for a long time to come. (p.8)

Viewed from this perspective, this response may be an interesting launch point for further investigation into the role of magazines in separating out and/or bringing together social groups in Australia.

The final question in the section asked: “In your magazine, on what topics (if any) are you actively promoting cultural change?” The question was answered by 20 editors whose responses are listed in the previous ‘Results’ section, both in their raw form and broken down and grouped thematically into six clusters of responses.

The first of these clusters, labelled ‘general sentiments’, espouses qualities generally deemed in contemporary Australian culture to be virtuous or noble. The list includes: tolerance; generosity; fairness; respect for the disabled; valuing motherhood; national pride; and active citizenship. Whether these qualities are deemed virtuous because they are promoted by magazines or whether they are promoted by magazines because they are virtuous is difficult to decipher at this stage, but this response at least provides a clear statement of intent on the part of the editors.

Social causes the phase three editors said that they actively promoted in their magazines ranged from those loosely characterized by the word “charitable” to more specific issues requiring political action on state or federal levels, such as: access to
dental health care; tougher sentences for people who abuse animals; paid maternity leave; and fair trade.

The second cluster grouped together causes that can be supported by the activation of community and state or local government initiatives. These included: fighting against domestic violence; strengthening communities to prevent child abuse; making communities more child-friendly; supporting young talent; and considering the role of parents in the workforce.

The next cluster focused on causes that require action by individuals, such as readers. These included organ donation, the way people perceive food in their daily lives, the kind of foods people buy and prepare, how people travel, and how they behave in relation to marriage, weddings and family relationships. This cluster also included the ‘I Can Make a Difference’ editorial campaign being run by one of the magazines that encourages readers to become activists working on issues related to their environments, their schools, their communities, their friends and families and to animals and wildlife.

Environmentalism could have been grouped in this (or the previous) cluster, but as it was raised by four different editors I listed it separately. It is interesting to note that while journalism traditionally does not support causes, following the release of Al Gore’s movie *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006 Rupert Murdoch declared that the media in his empire would stop treating climate change as a questionable theory, and that he would not only make News Corporation carbon neutral by 2010 he would also weave environmental issues and themes into his newspapers and other media. Highlighting how badly this fits with the accepted model of journalism, senior writer with *Fortune* Marc Gunther (2007), at the time, wrote that this latter idea was “a tricky business, particularly when it comes to news.” Nonetheless, Murdoch’s bold announcement may, to some extent, have mandated the editors (in particular those in his stable) to be outspoken about climate-change issues, despite the old ruling against taking sides.
Echoing the responses given to the question about what readers got from their publications, the phase three editors raised a list of health-related issues when asked what topics they were promoting cultural change on. These ranged from general statements like ‘health issues’ to more specific subjects such as: breastfeeding; exercise; healthy eating; weight loss; preventative healthcare; and lifestyle change to improve health. While these can be seen as issues that require individual action, there is a cultural component in normalizing them as behaviours, and there is a potential social dividend in reduced healthcare costs for the community.

The final cluster looks at deliberate efforts by magazine editors to advance pop culture and cultural aesthetics via a focus on design and beauty in general, and specifically in terms of new trends in food and wine, and in the appearance and functionality of building interiors. One editor also flagged her own perfectionism and said that she was aiming to influence quality perceptions of celebrity media.

**Expectations and Experiences**

In many respects the point of doing a study like this is its ability to uncover unknown aspects and nuances involved in the work of magazine editing. If this work was culturally well-understood there would be little point in a study such as this. It therefore seemed relevant to ask the editors how their knowledge of the job differed from the perception of it that others have. As they can’t know what others think, I asked how their current understanding differed from their perception of the role before they worked in it. The phase three editors were asked about six facets of their work, drawn from the answers of the phase two editors to questions about how their perceptions of the role had changed over time. Each option was prefixed with the word ‘less’ or ‘more’ and the editors were asked to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or to indicate that their perception of that facet of the work was ‘about the same’ as it had been before they took up the mantle of editor.

Between one fifth and one third of the editors said that their work was ‘about the same’ in terms of how interesting, glamorous, creative and draining it was and about half said it was ‘about the same’ in terms of fun. Looking at majorities in the yes/no answers, editors who thought the job was less glamorous and more draining
outnumbered editors who thought the reverse by three to one. This aligned with the perspectives of the three younger editors in phase two. In phase three, though, none of the editors thought the work was less interesting and only one thought it was less creative. Phase three editors who thought the job was more fun than they had expected outnumbered editors who answered ‘no’ to that item by four to one.

While this ‘more fun’ aspect makes the job seem appealing, asked if they were at risk of burnout 62% said ‘yes’. A higher proportion (five out of seven) of the phase two editors reported that they were at risk of, or had experienced, burnout as working editors. The lower (but still not insignificant) risk in phase three may be a product of the additional budget and staff support provided by the large publishing houses that most of the phase three editors worked for.

Further exploring downsides to the role, the phase three editors were asked if they agreed with any or all of a set of seven most-hated aspects of editor-work derived from phase two. ‘Time consuming administrative work’ topped the list with 79% ticking it. ‘Being forced to allow ugly advertisements on the pages’ came second with 75% support. These two options were derived from the two most experienced editors in phase two. The only other item ticked by more than half of the editors who answered the question was ‘Pressure to be out and about, attending events and making small talk’, with 54% support. This option was derived from comments by two of the phase two editors and it is interesting to compare it with the phase three editors’ response to question 23 that asked ‘Do you enjoy attending events in the role of editor?’ While none of the editors said ‘no’ to that question, 65% said they were indifferent. That an issue they are indifferent about rates as a most-hated aspect of the job gives an indication of the editors’ overall level of job satisfaction.

The other items raised by the phase two editors were supported by between 10% and 43% of the phase three editors. The phase three editors were also given the opportunity to contribute other most-hated aspects and while some are similar to items already on the list, others are new:

- ‘difficult personality on staff’ could have been recorded as support for
‘disagreements with colleagues and/or the publisher’ but it implies that there is only one person who is difficult to get along with and all other relations are healthy;

- ‘people’s perceptions of you when they’ve never met you’ is similar to ‘pressure to be out and about, attending events and making small talk’ in that it implies a frustration with the superficiality involved in professional socializing;

- ‘compromising for advertising dept’ and ‘dealing with advertising requests in which money wins’ could have been recorded as ‘being forced to allow ugly advertisements on the pages’ but they imply a larger range of disputes than simply focusing on the aesthetics of the placed ads; and,

- ‘not always being able to do things to the standard I like’; ‘the relentlessness of deadlines therefore no down time’; ‘millions of emails to deal with on a daily basis. There’s never enough time to respond to them all.’; and ‘The fact that the pressure of the day-to-day restricts opportunities for strategic planning and the fact that I don’t have the answer to the Next Big Thing in magazines!’ are thematically similar to ‘Exhaustion or burnout’ and ‘Time-consuming administrative work’ but different in that they convey a sense of being generally overwhelmed by the workload. There is also a sense of editors struggling against time to meet expectations, including their own; those of the people who send them emails; and their bosses who want them to come up with “the Next Big Thing”. While not phrased as ‘exhaustion or burnout’, this state sounds likely to lead to that end.

The most notably novel comment in this section was “Salary is not commensurate with responsibility level and stress”. While this wasn’t raised in phase two in response to the most-hated aspects of the work, one of the younger phase two editors
said that the fact that she was earning less than the art director and advertising manager had “grated” on her towards the end of her time in the role.

Asked about their most-loved aspects of their work the editors unanimously agreed that they enjoyed feeling proud of their magazines. This is interesting in light of Day’s (2005) claim that “magazines are the least credible print products”.

The phase three editors echoed the phase two editors with 96% enthusing about the creative aspects of their work and 86% about their colleagues. Three quarters ticked that they enjoyed the people they deal with as an editor and their relationship with their readers. Only one of the phase two editors said that he enjoyed the management aspects of his work and his minority status was echoed in phase three with only 41% ticking this option.

A very rough measure of whether editors are happy overall in their jobs can be gleaned by comparing the number of responses to the most-hated aspects question with the number of responses to the ‘most-loved’ aspects question. The former was answered by 28 editors whose total tick and written response tally was 99; the latter was answered by 29 editors who tallied 140 tick/responses. This indicates that overall on balance the positives of the job seem to outweigh the negatives, at least for editors still working. Presumably it is if (and/or when) this balance tips that editors move on.

Demographic Denouement

The phase three questionnaire ended with a set of demographic questions to enable the respondents to be compared with the phase two editors and with ABS data.

In phase two just over two thirds had been in the role for three years or less, while in phase three just under a third had been in the role for three years or less. The longest any of the phase two editors had been in the role was 11 years, while 14% of the phase three editors had been in the role longer than that, with two exceeding 25 years in the role. Predictably, as phase two was a small group this means there is a
greater range of editing experience represented in phase three, but more of the phase three editors have more years in the job behind them.

Comparing the ages of the phase two editors (at the end of their editorships, or if they were still working with their ages at the time of their interviews) with the phase three editors reveals that overall the phase two editors were younger. Three of them (42%) were in their 20s, while only 7% of the phase three editors were in their twenties. 29% of the phase two editors were in their thirties, 29% were in their forties and none were older than 44. This compares with 31% of the phase threes in their thirties, 52% in their forties and 10% in their fifties.

The gender balance between the groups was also different with 42% of the phase two editors being male but only 7% of the phase three editors being male. The gender balance in phase two was partly a result of the gender balance of my network and partly deliberate in order to keep the focus on women’s magazine editors rather than on female editors. In phase three the gender balance was a by-product of the selection of magazines based on Roy Morgan’s readership figures.

In phase two, of the six editors who answered the question about income, half were earning $60,000 or less. Given inflation and the passage of time since some of those editors were in their roles I made the lowest benchmark in phase three $70,000. So, while half the phase two editors were making less than $70,000, only 10% of the phase three editors were on wages that low.

Counting one whose wage was estimated via an indexation calculation, two of the phase two editors (33%) were making more than $120,000. This compares with 41% of the phase three editors earning over that figure. These figures indicate that, overall, fewer of the phase three editors were on low wages and more were on high wages than their phase two counterparts. This may be correlated with the overall age difference between the phase two and phase three editors.

It is interesting to note, given the diversity of salaries received by editors, that while insufficient salary was noted by one phase two and one phase three editor (in
addition to a couple of comments in phase two about magazine editing not paying as well as some people expect it to), generosity of salary was not mentioned by any editors as a favourite aspect of the job.

The question about tertiary education was asked because, while a few decades ago journalists entered the profession as copy-runners and cadets and were trained on the job, university qualifications are now standard criteria for entry-level journalism positions. In 1983 Ferguson wrote that editor training schools were non-existent (in the UK) and that editors were trained on the job. A few years later, writing about the “real and remarkable shifts in the world of girls’ magazines” since the 1970s, McRobbie (1991) said:

Perhaps the single most interesting change in the publications has been the result of the outlook and editorial values of those working inside them … For teachers of Media Studies, the conclusion might be that magazines are not just consumed and read, but also produced. Greater attention should be paid to this dimension.

(p. 186)

While this illustrates the potential for this study to impact on tertiary journalism education, it also raises the question of how tertiary media education may have changed magazine editors. Perhaps the old-style on-the-job training produced editors more deeply steeped in the tenets of journalism, and perhaps exposure to philosophy and media theory at university produces editors more interested in changing culture than just reporting on it, and more inclined to think on their feet than to dutifully adhere to a code. While more research is needed to fully unravel this, these figures provide an interesting starting point for investigation of this issue.

The oldest two of the phase two editors were trained by cadetship and had no tertiary qualifications. The other five had degrees, three with parts of their courses involving specialization in journalism or communications. In phase three, 55% had degrees, ten of these including communications, media or journalism majors. The lower proportion of degrees in phase three may be a result of the age spread – with more older editors, more would have entered the profession prior to the demise of the school-age cadetships.
An interestingly circular point is that given that the media industry has almost
universally accepted the practice of employing graduates, any generic shortcomings
in tertiary trained editors that this, or other studies, may reveal are directly relevant
to the tertiary education sector which is committed to equipping graduates to work
in their areas of specialization.

The final phase three question asked if the editors gave informed consent for me to
use their responses as de-identified statistical data in this thesis and academic
articles and they unanimously agreed.
PHASE FOUR INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Having used an insider ethnographic process to draw out into the open magazine editors’ views of their own position, the final stage of this project involved eliciting responses to the editors’ version of themselves from people occupying other positions (enunciative modalities), in order to assess whether editors’ views of themselves are well understood by others or not.

While other researchers, such as Ang (1990) and Hermes (1995), have explored the agency of readers, this project did not extend to reader research, and it did not dip back into magazine workplaces to interview administrative and advertising staff about how they communicate with editors, although these both represent interesting sites for further research to reality-test the editors’ claims about those fields of discourse.

Instead, it stepped outside those fields into a broader cultural space that discusses magazines and magazine production, and sought responses from a range of stakeholders. This decision reconnects with the idea that launched this project of looking at the framework magazines are seen to sit within and whether or not it enables the quality of magazines to be critically evaluated in a meaningful way.

The People
The stakeholders sought for this phase of the research included: a feminist; a publishing company executive; a media commentator; the journalists’ union; and a newspaper journalist. The process of finding people occupying these positions is outlined below:
Feminist:

**Anne Manne** was approached because, in addition to having written widely on feminism, motherhood, childcare, family policy and fertility, she wrote an article published as a *Quarterly Essay* in early 2008 (Manne, 2008) that presented a well informed history and description of feminism that reaffirmed her authority in this field. When contacted she agreed to be involved.

Newspaper journalist:

**Jane Schulze**, journalist and editor of *The Australian*’s weekly media section was approached and agreed to participate.

Executive:

**Nick Chan**, CEO of Pacific Magazines was approached and agreed to participate. Pacific Publications produces 12 of the titles in the list of 54 magazines used in phase three. Pat Ingram, ACP Magazines Group Publisher Women’s Lifestyle Titles, and Scott Lorson, ACP Magazines CEO were also approached but Ingram declined and Lorson didn’t respond. ACP Magazines produces 16 of the titles in the list of 54 magazines used in phase three.

Commentator:

**Mark Day**, media commentator and columnist with *The Australian* was approached because he was quoted in the introduction of the study and so I was interested in his reactions to its findings. He agreed to participate. Because Day’s views are often bluntly put and are therefore potentially contentious, **Margaret Simons**, media commentator on retainer with *Crikey* was also approached and agreed to participate. Simons has written several books about media and politics including *The Content Makers: Understanding the Future of the Australian Media*, published by Penguin in September 2007. Keith Windschuttle, current editor of *Quadrant*, and author of the 1988 classic *The media: A new analysis of the press, television, radio and advertising in Australia* and veteran editor Ita Buttrose were also approached. Buttrose declined, and while Windschuttle initially agreed to participate, he didn’t submit a response.
Union (MEAA):
Federal secretary of the MEAA Chris Warren was approached but as he was overseas he was unable to participate. I then asked the MEAA to suggest the next most appropriate spokesperson for the organisation and Jonathan Este, director of communications, agreed to participate.

The Process
In order to be able to compare and contrast comments made by the various stakeholders a methodology was required that would give them equal access to information about the project and equal opportunity to speak to it. I also needed to be cognizant of limitations in the amount of time they could devote to participating.

As the phase three discussion was around 10,000 words in length and written to work in the context of its place in this thesis it was deemed to be inappropriately long, and too academically focused, to use in phase four. Instead a summary of it was written, incorporating a few lines about the overall aim and structure of the project. The structure of this summary-essay reflected the seven sections used in the phase three questionnaire and carried through the phase three discussion. A prompt to give a ‘response’ was included at the end of each of these seven sections.

The summary essay and explanatory email (that explicitly stated that giving a response by email implied permission for use of that response and their names in this thesis and associated articles), were submitted to the ECU ethics committee for approval. With approval granted, the essay and emails were sent to Anne Manne; Jane Schulze; Nick Chan; Mark Day; Margaret Simons and Jonathan Este.
PHASE FOUR DATA

This section presents the summary essay as it was sent to the phase four participants along with their complete responses to it, sitting in the points of the essay that called for ‘response’. The responses were subjected to only minimal editing, involving correction of minor typographical errors, the expansion of abbreviations and acronyms and the addition of italics to publication titles. The data is shown in this form because it is at its richest in this raw state – in Geertz’s (1973) sense of the word – and it will allay concerns about selection bias in my choice of quotes from these responses in the following discussion section.

Discussion Paper: A draft profile of women’s magazine editors in Australia
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Love them or hate them women’s magazines sell well in Australia. According to the Magazine Publishers Association, Australians are among the most voracious magazine consumers in the world, and women’s titles are the industry’s top performers. But, despite their commercial success, women’s magazines are often criticized by media commentators for being ‘bad journalism’ and by academics for being ‘bad texts’. While the aims of journalism are broadly to inform and entertain, this thesis posits that magazines may not fit within the framework of journalism and that in order to assess their quality it may be necessary to consider other functions that they serve.

To date, academic research about magazines has been driven largely by women’s studies scholars. In the 1970s and early 1980s text-based studies were claiming that magazines were subordinating women by perpetuating a patriarchal hegemonic framework. Since the late 1980s models of discourse have more often been used to frame research that has broadened out to include evaluation of how audiences use and interpret media products. In 2003, Anna Gough Yates published a comprehensive analysis of women’s magazines in the UK in the 1990s that wove together business and cultural-impact considerations. Echoing earlier authors, such as Marjorie Ferguson and Angela McRobbie, Gough Yates admitted that what was missing from the picture was research involving the people who actually make the magazines – the editors.
This study has sought to address that lack by taking an ethnographic approach to researching the culture of magazine editors. It is now generally accepted that the best way to begin an ethnography is with self-disclosure, in order to allow readers to assess the scope for bias that may pervade a study as a result of the researcher’s background and prior experiences. Following this practice, I began this study with an autobiographical essay about my own experience as a women’s magazine editor. I then interviewed seven Perth-based editors using questions drawn from the autobiographical essay. The rich data this process yielded, in addition to being interesting reading in its own right, formed the foundation of a questionnaire completed online in February by 30 editors of magazines in the Australian top 50, ranked by Roy Morgan female readership figures.

The following profile of Australian women’s magazine editors is derived from the responses to that questionnaire.

The people, the job

- Most magazine editors are female (93%) and in their 30s or 40 (83%). Some are in their 20s and some are in their 50s.

- 49% of editors earn between $70,000 and $120,000 and 41% earn more and only 10% earn less.

- Just over half of them have degrees; most of these degrees are in fields such as media and communications.

- 97% claim to have complete, or almost complete, control over the editorial content of their magazines.

- 59% said they had never been given job descriptions.

Describing their work, all of the editors said it involved journalistic tasks (such as choosing stories, commissioning, writing and subbing); managing budgets; and promoting their magazines. All but one also said their work included project management (coordinating staff, photo shoots, schedules etc) and 55% said they were involved in corporate decision making.

Response:
Anne Manne:

It is interesting that the attitude to women’s magazines seems dismissive or quietly scathing about an unusually (compared to the rest of the Australian workforce) female dominated and relatively highly paid group of women – whose morale is also high! Those attitudes are
likely to come from the view of women’s magazines as ‘unserious’ and lightweight, yet their consistent popularity suggests an ability to tune into women's lives, and a professionalism and acumen on the part of the editors. Hence the editor’s role is surely worth examining beyond the stereotype of “perpetuating a patriarchal hegemonic framework.” Ita Buttrose, as one of Australia’s most successful career journalists and magazine editor, belies such a stereotype, as do other, younger contemporary editors.

Jane Schulze:

That all fits with my understanding. Editors of Australian women’s magazines are often very highly paid and are almost exclusively women. I would also agree they have a strong degree of control over the magazine and would expect most to have some form of communications degree.

Nick Chan:

It is difficult to comment on the statistics, however, the work description appears right. I would add that increasingly, the editor’s role has become more encompassing and involves areas of strategic planning, brand positioning, brand extensions as well as greater involvement in marketing and sales.

Mark Day:

There are no surprises here. The surprise would be that women DON’T edit women’s magazines. The lack of job descriptions in 40 per cent of the cases indicates the competitive nature of the magazine business: there’s always an understudy willing to say he/she can do a better job, and therefore when they get the gig it is often a publisher’s endorsement of that sentiment rather than a new direction which might require a job description.
Margaret Simons:

This accords with my understanding. No surprises here. I wonder about the source of your claim that the purposes of journalism include entertainment. Some (Jay Rosen, perhaps) would argue with you.

Jonathan Este:

It is interesting to read that only just more than half of the survey group of magazine editors have tertiary degrees. I wonder whether there is an age correlation here: the younger have degrees, while a proportion of older editors came up through the cadetship system.

That 49 per cent earn between $70,000 and $120,000 is not hugely surprising: those figures reflect grading under the ACP journalists’ award from about a grade 7 to what you might like to call at “Super 10” which doesn’t exist under the ACP award (which stops at Grade 9 – or about $90,000 per annum). I extrapolate upwards, however, based on my personal knowledge of newspaper awards and the number of journalists, for example, working at Fairfax Media earning more than $100,000 a year. You would want an editor to have complete control over the editorial content of their magazines.

Editorial Independence

Asked: “What influences, other than your own personal choices, shape the voice of your magazine?” they all cited concern for the readers’ interests. Most added “the mix of stories” and “the core focus or theme of the magazines”. In addition:

- 75% said they were influenced by the views of journalistic colleagues, and 62% by other colleagues including sales and admin staff.

- Only 25% said they were ‘not at all’ influenced by what their boss or publisher thought.

- Only 13% said they were ‘not at all’ influenced by how stories or features may impact on advertisers.

These last two figures, while small, are interesting when juxtaposed against the 97% who claimed to have almost or complete control over editorial content.
While much has been said about the manipulation of the media by publishers, 90% of the editors said they had never been asked to push a political line.

More than two thirds of the editors said they were part of their readerships by age, gender and income demographics and because of their interests, but only just over one third said they based assumptions about what their readers would be interested in on their own interests. This is odd given that publishing houses often promote editors as people who understand their readerships because they are part of them. It could be explained, though, by the 78% of editors who reported that their company commissioned or conducted research on their readers’ interests, implying that assumptions aren’t necessary.

Despite all this, 97% said their editorial choices were sometimes, or a lot, influenced by their own personal interests – which could be seen as “it’s my soap box and I’m going to stand on it” kind of thinking.

**Response:**

Anne Manne:

The main issue here is that whether, as a relatively highly paid section of the workforce, the editors would be mainly constituted of what the British sociologist Catherine Hakim’s called ‘work-centred’ women. Hakim established that after the equal opportunities revolution women are not a homogenous group with respect to work and family preferences. A minority of women return early to work and work pretty much continuously throughout life, an even smaller group are ‘home-centered’ and have larger families but do not do much paid work, while a much larger group is what Hakim called ‘adaptive’ – adapting working life to the needs of children, working part time or staying home when children are small, working more and often becoming more career focused as their children get older and more independent. The data shows this is also true of Australian women. If the editors are ‘work-centered,’ it is possible that the general world view of women’s magazines will tend to be a little distorted – and support a minority lifestyle more than the mainstream – supporting paid maternity leave for working mothers, for example, and running glowing profiles of ‘supermums having it all,’ but regard any stories on the potential ill-
effects of childcare, as ‘negative.’ An example: The Australian Women’s Weekly commissioned a profile of me and an article on my book Motherhood (2005). The article was very well written and researched, by a well-known journalist, Bettina Arndt, with interviews from key child development experts. The photographer came and took photos, and it looked all set to go. It undoubtedly would have been of interest to a lot of Australian women. It raised the important issue of much longer parental leaves than the proposed 14 weeks, which better reflect Australian mother’s actual behaviour. Yet I noticed that Arndt’s editor seemed wary of it, having put her own child into childcare very early, and when it came down to it, the story was killed. Against that, the need to maintain readerships would push the magazines towards fairly accurate representation of the views and behaviors of their readers, i.e. it would push them towards being inclusive of all mothers as opposed to just those who had lifestyles like their own.

Jane Schulze:

I would think that when picking stories, and especially front cover images, magazine editors are most influenced by the knowledge of what sells. Celebrities who have appeared on the front cover and scored strong sales will invariably reappear not too long afterwards. I also think it’s a huge stretch to think the owners of these mags think they’d actually have any political influence … there is very minimal political discussion in these mags – the closest was when The Australian Women’s Weekly did stories on the PM [prime ministers’] wives – and those stories are hardly going to affect government policy. So when picking which celebrity to put on the cover or write a story about, the influences would be A) can we put the image on the front cover and if we did would it sell? And B) gut feel for what is newsworthy to the female audience and c) colleagues’ opinions.
Nick Chan:

In my experience, the editor has “almost or complete control over editorial content”. In my experience, an editor also makes these editorial judgment on the basis of numerous ‘influences’ – these range from their personal choices, their peers, colleagues, various research, their bosses and, at times, advertisers.

I don’t believe that publishing houses often promote editors as people who understand their readership “because they are part of them” – we certainly don’t. We do promote our editors’ ability to understand their readership (usually through instinct, direct feedback and research) but not because they are necessarily “part of them”.

Most of the top 50 magazines published are targeted at women and normally age demographics range from 18-55. It is not surprising that over two thirds of the editors fall within this demographic, especially given that 93% of the respondents were female.

Mark Day:

Again, no surprises here. Magazine owners tend to look for editors they believe can best position the magazine in the market slot they want (to attract advertising and sales) so the first box they tick is whether or not they think the editor has the capacity to connect with that audience. It helps if the candidate lives the target lifestyle.

Research of readers’ interests is only a guide – a useful tool to make an editor feel confident he/she is on the right track.

Margaret Simons:

There isn’t necessarily a contradiction between saying they are influenced by something, and also saying they have control. To be influenced is not to cede control.

I think the reality is that advertising is much more influential than these figures in isolation suggest. But some of this operates at a semi-conscious level – in that the magazines would NOT EXIST without lots of glossy ads. So that means that a lot of assumptions are made about
what interests women – and these assumptions arise largely out of what, in an advertising-driven media model, it is possible to give them.

Jonathan Este:

I’m impressed by the candour of your responses. Again, my experience leads me to suggest that people who attain the lofty heights of editorship will not usually need an overt instruction from their proprietor to know what his/her thoughts are on any given issue. Most new magazine start-ups these days are accompanied by exhaustive audience research, however, it is odd that there is a discrepancy between the number of editors who considered themselves part of their readerships and those who went on their own instincts when coming up with story ideas.

Advertorial

Advertorial is run in a clear majority of high circulation women’s magazines, and about half of the editors consider it to be a contentious topic. While a clear majority of advertorial is labelled as such, just over half is written by journalistic, rather than advertising/marketing, staff. In addition, most editors work on finding newsworthy angles for advertorial and most editors speak to sales staff in order to either approve contractual promises of advertorial or because sales staff are encouraging them to write client-friendly copy.

The scope for conflict about advertorial was illustrated by figures that indicated that editors had power but could be overruled. While 65% of the editors said that advertorial could only be contractually promised with their consent, only about half of the editors said they were always able to refuse to run advertorial – leaving about half not always able to refuse. Despite this, only a quarter of the editors said they thought that advertorial was damaging to their magazines in the long term. While this figure is relatively small, it was larger then the proportion of publishers and sales staff who thought that advertorial was damaging.

Response:

Anne Manne:

Advertorial content subverts the purpose of editorial freedom and is a dubious use of journalistic skills. There should be a clear demarcation between advertisement and editorial content.
Jane Schulze:

It’s hard to respond to this without being given a clear example. But from a generic point of view, my opinion is that if copy is clearly labeled as ‘advertorial’ then it doesn’t matter who wrote it.

Nick Chan:

I agree that this is always a contentious topic. It is not surprising that it is contentious since advertorials are advertising communicated in editorial-like format albeit clearly labelled. I would contend that publishers are selling the format and hence the added effectiveness of the communication – the contentious issue should be either to allow this or not; and in our case the editors have a major say. Once decided and given that it is clearly marked, the editor should have very little say, except in cases where the communication is misleading, deceptive or inappropriate for the magazine brand.

Mark Day:

Journalists traditionally like the concept of editorial purity but are sufficiently savvy about the real world to understand the need for strong revenue to support their costs.

Margaret Simons:

No surprises here. But THIS is the point of contradiction re the earlier claim of having “complete control”.

Jonathan Este:

Advertorial will always remain a contentious topic. The Alliance’s view, based on our Code of Ethics, is that advertising material must be clearly marked as such. We recognize that – particularly in tough markets – magazines will be under pressure to include editorial material to chime with a particular advertiser or campaign but our principle is that journalists should not be compelled to compromise their integrity by
being asked to act as covert marketing agents for a third-party commercial interest. For what it is worth, my personal experience, having run a “special advertising projects” team on a daily newspaper, is that there are ways to run advertising copy that is still worthwhile – that canvasses the most interesting angles and is not pure pulp. Not surprised to see the discrepancy between editors who believe that advertorial can be damaging and publishers/sales staff!

**Cultural creatives or journalists?**

Around two thirds of editors find their work artistically satisfying, and the same proportion do not restrict how much of their own voice is in their publications. While just over half of the editors said their ‘voice’ was discernable in their copy, three quarters said that their magazines had a ‘voice’ discernable from their own.

A clear majority of magazine editors said they considered themselves to be journalists, and that the journalistic code of ethics applied to their work. But their sense of alienation from journalism was reflected by the 81% who said their work was substantially different from newspaper work and the half who said their work was not well-understood by journalists in other media. The sense of alienation is again confirmed by the two thirds majority who said that that the magazine community was separate from the journalistic community, and the three quarters majority who said the magazine community was a subset of the journalistic community.

Despite this troubled relationship with journalism as a profession, 94% expressed contentment with their jobs (that runs counter to the view of magazines as inferior media products) by saying that they would not prefer to be working in hard-news oriented media. In addition 84% said that they shared camaraderie with other magazine editors.

Asked about how their perceptions of the role of editor had changed over time the majority deemed the job to be less glamorous but more interesting, creative and draining than expected. About half said it was about the same as they had expected in terms of ‘fun’ and a further 39% said it was more fun. The draining aspect should not be taken lightly though, with 62% claiming to be at risk of burnout.

Asked about downsides to their work, the most common responses were to do with administrative work and dealing with advertising. Favourite aspects of the job included pride in the magazines, creativity, and dealing with people including colleagues, contacts and readers. Overall the editors gave more positive than negative responses to the job satisfaction questions.
Response:

Anne Manne:
While some women’s magazine editors clearly show real skill, professionalism and judgment in maintaining enviable readerships over a very long period, it is also true that the obsession with celebrity in many contemporary magazines both sells, but also legitimately undermines, our respect for the editors as serious journalists. While I am not expecting the New York Times sitting in the hairdresser (my main ‘research moment’ on this question!) flipping through magazines, I am amazed by the sheer quantity of content devoted to one seedy celebrity after another.

Jane Schulze:
I’d agree writing a report on the latest development in the life of a US celebrity is very different to writing a story which would appear in a newspaper. With the stories that appear in women’s magazines you would actually have to question if they’ve spoken to the subject of the story. In contrast, a newspaper journalist would arguably speak to at least 2 to 3 people involved in the situation before writing the story.

Nick Chan:
The debate on journalism continues unabated among newspapers (tabloid vs. broadsheets), and between magazines and newspapers, and even between magazines themselves. The rapid on-line development has only increased debate. For our part, we believe consumer magazines give a great deal of satisfaction to their editors. It is a very honest business: you create a magazine for the week, month, or quarter; you distribute the magazine; and your audience will either buy it or not. Like most ‘glamour’ jobs, the truth is that being an editor is a challenging role; it draws on one’s creativity as a journalist and as outlined above, it encompasses selling, marketing, business and people
management. And as in most roles, there are aspects such as administrative work and selling which are less satisfying.

Mark Day:

The editors of the down-market weekly women’s magazines such as *New Idea, Woman’s Day*, and *NW* have good cause to feel alienated from the broader journalistic community. They have long since jettisoned any journalistic rules or ethics; they knowingly publish made-up trash – the figment of a writer’s fervid imagination, and they seek to justify it because a large audience laps it up. As I have said before – their products are not weekly news-magazines; they’re comics, and their authors/editors should be ashamed of themselves, whether they think they’re involved in journalism or not.

Margaret Simons:

Did you ask them whether they were members of any journalistic professional associations or unions? I suspect few are. Which code of ethics were they talking about? MEAA or Press Council Statement of Principles or other? And how good was their knowledge of the contents of these codes? Does the statement that their work was different from newspaper work necessarily add up to alienation? Where they asked about broadcast and online journalists – similarities or differences? Not surprised they felt distant from newspaper journalists, although you might get a different response from editors of magazines that are included in newspapers (e.g. *Sunday Life, The Weekend Australian Magazine, BOSS, Good Weekend*).

Jonathan Este:

It is sad to read that only two thirds of editors find their work artistically satisfying. The other third are obviously doing it tough. Magazine journalists are still journalists and still subject to the same pressures that make the Code of Ethics a good protective guide, as much for the reporter/editor as for the objects of their stories and their
readers. There is nothing inferior about magazines per se, although many in the newspaper business may try to give that impression! And, of course, there are magazines which allow that misapprehension to flourish. While magazines set out to achieve different styles of journalism, they still require the fundamentals: research, narrative sense, flair, accuracy and ethics. Abandon any of these and you are likely to end up with an inferior product.

**Celebrity**

Most editors (nearly 90%) said that they thought their readers were curious about them but only two thirds thought that their jobs included an element of celebrity. Asked about more specific aspects of celebrity treatment, just less than half said they were invited to events (not just to report on them) and only a third said other media reported their attendance at the events. These responses indicate that while celebrity treatment is part of life for some magazine editors, it is not universally part of the job.

Adding more detail to how editors react to this treatment, one third said they enjoyed attending events in the role of editor but two thirds said they were indifferent about it.

Considering the function of the convention of including the editor’s photo and letter at the front of the magazine, more than three quarters of the editors said it made them feel more personally responsible for the content of the magazine than if they were not there.

**Response:**

Anne Manne:

The more interesting question is the promotion and celebration of celebrity lifestyles within the magazines, with an implicit judgment that if only one were famous ...! Also there is a continual focus on: celebrities’ body shape/weight; who is anorexic and who is overweight; in shape and out of shape; an obsession with diets; and how quickly they ‘Get Back’ into (‘proper’) shape after childbirth etc.

Jane Schulze:

I don’t have an opinion on this
Nick Chan:

Celebrity is a feature of our current society – chefs, fashion
designers, sportspeople, artists have all been moved into the public
spotlight. It is not surprising that editors of magazines that are read
by literally millions of people are also pushed into the spotlight.
It is surprising that not all editors feel that they are personally
responsible for the content of the magazines they edit.

Mark Day:

No surprises there – they say they are indifferent to celebrity, yet
plenty of them wallow in it!

Margaret Simons:

Interesting but not surprising. Many journalists are reluctant to
conceive of themselves as public figures (see my 1997 book on the

Jonathan Este:

Good to read that the majority of editors feel that their ‘letters’ at the
start of the magazine is their personal guarantee of quality. It is good to
read that so many identify so strongly with their masthead. As to
‘celebrity’ editors, I can see how being publicly identified as the ‘face’ of
a publication may help attract readers. I think the thrill of being a
‘face’ would probably pass after a while and this is borne out in your
numbers.

Pushing Barrows

Asked if they had ever promoted products or services through their magazines for personal
reasons, such as getting discounts on goods or to secure tickets to events, 90% said ‘no’.
The number of editors prepared to admit to pushing ideas, themes and causes was higher,
as 60% said ‘yes’.

This raises the question: what stops editors from filling their magazines with causes and
opinions that they feel passionate about? 90% of them ticked ‘the need to prioritize stories of
interest to the readership that may not interest the editor'. This implies a sense of separation and distinction between the editors’ interests and the readerships’ interests that is curious in the light of earlier responses that saw most editors claiming to be part of their readerships by age, gender and income demographics and by interests. This emphasizes the sense in which editors see themselves as being simultaneously part-of and not-part-of their readerships.

Most editors also said 'the character of the magazine' held them back from filling their publications with personal raves. On the flipside only 10% said they considered the need for caution about offending or discouraging advertisers. While this number is small, it indicates a cognizance of potential financial consequences among, at least, some editors.

The questionnaire asked the editors what they thought the readers got from their publications and whether that was something they deliberately sought to be a source of.

More than half of the editors said their 'readers got', and they, as editors, 'sought to be a source of':

- Inspiration to aspire;
- Information about new and unusual products they could buy;
- Confidence;
- Escapism from the daily grind;
- Companionship;
- Information about things to do and places to go;
- Education about other people in their community;
- Pride and/or contentment in where they live;
- A sense of safety.

Other things that some editors suggested that magazines provide included:

- Information about community services;
- Education about where they are;
- Succour;
- Information so they can carry on great water cooler conversations (community bonding);
- Health information,
- Financial advice;
- Entertainment;
- Visual pleasure;
- Humour; competitions and puzzles; and
- A chance to win life changing prizes.
Response:

Anne Manne:

Reading women’s magazines from the point of view of ‘companionship’, ‘succour’ and ‘escapism from the daily grind’ is interesting. A lot of the stories do have a cozy “I/they/you are just like us!” That is, they carry an assumption of camaraderie and solidarity among women, a sharing of common bonds, stories and life’s hardships which conflicts with the more dour Women’s Studies reading of them as mere patriarchal artifacts.

Re causes: It can be a legitimate form of journalism to promote a cause that is for public good. I have seen the cause of breast cancer awareness or [and] White Ribbon Day on domestic violence (supported by celebrities – a good use of celebrity authority!) supported by women’s magazines. That said, there is also clearly some conflict here between the editors’ sense of themselves as independent but also being concerned about losing advertising.

Jane Schulze:

Again, it’s all about selling the most magazines, so editors will fill their magazines with stories and ideas [they] believe to be of most interest to their readers so more of them buy the magazine. In terms of a ‘barrow’ that could be pushed, I think editors will only do that if it’s a barrow their readers want pushed. A good example is New Idea’s support for the breast cancer charity – it was an idea that was pushed but probably only because it resonated so well with New Idea’s target market.

Nick Chan:

The role of the publisher is to ensure business objectives are met as well as the magazine brand objectives. In managing the editor, a publisher should always ask "how would our readers feel"? Ultimately, there is certainly a possibility of self-interest but it is unlikely to
be tolerated by readers for long especially if it is not in sync with the target readership.

Mark Day:
If you’re editing a magazine that seeks to straddle the mainstream, you must put the need for balance ahead of personal opinion or preference. If you are editing a title that relies on being different and appealing in its individuality, then you’re more free to express your own (or the proprietor’s) opinions or sets of values. This is not a one-size-fits-all industry.

Margaret Simons:
Interesting to see the word “aspire” so high. Aspire to what? It would be interesting to know. Does your data tell us? “Succour” was another interesting word. The importance of information about interesting products reinforces my earlier point about the influence of advertising over and above the explicit.

Jonathan Este:
Not surprised that such a huge majority of editors denied using their positions to get things – holidays, merchandise, etc. Of course, there’s no doubting this sort of thing goes on but it would be a brave editor who would put his or her name to a statement admitting that they actively solicited payola.
On a personal note, I’m glad a majority of editors admitted pushing causes they were interested in as individuals. I happen to think that this is one of the bases of sound journalism. Having said that, the key aim, one would assume, is to put together the right mix of stories, etc., to attract the desired readership profile.
I would imagine that most editors would be at least cognizant of the risks of offending advertisers; this may not be expressed explicitly but any editor worth their salt would be aware of potential risks; I’d say that was part of their job.
Cultural change agents

Asked if they reported on and/or influenced culture, two thirds of the editors said that if they could only do one of those two it would be to influence culture rather than to report on it.

Asked how they thought they influenced culture, two thirds said that it was by framing certain social movements in a positive light. Just over half said they had given marketing support to fledgling businesses; just under half said that they had imported styles and ideas from overseas; and just less than a third said their cultural activism was achieved through subtext throughout their publications. This low response for ‘subtext’ is interesting, as much of the previous research on magazines has assumed that there is subtext.

Other possible mechanisms for achieving social change suggested by the editors were:

- Raising awareness of health and social problems;
- Providing positive reinforcement to people who are living socially co-operative lives.

Asked on which issues they were promoting cultural change, 20 of the 30 editors contributed. Their list included generalised benevolent sentiments; issues that require state or federal political action; issues that require community or local government action; issues that require individual action and calls on readers to become political activists. The list also included environmentalism, health issues (that offer social benefits in reduced community health care costs) and aesthetic issues.

The generalised benevolent sentiments, included: tolerance; generosity; fairness; respect for the disabled; valuing motherhood; national pride; and active citizenship.

Social causes the editors said that they actively promoted included: access to dental health care; tougher sentences for people who abuse animals; paid maternity leave; fair trade; fighting against domestic violence; strengthening communities to prevent child abuse; making communities more child-friendly; supporting young talent; and considering the role of parents in workforce.

Causes that require action by individuals included: organ donation, the way people perceive food in their daily lives; the kind of foods people buy and prepare; how people travel; and how they behave in relation to marriage, weddings and family relationships. This cluster also included an editorial campaign being run by one of the magazines that encourages readers to become activists on issues related to their environments, their schools, their communities, the friends and families and to animals and wildlife. It also included health-related issues, including breastfeeding, exercise, healthy eating, weight loss, preventative healthcare and lifestyle change to improve health.
Determining whether these causes and qualities are deemed virtuous because they are promoted by magazines or whether they are promoted by magazines because they are virtuous is beyond the scope of this study, but these responses at least provide a clear statement of intent on the part of the editors that differs from the usual journalistic mission.

Overall this data illuminates the position of editor as responsible for editorial decisions but also enmeshed in a workplace where input from others needs to be taken into account to an extent that sometimes limits editorial freedom.

Your responses to these finding will be much appreciated.

**Response:**

Anne Manne:

The really interesting thing here would be to evaluate the editors’ responses with actual magazines – to see whether the editor’s sense of their accomplished mission was true or somewhat Pollyannaish! See my comments above for example on the conflict between the desire to promote the cause of ‘healthy eating’ with continual falling from grace stories about some star’s battle with the bulge!

Jane Schulze:

See my previous response.

Nick Chan:

Most editors will state that their particular magazine aims to inspire, entertain and inform their target readership. If you combine this objective with the power and ability of magazines to create a community of readers – either through specific interests eg fashion, homemaking, food etc or via mindset – then it is inevitable that some of a magazine’s editorial will shape cultural change.

The frequency of magazines, which is less than that of newspapers, TV and radio, generally means that they are less likely to report and more likely to explore the issues.
Mark Day:

Everything we write influences someone, somewhere. You just never know who and how. Those who set out to change the world often leave it unhappy that they did not succeed. Sometimes the things we least expect flow from an article or an opinion piece.

No matter how “free” they are to make decisions, smart editors will canvass those around them for opinions.

Margaret Simons:

Not surprising to me. But I suspect the advertising dependent nature of the magazines limits the causes and subtexts realistically available to the editors. Could they support the ‘Buy Nothing Day’, for example? Or campaign against hair colouring in older women, against the latest clothing fashion trend, against sweatshop-produced clothing, against the wearing of make-up? I suspect not, or not much.

Jonathan Este:

A very interesting finding indeed. I suspect this would be different in a straw poll of newspaper editors in Australia (the UK model is slightly different – papers tend to be more campaigning there). I must say I am surprised at this finding: I’d have previously thought that most magazine editors were about reflecting, rather than influencing. However, I can see how this sentiment might change with the political current and/or the zeitgeist. If it is seen as hip to be on message with, for example, climate change, then that is a powerful marketing tool. Ditto world poverty etc, which allows you to align your masthead with the likes of Bono et al.

Any closing comments?

Anne Manne:

It would be a worthwhile study to look at women’s magazines in the light of this report on editors to see how far there was consistency
between intention and product. The other main issue too, is that women’s magazines are not all created equal, i.e. of identical quality. Some are very good, others deserve the tag of ‘inferior journalistic product!’ Some enter the values of the raunch culture and obsess over celebrities, others carry values which subvert, as well as represent, such cultural values.

Jane Schulze: No closing comments.

Nick Chan: No closing comments.

Mark Day:

My comments should be seen though a framework of concern that this kind of ‘averaging’ research is, to my mind, highly suspect in that it will provide you with a sense of the ‘average’ editor when the very nature of magazines demands different types of editors for different types of product. Magazines fill niches, so at one end of the scale you need a hoaky bloke to edit Ralph while at the other end you need a stylish socialite to edit Vogue.

I see many of the issues posed here as too general to have any real meaning. You ask whether magazine work is journalism: in my view, some is; some isn’t. It depends on the magazine – are we asking about a Marie Claire article on Somalia, or a NW report on celebrity cellulite? I feel this kind of research will define the middle of the magazine industry – which is exactly where they don’t want to be. They want to be “out there” and “different.”

Margaret Simons:

Fascinating research and I will be interested to see your conclusions. I wonder if you are including any discussion of the role celebrity reporting plays for people? I actually think it is very important. More comment on this in my book The Content Makers, if you are interested. I argue that celebrity reporting plays the same role as the morality plays
of old – giving people raw material for the discussion and examination of big moral issues, and reflecting on their own life stories and ways of being.

I would argue that entertainment is not part of the purpose of journalism (although journalism may be entertaining). But also that celebrity reporting is not only entertainment. The real issues arise, however, when the material is not reporting, but is made up. Then, it may have a serious purpose but it is fiction, not journalism.

Jonathan Este:

In all candour, I wonder whether the responses you elicited were always 100 per cent honest on the part of all editors. My understanding of the way print journalism is going is that newspapers will suffer worse from the unbundling of advertising and editorial, as magazines are a better illustration of the “long tail” i.e. they are much more carefully targeted at particular niche audiences and, thus, are much more appealing to advertisers, hence the relationship between an editor and his/her target advertisers is bound to be closer. This in turn would surely bring its own pressures. A magazine that is strongly backed by, say Revlon is not going to use the ‘face’ of L’Oreal (is that Scarlett Johansson?) on the cover, whereas Jessica Alba would probably be found to be newsworthy!

I’d be very interested to find out how many of the people you polled are [Media Entertainment and Arts] Alliance members.
PHASE FOUR DISCUSSION

This section summarises the responses given by the phase four participants. It is important in presenting these comments to acknowledge that the respondents were only working from the summary essay, and they had not read the rest of the thesis. They were also all constrained by other work demands in terms of how much time they were able to devote to this process. That said, these responses illustrate the way the role of editor is perceived by people occupying a range of other roles in the field of discourse that editors operate within.

The people, the job
The points raised in the first section of the summary essay included statistics on: the gender of the phase three editors; their income; education levels; the degree of control they feel they have over the editorial content of their magazines; and the proportion of them who had been given job descriptions. It also covered descriptions of the work they do.

Five of the phase four stakeholders responded that various elements of the summary were in accordance with their expectations. Chan pointed out that the work description “appears right”; Este said the income spread was “not hugely surprising”; Day and Simons were more sweeping in their statements and both said “no surprises here” and Schulze echoed this saying: “That all fits with my understanding”.

Explanations for the data they offered included media executive Chan’s comment on the role of editors that it was evolving in a way that was making it more encompassing of strategic brand-management issues. Looking at wages, union official Este referred to the MEAA awards and said they were in the range he expected. It is interesting to compare his figures with Schulze’s statement that
“magazine editors are often very highly paid” that focuses on the top end, rather than the bottom end figure that has 10% of the editors of magazines in the top 50 by female readership earning less than $70,000. If editor-income is linked to a magazine’s profitability and circulation, then this figure prompts curiosity about what the editors of the other 1050 magazines produced in Australia are earning and whether those wages sit within the award.

Both Schulze and Este commented on education levels. Schulze, focusing on the slight majority, said that she would expect most to have a communications degree while Este speculated that the almost even split between the editors with and without degrees could be age correlated and reflect entry of older editors to the profession via the cadetship system that pre-dated tertiary media courses.

Day’s comment suggested that not having job descriptions may help editors create a sense of mystique about what they do that may serve them, given the “competitive nature of the magazine business”. His comment implies that editors gain and retain their positions by manipulating appearances rather than through innovation, hard work, skill or knowledge.

The dismissive undertone in Day’s comment contrasts with Manne’s point, responding to the introduction to the essay. She noted that “quietly scathing” attitudes about women’s magazines were “interesting” in the light of editorship being a profession dominated by women with relatively high morale. This echoes the sentiments that underpin the whole thesis and her support for research into the editor’s role beyond the stereotype of “perpetuating a patriarchal hegemonic framework” resonates with similar comments made by Hermes (1995) and Gough Yates (2003).

Simons takes to task the line in the introduction of the summary essay: “while the aims of journalism are broadly to inform and entertain …” and points out New York University scholar Jay Rosen’s oppositional view. The ‘infotainment’ debate has long raged within journalism. In her journalism text book Sally White (1996) wrote: “The entertainment function of news is well-recognised by reporters and news
executives” (p.7). Hirst and Patching (2007) reflect the growing unease with ‘infotainment’, claiming that “the most prominent contradiction in journalism at the start of the twenty-first century is between information and entertainment.” (p224). Rosen’s contribution to the debate was encapsulated in his book What are Journalists For? (1999) and it has been extended through several threads of discussion on his award-winning blog PressThink. This line of opposition to magazine-style journalism was discussed in the introduction of this project with reference to Al Gore’s dismay at the amount of news coverage devoted to Paris Hilton in 2007. That said, the editors involved in this project referred to entertainment, as well as a range of other feel-good sentiments, as things they sought to be a source of, and all of them said readers’ interests were a key concern in their content selection choices. In response to section seven, Magazine executive Chan also listed ‘entertain’ as a common editorial aim.

Editorial Independence

The second section of the summary essay looked at what influenced editors’ decisions about the content of their magazines. While most editors said they had almost or complete control over the content of their magazines, most also said they were influenced by the views of colleagues, bosses and advertisers. It also stated that most editors had never been asked to push a political line and that most felt they were part of their readerships in some way but they did not base their judgments about their readers’ interests on their own interests. However, most based some editorial choices on their own personal interests.

Responding to this, Chan and Simons both pointed out that there wasn’t necessarily a contradiction between being influenced by something and having control over decision making. Day made a similar point (in response to section seven) noting that: “No matter how ‘free’ they are to make decisions, smart editors will canvass those around them for opinions.”

While no mention was made in the summary essay of the “sixth sense” (Ferguson, 1983) or “instinctive knowledge” (Gough Yates, 2003) that editors are said to magically possess, it was raised by four of the phase four respondents – with Chan in
the context that editors have an “ability to understand their readership (usually through instinct”); Este conflating basing editorial choices on their own interests with going on “instincts when coming up with stories”; Schulze stating that, in her opinion, “gut feel for what is newsworthy” would be a critical element of content choice; and Day, who said that research was only a tool to make editors “feel confident he/she is on the right track”.

Simons also delved into psychological realms questioning the influence of advertising. While 87% of the editors admitted that they took impact on advertisers into consideration, Simons argued that it was “much more influential than these figures in isolation suggest”. She added that some of this operated on a “semi-conscious level” to do with confusion or association of readers’ interests with the contents of the advertisements in the publication. Este also suggested subtle perceptive powers saying editors “will not usually need overt instruction” to know what their boss’s thoughts are.

Looking at more concrete professional skills, Schulze raised the issue of “knowledge” in the context of editors’ awareness of sales figures associated with previous use of various celebrity images, Manne raised the logic of maintaining readership via “accuracy” in representation of the readers’ views and behaviours and Chan mentioned “direct feedback and research” as contributors (along with instinct) to editors’ understanding of their readerships.

While Chan said editors weren’t expected to be part of their readerships, Day said it helps if the editor “lives the target lifestyle”.

Schulze’s comment on The Australian Women’s Weekly’s coverage of prime ministers’ wives being unlikely to influence government policy is interesting in the light of Manne’s published essay (2008) that opens with a comparison of Janette Howard and Therese Rein as role models, and ends with twelve specific recommendations for policy change. Manne’s response to this section focused on the potential for editors to seek to justify their own work-centredness by presenting it as the norm in their magazines and not covering stories about adaptive and home-
centred women, and not delving into political issues such as longer parental leave. Schulze is claiming magazines aren’t politically influential while Manne suggests that they are. The literature relevant to this point is Sheridan’s (2000) study and the contention shown here indicates that this issue could be researched further. It is also interesting to note that ‘breastfeeding’, ‘paid maternity leave’ and ‘valuing motherhood’ were volunteered by editors in phase three as issues they were promoting cultural change on. The fact that some editors are working on this, while the one Manne encountered appeared not to be, connects with the phase two editors’ perception that one of the things that limited their cultural impact was being drowned out by other competing media voices.

Advertorial
The third section of the summary essay was about advertorial – who wrote it, whether it was labelled, how contentious it was and whether editors could refuse to run it. Four of the phase four respondents: Manne, Chan, Este and Schulze voiced their opinion that clear labeling was important. Manne mentioned “editorial freedom”, Day “editorial purity” and Este journalistic “integrity” as counterpoints to advertorial and its production. Manne referred to advertorial as “dubious”, and Chan and Este said it would always be contentious. These views echo the disdain for advertorial voiced by Hirst and Patching (2007) and flagged by Gough Yates, who said advertorial “had traditionally been viewed as ‘tacky’” (2003, p.135).

Union official Este acknowledged that “special advertising projects” (advertorial) could be worthwhile and “not pure pulp” but he also used the same foreboding terminology as Hirst and Patching (2007) saying that journalists should not be “compelled to compromise their integrity by being asked to act as covert marketing agents”. In wording it like this he avoids direct criticism of magazine editors who write and run advertorial. Schulze’s statement also allows room for forgiveness of journalists who write advertorial, while maintaining a principled position about how it is handled in saying that if the copy is clearly labelled it didn’t matter who wrote it.”
Executive Chan stressed that editors should have a major say in whether a publication runs advertorial or not, but then “very little say” in the content, unless the content is “misleading, deceptive or inappropriate for the magazine brand”. This juxtaposes nicely against Simon’s point that this calls into question the claim the most editors have “complete control” over the content of their magazines. Day posits that editors may chose to run advertorial, despite their dislike of it, describing them as “sufficiently savvy about the real world to understand the need for strong revenue”.

Cultural Creatives or Journalists?
Section four of the summary essay presented the editors’ views on the creativity of their work and where they felt they were located in relation to other journalists and journalism as a profession. It also explored their perceptions about their role and their satisfaction with it.

Only two respondents commented on the creativity and satisfaction components of this section: Chan said he thought editing was both creative and satisfying; and Este lamented that a third of the editors were not creatively/artistically satisfied by their work.

The point made at the outset of this study – that measuring magazines by the standards of journalism was problematic – is borne out here. Much-published media commentator Day, as discussed in the Introduction, publicly hates some magazines. He echoed those sentiments here calling some (specifically named) women’s magazines “comics” and saying their authors/editors “should be ashamed of themselves, whether they think they’re involved in journalism or not”.

He claimed that these editors had “long since jettisoned any journalistic rules or ethics”; Manne echoed this saying “obsession with celebrity ... legitimately undermines our respect for the editors as serious journalists”; and Schulze made a similar point questioning the research practices of magazine writers and comparing them with what, she claimed, was the usual practice of newspaper journalists.
Este, representing the journalism union, is unequivocal in saying that “magazine journalists are still journalists”. But he flags the acrimony between newspaper writers (such as Schulze and Day) and magazine writers saying: “There is nothing inferior about magazines per se, although many in the newspaper business may try to give that impression!” And he then goes further, and sides with the newspaper writers, in judging magazines by the standards of traditional newspaper journalism and saying that magazine writers who abandon “research, narrative sense, flair, accuracy […] or ethics … are likely to end up with an inferior product.”

While magazine executive Chan referred to editors as journalists, he invoked a different yardstick and said the audience’s decision to “buy it or not” was an “honest” measure of quality.

It is interesting to juxtapose Day’s comment about some magazines containing “made-up trash – the figment of a writer’s fervid imagination, [that] they seek to justify … because a large audience laps it up” against Chan’s statement that editing “draws on one’s creativity” and is an “honest business […] because your audience will buy it or not”. While the subject matter of these two statements is similar, the opinions they express about audience assessment of products are diametrically opposed. This kind of difference of opinion indicates the value of research such as Hermes (1995) and McRobbie’s (1996) explorations of reader behaviour. Day’s comment is reminiscent of the early feminist magazine researchers that Hermes accused of “holier than thou moralism …[and of speaking] on behalf of others who are, implicitly, thought to be unable to see for themselves how bad such media texts as women’s magazines are” (p. 1).

Simons (in her closing comments) addresses this area of contention, saying that some magazine content “is fiction, not journalism” but she goes further and suggests that this fiction may serve serious purposes. She has argued (2007) that celebrity reporting may play a similar role to the morality plays of old. This connects with Pinkola Estes’s (1992) thoughts about story having the power to strengthen and aright individuals and communities, and the suggestion posited earlier that magazines may be vehicles for these kinds of stories.
Commenting further on the relationship between magazine editors and journalists, Simons and Este (in his closing comments) both asked how many editors were members of professional associations or unions and Simons went further and asked about their familiarity with codes and guidelines. This is an interesting angle for further research. She also questioned whether editors of magazines circulated with newspapers may feel less ‘alienated’. While editors of these insert-magazines were not included in phase three, the newspaper-magazine editor included in phase two said he didn’t feel like he was part of the journalistic community.

**Celebrity**

Section five of the summary essay looked at the celebritisation of the role of editors and how editors felt about it. Responses to this section were fairly brief and the dominant theme was lack of surprise. Manne skipped over it to “more interesting” questions about celebrity reporting, while Schulze expressed “no opinion”.

Simons and Day, respectively said “not surprising” and “no surprises”, but Simons also commented on the editors’ reticence about celebrity treatment adding that “many journalists are reluctant to conceive of themselves as public figures”, while Day focused on the editors’ enjoyment, saying that despite their claimed indifference “plenty of them wallow in it.”

Chan commented that celebritisation is a feature of current society and he noted that the summary essay said that more than 75% of the editors claimed the appearance of their photo and letter at the front of the magazine made them feel more personally responsible. He expressed surprise that not all editors felt personally responsible. This may be a misreading of the data, however, as it may be that the missing 25% would feel personally responsible whether or not the photo and letter appeared in their magazines.

Este commented on this statistic as well, saying it was good that the letters served as a person guarantee of quality. He also offered up publicity-fatigue as an explanation
for the ambivalence towards celebrity treatment shown in the data and this resonates with comments made by the phase two editors.

**Pushing Barrows**

Section six of the summary essay looked at editorial freedom and what, if anything, stops editors from using their position for material gain and/or to promote their favourite causes. It mentioned that 90% of editors cited readers’ interests as a consideration and that only 10% cited concern about discouraging advertisers as a limitation on what goods or causes they could promote through their pages. It also listed 19 things that editors aspired to, or felt they did, provide for their readers.

Most of the responses described the editors’ work in the coldly commercial context of the readership (sales figures) and advertisers (who they can’t afford to offend). No attention was paid to the possible existence of altruistic motives in the editors’ clearly stated aims of providing emotional support and encouragement to readers – other than Manne’s statement that it was an “interesting” way of reading women’s magazines “which conflicts with the more dour Woman’s Studies reading of them” and Simons’ comment that it was “interesting” to see words like ‘aspire’ and ‘succour’ mentioned.

While only 10% of the editors said that concern about discouraging advertisers influenced them, Manne, Este and Simons made comments that implied that this was a larger, perhaps more universal, issue. (It is worth noting that 87% said that they considered the impact on advertisers when making content choices; in this section it was related to whether it influenced editors’ decisions about the promotion of specific goods or causes).

Picking up on the figure of 90% of editors who said readers’ interests limited their barrow pushing, Schulze said that editors could only push barrows that “readers want pushed” and Chan said it wouldn’t be “tolerated by readers … if it was not in sync with the target readership”. Day echoed this, saying that freedom to express opinions was not “one-size-fits-all”, adding that it was dictated by the readership, and only possible in tightly nichéd publications (where the readership presumably
shares those views). These three statements downplay the potential of editors to change the views of their readerships by implying that they can only echo opinions already held.

Three respondents expressed familiarity with support of causes in women’s magazines with Schulze and Manne mentioning promotion of breast cancer awareness, and describing it as appropriate because of its resonance with female readerships, and Este adding that he sees the support of causes as one of the bases of sound journalism.

Este picked up on the 10% of editors who said they had used editorial power to secure discounts, tickets or goods saying that he believed it to be more widespread but that discussion about it was suppressed by the shame and censure within the journalistic community surrounding “actively solicited payola”. This connects with comments from two of the phase two editors who said that it would be very easy to use their position for personal gain but that they felt it would be unethical to do so.

Cultural change agents

Section seven of the summary essay dealt with the editors’ self perceptions about their impact on culture. Most editors said that if they had to choose between reporting on or influencing culture they would influence it. They also listed the ways they thought they influenced culture and types of issues they were promoting cultural change on.

Initial responses ranged from Chan’s sense that it was “inevitable” and Simons’ lack of surprise, through Este’s “I am surprised” to Manne’s incredulity. This range indicates that the idea is not well-accepted or understood and that consensus on it has yet to be reached. Looking at the whole responses, with the exception of Chan, the idea was not simply accepted and a number of different lines of resistance to it were offered.

Chan looked pragmatically at a combination of factors including the frequency of publication (and consequent focus on issues rather than news), editors’ aims to
inspire, entertain and inform, and “the power and ability of magazines to create a community of readers” and said that it was inevitable that magazine editorial would shape cultural change.

In contrast, Este expressed surprise at the preference towards influencing rather than reflecting culture, but considering the finding he offered a possible explanation in the current sense that it is “hip to be on message” with climate change and world poverty, thanks to celebrity alignment with these issues. His inference seems to be not that editors are seeking to influence culture but that they are keen to be seen as ‘hip’. Manne also struggled with the idea and called for more research to test whether editors were deluded in their sense of achievement on these issues and accused them of possibly being “somewhat Pollyannaish”. She cited conflicting messages about eating and weight in magazines as a reason to doubt the effectiveness of editorial activism. These representations of editors, as deluded Pollyannas and wannabe hipsters, contrasts sharply against Ferguson’s (1983) vision of women’s magazine editors as wise women guiding femininity and culture.

Day took a common journalistic position of disassociating the act of journalism from specific potential impacts on readers saying: “Everything we write influences someone, somewhere. You just never know who and how.” There is a subtle sleight of hand in this response. In saying that everything is influential but in an unpredictable way, he sidesteps responsibility for the impact of any particular thing that he writes. And in doing that on the part of an inclusive “we”, he neatly disempowers the editors and places them in the Pollyanna position posited by Manne.

Schulze refused to allow the editors the potential of any real power by referring to her previous comment that editors could only push barrows that readers ‘wanted’ pushed. This puts them in the position of following culture rather than influencing it and again it challenges their self-perception.

Simons raised the point that advertising may be a limiting factor in regard to editor activism, in that editors may not be able to promote issues that directly oppose the
interests of their advertisers, such as “Buy Nothing Day” or anti-make-up campaigns. With this comment in mind, it is interesting to hear in mind comments from editors who admitted that they considered impacts on advertisers and to look back at the list of issues that editors are actively promoting cultural change on, as some of the issues (such as the slow food movement and fair trade) are not well aligned with most food-oriented advertisers, indicating that editors may not always bow to this pressure.

Closing comments

The phase four respondents were invited to add other insights at the end of the summary essay under the heading closing comments. In this section Day critiqued the overall research methodology and Manne suggested avenues for further research.

Day expressed concern that research that involves ‘averaging’ is “highly suspect” because editors, like their products, are highly differentiated. He then gives the example (stepping outside the realm of women’s magazines to include men’s magazines) that “you need a goofy bloke to edit Ralph, while at the other end of the scale you need a stylish socialite to edit Vogue.” This comment echoes the view that the editor needs to resemble or represent the target audience, a perspective that Chan challenged in his response to section two of the summary essay.

While aggregating responses always results in a loss of richness and specificity in data, it is also worth noting that the two editors’ autobiographies much quoted in phase one of this study were written by ‘hoofy’ Ralph editor Mark Dapin and stylish Australian Women’s Weekly editor Ita Buttrose. It was the commonalities between their experiences as editors and my own that coalesced into the set of questions that I asked the phase two editors and that have formed the basis of this investigation into the freedoms and limitations commonly encountered by people occupying the role of editor. The distinction worth drawing here is the differences between ‘averaging’ responses and seeking to find the range of responses that can be expressed from an enunciative modality in a field of discourse, which was the aim of this project. It is also worth noting that, like many of the editors in this study who have worked on more than one publication, as well as successfully editing Ralph for
many years Mark Dapin also worked on Woman’s Day for a while, during which
time he was probably more often described as sensitive than ‘boofy’. This relates to
the questions raised in phase one about how time working on a magazine can impact
on an editor’s sense of self definition. Dapin reflected on this at length in his

Manne suggested that more research into the consistency between editors’ intentions
in creating their magazines and their products, and I would add, echoing Hermes
(1995) and McRobbie (1996) that it is important to go further still and to include the
way readers interpret magazines and act in response to what they have read and
seen. She also raised the problem of how variation in the quality of magazines can be
meaningfully assessed without reverting to ‘holier than thou moralism’. Manne
invoked the yard stick of journalism and said that some magazines deserved the tag
of ‘inferior journalistic product’ and she also listed ‘the values of the raunch culture’
and ‘obsession with celebrity’ as examples of cultural values that are subverted and
represented by various magazines. This opens a window on consideration of the
content of culturally persuasive messages being promoted by magazine editors that
requires, in order to validate its relevance, recognition that editors have the
potential to be culturally persuasive or influential.

This point also dovetails with Simons’ suggestion that celebrity reporting, rather
than being a mark of inferior quality, could be seen as morality drama “giving
people raw material for the discussion and examination of big moral issues, and
reflecting on their own life stories and ways of being”. Simons makes the point that
this way of looking at celebrity journalism frames it as both entertainment and more
than entertainment, but not as journalism. She argues for a more politically-oriented
definition of journalism that does not include a requirement to provide
entertainment. And presumably, by default, a new framework in which to consider
magazine production, perhaps more aligned with Vincent et al’s (1997) notion of
social narratives, Grave’s (1982) view of the social function of mythology, and
Pinkola Estes (1992) idea of stories as medicine that can strengthen and aright
individuals and communities.
Este raised an issue universal in social sciences research and questioned the honesty of the respondents. Mechanisms to protect the confidentiality of editors were included in this study’s methodology in a bid to maximise honesty and the use of personal experience in phase one, a network sample in phase two and personal contact prior to completion of the questionnaires in phases three and four were also attempts to access real, rather than superficial or disguised, responses. That said, honesty and transparency are not absolutes, and even with the best will in the world the participants in this study may not have perfect understandings of the inner workings of their own minds, and that may create distortions in the data. More importantly though, the aim of this study has been to explore the range of what can be said from the position of women’s magazine editor in contemporary Australia. The data gathered has been handled as Foucauldian statements, and not analysed specifically in terms of their truth. It may be that all women’s magazine editors selfishly solicit payola and gleefully write advertorials. I have not sought to prove or disprove this, but this study does show that within the current discourse of magazine journalism it is not possible for them to say that they do.

Este also raised interesting issues related to speculation about the future of media, in terms of ‘unbundling’ – a term used to describe the posited breakdown of the current media model that sees editorial copy attracting readers to media products that contain advertising, and advertising revenue paying for the production and distribution of journalism/editorial content (Rosen, 2008). Discussion around ‘unbundling’ has included suggestions that advertising may become accessible, targeted and attractive enough to no longer need editorial to get to its desired audiences and that some audiences may be willing to pay for journalism and editorial content that is free from advertising. As magazine print production cycles mean magazine articles tend to be less news-focused (than newspaper articles) and more to do with issues that remain relevant for longer periods of time, they benefit from ‘long tail’ readers – meaning their total reads may be accumulated over a long period of time rather than in a short burst close to the time of publication (Anderson, 2004). The upshot of this better ‘long tail’ performance is that magazine adverts continue to work for longer and this means that magazines are likely to be more resistant than newspaper to ‘unbundling’. Este posits that magazine producers
may actively resist ‘unbundling’ and that editors will seek closer, more
journalistically compromising, relationships with advertisers, in a bid to survive the
turbulent times ahead in the media industry. The example he uses to illustrate this is
the use of one celebrity over another, in order to appease an advertiser, which, while
objectionable from a journalistic perspective, may not impact on the ‘morality’ of a
celebrity story being told for reasons that are not to do with journalism.

* * *

This discussion section has highlighted contention around many of the themes that
were raised in phases one, two and three. Advertorial and payola were acknowledged
to be contentious. The use of words like ‘purity’, ‘integrity’ and ‘freedom’ indicate
the extremes of virtue tangled up with advertorial that render unlabelled advertorial
(or client-focused copy) virtually unmentionable, although it was discussed fairly
freely in phase two, under the cloak of confidentiality.

Differences of opinion expressed about the scope of magazines to influence
government policy were interesting, given that many of the issues the editors said
they were advocating about in phase three require legislative change.

While accepting that editors were (and needed to be) trained and qualified
professionals, the phase four participants said they also needed more mystical
abilities described as ‘instinct’ and ‘gut feel’. It was acknowledged that they had
control over their products but that they also had to manage and balance input from
competing sources of influence.

Most of the respondents said they thought of magazine editors as journalists and
many made the point that some magazines were ‘inferior’ products because they
didn’t always follow the rules of journalism. Only Simons suggested that magazine
fiction could serve a serious purpose and only Chan expressed a willingness to let the
readers decide what was good for them. In the closing comments, Day said that
some magazine writing was journalism and some wasn’t. An obvious, but necessary,
observation to add to this is that the line between magazines and newspapers is not
clearly drawn. Some magazines run high-quality journalism while some newspapers commit offences against journalism as profound as those of the most apparently flippant, celebrity-focussed glossies.

The editors were generally described as well paid, with little attention given to the proportion of editors working to near burnout on relatively low wages (for a responsible and creative position). It was also largely accepted that editing involved celebrity treatment, and while Simons and Este accepted that some editors may be reticent or weary of it, Day suggested that they wallow in it.

Overall, there was a focus on editors as corporate functionaries engaged in selling vehicles for advertising to consumers, rather than seeing them in a socially nurturing or responsible role. There was a very mixed response to the idea that magazine editors could function as cultural change agents ranging from acceptance of it as inevitable to surprise and incredulity.
CONCLUSION

Discussing the evolution of anthropology and its struggles with subjectivity, truth and modernity, Foucauldian scholar Paul Rabinow offered some helpful suggestions for cultural studies researchers. His list included:

We need to anthropologize the West; show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasize those domains most taken for granted as universal ... make them seem as historically peculiar as possible; show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world.


Through its use of an ethnographic methodology, this study has anthropologized a portion of the West – the fragment that is the domain of women’s magazine editors in Australia. In doing this it has shone a light on the areas of agreement and disagreement between editors. By looking at a range of issues it has shown editors to be both similar to and different from each other and, in doing this, it has illustrated the scope for variation possible within the confines of the role and function of ‘women’s magazine editor’. This study also stepped beyond the role of editor and asked others to respond to claims made by some, or all, of the editors. The variety of responses to the editors’ assertions about themselves given in this final phase of the research made visible different worldviews or frameworks for assessing magazine editorship that are currently in operation. It is these different lenses through which editors are seen and judged that make their position contested and open to both positive and negative critique.

Rabinow recommended the use of Foucault’s concept of the statement in anthropological studies because statements are “capable of being taken seriously as true or false” (1986, p.238). Viewing all of the input from all of the participants in this study as statements subverted the need to assess anything said as ‘valuable because it was true’ or ‘worthless because it was false’. It kept all of the input on the
table, where patterns in the data could be traced and complexities made visible. This approach was adopted because the aim of this study was not to make an assessment of magazine editors. The aim was to throw into contention assumptions made about them from the framework of journalism and the framework of feminism by making a third framework visible. That third framework is the one that the editors themselves use. I posited at the outset that it may be a framework in which they operate as culturally-influential storytellers and that I have sought, through this ethnographic approach, to find out if this is how they view their role and to textualise their vision of themselves.

In the ‘Introduction’ section it was declared that this study commenced with the aim that it would:

- document the nature of the mental, as well as the physical, work done by magazine editors (for the sake of journalism educators, media commentators and other journalists);
- plot the configuration of workplace relationships that editors operate in;
- identify limiting, supportive and inspirational elements; and
- describe the way magazine editors perceive their roles in terms of their contribution to maintenance and change of the values and beliefs Australians collectively hold as a culture so that the extent to which those expectations are met in reality could be explored in future research.

The rich data presented in this thesis has done all of these things.

It has recorded the frantic sense of being overwhelmed and yet having to focus, make decisions and produce a product to tight deadlines with little reassurance other than feedback from peers and a few readers that the last set of decisions were on the right track and that the next, therefore, can be assumed to be. It also exposed processes of self-evaluation and discipline practiced by editors that go beyond the writing and newsgathering skills usually thought of as journalism.
The editors discussed their interactions with professionals in a range of other roles, and gave details of their pay, stress levels, educational backgrounds and networks of peer support. Pressures from employers and advertisers were discussed and the answers indicated that multiple layers of influences were involved in magazine work and that decisions tended to be made on as-needs bases rather than according to strict formulas.

The editors expressed surprise when asked about their cultural roles, giving the impression that conversations about the degree to which they influence culture, the mechanisms of that influence, and the ethical mores they employ are uncommon. They expressed both surprise and relief when questions were asked about the nurturing aspect of their role and their potential to be acting in the interests of some kind of greater good, as comments about their cultural role, when they do arise – from within the journalistic profession, as voiced by Day (2005) – tend to be critical and to imply that they lack both professionalism and common decency. It is the potential of editors to be doing good, and the persistence of arguments about them doing bad, that continues to intrigue me most about this study, especially in the context of discussions about the evolving social and political role of journalism. These conversations are being led in Australia by authors and commentators such as Simons (2007), Hirst and Patching (2007), and Errington and Miragliotta (2007), and internationally by Rosen (1999). Given the potential long-term social impact of editor-activism, and the gradual groundswell of interest in advocacy journalism (Berman, 2004), it troubles me that it is so rarely discussed in the context of women’s magazines, that have long been acknowledged as publications that emotionally engage and socially educate their readers (Ferguson, 1983, McRobbie, 1991).

Declaring that the stories journalists write are part of the process of creating shared meaning and cultural continuity is old news from a theoretical perspective, having been discussed at length by several writers including van Dijk (1988), Windschuttle (1988) and Vincent et al (1997). But it still sits uncomfortably inside newsrooms. This unease is illustrated in questions asked (but not answered) by David Secko from
the Science Journalism Research Group, with reference to the social role of science journalism:

Science journalists are no strangers to discussions of value. Many wrestle with editors to get science stories printed or broadcast. They … energetically engage in conversations over the value of science to our understanding of the world, and thereby signal a belief in the value of science journalism. But … the “role” of the science journalist – their function or purpose – is much less contemplated … Are they (and importantly should they be) informers, educators, jargon translators, storytellers, watchdogs, a combination of each of these, or perhaps something no one has argued for yet? The lines between these roles may not always be crisp, but as choices they bring different expectations as to what standards science journalists should be judged against. (2007, p.1)

By connecting the question of the social role of science journalists with the arguments that journalists have in newsrooms about the news value of their stories, Secko (2007) puts his finger on the problem. Editors and journalists are accustomed to arguing using the criteria of fourth estate considerations and/or entertainment value. These criteria are part of the body of journalism, once an oral tradition, now enshrined in journalism textbooks (such as Windschuttle 1988; White, 1996; Whitaker et al, 2000) that routinely list criteria for newsworthiness that vary only slightly from book to book and that provide a common rubric to speed newsroom decision-making processes. Adding responsibility to consider the impact of every story on culture into the tinder-dry, deadline-loomning newsroom environment could inflict fatal, paralysing indecision. The list of newsworthiness criteria allows newsrooms to simply report and to let the cards fall where they may, in terms of the cultural impact of the stories they run.

The newsworthiness criteria don’t work as well for women’s magazines though. Magazines are not as geographically bound to their readers, and having longer production cycles means that timeliness is a problem – not only because daily media get to the stories first, but also because there is a perception that magazine editors do have time to consider cultural impacts – hence the feminist critiques such as Whitlock (2000) and Wolf (1991/2002). This study shows that publishing houses, and others in the media (represented by the phase four participants), are dealing with this problem of having to take responsibility for the cultural impact of their
publications using two distinctive strategies. The first is the elevation by magazine editors and their publishers of ‘what the readers want’ into the sole criteria of newsworthiness. This was eloquently stated by ACP executive Brad Boxall, cited in Dapin, as a critical guide to editorial decision making: “Should we give the readers more of what they like? Or less?” (2004, p. 236). This elevation of the importance of reader-pleasure runs counter to growing journalistic abhorrence of info-tainment in (Simons, 2007; Hirst and Patching, 2007; Rosen, 1999) and it highlights the disconnect between magazine editing and journalism.

The second strategy being employed by others in the discursive field as well as by the editors themselves, is framing the decisions that editors make as personal or magical, rather than professional. This renders editorial decisions immune to rational arguments about their appropriateness, benevolence, or morality – they are seen simply as expressions of the editor’s individuality. While this is immensely empowering for editors, who can support causes simply because they like them, it is a double-edged sword in that the editor also has to take the blame when there is any kind of backlash. The upshot of this is a high degree of workplace pressure, experienced by editors who juggle requirements to please their employers, advertisers, peers and readers, as well as giving some thought to impacting on culture if they can. It also accounts for the relatively high turnover of editors within publications, as the editors are held personally responsible for any downturn in sales. As their decisions are seen as expressions of their individuality, in the case of falling revenue there is a strong case for removing the editor from the role in order to improve sales.

Finally, it should be added that I feel a sense of ethnographer’s dismay in writing these last few paragraphs, culling and compressing the rich data into a few pithy lines that can, at best, only provide a snapshot of the whole project, which itself is only a snapshot of the world it sought to describe. As a journalist, the joy in writing this thesis has been the scope to explore the subject matter at length, without the confines of column centimetres. At the same time, as a journalist, I’d like to sum it all up in 200 words. The only-semi-humorous mantra of the Visnews newsroom where
I worked in London in the late 1980s was “there’s not a story in the world that can’t be told in 200 words” so: What is this story in 200 words? Perhaps this:

Magazine editing is a curious role. Most editors weren’t trained for it or given job descriptions. Sources of influence are often ambiguous, with clear direction to favour advertisers or push political lines rarely given directly – but editors are assumed to understand the need for these things. Magazine editors are obsessive about their readers and prioritize their needs and desires over almost everything else. Not all magazine editors have access to research that tells them what their readers want. They often have to guess or extrapolate a vision of their readers from people they know. Others call this having “instinct”.

Most magazine editors see themselves as journalists but they don’t think they are well understood by other journalists. Most magazine editors would rather influence culture than report on it. Asked what issues they are promoting cultural change on they listed several. They work ‘activist’ content into all parts of their magazines but most deny using subtext. Critiques of magazines come from a range of frameworks including old school journalism and feminism; neither of these frameworks pays much attention to the agency and discernment of readers. Most editors are indifferent to celebrity-treatment and are at risk of burnout. Most love their jobs.

It’s a summary that raises as many questions as it answers and while many of the answers can be found in the plumper sections of this thesis, others are seeds for other researchers to cultivate. Borrowing a term from anthropologist James Clifford (1986) – who discussed at length the questions ethnographers ask themselves about how they can make claims about truth and how they can describe others with any sense of authority – I hope in presenting this data that “it sheds a strong, partial light.”

I also hope that this study informs further debates about magazines and journalism and that there will be more discussion in future about the potential social therapeutic functions of magazines and other journalism.
REFERENCES


300


304


APPENDIX 1

Phase Two Questionnaire

1. Demographics.  Name  
   Age  
   Gender  
   Ethnicity  
   Religion  
   Income as editor  
   Education level

2. Relevant experience as a magazine editor:  
   Describe the magazines you have edited  
   Relevant education or training for the position  
   What makes your magazine/s specifically women’s magazines

3. Designated job descriptions (roles and responsibilities):  
   Other tasks (implied responsibilities):  
   Describe your workplace dynamics

4. What influences, other than your own personal choices shaped the voice of your publication?

5. Were there directives from publishers to provide ‘advertorial’ copy for advertisers?  
   If so, did you do anything to moderate the pressure to provide advertorial?

6. Were there explicit directives from publishers to push particular political lines?  
   If so, did you do anything to moderate those pressures?

7. Were there explicit directives from publishers to present yourself as a typical reader?  
   If so, did you do anything to moderate those influences and pressures?

8. Are there particular ideas or themes, products or services that you sought to promote through your editorship?  
   What are they and why are they important to you?

9. How did you seek to promote those ideas, how did you work them into your publication?  
   What kinds of stories did you use to promote specific values?

10. Do you feel that as an editor you speak from a personal position, creatively expressing your own views, values and opinions through your magazine, or do you speak from a corporate perspective as a medium for the expression of the ideology that will most benefit your employer?
11. To what extent does your style of professional practice remain consistent across different publications that you have worked on.

12. Do you change your style or make concessions to differences in the readership’s preferences of different publications you have worked on.

13. How do you feel about the celebritisation of magazine editors?
   Is it deserved?
   Is it appropriate?

14. What role do you believe magazines and their editors play in the lives of readers?

15. Do you think you contributed to cultural change?
   If so how?
   What (if anything) limited your impact on cultural change?

16. Did your perception of the role of magazine editor change over your time in the role?

17. Having worked as an editor do you have a perspective on the role that you think differs from the public perception of the role?

18. Is there a sense of camaraderie with other magazine editors and/or with other journalists in general?

19. What did you like most about being a magazine editor?

20. What did you like least about being a magazine editor?
APPENDIX 2

The Roy Morgan list of magazines and editors contacted for phase three.

The listed is sorted by total readership figures and only includes magazines that have readerships that are 70% or more female. The list is based on Australian readership between October 2006 and September 2007 (Roy Morgan Single Source, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Magazine Title</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Readership in '000s</th>
<th>% Female Readers</th>
<th>Contact and Potential Inclusion in Phase Four</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Australian Women’s Weekly</td>
<td>Deborah Thomas</td>
<td>ACP Magazines</td>
<td>2705</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>phone contact, sent link</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Woman’s Day</td>
<td>Amy Sinclair</td>
<td>ACP Magazines</td>
<td>2465</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>phone contact, sent link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New Idea</td>
<td>Michelle Endacott</td>
<td>Pacific Magazines</td>
<td>2039</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>phone contact, sent link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Better Homes and Gardens</td>
<td>Julia Zetta</td>
<td>Pacific Magazines</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>phone contact, sent link</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>That’s Life</td>
<td>Linda Smith</td>
<td>Pacific Magazines</td>
<td>1146</td>
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<td>Rebecca Cox</td>
<td>Federal Publishing</td>
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<td>Pacific Magazines</td>
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<td>Gemma Crisp</td>
<td>ACP Magazines</td>
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APPENDIX 3

Phase three telephone script and emails.

This script was written to provide continuity between different conversations with editors and were written in a style to quickly attract the editors’ attention. That said, it wasn’t always followed to the letter, as I was responsive to the editors on the other end of the phone.

Script for contacting phase three editors by phone:

Hi,
I’m a lecturer in journalism at Edith Cowan University and a former magazine editor and I am doing a PhD study about magazine editing. This study is important because we currently have all sorts of people including politicians like Al Gore, media commentators like Mark Day and even some academics and feminists bagging out magazines and calling them “bad journalism” and “bad texts” but at the same time they are the fastest growing media sector in the world and all those readers can’t be wrong.

So far none of the research into magazines in Australia has actually asked the editors, the people who make the magazines, what they are doing and why and that is what I am doing with this study.

I’ve done a lot of work already through a series of long interviews with some editors and I am now at the point where I need to test how much of what they have said rings true with the editors of Australia’s largest circulation women’s magazines and that’s why I’m calling to you to ask if you could give ten minutes to fill out an online questionnaire if I email the link to you.

If you could, you’d be making an important contribution to the study, which I am planning to develop into a series of academic articles that I hope will filter through the media commentariat and change the way people see the professional art of magazine editing.

Wait for a response, discuss timing, email addresses etc. Perhaps prompt with: it’s a very user friendly questionnaire and so far the editors I’ve worked with have said it’s interesting.

Email sent to phase three editors after initial phone contact:

Thanks for your interest in this research.

Here is the link to the questionnaire: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=trnqe7baTBBy2_2b8jYSa897Q_3d_3d
This email outlines what I am asking and why I hope you will be part of this important project that will make public for the first time the collective knowledge Australian magazine editors hold about their own profession.

The questionnaire comprises 40 questions, and while some are in a few parts, none of them require long or written answers. In pilot testing it has taken around 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

This research is part of my PhD thesis in Communications at Edith Cowan University, where I am a lecturer in journalism.

The questions arose from a process that included reading academic literature and autobiographies of magazine editors, reflecting on my own experience as a magazine editor and interviews with seven other magazine editors. These seven editors all said that they found the questions interesting and the process rewarding and I hope you will too.

The aim of this questionnaire is to test how much editors have in common in how we perceive and deal with the challenges magazine work presents. It is important because of the scale and influence of the magazine sector and the lack of understanding of the work-place processes of magazine production.

Almost all magazine studies to date have looked at magazines as texts and neglected to talk to the people who produce them. As a result, criticism of magazines is dislocated from a genuine understanding of what it is like to be in the midst of production. It is also dislocated from the market-place reality of what makes magazines work, whether or not they are deemed to be good journalism.

I hope that this research will lead to a better understanding of what magazines are and what makes a good editor, so that journalism courses can do a better job of training the next generation of editors.

As some of the questions address sensitive topics I need to emphasize that your responses will be handled with complete respect for your privacy and confidentiality.

While the thesis (and academic articles I write about it) will state that the editors of Australia’s highest circulation women’s magazines were surveyed, at no stage will you be identified as the person who gave a particular response only collective statistics will be presented. This is both a personal and a university-backed guarantee as the ECU Ethics Committee is overseeing this project.

In accordance with an Ethics Committee requirement, the final question (number 40) asks specifically if you have read this email letter and if you give informed consent for your responses to be used as de-identified
statistical data in this research project and clicking yes will enable me to use your response.

When the study is complete (in July) I will email you again with a link so that you can see the results and/or read the thesis in full.

Again: Thank you for your interest. I hope you will find time to contribute to a better understanding of the art of magazine editing and find it interesting.

Yours sincerely,
Kayt Davies.

If you have any further questions about this project you can contact me on: <contact details given for myself, my supervisor Dr Rod Giblett and ECU’s Human Research Ethics Officer>

Reminder email

I sent these out weekly, through the survey period, being careful to exclude editors who had responded to me by email from the list.

Many thanks to the editors who have completed my questionnaire and a gentle reminder to those who are so busy that it’s still on your 'things to do' list.

So far it is shaping up well but a good level of response is essential if this study is going to succeed in clearly defining the fine art of editing and elevating the status of our profession.

Here is the link to the questionnaire:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=trnqe7baTBy2_2bSiYSa897Q_3d_3d

If you email me back to let me know you've done it, I'll take you off this list. Otherwise I'll send another gentle reminder next week.

All the best with all your deadlines,
Kayt

Kayt Davies
Edith Cowan University