

**No Room for Baby Fat in Skinny Jeans:
Promotion and Online Engagement with the
Yummy Mummy Discourse in *US Weekly***

by

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Abstract

This study investigates how an entertainment magazine promotes the ‘yummy mummy’ (YM) discourse, identifies how alternative discourses are used to support or challenge the YM discourse, and analyzes how individuals engage with aspects of the YM discourse promoted by the magazine. Using discourse analysis, I investigate print and online articles published by *Us Weekly* magazine as well as reader’s responses to content which were posted on *Usmagazine.com*. The findings reveal that *Us Weekly* promotes the YM discourse by praising celebrity mothers who exemplify the YM aesthetic and by disparaging failed celebrity YMs, by positioning celebrities as being ‘just like us’, and by aligning the YM aesthetic with expert advice and tenets of the ‘good mother’ discourse. Readers’ engagement with the YM discourse is diverse and demonstrates how the YM discourse is taken-up, reproduced, enforced and resisted. The implications of these findings for women’s mental health are extensively discussed.

Keywords: yummy mummy; perinatal; pregnancy; body image; media; feminine beauty ideals

Dedication

To my mother

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1. Introduction

Routine visits to my local drug and grocery stores sparked my interest in changing discursive constructions of the perinatal form. Shopping at most major drug and grocery stores includes inevitable encounters with the glossy images of thin, beautiful women on the covers of magazines. Checkout lines are flanked with a variety of magazines, strategically placed at eye level, which invite shoppers to absorb the images and headlines featured on the covers. Shoppers will often select magazines and scan the pages as they wait for their turn to pay. Over the past ten years, I began to notice an increase in the coverage of the perinatal bodies of celebrities by magazines. Images of ultra-thin, pregnant celebrities who seemed to be able to defy nature by remaining svelte and restricting their pregnancy growth to small, firm, rounded abdomens seemed to become increasingly visible and commonplace. I also noticed that articles in magazines featuring post-pregnancy bodies were growing in popularity. During a visit to my local drugstore in the summer of 2008, I distinctly remember idly waiting in the checkout line and selecting an entertainment magazine from the racks. The magazine featured Nicole Kidman's post-baby body and I was shocked to see that she appeared even thinner weeks after delivery than she was pre-pregnancy. I instantly found myself comparing Kidman's body to my own. I momentarily felt like a failure because, unlike Kidman, I had not recently delivered a baby and yet I was unable to attain the thin ideal she exemplified. I wondered how these images and messages surrounding women's perinatal shape promoted by the media may be affecting other women.

The thesis component of my Masters of Arts in counselling psychology at Simon Fraser University presented a unique opportunity to explore this topic further. A review of the existing literature on the changing discursive constructions of the perinatal form revealed that very few studies have explored the increasing objectification of new and expectant mothers by the media. As a result, I chose to conduct a discourse analysis of content published by Us Weekly magazine as well as readers responses to this changing perinatal aesthetic.

1.1. My Relationship With Pregnancy

Women's health has always been important to me, and my interest in the changing aesthetic of motherhood and pregnancy developed through my personal, professional, and academic experiences. I am a married, 36 year old, childfree, Canadian woman of European descent from a large family. I have worked as a make-up artist for 18 years with a well-known cosmetics company and I am currently pursuing a Masters of Arts in counselling psychology. My family life cultivated my interest in pregnancy and motherhood. I am the youngest of five children and my mother's pregnancy with me was unexpected. My mother was 41 years old when she became pregnant with me and she and my father were already parents to 4 other children who were between 10 and 16 years of age. The distance between my age and the ages of my siblings created a unique familial dynamic; as I entered puberty my older siblings began having children. I became an aunt for the first and second time when I was twelve when two of my sisters had their first children in the same year and—I am now an aunt to 15 nieces and nephews. As a child, I marveled at my sisters' growing bellies and listened to them discuss how motherhood was going to transform their lives. I noticed how their clothing changed and watched them feed their pregnancy cravings. I distinctly

remember my oldest sister Eva, the family fashionista, complain about the paucity of attractive maternity clothing. She was disheartened that her nicest outfit was a floral tent dress with Peter Pan collar and suggested that the maternity clothing that was available to her in the 1980s contributed to the disdain she felt towards her changing pregnant body.

Contemporary maternity fashions, language surrounding pregnancy, and behaviours in the perinatal stages have drastically changed in comparison with my sisters' experiences of pregnancy in the 1980s and 1990s. Beginning in the late 1990s, maternity fashions started becoming more revealing. Cotton tent dresses with Peter Pan necklines were being replaced by body hugging sheath dresses and skinny-fit maternity jeans. Women's pregnant bodies were no longer being hidden underneath yards of fabric, but were being proudly displayed. When I first became aware of this changing maternity fashion aesthetic I was thrilled. I had always perceived pregnancy as beautiful and somewhat miraculous and I was glad to see that women were embracing their pregnant form.

However, my feelings about this new aesthetic shifted during the past decade as I began to hear critiques of pregnant women's shapes and conversation focused on perinatal weight. Conventional comments about pregnant women's "glow" were increasingly replaced with comments about women's pregnant form. For instance, I would routinely hear: "Doesn't she look amazing? You can't even tell that she's pregnant from behind!" or "She's so lucky. She's all bump". I noticed a competitive undercurrent among women who had recently delivered; however, instead of comparing their labor experiences or babies' developmental achievements, they compared how many pounds they had lost and who could fit into their pre-baby jeans the fastest. Updates on

postpartum weight loss even became commonplace on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

This increased obsession with and objectification of the perinatal body suggested that many women no longer perceived pregnancy as a reprieve from the thin ideal. Beginning in 2005, I started to notice that more and more women appeared to be very thin almost immediately after delivery. Throughout my academic career I worked as a make-up artist in the fashion industry. My professional experience has advanced my insight into contemporary expectations and experiences of pregnancy and motherhood. As a make-up artist, I primarily worked with women and have fostered relationships with countless women from diverse backgrounds. I routinely worked with women in their 20s and 30s between 5' 7" and 5' 11" tall who were a US size four or six less than three months after delivering their babies. These women were not professional models or celebrities whose careers necessitated immediate weight loss. Although the majority of these women were Caucasian Vancouverites who were economically privileged, I also worked with women from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds who also embodied this aesthetic. I was startled by this phenomenon. I am 5' 10" tall and a US size 8 and have never been pregnant. I wondered how these women were able to lose their baby weight so quickly after giving birth and I began to tactfully ask these very thin new mothers how they were able to achieve their post-pregnancy shape. Many women confided that they closely monitored their pregnancy weight gain in order to ensure that they gained no more than 18 to 25 pounds during their pregnancies. Women also reported that they returned to their exercise routines immediately after delivery and restricted their caloric intake. Women appeared to be describing dieting behaviours while pregnant and prioritizing their weight loss immediately after delivery.

My personal and professional conversations with women about this relatively new perinatal aesthetic suggest that this aesthetic may be adversely affecting women's mental health. For instance, a friend confided that she is reluctant to become pregnant, even though she longs to have a child, because she is frightened of the weight gain associated with pregnancy and worries that she will be unable to get her body back. She also expresses anxiety about how she will look while pregnant and fears that she will "explode" and deviate from the thin pregnant ideal presented in magazines and exemplified by many women in Vancouver. Her desire to become a mother and her concerns about her body are at odds; she reported this internal struggle creates feelings of anxiety and shame.

Shame surrounding the postpartum body may also encourage women to isolate themselves during the first few months of the postpartum period. Women have told me that they avoided friends and family members for the first three months postpartum because they were ashamed of their body shape. Connecting with friends and family is particularly important during the postpartum period because social support has been shown to be significant in preventing and treating postpartum depression (Driscoll, 2006). Societal pressure to embody the thin perinatal aesthetic may contribute to increased anxiety and shame and may make some mothers more vulnerable to postpartum depression. Furthermore, my interactions with women suggest that body related concerns in the postpartum period may detract from the positive aspects of new motherhood and increase feelings of anxiety, self-criticism and stress as they navigate their transition into their roles as mothers.

1.2. Background and Rationale

Celebrity women in the perinatal stage are increasingly visible in the media and this shift signals changing cultural views of pregnancy and motherhood in North American society. Popular magazines reflect and reinforce discursive constructions from the societies in which they circulate and can influence normative standards, behaviours, and expectations (Sha & Kirkman, 2009). The dominant discourses surrounding pregnancy and motherhood promoted by the media encourage women to compare themselves to celebrity mothers and to conform to the “yummy mummy” aesthetic. The “yummy mummy” discourse is a social construction which suggests that women should dress fashionably, appear expertly coiffed at all times, and maintain a thin, toned physique throughout the perinatal period. Expectant mothers should restrict their pregnancy weight gain and solely allow their firm “baby bump” to betray their gravidity. New mothers should return to a thin pre-pregnancy body shape rapidly after giving birth. This discourse also links the attainment of the thin-ideal with women’s success both as individuals and as mothers.

The yummy mummy aesthetic can be damaging; the prevalence of the yummy mummy discourse in Western society creates normative expectations surrounding women’s perinatal appearance and further objectifies women. Women who compare themselves to images of celebrity mothers and who internalize the thin ideal, which is exemplified by the yummy mummy discourse, may be more likely to experience greater body dissatisfaction (Rallis, Skouteris, Wertheim & Paxton, 2007; Sumner, Waller, Killick & Elstein, 1993), to engage in disordered eating behaviours (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002), and to experience anxiety, shame, and depressive symptoms (Douglas, 2010; Hadfield, Rudoe, & Sanderson-Mann, 2007; Rubin & Steinberg, 2011); as a result, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon in order to adequately inform and

create interventions that can prevent and neutralize the adverse effects of harmful discourses.

This study investigates the promotion of the yummy mummy discourse by popular media and provides insight into how individuals negotiate these discourses. This exploratory research project has been designed to examine the following empirical objectives: 1) to identify how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted, 2) to determine how discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles may be used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and 3) to analyze how individuals engage with discourses, for example by using, reproducing or resisting the yummy mummy discourse. Discourse analysis was used to analyze content published by popular North American entertainment magazine *Us Weekly* between March 19, 2012 and June 11, 2012. The corpus for this study was comprised of articles from both the print and online versions of the magazine as well as readers' responses to online content; a total of 569 texts were analysed in order to meet the empirical objectives of this study.

1.3. Significance of Research

This research makes a significant contribution to existing academic knowledge and can inform clinical practice and subsequent research in this field in order to benefit women's mental health. Previous studies have explored how the corporeal aspects of motherhood are portrayed in contemporary fitness magazines. For example, Dworkin and Wachs (2004) conducted a textual analysis of *Shape Fit Pregnancy* magazine and they identified that the fitness magazine presents the pregnant form as "maternally successful yet aesthetically problematic" (p. 610). Dworkin and Wachs (2004) also discuss the increasing responsibility women face as they become mothers. Many women in contemporary North American society work outside of the home, continue to

be responsible for child-care and household labor, and are now expected to engage in and prioritize fitness practices in order to prepare for delivery and to regain their pre-pregnancy shape (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). Jette (2006) explored how pregnancy, fitness and health are represented in a column targeting new and expectant mothers. Jette (2006) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the “Fit for Two” column published in *Oxygen* magazine. According to Jette (2006), the column draws on medical discourses and encourages expectant mothers to engage in moderate exercise during pregnancy in order to manage the risks associated with pregnancy and delivery. The column also promotes the thin ideal female body shape as a norm and combines this beauty discourse with advertisements for pregnancy-related health products, suggesting that women can transform themselves into the promoted aesthetic through consumer and disciplinary practices (Jette, 2006). Both of these studies provide insight into the changing behavioural and aesthetic expectations associated with the perinatal stage promoted in contemporary society.

This study adds to the existing knowledge surrounding contemporary constructions of the corporeal aspects of motherhood in two important ways: by examining how a popular entertainment magazine promotes the yummy mummy discourse and by extending the analysis to examine how women engage with these discourses. Although the previous mentioned studies are exceedingly valuable, they both explored fitness magazines with relatively low circulation rates. This study investigates how this changing discursive construction and objectification of the perinatal form is promoted in a highly visible and widely circulated magazine. For example, according to the Alliance for Audited Media (2012) the circulation averages for the three magazines for a six month period ending December, 31, 2012 are as follows: *Fit Pregnancy* sold 52,439 copies, *Oxygen* sold 184,084 copies, and *Us Weekly* sold

1,964,446 copies. Based on the circulation rates, far more women will be exposed to the messages promoted by *Us Weekly* when compared to the magazines analyzed in the aforementioned studies. This study explores content found in the print version of the magazine as well as content published online that can be accessed free of charge. Millions of readers are exposed to messages promoted by *Us Weekly* magazine and, as a result, this study expands existing knowledge surrounding various aspects of the yummy mummy discourse and provides insight into how this discourse is promoted by popular media.

Further, analysis will examine how readers engage with the yummy mummy discourse. Understanding how individuals engage with the yummy mummy discourse is exceedingly important. To my knowledge, no studies have explored how entertainment magazines promote the yummy mummy discourse and how readers engage with this construction of the perinatal form. By analyzing contributors' responses to online articles published by *Us Weekly*, this study produces new knowledge of how individuals engage with, use, reproduce, reject and enforce the yummy mummy discourse. Insight into the discursive effects of the yummy mummy discourse and into individuals' meaning making processes can be used to inform interventions and clinical practice. This study may encourage clinicians to become more sensitive to body related shame and anxiety experienced by clients during the perinatal period. Additionally, this study may inspire therapeutic conversations about dominant gendered discourses with female clients in order to help women learn how to deconstruct dominant discourses, and to encourage alternative ways of meaning making that are conducive to mental wellness.

The knowledge produced by this study can also guide interventions designed to provide women with the necessary tools to challenge the yummy mummy discourse as well as other dominant discourses that can adversely affect women's mental health.

Moreover, this study encourages the critical evaluation of dominant gendered discourses by exposing the constructed nature of discourses and by illustrating how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted. Furthermore, by presenting a variety of contributors' responses in this work, women are exposed to new ways of understanding the yummy mummy aesthetic.

Lastly, this study demonstrates the pervasiveness of the yummy mummy discourse and draws on previous research on body image and mental health in order to demonstrate the potential adverse effects this discourse can have on women's mental health. By increasing awareness of this topic, this study can also inform further research.

1.4. Summary of Chapters

The chapters of this thesis are designed to provide the reader with insight into every aspect of the analytical process. This introductory chapter establishes my personal connection to this topic of study and provides insight into my personal experiences and subjectivities that have influenced every aspect of this academic work. This chapter also identifies the rationale and purpose of this study and speaks to the significance of my work.

Chapter Two presents an overview of relevant literature. This chapter begins by defining discourse and illustrating how dominant gendered discourses can shape individuals' identity and sense of self. I then outline the role of media influence and provide an overview of dominant gendered discourses in order to establish the context of the yummy mummy discourse and to demonstrate how dominant gendered discourses are socially constructed and shift over time. Relevant research in this field is highlighted

throughout this chapter, indicating the adverse effects this phenomenon may have on North American women's mental health.

This study employed discourse analysis and Chapter Three provides a thorough description of the research method. The chapter begins by identifying the epistemological foundations, development, and advantages of discourse analysis. The process of inquiry is outlined and I identify the empirical aims, corpus, and procedural approach to data analysis. The final section of this chapter addresses the techniques that I employed throughout this study in order to produce quality findings that are both credible and trustworthy.

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. This chapter provides insight into how *Us Weekly* promotes the yummy mummy discourse, how alternative discourses are used to support and challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and how individuals engage with the yummy mummy discourse and use and reproduce gendered discourses. Images and excerpts of articles and contributors' responses are included in this chapter, along with my interpretations, in order to encourage engagement with the material and an assessment of my interpretations. The chapter then concludes with a summary of key findings.

The fifth and final chapter explores the meaning and implications of the findings. This chapter presents key findings and discusses these findings in relation to previous research in the field. The strengths and limitations of this study and methodology are explored as are recommendations for future research. The final section of this work addresses how these findings can contribute to the betterment of women's mental health.

2. Literature Review

In 2005, model Heidi Klum appeared in the televised *Victoria Secret Fashion Show*, wearing little more than her large, feathered angel wings, less than two months after giving birth (Hamilton, 2005). Her firm, fat-free postpartum body was revealed in a seemingly miraculous return to her pre-pregnancy shape. Millions of viewers marveled at Klum's perinatal body and her achievement was widely discussed in print and digital media as well as on television. Klum's apparently effortless mastery over her perinatal shape reflects the most recent development in discursive constructions of motherhood: the yummy mummy. This research project addresses how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted, identifies how discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles are used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and analyzes how individuals engage with conflicting discourses and use or reproduce the yummy mummy discourse.

This chapter will investigate media influence, key gender issues, common societal discourses on mothering, the transformative nature of pregnancy and motherhood, and the Westernized view of the body in order to illuminate the interconnectedness of these factors and their relevance to this study. I will present current research in this field according to themes that apply to this study. The primary aims of this literature review are: to present the historical background and contemporary context of discursive constructions which have shaped the yummy mummy discourse, to discuss relevant research in this field, and to demonstrate the necessity of expanding

research in this field. I will conclude this chapter with the rationale for conducting the present study.

2.1. Deciphering Discourse

Terminological confusions surrounding the term *discourse* abound within academia (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) because the term *discourse* is extremely broad and is used to refer to divergent entities. *Discourse* commonly signifies communicative exchanges. Texts and institutionally specific communications are often referred to as *discourses* (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). For example, advice columns in parenting magazines touting the benefits of breast feeding are a type of discourse and are likely to reflect a medical discourse. *The Oxford Dictionary* (2013) defines discourse as “written or spoken communication or debate” or as “a formal discussion of a topic in speech or writing” (n.p.). Bloor and Bloor (2007) posit that discourse refers to “all the phenomena of symbolic interaction and communication between people” that occurs through written or spoken language or visual representation (p. 6). Similarly, Austin (1962) and Wittgenstein (1967) suggest that discourse “is mainly understood as linguistic action, be it written, visual or oral communication, verbal or nonverbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions” (as cited in Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 5). According to Michel Foucault (1979), discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” and are socially, institutionally, and historically specific (as cited in Parker, 1992, p. 8). Discourses are also understood as “institutionally supported and culturally influenced interpretive and conceptual schemas” which “produce particular understandings of issues and events” (Bacchi, 2005, p. 199). For the purposes of this study, discourse shall be defined as

socially, historically and institutionally specific understandings that shape our social world and meaning-making processes.

Discourses shift over time and multiple contradictory discourses can exist within a society (Foucault, 1972, as cited in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourses reflect a culture's collective thought and communication; therefore, discourses can influence an individual's actions, motivations, and perceptions (Karlberg, 2008). Culture influences the formation and power of specific discourses. Culturally constructed discourses influence identity formation because they affect how we conceive ourselves (Driscoll, 2006) and create the parameters of possible identities for an individual within a specific society (Kroger, 2007).

2.2. The Socially and Discursively Constructed Self

Identity is established within "symbolic, material, [and] discursive" constraints and "involves the negotiation of an existing set of culturally defined labels, concepts and discursive positioning" (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004, p. 46). Socio-cultural categories such as gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, and socio-economic status are discursively constructed and intersect in various ways to influence the formation of collective and individual identities (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004). An individual's identity is fluid, and continues to develop over an individual's lifespan (Erikson, 1959). Changes in identity arise from shifts "in culturally defined roles and status" which often occur as a result of social learning, biological development (Kroger, 2007, p. 12), and shifts in discursive positioning (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004). Davies and Harre (1990) suggest that an individual's sense of self is constructed through identification with specific social categories and participation in discursive practices which ascribe meaning to various social categories. For example, social categories include female/male, mother/daughter,

and expert/laity ad infinitum. Individuals position themselves in relation to discursive constructions associated with these social categories and negotiate and renegotiate their sense of self through their engagement with contradictory discursive practices (Davies & Harre, 1990). An individual's discursive positioning shapes their worldview and meaning-making processes because they understand the world "in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies and Harre, 1990, p. 46). Individuals occupy multiple subject positions and these positions shift throughout the day (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). For example, I am a student, a female, a counsellor, a make-up artist, a wife, a daughter, an aunt, and an expert in some contexts and an unskilled novice in others. Social contexts make some aspects of my identity, or sense of self, more salient.

Identity is further constructed in and through interpersonal relationships. An individual begins to construct the self by interpreting how others respond to them within their significant relationships, thereby learning who they are through their exchanges with others (Kroger, 2007). When I am with my nieces and nephews I am an aunt. As an aunt, I believe I should demonstrate love and support and maintain a playful attitude while modelling socially appropriate behaviour. The information gleaned through these social interactions allows an individual to ascertain the effect they have on other people and subsequently allows the individual to "determine future communications of the self" (Kroger, 2007, p. 19).

The social roles ascribed to an individual and their ability to embody the cultural expectations surrounding that role can greatly impact how others perceive and respond to them. Morgan (2007) defines gender roles as "a set of behavioural norms associated with males and with females, respectively, in a given social group or system" (p. 113).

For example, female, mother, wife, daughter and sister each carry specific behavioural expectations. Individuals who successfully embody specific social roles in line with dominant cultural discourses are more likely to experience favourable interaction with others when compared to those who deviate from culturally constructed role expectations. It can be difficult for women to embody the role expectations associated with an “ideal” woman in Western society due to often conflicting gendered expectations and values embedded in dominant discourses.

Dominant discourses are discourses that have increased power within a society (Bacchi, 2005), can lead to the unquestioning acceptance of certain beliefs, actions, and ideas (Hvas & Gannik, 2008), are promoted by the media through various mediums including magazines, advertisements, television, and film, and shape personal identity. In this manner, the media shapes attitudes towards and internalizations of gender norms, individual behaviour, and femininity within a given culture (Heffernan, Nicolson & Fox, 2011; Lin & Yeh, 2009). Lin and Yeh (2009) describe the media as “magic mirrors” that “creatively [use] intimate knowledge of cultural contexts and the magic of modern technology, [to] portray just the right blend of cultural meaning, societal values, and personal dreams”; the media reflects “the wants of individuals...and propel[s] modern-day myths of what is ‘needed’, [and] of what it means to be ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ ” (p. 61). For example, gendered discourses are dominant interpretive schemas that influence individuals (Bacchi, 2005) by shaping their expectations, behaviours, and sense of self. The gendered body ideals evident in dominant discourses are promoted by the media and are often extreme representations of societal expectations surrounding appearance and behaviour (Jhally, 2009 as cited in Tylka & Calogero, 2011).

Societal expectations and values reflected by the media influence the construction and maintenance of an individual’s personal identity (Graham, Sorell &

Montgomery, 2004). Westernized societies, for example, emphasize the value of capitalistic gain and physical beauty. Bordo (2003) posits that women are valued to the extent that they are physically attractive and available as sexual objects. Messages in the media suggest that individuals can re-construct themselves and become both beautiful and successful if they simply purchase, and use, the advertised products and engage in the endorsed behaviours. Additionally, these messages encourage women to associate objectification and sexualisation with a way to achieve power and social success (Lin & Yeh, 2009). Cultural representations and images depicted in Western media encourage individuals to associate their value with their physical appearance and perpetuate the notion that one's identity can be constructed and re-constructed through one's appearance (Rubin, Fitts, & Becker, 2003).

Currently, the dominant gendered discourses prevalent in Westernized societies encourage women to be independent, career-oriented, and successful members of society (Morgan, 2007); attentive, child-focused, nurturing mothers and partners (Hays, 1996); and to have thin, toned, and beautiful bodies (Bordo, 2003). Women experience a great deal of pressure from peers and the media to display their gender consistently with what is both expected and deemed appropriate by their culture (Goffman, 1979) and this can be an unsettling process. Since cultural gendered prescriptions for women's roles often conflict, many women struggle as they try to manage multiple personal identities that are constructed within the contexts of motherhood, employment, and their relationships (Graham et al., 2004; Morgan, 2007).

2.3. The Joy of Pregnancy

In Western societies, being a caretaker continues to be the most valued and traditional role assigned to women (Johnston & Swanson, 2003). As caretakers, women are assumed to have an innate desire to become mothers as well as an instinctive and natural capacity to care for others (Bobel, 2004; Hays, 1996). Presumptions surrounding women's natural mothering abilities, predilection for motherhood, and primary responsibility for child-rearing have been socially constructed through power relations, social interests and historical events (Hays, 1996). Prevalent discourses surrounding motherhood —particularly the childbearing discourse— suggest that becoming a mother is essential for all women and continues to be viewed as the “supreme route to physical and emotional fulfillment” (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991, p. 7).

The primacy and naturalness of motherhood is echoed and reinforced in the media and accounts of celebrity motherhood often promote this perspective. For example, when pregnant Academy Award winner Halle Berry was interviewed by *People* magazine in 2007 she spoke about becoming a mother, stating: "I feel happier than I've ever felt before in my entire life" (¶ 2) and "I was meant to be a mother" ("Halle Berry", 2007, ¶ 3). Halle Berry's comments to *People* magazine suggest that the achievement of pregnancy, and the joy of prospective motherhood, surpassed her achievement in 2002 when she became the first African American woman to win an Academy Award for Best Actress. While some women, like Halle Berry, identify pregnancy as the pinnacle of fulfillment, others may find the changes they experience during pregnancy less rewarding and exceedingly difficult.

When women become pregnant, they experience physical, social, relational, and emotional metamorphoses and each of these changes presents unique demands (Raphael-Leff, 1993). Pregnant women experience significant physical changes over a

relatively short period of time. According to The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada [SOGC] (2011), more than half of all pregnant women will experience nausea and vomiting beginning in the sixth week of their pregnancy and these symptoms are likely to interfere with women's daily activities. During the first trimester of pregnancy, women will begin to gain weight and experience bloating, constipation, and swollen breasts (MedicineNet, 2012).

Furthermore, during the second and third trimesters, many pregnant women may begin to endure swollen ankles and pain in their backs, thighs, and abdomens (MedicineNet, 2012). Women begin to feel physically restricted and uncomfortable as their pregnancy progresses and can become frustrated when they are unable to function as efficiently as they did prior to their pregnancy (Johnson, Burrows & Williamson, 2004). Stretch marks may begin to form on their bodies, along with darkened patches of skin on the face (MedicineNet, 2012). The shape of a woman's body dramatically changes, as her waist thickens and breast size increases; the average woman who carries to term will gain approximately 13 kilograms of weight throughout her pregnancy (Health Canada, 2012).

In her book *Pregnancy: The Inside Story*, social psychologist and psychoanalyst Joan Raphael-Leff (1993) presents an in-depth exploration of the experience of pregnancy. Raphael-Leff (1993) drew on her personal experience of pregnancy, her conversations with colleagues and attendees of her parenting groups, her observations of parent/child interactions in a play group setting, and her extensive clinical work with close to 200 pregnant women, partners of expectant women and parents. Her insights into motherhood are exceedingly valuable because they honour women's lived experiences of pregnancy as well as the meaning-making processes that accompany parenthood. Raphael-Leff (1993) suggests that the physical transformation that occurs

through pregnancy “dissolves familiar connections between the woman and her body” (p. 16). Pregnancy alters a women’s shape, physical responses, sense of smell, “temperature control, equilibrium, kinesthesia, complexion, hair texture, taste-buds, vision acuity, and touch-pads” (Raphael-Leff, 1993, p. 16). Women must develop a new sense of space during pregnancy because their growing bodies affect their balance, movement and spatial relationship to their physical surroundings (Raphael-Leff, 1993). Women may perceive their bodies as unrecognizable as their “bod[ies] become physically occupied by another” (Raphael-Leff, 1993, p. 9).

These embodied changes can be unsettling and women may experience anxiety about their changing shape (Raphael-Leff, 1993). Many pregnant women may begin to reappraise their body image as their weight increases and their physical appearance changes (Lederman & Weiss, 2009; Strang & Sullivan, 1985). These physical alterations can affect women’s satisfaction with their bodies (Fox & Yamaguchi, 1997); women who highly value their physical appearance and perceive being slim as central to their sense of self may experience increased distress as a result of the physical transformations that accompany pregnancy (Raphael-Leff, 1993).

Pregnancy does not only lead to a physical transformation; pregnancy also facilitates a redefinition of roles and identity. The physical transformation that occurs during a first pregnancy cues women to reflect upon and redefine their roles and identities in preparation for motherhood and can often prompt a corresponding social and relational transformation (Lederman & Weis, 2009).

Messias and DeJoseph (2007) interviewed 29 expectant women in order to gain insight into the transformative experiences of a first pregnancy. Qualitative and narrative analysis was used to interpret their findings (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). This study is important because it provides insight into women’s personal experiences of pregnancy in

a specific socio-historical context and provides readers with a glimpse into the complex personal transformations that can occur as women become mothers. The expectant women in Messias and DeJoseph's (2007) study reported significant shifts in their social and personal identities as they revised their priorities and values during pregnancy. For example, expectant women who are career focused may begin to consider full-time motherhood. However, if a woman derives personal meaning and value from her paid employment, it may be exceedingly difficult for her to abandon her career and focus entirely on motherhood, even when her pregnancy is planned. This process can provoke anxiety as expectant women shift from both their nonparent roles and from solely being accountable for themselves, to becoming a mother who is responsible for the care of her infant (Leahy-Warren, McCarthy & Corcoran, 2011). Maternal identity development is a complex process that can be enjoyable for some women and distressing for others and many women may experience both joy and distress at various times throughout their pregnancies.

The relational aspect of maternal identity formation may begin with the negotiation of the relationship between the expectant mother and her unborn child (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). "Much of life is dedicated to maintaining our integrity as distinct beings" and pregnancy presents a unique challenge to a women's sense of individual distinction because "[t]wo people live under one skin" (Raphael-Leff, 1993, p. 8); the union that occurs during pregnancy can create divergent reactions among expectant mothers. Schmied and Lupton (2001) conducted a longitudinal study of 25 heterosexual couples which explored how first time mothers discursively constructed their experience of pregnancy through a series of interviews. Schmied and Lupton (2001) found that some women delighted in sharing their bodies with their fetus and identified their fetus as a companion, while other women felt distressed and described

their fetus as an invader. Schmied and Lupton (2001) suggest that boundary confusions between an expectant mother and her fetus are typical during pregnancy; expectant women view their fetus as part of the self and, at the same time, as a completely separate identity. These boundary confusions, as described by Schmied and Lupton (2001), reflect the intricacies of maternal identification. Maternal identification requires a woman to shift from a single self-identity, to a shared identity with her unborn child, and ultimately to a maternal identity that recognizes the individuality and separateness of her child (Lederman & Weis, 2009).

In addition to negotiating the relationship with her unborn child, the expectant woman must also renegotiate her personal expectations, her existing roles, and who she is in relation to others as she begins to integrate *mother* into her identity (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). The expectant mothers in Messias and DeJoseph's (2007) study reported that, as they prepared for motherhood, they reflected upon their personal experiences of being parented and evaluated the parental models they experienced within their respective families of origin. The increased relationally oriented reflection that occurs during pregnancy may directly influence expectant mothers' significant relationships (Lederman & Weis, 2009). For example, expectant mothers may enjoy improved relationships with their mothers during this time if they perceive their own mothers to be supportive, encouraging and enthusiastic; conversely, expectant mothers may distance themselves from their own mothers if they perceive them to be critical and unsupportive (Lederman & Weis, 2009).

Expectant mothers may also experience shifts in their intimate relationships as a result of pregnancy. Messias and DeJoseph (2007) suggest that the changing nature of intimate partner relationships may be one of the most salient and sensitive aspects of the transformation that occurs during a first pregnancy. A number of changes can occur

within expectant mothers' intimate partnered relationships including: a re-distribution of domestic responsibilities, altered communication patterns, increased negotiation, and increased conflict, among other things (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). Raphael-Leff (1993) posits that pregnancy alters existing interactional patterns, precipitating change and offering opportunities to renegotiate emotional expectations within relationships. For example, an expectant couple may become concerned about the effect parenthood may have on their relationship and can experience anxiety over the loss of their partner's full attention (Raphael-Leff, 1993). Furthermore, expectations surrounding gender roles may "redefine or exacerbate power and control dimensions in the partnership" (Raphael-Leff, 1993, p. 77). Therefore, it is not surprising that many studies have found that marital quality and satisfaction decrease from pregnancy to the post partum period (e.g. Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman & Bradbury, 2008; Schultz, Cowan & Cowan, 2006).

Although generally considered a source of fulfillment, pregnancy can also be difficult for many women as they confront their changing bodies and evolving roles. Moreover, entry into motherhood is further complicated by varied social expectations surrounding gender and motherhood. The next sections will explore popular discourses as they relate to gender and motherhood as well as the impact of shifting cultural discourses on both the internalization of gendered expectations and the experiences of pregnancy and motherhood.

2.4. Gender and the "Good" Mother

The motherhood discourse is disseminated, among other ways, through social interactions and mass media and is considered to be part of a common system of knowledge (Heffernan et al., 2011). In North America, the "good mother" has

traditionally been discursively produced as a White, heterosexual, middle-class, stay-at-home mother who achieves fulfillment through her domestic efforts (Boris, 1994). The “good mother” discourse typically excludes lesbian, single, adolescent or older mothers, and women of colour (Johnson & Swanson, 2006) as well as other women who do not meet its narrow criteria.

The current dominant discourse on mothering in Western culture is child-centred and is referred to by Sharon Hays as intensive mothering (1996). Intensive mothering is an expert-guided, labor intensive, emotionally consuming, child-centered, and costly approach to mothering, and requires that the child’s needs come before the mother’s (Hays, 1996). The mothering style exemplified by June Cleaver, the idyllic mother from the 1950s television series *Leave It To Beaver*, is a precursor to the intensive mothering style seen today. The Cleaver children, Wally and Theodore (Beaver), are the centre of June’s life and she clearly demonstrates her commitment to her family in every episode. June is a domestic goddess who seems to derive extreme pleasure from selflessly serving her family. In the mornings, a cheerful June makes the children’s breakfast and greets them with a kiss and a warm smile. The boys are sent to school with lunchboxes packed with their favorite sandwiches and return from school to a perfectly maintained home and to a gleeful, attentive mother who eagerly awaits their news. June is attuned to her children’s needs and wishes; she senses her children’s distress, deception, or blissful contentment and meets all their needs. June appears vicariously jubilant when her children share their successes, no matter how small, and she appears similarly distraught when her children struggle. Wally and Beaver confide in their mother because they know that June empathetically listens to their concerns and will never fail to offer encouraging and infallible words of wisdom.

June's parenting style reflects the expert-guided parenting practices advocated during this time and she ensures that her husband Ward also complies with popular parenting recommendations. In the episode "Beaver Gets Spelled", Beaver hides in a tree because his classmates convince him that he is going to be expelled from school (Connelly, Mosher & Tokar, 1957). When their son does not return home from school, Ward and June, overcome with worry, immediately search the neighborhood. They quickly discover Beaver hiding in a tree, surrounded by onlookers. Ward becomes angry and threatens to spank Beaver. June instantly expresses her disapproval of Ward's threat, censuring his behaviour by gripping his arm and glancing reprovingly in his direction. Recognizing his inappropriate emotional outburst, Ward withdraws, allowing June to parent Beaver. June's quick response to Ward's threat of corporeal punishment reflects a cultural shift in parenting: strict discipline and the use of corporeal punishment were no longer fashionable in North America because of the growing popularity of the child-centred, permissive parenting approach promoted by Dr. Benjamin Spock in 1946 (Thurer, 1994). In line with Dr. Spock's recommendations, June prefers to use psychological methods of discipline. Throughout the series, June patiently speaks to Beaver and lovingly explains why his actions are morally problematic. Beaver, imbued with his mother's love, always sincerely apologizes for his transgressions and willingly accepts his punishments, which were usually a withdrawal of privileges, and the Cleaver household instantaneously becomes harmonious once more.

Although June Cleaver is a fictitious character, and rose to popularity over 55 years ago, she continues to be viewed as a good mother archetype. June's mothering style was not invented by the writers of *Leave It To Beaver*, but instead reflected dominant child-centred, permissive parenting discourse which was gaining popularity in

the 1950s and influenced the development of the contemporary intensive mothering discourse.

Dominant discourses are socially constructed and shift over time. To examine these historical shifts in dominant mothering discourses, I will use the Cleaver family to illustrate how parenting practices and family dynamics differed greatly across specific points in history. I have also chosen to highlight specific historical circumstances that have shaped our contemporary views of good mothering practices. This section is not intended to be a thorough historical account of parenting practices; its purpose is to briefly illustrate the evolution and social construction of the dominant mothering discourse in North American society. The intensive mothering discourse became the dominant discourse in Western society in the twentieth century, as a result of patriarchal influence and historically bound social, cultural, political, and economic developments that have occurred over the centuries (Horwitz, 2011).

Socio-cultural shifts in the conceptualization of children's nature and developmental needs have been highly influential in shaping societal expectations surrounding mothering (Hays, 1996). Long before June Cleaver and her warm, forgiving embraces, children in the Middle Ages were viewed as inherently evil and required severe discipline and corporeal punishment; consequently, children were often beaten and abandoned (Hays, 1996). By the age of six or seven, children were routinely expected to contribute to society through paid work (Hays, 1996). In the Middle Ages version of *Leave It To Beaver*, Beaver and Wally would not have the privilege of a formal education. Since the Cleavers live in a city, Wally would most likely enter a trade-related apprenticeship and Beaver would presumably work as a servant or a groom (Hays, 1996). Beaver's penchant for mischief would certainly result in severe beatings. If regular beatings did not encourage Beaver to behave appropriately, Ward and June may

decide that raising Beaver was too arduous a task and reasonably conclude to abandon the doe-eyed tot instead.

The conceptualization of children in Western Europe began to shift during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Children began to be seen as “special” and childhood was now viewed as a valuable life stage by the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (Hays, 1996). Education and parental nurturing were considered crucial to children’s future character development and children were increasingly deemed innocent and sacred (Hays, 1996). The evolving social status of children and childrearing practices during this time were guided by the popular novels written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Hays, 1996; Kaplan, 1992). Rousseau’s (1761, 1762) work extolled the innocence of childhood and suggested that children should be nurtured with love and affection, raised in accordance with the development of their inner nature, cherished, and protected from social corruption (as cited in Hays, 1996). As a result, parenting practices began to change among *certain* members of Western European society, initiating the cultural movement towards contemporary mothering practices; however parenting was not yet synonymous with motherhood.

In the eighteenth century of Western Europe, June Cleaver’s counterpart is the bourgeois mother, who may have adopted a detached approach to parenthood and largely ignored her children (Hays, 1996). Eighteenth century June relied on wet nurses and servants to raise Wally and Beaver, preferring to pursue other endeavours such as writing, socializing, or focusing on other aspects of household management rather than engaging with her sons (Hays, 1996). Gradually however, the always fashionable June would adjust her aloof parenting style in order to align with the newly popular parenting discourses introduced by Rousseau (Hays, 1996). Rousseau’s ideas would have motivated June and Ward to express love and affection towards their children, to

eliminate flogging from the parenting repertoire, and to protect Wally and Beaver from the corruption of the outside world. Furthermore, the Cleavers would have ensured that their sons received a formal education in order to prepare them for adulthood.

However in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in North America, parenting practices in Puritan New England continued to reflect ideologies from the Middle Ages. Puritan culture maintained the conceptualization of children as inherently evil, and wilfulness was seen as the manifestation of a child's innate sinful nature (Hays, 1996). According to Beekman (1977) and Stone (1977), Puritan children were expected to demonstrate unwavering obedience to God and to the patriarch of their family, and to redeem themselves and attain salvation through hard work (as cited in Hays 1996). As the patriarch of the family, Ward Cleaver would be expected to discipline the Cleaver boys if they deviated from their duties or engaged in idleness or play. Beaver and Wally's wilfulness and fun-loving natures would not have been tolerated in Puritan society. Beaver and Wally would have received strict religious instruction and would be forced to work tirelessly for their parents or for other families. Patriarchs were responsible for controlling their wives and children and ensuring that their family's behaviour adhered to the social values of this period; corporeal punishment was customarily used to discipline children and was viewed as a necessary tool to foster moral behaviour (Hays, 1996). Guided by puritanical parenting discourses, Ward would have severely whipped his children when they misbehaved in order to encourage his sons' morality and to fulfill his duty as a good parent and citizen. Men held the primary responsibility for childrearing because it was thought that men were capable of reason and exemplified moral fortitude, while women were viewed as weak and susceptible to over indulgence and emotion (Hays, 1996). Therefore, June's primary parenting role during this era would be limited to birthing and chaperoning her children. June would

willingly submit to Ward's dictates and encourage Wally and Beaver to obey the rules of the church, the community, and the family patriarch: Ward Cleaver.

Socio-historical developments began to alter expectations surrounding gendered approaches to childrearing roles. The Industrial Revolution affected existing family dynamics by separating the workplace and the home (Thurer, 1994). The decline of agriculturally based economy necessitated that families leave rural areas and move to urban centres in order to earn enough money to support their families; families faced a "social dislocation [which] entailed the transformation of the family unit as an economically productive unit into a consumer unit" (Thurer, 1994, p. 183). Many working class individuals left their extended families behind when they migrated to cities and the nuclear family began to take shape. Typical families in urban areas were comprised of parents and their children and no longer included grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins as they did prior to the Industrial Revolution; family life was increasingly insular (Horwitz, 2011). Fathers left the family home to work in factories and offices; as a result, mothers became increasingly responsible for child rearing. Middle class mothers, in particular, stayed at home and became the primary caregivers for their children (Horwitz, 2011), while mothers who occupied lower socioeconomic rungs of society needed to work low-paying jobs outside of the home to sustain their families (Thurer, 1994).

Perceptions of children, childhood and women's childrearing abilities began to shift in North American culture during the same historical period. The value of childhood and children's innocence was promoted through popular discourse (Hays, 1996). Additionally, the perception of women's childrearing abilities began to evolve. Kerber (1986) credits a group of American, Revolutionary Period, middle-class, urban, republican mothers as being responsible for inciting the cultural shift in discourses surrounding mothers' roles and childrearing capabilities because these mothers

successfully fought to be viewed as integral to children's development and as being responsible for "socializing the republic's future citizens" (as cited in Hays, 1996, p. 29). Women's social movements in the United States and Canada persisted throughout the nineteenth century as women from the middle-class formed organizations and wrote, read, and distributed books on motherhood, as well as various other social issues such as, slavery, and temperance, which further promoted the moral virtues inherent to womanhood (Hays, 1996; Kulba & Lamont, 2006). Subsequently, mothers were inaugurated "as the keepers of morality" in popular nineteenth century childrearing discourses (Hays, 1996, p. 30). The changing discourses surrounding a mother's role in childrearing, and the "specialness" of children and childhood, began to alter the parenting practices of middle class North Americans.

North American society also began to advocate the protection and prolongment of childhood innocence and the importance of fostering an affectionate bond between mother and child (Hays, 1996). The home was depicted as a moral haven that could protect its inhabitants and counteract the corruption found in society at large and women became responsible for providing emotional and moral sustenance to their families; by extension, women were distinguished as integral to the creation of a more virtuous world (Hays, 1996). Domesticity was celebrated and motherhood became synonymous with childrearing as social discourses positioned mothers, rather than fathers, as responsible for the development and maintenance of children's morality (Hays, 1996). Domestic success became a social concern as mothers' roles were directly linked to the maintenance of a virtuous society. Therefore, childrearing manuals written by doctors, educators, theologians, and mothers became popular during this time because they were presumed to be necessary in guiding a mother's childrearing practices (Hays, 1996).

It was assumed that a child's character development and future success was understood to be entirely dependent on the quality of the mother-child relationship; as a result, the mother-child bond became a central focus of childrearing practices and mothers were instructed on how to develop children's consciences (Hays, 1996). Expert guided childrearing discourses suggested that psychological methods of discipline were superior to corporeal methods. Consequently, mothers were instructed to withdraw their affections when children misbehaved and to consistently model righteous behaviour in order to adequately develop a child's character and moral virtue (Hays, 1996). Ryan (1981) provides an excerpt from *Mother's Magazine*, published in 1833, which demonstrated the appropriate maternal discipline in response to a son's transgression: "I would not smile upon you, I should not receive your flowers, but should have to separate you from my company" (as cited in Hays, 1996, p. 31). Therefore, the affectionate bond between mother and child was necessary in order for the withdrawal of affection to effectively serve as punishment.

Tenets of the good mother discourse began to materialize among the North American middle class during the mid to late nineteenth century (Hays, 1996). Middle class women had a singular focus during the mid to late nineteenth century and were expected to stay at home; expert advice encouraged women's prioritization of domestic life and paid labour outside of the home was discouraged (Hays, 1996). Experts wrote articles in journals and entire books encouraging women to wholly devote themselves to their children and to constantly monitor their own behaviour as well as the behaviour of their children in order to ensure successful development (Hays, 1996). Middle class mothers became responsible for the development of their children's morality and were discouraged from seeking childrearing help from servants, other women, or their older children because childrearing was positioned as a crucial task that was best completed

by the mother (Hays, 1996). Childrearing became costly because children no longer contributed to the family economy through paid labour, and parents were required to provide their children with the right books, toys, and clothes (Hays, 1996). Thus, the childrearing discourses during this period served as the foundation of the expert-guided, child-centered, labour intensive, costly approach to mothering that permeate modern society and were effortlessly, albeit fictitiously, embodied by June in *Leave It To Beaver*.

A kind, gentle and nurturing approach to motherhood was not widely practiced in the nineteenth century; it merely began to gain popularity in a small subsection of the population. During this time, contradictory childrearing advice continued to exist and some experts continued to advocate the use of corporeal punishment in order to ensure obedience and submission, while others condemned the use of such measures (Hays, 1996). Families from rural areas were likely to use strict discipline and corporeal punishment with their children and children's participation in the family economy was generally expected (Hays, 1996). Many poor urban mothers were single and had to balance multiple responsibilities: paid labour, child-care, and domestic tasks (Hays, 1996). Therefore, women banded together in order to manage their households and to increase their families' likelihood of survival. For example, women would assist each other with child-care, subsistence, and domestic labour (Hays, 1996). Since these mothers generally worked outside the home, little time was available for good mothering. Moreover, poor urban children continued to engage in paid labor until the early twentieth century

During the twentieth century, expert advice and government involvement shaped childrearing practices. Organizations such as the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), established in 1904, fought to create child labour laws and to ensure compulsory education for children (NCLC, 2010). Scientifically based childrearing

practices became widespread as society began to look to experts to “provide technical solutions for all social problems” (Hays, 1996, p. 42). Some existing discourses still presented the view that mothers were unreliable due to their predispositions to maternal overindulgence (Hays, 1996). Consequently, it was assumed that expert guided, scientifically based childrearing practices could serve to discipline both children *and* mothers, thereby reducing social ills and cultivating a prodigious nation (Hays, 1996). Middle class mothers, who were already educating their children, devoted more attention to aligning their childrearing practices with expert advice, while working class mothers were compelled to drastically alter their childrearing practices (Hays, 1996). State-enforced reforms to child labour and the advent of compulsory education that occurred during the 1920s affected the family economy of working class homes because children were no longer able to contribute as much financially as they did prior to these laws (Hays, 1996). Furthermore, mothers who worked outside of the home could no longer rely on their older children to care for their younger siblings because older children had to attend school (Hays, 1996). This created a cultural shift. It became increasingly difficult for working class mothers to engage in paid employment while their children were young and women began to forgo paid labor in order to stay at home to care for their children (Hays, 1996). According to Hays (1996), expert childrearing advice and the efforts to promote men as the wage earners, coupled with state-enforced laws regarding child labour and schooling, thrust increasing numbers of women into exclusively domestic roles and furthered the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse.

In some ways approaches to childrearing became child-centred as early as the nineteenth century, but the labour intensive, emotionally consuming child-centred parenting practices we know today began to take shape through the “permissive

parenting” discourse from the 1940s (Hays, 1996). In the nineteenth century, family life was child-centred in that parents attended to children’s behaviour in order to ensure that children acted in accordance with adult expectations (Hays, 1996). However, the child-centred approach to parenting that dominates contemporary society is vastly different. The permissive parenting discourse suggests that desirable childrearing practices require mothers to attend to and fulfill their child’s needs and wants, never forcing their child’s development (Hays, 1996). A mother, according to the permissive parenting discourse, should love her child so deeply that she allows her “child’s needs and desires to supersede her own behaviour” (Hays, 1996, p. 46). Thus, good mothers were and continue to be defined as self-sacrificing, child-centred mothers.

Expert advice provided insight into children’s developmental needs and was used to help mothers become more child-centred in their parenting practices. The work of Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson expanded upon previous psychological research and established new theories that outlined stages of child development; their theories infused modern childrearing texts (Hays, 1996), subsequently shaping parenting discourses. Good parents were now expected to educate themselves on the stages of childhood development in order to meet their children’s shifting cognitive and emotional needs. Therefore, it is not surprising that childrearing manuals grew in popularity and that women began to rely heavily on expert guidance instead of advice from either their own mothers or extended family (Hays, 1996). Furthermore, Heffernan et al., (2011) suggest that modern mothers are more reliant on seeking expert advice from the media and have less confidence in their own mothering instincts in comparison with mothers from previous generations.

In contemporary society mothers continue to be bombarded with expert advice and continue to be encouraged to employ the mothering techniques made famous by

June Cleaver in the 1950s. However, the dominant good mothering discourse in contemporary North American society has surpassed the tenets of intensive mothering as outlined by Hays (1996) to include increased expectations of motherhood.

The current dominant discourse on mothering in North American society positions mothers as being primarily responsible for the development and well-being of their children (Horwitz, 2011). In contemporary society, mothers are encouraged to sacrifice themselves and to perfect motherhood in order to avoid “wounding” their children (Horwitz, 2011; Thurer, 1994). Children are perceived as fragile and mothers are expected to remain empathic towards their children at all times in order to ensure that their children feel supported and achieve optimal emotional development (Horwitz, 2011). Mothers are often blamed for their children’s behavioural, psychological, and health related issues (Jackson & Mannix, 2004) and, as a result, many mothers feel pressured to perfect motherhood by adhering to the tenets of the good mothering discourse (Horwitz, 2011). The contemporary discourse on mothering places unrealistic demands on mothers. Contemporary expectations surrounding good mothering require that mothers sacrifice their own needs in order to satisfy the needs of their children (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Mothers are encouraged to enhance their children’s development by spending copious amounts of time with their children, by providing their children with a variety of toys, designer clothing and nutritiously dense meals, and by entertaining, educationally stimulating, and emotionally supporting their children at all times (Horwitz, 2011; Thurer, 1994).

June Cleaver in contemporary society would attempt to provide Wally and Beaver with a competitive edge soon after conception. June would eat the right foods and exercise throughout her pregnancy. She would play classical music and read them books as they floated in utero. She may document every stage of their growth by

photographing her expanding belly and by purchasing three dimensional ultra sounds. Once they were delivered (via a natural birth of course), June would become her children's tutor, role model, disciplinarian, friend and playmate. She would prepare nutritious, organic meals and maintain a clean, child-friendly home. June would be able to identify their individual strengths and challenges and mold her parenting style to fit their individual needs. June would protect them, love them unconditionally, and try to provide them with every opportunity. June would become her children's project manager. She would take Wally and Beaver to host of extracurricular activities and enrol them in the highest ranking schools in order to ensure their success in a competitive capitalistic society; her boys would pursue activities that interested them and enhanced their physical, emotional, and mental development no matter the cost. Their financial needs would take precedence and she would continue to care for them in the family home until they were ready to leave.

Demonstrably, the tenets associated with good mothering have become increasingly intensive over time and have been shaped by a number of socio-historical factors. Throughout this paper I will use the terminology *good mother* and the *good mothering discourse* to refer to the tenets associated with intensive mothering compounded with the increased expectations of motherhood faced by women in contemporary society.

2.5. Expert Advice and Medical Surveillance

New and expectant mothers are exposed to a barrage of advice from expert sources, their peers, and the media. Information regarding fetal and maternal health is widely available and accessible through television, the internet, and magazines. Expert biomedical information has permeated daytime talk shows on television, educational and

personal websites, and various types of printed media; as a result, biomedical information has increasingly become common knowledge. Consequently, the medical surveillance of expectant mothers has increased (Heffernan et al., 2011) as well as the expectations surrounding good mothering. As members of society become more familiar with the medical recommendations surrounding pregnancy, many expectant mothers have reported that they encounter forms of social control, often disguised as advice regarding lifestyle, diet, and health (Heffernan et al., 2011). Reproductive and population health expert Wendy Chavkin (1992) suggests that pregnant women who do not follow expert recommendations and deviate from the cultural and social expectations surrounding mothering are viewed as hostile to their fetuses. Furthermore, expectant mothers who are not fetus-focused may face public censure.

Heffernan et al. (2011) conducted a mixed methods study in order to investigate how disparate generations of women experienced pregnancy. In phase one of the study, 34 mothers between 29 and 66 years of age completed self-administered questionnaires which were designed to gain insight into how pregnancy impacted the respondents' lifestyles (Heffernan et al., 2011). Phase two of the study entailed in-depth interviews of 12 mothers who were less than a year postpartum (current generation of mothers) along with in-depth interviews of seven of the 12 mothers' mothers (my mother's generation of mothers) (Heffernan et al., 2011). Heffernan et al. (2011) found that the current generation of mothers reported increased public policing during pregnancy when compared to the experiences of the previous generation of mothers. Many of the current generation of mothers disclosed personal experiences of being censured in public because of their gravidity. A seemingly extreme example of public censoring occurred at one participant's place of employment. The participant reported

that a co-worker shunned her because she was engaging in potential fetus-harming behaviour by eating a tuna-fish sandwich (Heffernan et al., 2011).

The pregnant woman's body no longer belongs to her alone (Longhurst, 2000). People stare at her growing belly, touch her without permission, and police her actions (Longhurst, 2000). According to Tylka and Calogero (2011), monitoring and restricting expectant mothers' behaviour is viewed as a societal necessity because the fetus is a future citizen in need of protection; as a result, expectant women may become increasingly susceptible to public scrutiny as their bellies expand (Heffernan et al., 2011).

The public censuring of expectant mothers suggests that the good mother discourse has expanded to provide a new ideal that begins not at childbirth, but at conception. The good mothering discourse posits that pregnant women should be fetus-focused just as good mothers should be child-centred. If expectant mothers want to avoid being labeled as "bad" mothers they must consider the welfare of their fetus at all times (Heffernan et al., 2011; Markens, Browner & Press, 1997).

Media coverage of Jessica Simpson's pregnancy demonstrates and further promotes and perpetuates the intense public scrutiny that pregnant women endure in contemporary society. Simpson's body has been analyzed throughout her career: she was heralded as female physical perfection when she played the character Daisy Duke in *The Dukes of Hazard* movie; she was later condemned for wearing high-waisted "mom jeans" that made her size four frame look fat ("Jessica Simpson", 2010). During her pregnancy, Simpson was openly criticized by the media for her weight gain and her dietary choices. Joy Behar, from *The View*, called Simpson "fat" (Ravitz, 2012a) and Simpson's self-reported dietary choices, such as buttered Pop-Tarts, were published by numerous magazines and newspapers including: *Us Weekly*, *The Daily Mail*, *Shape*

Magazine, and *The Globe and Mail*. Subsequently, as if to justify their criticism of Simpson's weight gain, entertainment programs and magazines consulted with medical doctors in order to demonstrate the hazardous nature of Simpson's dietary practices. For instance, the website Hollywood Life sought expert advice from obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. Tara Solomon (Melas, 2012). Dr. Solomon reported that Simpson's poor dietary practices and excessive weight gain could lead to health problems for both her and her fetus, and that her fetus may be more susceptible to the development of respiratory and glucose regulation difficulties (Melas, 2012). The media used expert advice to further portray Simpson as a careless mother who was putting her fetus in danger by engaging in reckless, Pop-Tart-eating behaviour, and the public evaluation of her weight gain was viewed by some as justifiable to protect her fetus.

Pregnancy may no longer offer a reprieve from weight-related public criticisms; instead, a woman's physical appearance during pregnancy has been discursively linked to her aptitude for motherhood. Expert advice is used to justify the increased surveillance of women's bodies during pregnancy and weight-gain above the minimum medical recommendations has been discursively constructed as harmful to the fetus. As a result, women in contemporary society may be increasingly focused on monitoring their own pregnancy weight gain and that of others in order to align with current physical expectations for the pregnant female form.

2.6. Yummy Mummy

The thin, non-pregnant ideal now has a pregnant counterpart—the yummy mummy. In 1991 a heavily pregnant Demi Moore posed nude for the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine. The photo shoot was groundbreaking because pregnant female celebrities were seldom mentioned in the media, let alone depicted in a sexualized

manner. Due to Western culture's obsession with celebrity, pregnancy has become increasingly visible in the media (Hadfield et al., 2007). According to Longhurst (2000), pregnant women "have arrived [...and] it now seems as though it is possible to be pregnant and fashionable; pregnant and sexy; pregnant and a corporate manager; pregnant and sporty" (p. 458). Although the "arrival" of pregnant women in Western society may have afforded pregnant women more freedoms, it has also led to increased surveillance and social pressure to look a certain way while pregnant.

The yummy mummy is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western popular culture that epitomizes Western ideals surrounding femininity. The yummy mummy discourse was conceived by a "capitalist culture that equates empowerment with the capacity to 'manage' changes in the reproductive body" (Douglas, 2010 p. 29). Depicted in the media through a new generation of celebrity mothers, the yummy mummy is presented as sexy, beautiful, and in control. The yummy mummy manages her body by ensuring that she does not gain extra fat during her pregnancy and her "bump" is framed by an otherwise thin body. This idealized pregnant form is described as "a belly on two sticks" in a New York magazine article titled "The Perfect Pregnancy" (Abraham, 2004, as cited in Rubin & Steinberg, 2011, p. 607).

The physical transformation during pregnancy can be managed further by purchasing the right clothes, accessories, and beauty and healthcare products (Douglas, 2010). Maternity fashions reflect the evolution of the idealized pregnant body. Clothing that formerly disguised the pregnant body has now been surpassed by form fitting fashions that highlight the yummy mummy's "bump". The dramatic transformation of maternity fashion indicates "that pregnancy is something women no longer need to 'cover up'" (Heffernan et al., 2011, p. 322).

Recently, many designers have expanded their business by creating maternity clothing lines and affluent pregnant women can now access the latest fashion trends and purchase foundational garments, and specially designed dresses, that can help them transform into a yummy mummy. For example, maternity dresses that resemble the body conscious aesthetic of the bandage dress created by Herve Leger are now widely available for pregnant women. The bandage dress is designed to “seamlessly sculpt the female silhouette with signature banding construction” and to “pay tribute” to “modern femininity” (Herve Leger, 2012). The elasticized banding in the Herve Leger style dresses are designed to make the wearer look thinner and smoother, allowing pregnant women to better represent the idealized feminine form. Maternity versions of the popular foundational garment Spanx are also available to pregnant woman who want to manage their pregnant form. “ASSETS Marvelous Mama Unbelievable Underwear” by Spanx advertises that their foundational garment “shapes, smoothes and firms the hips, thighs and rear” to help the pregnant woman look smooth throughout her nine months of pregnancy (Spanx, 2012). The endless array of maternity products available to women and the changing aesthetic of maternity clothing encourage consumerism and create societal expectations surrounding pregnant women’s appearances.

The yummy mummy is not only able to manage her body during pregnancy, but she is able to quickly return to her conventionally attractive, pre-pregnancy shape after giving birth (Douglas, 2010). For example, Heidi Klum is the quintessential yummy mummy. Klum participated in the 2005 televised Victoria’s Secret fashion show less than two months after giving birth to a son (Triggs, 2009). Wearing nothing more than a pair of wings, a crystal studded bra and a thong, the supermodel proudly displayed her slim postpartum body to millions of viewers. Klum repeated this postpartum feat in 2009 when she returned to the Victoria’s Secret runway six weeks after giving birth to a

daughter. Victoria's Secret model Alessandra Ambrosio followed in Klum's footsteps and walked the runway four months postpartum, while Victoria's Secret models Miranda Kerr and Adriana Lima returned to the runway less than a year after they gave birth. It is likely that the Victoria's Secret models felt pressure to return to their pre-pregnancy shape soon after delivery because their careers centre on their physical attractiveness. Furthermore, the increased media focus on pregnant celebrities may also contribute to their sense of urgency to lose their pregnancy weight because they are likely to be photographed and scrutinized by the media and society at large.

The media's intense focus on celebrities promptly returning to their thin, toned pre-pregnancy shape can skew women's perceptions of the appearance of their postpartum bodies. When ordinary mothers model themselves on the image of the yummy mummy, they can become "lock[ed] into battle with their postnatal body as they attempt to tone, sculpt, and thin it down" (Douglas 2010, p. 129).

In a small scale pilot study, Sumner et al. (1993) investigated whether or not pregnant women's body shape distortion was affected by exposure to the media's portrayal of the thin ideal female form. Sumner et al. (1993) exposed ten pregnant women to a series of images at two separate gestational periods and then asked the women to estimate their body size. The women were exposed to two sets of images: one set was neutral and the other was affective (Sumner et al., 1993). The neutral images were photos of home furnishings taken from a home décor magazine and the affective images were photographs of models taken from a fashion magazine (Sumner et al., 1993). Sumner et al. (1993) found that pregnant women overestimated their body size after being exposed to images of models in fashion magazines. The authors suggest that pregnancy may promote an increased sensitivity to women's body image

and that exposure to images presented in fashion magazines may increase women's likelihood of experiencing body image distortions (Sumner et al., 1993).

Rallis et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative, longitudinal study which investigated changes in body image and potential predictors of various dimensions of body image during the first year postpartum. Rallis et al. (2007) administered questionnaires to 79 women at three different postpartum periods: six weeks, six months and one year postpartum. The researchers found that women who compared their bodies to dissimilar others at six weeks postpartum were more likely to feel fat and experience increased body dissatisfaction one year postpartum (Rallis et al., 2007). Rallis et al. (2007) suggest that comparisons to dissimilar others such as non-postpartum women and celebrity mothers, may lead to higher levels of body dissatisfaction among new mothers.

The yummy mummy discourse objectifies women and posits that women should remain sexy and slim throughout their pregnancies and reclaim a thin and toned physique promptly after delivery. This maternal aesthetic is extraordinarily difficult to achieve and is costly and time consuming. This discourse can also create a sense of "failed femininity" within some expectant and new mothers who are unable to meet the standards depicted by celebrities (Hadfield et al., 2007); subsequently, feelings of failure and body dissatisfaction have been linked to the development of depressive symptoms, shame, anxiety, and guilt (Douglas, 2010; Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). The yummy mummy discourse is potentially deleterious to women's well-being and places additional expectations on women who may already be struggling to do it all.

2.7. Can and Should Do it all

A pervasive discourse that currently exists in Western society is the "can do it all" discourse (Wood, 2010, p 103). The can do it all discourse suggests that women can

and should do it all (Wood, 2010). Women are taught to “aim high, achieve much, then aim higher and achieve more” (Wood, 2010, p. 103). This gendered discourse implies that women can be physically attractive and have successful careers and families if they simply balance their responsibilities and exert enough effort (Wood, 2010). Women can become overwhelmed as they try to “do it all” expertly and can find themselves in an “ongoing internal struggle when dealing with their gender role identity. Are they a career woman? Are they a mother? Are they the perfect wife? Are they the sultry sex-kitten? Or are they all of the above?” (Morgan, 2007, p. 112). “Doing it all” can be exceedingly difficult because many of these gendered expectations are in opposition. For example, it is difficult for women to embody the role of the successful, workaholic career woman and the child-centred, self-sacrificing mother because each of these roles is an extreme and requires a singular focus.

Since the 1980s, more and more women are employed on a full-time basis outside the home and this has led to increased responsibilities for women as they engage in multiple shifts of work (Kaplan, 1992). Although the feminist movement advocated for shared household responsibility among partners and the gender roles within families are shifting, the burden of household responsibilities continues to rest with mothers (Kaplan, 1992). Messias and DeJoseph (2007) suggest that women begin to navigate the double-shift of employment, domestic work, and childcare before their babies are even born. For example, Gail, a mother in Messias and DeJoseph’s (2007) study, worked full-time as an administrative assistant, was responsible for the majority of the housework, and also did the billing for her husband’s company. Women in Westernized societies are required to not only complete the first shift of paid labour and the second shift of child-care and household related work, but are increasingly being expected to engage in a third shift of dietary and fitness practices in order to maintain a

physical appearance that is consistent with feminine beauty ideals promoted in contemporary society (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). These combined responsibilities require an exorbitant amount of time and energy and can be daunting for women. It seems that the multiple shifts of work women face may also make it difficult, if not impossible, to adhere to the idealized image of the good mother. It would be exceedingly difficult to constantly “be there” for your children while having to work outside of the home, manage household responsibilities, nurture your intimate relationships, and maintain a fat-free toned physique.

However, many women continue to internalize the can do it all discourse even though “doing it all” is largely impossible. For example, Francesca, a participant in Messias and DeJoseph’s (2007) study, clearly articulates a common struggle that many women encounter. Francesca grew up with the feeling that “women can do it all” and reported that she struggled trying to do it all and felt as though “[she] had to do it all and do it right” (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007, p. 51). When Francesca became pregnant she began to realize that “women *can’t* do it all” (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007, p. 51). Other women in the study described feeling a “pull between pregnancy and work” and struggling to meet expectations at their jobs while addressing the changing needs of their bodies (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007, p. 51). The women reported that being pregnant could be physically exhausting and that pregnancy required an increased focus on their physical selves as they became more attentive to their diet and emotional health in an attempt to avoid harming their babies (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). Furthermore, two of the women in the study left their jobs in order to protect their fetuses from potential hazards found in their work environment (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007).

Douglas (2010), a general medical practitioner, reflected on her work with new and expectant mothers. Douglas (2010) observed that many of these women feel as

though they are “not enough” and believes that the constant drive to improve oneself and to expertly perform motherhood leads to anxiety and to the belief that motherhood is a skill that can be mastered (p. 123). The can do it all discourse breeds a perfectionistic approach to life and those who are unable to do everything well may feel inferior and tend to compare themselves with women who seem to do everything successfully (Wood, 2010).

Women who internalize the can do it all discourse believe that the self is in constant state of improvement, that the self can be endlessly reinvented, and that they are capable of achieving anything and everything if they work hard enough (Wood, 2010). The individualistic values embedded in the can do it all discourse prompts women to believe that they are solely responsible for the success of their families and their careers, thereby creating additional, and unrealistic, pressures. The can do it all discourse recuses men of childrearing responsibilities, leaving women to do it all, and excludes the involvement of immediate and extended family and friends in childrearing. As a result, it is possible that women who internalize this discourse may be less likely to seek support from others, including their partners, and be more likely to feel isolated and vulnerable during a crisis. Furthermore, new mothers who have low levels of social support are more likely to experience higher levels of depressive symptoms during the postpartum period (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important for expectant women to accept dependence on others and assimilate to identities and social roles which emphasize caring and cooperation in order to increase the likelihood of their successful adaption to motherhood (Patel, Lee, Wheatcroft, Barnes & Stein, 2005).

The belief that success is solely reliant on individual effort is also problematic because it fails to consider the effects of social inequalities. The can do it all discourse suggests that the individual is responsible for her own success and that failure is a result

of a lack of effort (Wood, 2010). However, structural factors like poverty, sexism and racism are unlikely to be substantially affected by individual effort (Wood, 2010), making it difficult for many women to achieve socially constructed markers of success regardless of how much effort they exert. For example, marginalized women may have increased health concerns and may be unable to obtain safe housing, adequate nutrition and education, thereby limiting their access to subsequent opportunities. The can do it all discourse sets women up for failure because it promotes the belief that women are able to conquer any barriers and succeed on all fronts even when some barriers are immovable (Wood, 2010). Being highly successful on all fronts is a near impossibility and women who ascribe to the can do it all discourse are likely to internalize failure, believing that they simply did not work hard enough.

The idea that individuals can create and re-create themselves arises from a larger discourse that suggests that one's identity is merely a collection of materials that "can and should [be] transform[ed] to achieve success" (Wood, 2010, p. 104). This discourse also applies to women's bodies. Women's bodies are often framed as problematic and this encourages adherence to a continually evolving idealized image of feminine beauty as well as the notion that our bodies are projects that can be transformed through hard work (Bordo, 2003). Society's focus on the "ideal" mother has intensified, and the pregnant body is increasingly becoming a public project in need of improvement (Hadfield et al., 2007).

And yet, pregnancy may be perceived by some women as legitimizing a corporal contravention from Westernized standards of feminine beauty (Johnson et al., 2004). Women may experience a temporary reprieve from bodily concerns and the attainment of the thin physical ideal during the later stages of pregnancy (Johnson et al., 2004; Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002; Skouteris, Carr, Wertheim, Paxton & Duncombe, 2005). For

instance, many women in Johnson et al.'s (2004) study reported that pregnancy made it more acceptable for them to eat more and forgo their usual, self-imposed dietary restrictions. However, pregnancy only seemed to legitimize weight gain to a certain extent; women reported that there was a distinction between gaining an acceptable amount of weight and "becoming a really big, fat pregnant person" (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 365). Women appeared driven to demonstrate that the changes in their body weight and size resulted from pregnancy, rather than a loss of self-control (Earle, 2003). For example, a woman in Earle's (2003) study reported that she was relieved that others knew she was pregnant and did not misinterpret her changing shape as a sign that she was "stuffing [her] face" (p. 247). Another woman appeared anxious about being negatively evaluated by others because of her changing shape, stating "[y]ou can't really see I'm pregnant, just looks like I've got fat, people don't know what to think" (Earle, 2003, p. 247). These women's comments demonstrate "the moral culpability associated with being fat and the perceived relationship between over-eating and a lack of self-discipline and control" (Earle, 2003, p. 247).

2.8. Fat Phobia

In Westernized cultures, body fat and fleshiness are associated with over-indulgence, a lack of discipline, a devaluation of the feminine ideal, and "failed individual morality needing earthly discipline" (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004, p. 611). The condemnation of fat results from Cartesian mind/body dualism and Christian asceticism (Bordo, 2003). Throughout history the view of the body has shifted; however, mind/body dualism has remained relatively consistent (Bordo, 2003). According to Plato, Augustine and Descartes, the human body is composed of two realms: the mental and spiritual and the bodily or material (Bordo, 2003). Each of the three aforementioned philosophers

conceptualizes the body as a mechanical, material case for the revered inner self (Bordo, 2003). The philosophers considered the body as a site of confinement and limitation that burdens the soul (Bordo, 2003). Furthermore, the body was conceptualized as the enemy because it confused thinking and is a “source of countless distractions by mere requirement of food” as well as “liable also to disease which overtake and impede us...it fills us full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies of all kinds, and endless foolery” (Cottingham, 1976, p. 8, as cited in Bordo, 2003, p. 145). The perceived weakness and fallibility of the body was thought to impede intellectual greatness. Thus, the body was viewed as dangerous and in need of control through eliminating the body’s hungers and desires (Bordo, 2003).

Although the discourse of the dangerous and unpredictable body may seem archaic, this discourse continues to pervade Westernized societies. For example, a well-composed, physically fit body implies mastery over the self and is a social marker of success, while a body that does not align with societal ideals suggests a loss of control and, as a result, is devalued in Westernized societies (Bordo, 2003). For example, in 2005, Jessica Simpson’s body was glorified by the media because she toned and sculpted her body in order to fit into her Daisy Duke short-shorts. Multiple magazines, including *People*, *Shape*, and *Woman’s Day* published her exercise regimen and dietary practices in order to provide readers with guidelines they could use to attain similar results (for examples see Byrne, n.d.; “Jessica Simpson’s hotpants diet”, 2005; Wong, 2005). When Jessica began to gain weight she received similar levels of media coverage, but the messages convey a cautionary tale: if you lose control of your cravings and eat Pop-Tarts and fried chicken, you will become fat and an object of ridicule.

Even though mastery over one's body is applicable to both men and women, women's bodies are subject to greater scrutiny and are often framed as failing in a myriad of ways (Bordo, 2003). The idealized feminine form is continuously shifting and women are encouraged to continuously strive to achieve the current physical ideal. The body is seen as a project, a component of an individual's self-identity that should be worked on and mastered (Bordo, 2003). Western media promotes the transformation, rearrangement, correction, and limitless improvement to the body "defying the historicity, the morality, and, indeed, the very materiality of the body" (Bordo, 2003, p. xvii).

The current idealized feminine form, as portrayed in the media, is thin with large breasts (Tylka & Calogero, 2011), digitally altered and unrealistic. Actors and models who most closely mirror the current bodied ideal are deliberately selected by media representatives and images of these actors and models are then routinely digitally altered to make them further align with gendered body ideals (Tylka & Calogero, 2010; Zones, 2000). The altering of bodied images in the media makes these bodied ideals seem achievable when in reality they are not (Tylka & Calogero, 2011). Even actors who are beautiful by conventional standards are not appealing enough in their natural form. Bordo (2003) references an image of Michelle Pfeiffer on the cover of *Esquire* magazine that was framed with the caption "What Michelle Pfeiffer needs...is absolutely nothing" (p. xviii). In reality, Pfeiffer's image "needed" digital complexion enhancement, line removal, neck softening, and chin trimming (among other enhancements) in order to appear on the cover; the invoice for these digital procedures was later printed by *Harper's Bazaar* magazine (Bordo, 2003). The bodied ideals presented in the media represent an extremely narrow and fictitious depiction of beauty that is unattainable without digital enhancement (Tylka & Calogero, 2011). Since these fictitious bodied ideals are portrayed as attainable, their influence can contribute to intrapersonal and

interpersonal pressures to achieve a body that aligns with the gendered body ideal (Tylka & Calogero, 2011) because media leads women to believe that their physical appearance reflects who they are and determines their worth (Patel et al., 2005).

Levine and Murnen (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of research that explored mass media as a causal risk factor for disordered eating and negative body image in females. The researchers determined that engagement with media is a variable risk factor for disordered eating and negative body image (Levine & Murnen, 2009). The mass media repeatedly presents unhealthy messages about attractiveness, ideal body size, gender, food, self-control and weight management (Bordo, 2003; Levine and Murnen, 2009). The messages presented by the media can encourage a number of beliefs surrounding the importance of physical appearance and the need for consumer goods (Levine & Murnen, 2009). Being sexually attractive is presented as a necessary goal and the media identifies culturally established beauty ideals, identifies trends, and routinely infers “that the best, most competitive practices for becoming and staying beautiful are obviously located outside the self” and can be achieved through the acquisition of attractiveness enhancing products (Levine & Murnen, 2009). Furthermore, the researchers determined that the media promotes a “thinness schema” (p. 15). This thinness schema discursively creates a set of beliefs and assumptions surrounding the woman’s roles and relationship to the thin ideal. For example, Levine and Murnen (2009) suggest that this schema presents women as “‘naturally’ invested in their beauty assets” and that “beauty is a woman’s principal project in life” (p. 15). The media also suggests that “a slender, youthful attractive ‘image’ is really something substantive, because it is pleasing to males and it demonstrates to females that one is in control of one’s life...[and that] learning to perceive, monitor, and indeed experience yourself as the object of an essentially masculine gaze is an important part of being feminine and

beautiful” (Levine & Murnen, 2009, p. 15). Most women regularly engage with the mass media and may experience negative body image and or adopt disordered eating behaviours as a result (Levine & Murnen, 2009).

The interpersonal pressure placed on women through peer influence often mirrors the values presented in the media and can work in tandem to propagate the importance of the idealized feminine form (Ridolfi, Myers, Crowther & Ciesla, 2011). A series of quantitative studies have found that the pressure from media and peers to attain this socially constructed idealized version of beauty can be powerful and can encourage women to internalize an unrealistically thin standard of beauty (Stice & Shaw, 2003; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). When unrealistically thin versions of beauty are internalized, women may be more likely to engage in harmful behaviours and suffer increased negative affect. Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw and Stein (1994) conducted a quantitative investigation into the relationship between exposure to both print and television media, ideal body stereotype internalization, eating disordered symptoms and body satisfaction among 238 female undergraduates. The researchers found that media exposure encouraged the internalization of the thin ideal body shape and the internalization of the thin ideal body shape was associated with eating disordered symptoms and body dissatisfaction (Stice et al., 1994).

Yamamiya et al. (2005) used quantitative methods to assess how exposure to images of thin and beautiful women affected the moods and body image of 123 White, female college students. The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3) was administered in order to assess internalization of the thin ideal and the Body Image States Scale (BISS) was used to measure current body satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Yamamiya et al., 2005). The researchers determined that women who had a high thin-ideal internalization reported an increased negative

body-image state after being exposed to the thin-and-beautiful media images for as little as five minutes, while exposure to neutral images of objects did not affect the body-image state among these women (Yamamiya et al., 2005). These findings are consistent with those of Stice et al. (1994) and suggest that women who internalize the thin ideal may be particularly vulnerable to media images of the thin ideal.

Yamamiya et al. (2005) also assessed brief preventative interventions that may be used to prevent body image disturbances. The researchers explored the preventative effects of media literacy information with and without a dissonance-induction (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental groups: control-info/control-slides (n = 30), control-info/model-slides (n = 33), media-info/model-slides (n = 28), and media-info/dissonance-induction/model-slides (n = 32). The neutral control information or media literacy information was presented prior to being exposed to control slides, images of objects, or model slides, media images of thin-and-beautiful women (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Adverse effects of exposure to media images of thin-and-beautiful women was significantly reduced among women who had high-internalization of the thin ideal when they were educated on media literacy and verbally recalled what they learned or constructed arguments against the thin ideal presented using the media literacy information (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Interestingly, women with low levels of internalization were not affected by any of the experimental manipulations (Yamamiya et al., 2005). These findings suggest that media literacy interventions may help reduce the adverse effects media messages and images have on women's mental health by teaching women how to critically engage and question the promoted ideals.

2.9. Taming the Unruly Female Form

The media suggests that if individuals work hard enough to control their bodies, use the right products, and are willing to sustain enough effort they can resemble the current bodied ideal. In other words, the body can be shaped and improved through exercise. The rise of women's participation in exercise and sport in the 1980s can be attributed to the second-wave feminist movement which worked towards securing equal rights for females including access to sports and fitness opportunities (Jette, 2006). Feminism and sport intersect and can help women achieve physical empowerment (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). In some ways, the discourse of liberal feminist empowerment and choice parallels the discourse of the body needing control. The direction is clear; women need to take control. Strong, empowered women take control of their rights, their futures, and their bodies. As Dworkin and Wachs (2004) found, magazines clearly used messages of feminist empowerment when touting the benefits of exercise. The researchers discovered that fitness magazines depict women who choose to exercise as liberated and "breaking free from oppression", as opposed to simply being "baby machines" (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004, p. 617).

Expectations surrounding pregnant women's activity levels and ability to engage in exercise have changed since the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Fredrikson et al., 2010). Pregnancy was largely treated as a risky condition and the pregnant woman was viewed as sick and in need of rest until the late twentieth century (Fredrikson et al., 2010). Although pregnancy and childbirth are not risk free, maternal mortality rates have generally decreased among healthy North American women over the last century (Child Health USA 2011, 2011; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002). Female participation in sport and exercise regimens dramatically increased in the 1980s, but pregnant women were generally advised to avoid most forms of exercise except perhaps a light stroll,

because the pregnant body continued to be viewed as fragile during this period (Jette, 2006). In 1988, Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, refused to give up skiing during the early stages of her pregnancy and, as a result, she faced public censure. Sarah was depicted as an irresponsible mother and an irredeemable risk-taker. However, during the past decade the pregnant exerciser has become more visible in Western society, both in the media and in the community. Images of expectant celebrity mothers engaging in physical activity are now common and it is not unusual to see images of pregnant celebrities going to the gym or practicing yoga in, for example, *Us Weekly* and *People* magazines. Furthermore, pregnant athletes often continue to train while pregnant and three expectant mothers have competed in the Olympics (“Olympic athlete”, 2012). The pregnant exerciser’s visibility, both in the media and in the community, reflects a shifting discourse regarding pregnant women’s physical capabilities and may intimate the positive influence of feminism (Jette, 2006).

The medical discourses indicating the riskiness of pregnancy continue to exist, but have shifted in regards to exercise. The pregnant woman is now seen as “at risk” if she does *not* engage in physical activity during her pregnancy (Jette, 2006). Now, rather than being able to choose to exercise without facing public scrutiny, the pregnant woman *must* exercise. For example, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology and the Joint Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada both advocate moderate physical activity during pregnancy and suggest that failure to do so could result in excessive weight gain during pregnancy, loss of cardiovascular and muscular health, a higher risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension and gestational diabetes, and poorer psychological adjustment to pregnancy (Davies, Wolfe, Mottola, & MacKinnon, 2003). The fitness industry has capitalized on the shift in medical discourse and this is reflected in popular media (Jette, 2006). The messages contained in popular fitness magazines

reflect cultural discourses on the pregnant body and on motherhood; physical appearance is increasingly being linked to the conceptualization of the good mother (Hadfield et al., 2007).

Dworkin and Wachs (2004) conducted a textual analysis of *Shape Fit Pregnancy* magazine and reported that the magazine framed fitness not merely as empowering for women's sense of self, but as "an entire regime of gendered bodily practices that is required by a capitalist speedup" (p. 617). The magazine promoted the notion that "time is of the essence"; women should be "getting their body back" and "bouncing" back to their pre-pregnancy shape as soon as possible (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004, p. 617). The magazine even suggested that women should start working towards regaining their pre-baby body the day after giving birth (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). New mothers were told that fitness should be a postpartum priority and warns that a new baby should not impede a fitness routine (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). The association of fitness with "getting your body back" suggests that fitness is not solely an activity that aids maternal and infant health; fitness is a way to tame the unruly pregnant body (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004).

Jette (2006) conducted a critical discourse analysis of six consecutive fitness and health columns for expectant and new mothers called "Fit for Two" which were published in the popular fitness magazine *Oxygen*. The researcher identified a discourse promoted by the magazine that suggested that expectant mothers should exercise because they are ultimately responsible for ensuring healthy and safe pregnancies (Jette, 2006). Similar to the findings of Dworkin and Wachs (2006), Jette (2006) discovered that many of the tips in the column encouraged the expectant mother to use exercise to gain control of her changing pregnant form, as well as to help her prepare for labor, and to ensure a healthy pregnancy. Jette (2006) recognized that a discourse

surrounding appearance pervaded the column. Issues titled “Shed Baby Fat” and “Get Your Body Back” were targeted towards new mothers in the postpartum period and offered advice regarding exercises and eating behaviours that could help them tone their bodies and “get rid of the jiggle” (Jette, 2006, p. 346). Furthermore, Jette (2006) noted that advertisements for stretch mark creams were printed on the page directly opposite to the column. The images in the magazine featured yummy mummies, attractive mothers who are tight and toned, alongside similarly attractive celebrity moms (Jette, 2006). Jette (2006) asserts that even though the stated goal of the magazine column seemed to be the promotion of maternal health and fitness, readers are positioned to fear weight gain and the jiggling, dimpled flesh of the postpartum body.

Tensions surfaced among the discourses within the column. For example, women were told to exercise in order to benefit child and maternal health which reflected medical and good mothering discourses (Jette, 2006). Moreover, the magazine encouraged women to use exercise as way to sculpt their unacceptable, postpartum bodies which reproduced discourses surrounding mastery of the self and the yummy mummy (Jette, 2006). The first message encourages mothers to focus on the infant’s needs, while the second places the focus on physical appearance above all else (Jette, 2006). Interestingly, both Dworkin and Wachs (2004) and Jette (2006) found that the “fit mother” discourse promoted in popular fitness magazines linked a woman’s physical shape and engagement in exercise with her mothering ability. In both magazines analyzed, fitness was linked to increasing maternal and fetal health as well as preparing women for motherhood (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004; Jette, 2006).

The idea of using exercise to become “fit” for motherhood seems to have ethical implications (Jette, 2006); that is, the fit mother discourse implies that women who exercise are going to be good mothers while those who do not exercise will be unfit for

motherhood. Good mothers choose to exercise to encourage the health of their babies, and control their unruly pregnant bodies, whereas “bad” mothers do not follow this advice. Jette (2006) suggests that although encouraging expectant mothers to exercise signals a positive societal shift, the promotion of physical activity as an indicator of a mother’s child rearing capability is problematic. Furthermore, Dworkin and Wachs (2004) identified that *Shape Fit Pregnancy* equated failed motherhood and womanhood with women who “let their bodies go” during and post pregnancy. Demonstrably, the message that women receive is clear: the pregnant and postpartum body is problematic and needs reform. Therefore, it is not surprising that many women engage in fitness, not just for health reasons, but also to align their physical appearances with current signifiers of idealized femininity (Bordo, 2003).

Reports of increased body dissatisfaction during the postpartum period appear to be a common experience for many women. Research exploring body satisfaction among new mothers suggests that many women experience higher levels of body dissatisfaction during the postpartum period when compared to pre-pregnancy and late stages of pregnancy (Jordan, Capdevila & Johnson, 2005; Rallis et al., 2007; Shrewsbury, Robb, Power & Wardle, 2009). Rallis et al. (2007) suggest that women feel the least fit and fattest in the first year postpartum and that body dissatisfaction is the greatest at six months postpartum. Women report feeling the fattest at six months postpartum even though most women weigh less at six months postpartum than they did at six weeks postpartum (Rallis et al., 2007). The authors suggest that women may not be as concerned about weight gain at six weeks postpartum because they may continue to perceive their figure in terms of pregnancy and delivery (Rallis et al., 2007). However, at 6 months postpartum women may no longer consider their bodies as being within a pregnancy phase and, as a result, may perceive their bodies as unacceptable (Rallis et

al., 2007). Women who gained more weight during their pregnancies reported feeling less attractive (Rallis et al., 2007). Shrewsbury et al. (2009) found that weight loss attempts dramatically increased during the postpartum period; a quarter of the 954 mothers who participated in their quantitative study were attempting to lose weight prior to pregnancy and the amount of women engaging in weight loss practices doubled during the postpartum period.

Jette (2006) suggests that discourses embedded in the magazine's articles create norms that mothers should strive for: mothers should embody both the good mother and the yummy mummy. The alignment of the good mother with the yummy mummy plays on the vulnerabilities of new and expecting mothers and can promote increased self-surveillance during pregnancy (Jette, 2006). Corporations can capitalize on women's anxieties about their bodies and pregnant women may be more susceptible to this because their shape begins to deviate from gendered bodily norms as they go through pregnancy (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004).

Psychoanalyst and reproductive scholar Raphael-Leff (1993) suggests that women who have suffered from eating disorders may find the loss of control during pregnancy upsetting. Pregnancy triggered previous issues surrounding eating disorders for three participants in Messias and DeJoseph's (2007) study. The authors found that women's reactions to their physical changes during pregnancy ranged from reverence to apprehension and a sense of loss of control (Messias & DeJoseph, 2007). Other research in this area has reported similar findings suggesting that women's satisfaction with their pregnant bodies and their sense of corporeal control vary during pregnancy (Jordan et al., 2005; Rubin & Steinberg, 2011; Skouteris et al., 2005; Warren & Brewis, 2004).

Using qualitative thematic content analysis, Patel et al. (2005) explored how physical changes that occurred through pregnancy, and the postpartum period, affected three groups of women with varying levels of eating disordered psychopathology. Eating disorder pathology was assessed using the Eating Disorder Examination—Questionnaire (EDE-Q) modified for the postpartum period—and through full diagnostic interviews guided by the Eating Disorder Examination (EDE) (Patel et al., 2005); “the EDE generates operationally defined DSMIV (APA, 1995) eating disorder diagnoses” (p. 351). The study included 21 mothers in the postnatal period. The women were divided into three groups according to levels of eating disordered pathology: the comparison (mothers without eating disordered pathology), the “at risk” group (mothers at risk for eating disorders), and an eating disordered group (mothers who had been diagnosed with an eating disorder) (Patel et al., 2005). The authors found that mothers in all three groups felt negatively about their appearance and voiced concern about their pregnancy related weight gain (Patel et al., 2005). Many of the mothers in the study expressed disappointment in the physical changes that occurred as a result of their pregnancies and the level of distress they reported seemed to be directly related to their level of eating disorder psychopathology, namely, women with eating disorders were more distressed than those in the comparison group (Patel et al., 2005). Patel et al. (2005) posited that pregnant women may become distressed by the loss of their pre-pregnancy figures, and new mothers may find the loss of their pre-pregnancy shape particularly difficult. Some mothers in Patel et al.’s (2005) study identified that the changes to their bodies were highly upsetting and that they feared that they would “never get [their bodies] back” (p. 353). Other mothers were able to resolve the loss of their pre-pregnancy shape by focusing on their new role as a mother to an infant (Patel et al., 2005). Many women reported that concentrating on their babies was more important

than being preoccupied with their past selves (Patel et al., 2005). However, many of the mothers who were at risk for an eating disorder found it difficult to shift their priorities because being slim was indispensable to their self-identification and they derived confidence from their slim body shape (Patel et al., 2005).

Mothers who highly valued being viewed as slim by others appeared to anticipate negative evaluations surrounding their postpartum body from friends, family and co-workers (Patel et al., 2005). One mother even suggested that her weight gain would result in fewer employment opportunities (Patel et al., 2005). When discussing her postpartum body, a mother from the comparison group stated “I feel like I almost need to apologize to people that this isn’t what I normally look like. It’s a slight feeling of embarrassment” (Patel et al., 2005, p. 353). Mothers with eating disorders were the most distressed about their postpartum bodies and seemed to perceive the world as being critical, persecutory, and hostile towards their altered physical appearance (Patel et al., 2005). For example, one mother stated “I had a friend who came to visit. (It was the first time I’ve seen her (since the birth) I felt she was looking at me as though—‘Oh you’ve gone downhill’, I think everyone else is thinking it, not only me ... I feel that if I don’t get back to being slim then I’ve failed and everyone else thinks I’m a failure” (Patel et al., 2005, p. 360). Another mother suggested that everyone sees her as a “fat blob” and that people no longer view her as someone who has a “good brain” (Patel et al., 2005, p. 360). Patel et al.’s (2005) research identified that women who have eating disorders and women who perceive thinness a being central part of their identity may experience increased distress surrounding the changes to their bodies.

Bailey (2001) used discourse analysis to explore first time mother’s corporeal experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. Bailey (2001) conducted a secondary analysis of qualitative data that was collected from interviews with 30 first time mothers. The

mothers were interviewed twice; once during their third trimesters and again three to six months post partum (Bailey, 2001). The women's embodied experiences of motherhood were not identical. Many of the women reported that they were pleased "when the[ir] pregnanc[ies] progressed to the point where they were clearly pregnant rather than 'fat'" (Bailey, p. 120). While some women perceived pregnancy as a reprieve from the bodily concerns they experienced prior to pregnancy, other women continued to experience concerns about their body shape and reported feeling "frightened" of gaining too much weight during pregnancy (Bailey, 2001, p. 120). Bailey (2001) also found that many women in the study became increasingly concerned about body shape during their second, post-pregnancy interview. The women spoke about getting their "bodies back to normal" and provided detailed descriptions of their weight loss thus far (Bailey, 2001, p. 120).

Johnson, Burrows and Williamson (2004) interviewed six women in the later stages of pregnancy and reported findings that were similar to Bailey's (2001). Using an inductive qualitative approach to analysis, Johnson et al. (2004) discovered that the women in their study were more satisfied with their bodies when their bump began to show. Many of the pregnant women interviewed disparagingly describe their bodies as "frumpy", "fat" and "bloated"; they expressed concern that others would view them as "fat" early in their pregnancies because they were larger than their pre-pregnancy selves, but did not yet have the distinct bump that indicated pregnancy (Johnson et al., 2004 p. 366). The participants suggested that "showing", via their bumps, legitimized their deviation from the thin-ideal (Johnson et al., 2004).

Earle's (2003) findings also suggest that women covet the pregnancy bump and increased breasts size associated with pregnancy and consider weight gain on other parts of the body to be unacceptable. Earle (2003) conducted a series of interviews with

19 new mothers in order to investigate women's experiences of changes to body shape, weight, and size during their pregnancies. The women were interviewed on three separate occasions: early pregnancy (between six and 14 weeks), latter stages of pregnancy (34 and 39 weeks), and between six and 14 weeks postpartum (Earle, 2003). Earle (2003) used an inductive qualitative approach to analyze the data. Some women in Earle's (2003) study pride themselves on how they carried their baby weight. One participant describes herself as "lucky" because her weight is "all baby" and her "bump" is "solid" (Earle, 2003, p. 249). Another participant reports that she does not look pregnant from the back and that she simply has a "bump at the front" (Earle, 2003, p. 249).

Women in Bailey (2001), Earle (2003) and Johnson et al.'s (2004) studies report that they enjoy the increased bust size that occurs as a result of pregnancy. This was further supported by Patel et al.'s (2005) study as a participant reported feeling nostalgic towards her "fantastic" looking breastfeeding breast (p. 353). Western culture identifies large breasts as being sexually attractive; pregnant women's reported enjoyment of their growing bust-lines reflects this dominant cultural feminine ideal (Bailey, 2001; Johnson et al., 2004), suggesting that women may focus on the way a larger breast size enhances their appearance as opposed to the functionality of their breasts in regards to breastfeeding and motherhood (Earle, 2003). However, many of the participant's in Bailey's (2001) study reported that they began to de-sexualize their breasts and viewed them as "fulfilling their true purpose" by feeding their infant (p. 118).

Research has also identified potential protective factors. Bailey (2001) posits that women may experience increased confidence when they acknowledge the functionality of their bodies and Bailey (2001) and Earle (2003) found that pregnancy can lead some women to renegotiate their sense of self as a woman; as she becomes a

mother she begins to focus on motherhood and the biological aspects of being a woman as opposed to socially created, objectified version of womanhood. Women who associate pregnancy with fulfilling their gender role of motherhood may experience increased body satisfaction during pregnancy (Bailey, 2001). Similarly, Earle (2003) suggests that women who believe pregnancy signifies social-status, and those who highly value pregnancy, may eagerly anticipate changes to their body's size and weight. When describing their perinatal bodies, many women in Bailey's (2001) study described themselves as "feeling more womanly" and suggested that "their bodies offer[ed] a positive reflection of their feminine self" (p. 116). Many women reported that pregnancy provided them with a reason to deviate from the thin-ideal and this allowed them to feel more positive about their bodies during pregnancy than they did pre-pregnancy (Bailey, 2001). However, the increase in positive feelings women had towards their pregnant bodies seemed to dissipate during the postpartum period (Bailey, 2001). Most of the women in the longitudinal study reported that they wanted to achieve a more slender appearance when they were interviewed at three to six weeks postpartum (Bailey, 2001).

Rubin and Steinberg (2011) conducted a quantitative study to further explore how appreciation of body functionality and awareness relates to self-objectification (body-surveillance) and how these factors correlate to depressive symptoms and health behaviors. Their sample was comprised of 156 American women who were pregnant for the first time (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). The participants completed web-based questionnaires which included measures that assessed their attitudes and feelings about their pregnancy as well as collected information about their demographic characteristics and pre-pregnancy BMI (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). The researchers adopted Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) definition of self-objectification and defined it as the

“habitual monitoring of the body’s outward appearance” (p. 180, as cited in Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). Self-objectification was measured using the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS-BS) (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). The OBCS measures control beliefs, body surveillance, and body shame; three aspects of women’s objectified body consciousness (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). The researchers measured body functionality across two domains, body functionality and appreciation of body functionality, using a 17-item measure that they created. Depressive symptoms were measured using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (CES-D 10) and the pregnant women’s health behaviours were assessed using the revised version of the Prenatal Health Behavior Scale (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011).

Rubin and Steinberg’s (2011) findings demonstrated significant relationships between depressive symptoms and negative health behaviours and body surveillance among pregnant women. They found that women who demonstrated higher levels of body surveillance experienced depressive symptoms and were less likely to engage in prenatal health behaviors (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). Conversely, women who appreciated and acknowledged the functionality of their perinatal bodies experienced fewer depressive symptoms and engaged in more healthy prenatal behaviour (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). However, the researchers found that the relationship between body surveillance and depression attenuated at lower levels of awareness of body functionality and increased at higher levels (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). This finding was surprising and the researchers suggest that their measure of awareness of body functionality may include hypervigilance about and general awareness of physical appearance and body image dimensions (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). Rubin and Steinberg (2011) suggest that women who appreciate the functionality of their pregnant

bodies may experience reduced depressive symptoms and may be more likely to engage in health promoting prenatal behaviours.

2.10. Rationale for the Present Study

The purpose of this inductive qualitative study is to develop a deeper understanding of the yummy mummy discourse—and women’s engagement with this discourse. The yummy mummy discourse is a gendered discourse that has the potential to affect the mental health of women generally, and in the perinatal stage in particular. I used discourse analysis to explore the role of the media in promoting the yummy mummy discourse and to better understand how women negotiate this discourse.

Pregnancy initiates the onset of profound physical, social, relational, and emotional alterations, all of which impact mental health. Women must adjust to their changing bodies, identities, and relationships as they become mothers. Although the transition into motherhood can be exciting and fulfilling, many women identify the perinatal period as challenging and stressful. Some of the dominant discourses in Western society can make the transition into motherhood even more formidable. The good mother, the can do it all, and the yummy mummy discourses are dominant and have socio-historical foundations that currently inform society’s expectations of women. Women experience a great deal of pressure to consistently conform to gendered cultural expectations.

The media reflects cultural values and is highly influential in promoting specific discourses. Western society places an extreme emphasis on women’s physical appearance and the media successfully promotes the thin-ideal through imagery and language. In the past, images of pregnant women were rarely presented in the media and this may have enabled women to perceive pregnancy as a reprieve from the thin,

non-pregnant ideal. Over the past 20 years, the media has increasingly focused on celebrity women in the perinatal stage and this shift signals changing cultural views of pregnancy and reflects society's increased obsession with celebrity.

It is difficult for women to escape the images of yummy celebrity mummies and, as a result, pregnant women may compare themselves to celebrity mothers and feel pressure to conform to the yummy mummy aesthetic. In order to be a yummy mummy, women must limit their pregnancy weight gain because a yummy mummy's body features a firm baby bump on an otherwise toned and thin physique (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). Furthermore, this discourse encourages women to "get their bodies" back immediately after giving birth because the maintenance of the thin-ideal is increasingly being linked to women's success both as individuals and as mothers (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004; Jette, 2006). The achievement of the yummy mummy aesthetic is unrealistic for most mothers because it is time consuming and costly (Jette, 2006). Furthermore, the yummy mummy aesthetic can be damaging; the prevalence of yummy mummy discourse in Western society creates normative expectations surrounding women's perinatal appearance and further objectifies women.

Women who compare themselves to images of celebrity mothers and who internalize the yummy mummy discourse may be more likely to experience greater body dissatisfaction (Rallis et al., 2007; Sumner et al., 1993), to engage in disordered eating behaviours (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002), and to experience anxiety, shame, and depressive symptoms (Douglas, 2010; Hadfield, Rudoie, & Sanderson-Mann, 2007; Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). As a result, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the assumptions and expectations associated with the yummy mummy discourse, the ways in which the yummy mummy discourse is promoted, and how women understand, engage, and resist this discourse. This understanding can inform clinical work and

interventions that address the power of the yummy mummy discourse, and equip women to discern, critique and resist the discourse. These interventions have the potential to prevent and neutralize the adverse effects of this harmful discourse.

By studying a widely distributed entertainment magazine, this study makes an important contribution to the existing body of academic literature. The yummy mummy discourse is pervasive in contemporary society and yet few studies have explored the phenomenon. Women are exposed to this discourse through social interactions and *Us Weekly's* promotion of this discourse is difficult to escape. *Us Weekly* is visible in the check-out lines of most major grocery and drug stores and the images presented by the magazine are virtually unavoidable because of merchandising guidelines. The magazines are merchandized to be at customers' eye level and are placed in a location that invites shoppers to explore the pages of the magazine while they wait to pay for their goods. Even brief exposure to the images and messages presented in the magazine can temporarily affect the body image and mood states of women who internalize the thin ideal (Yamamiya et al., 2005). Furthermore, magazines like *Us Weekly* that feature yummy mummies on the cover, and advertise that readers can obtain the same bodies as celebrities if they simply follow the tips and tricks printed within the pages of the magazine, promotes the thin ideal and invite women to compare themselves to celebrities by presenting these extraordinary and often digitally altered bodies as achievable.

This study provides insight into how women are engaging with the yummy mummy discourse presented by the magazine as well as how the magazine strengthens the power of this discourse. Very few studies have explored how individuals engage with the yummy mummy discourse and no studies have explored the body of texts

analyzed in this study. This study makes a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

2.11. Concluding Comments

Women are bombarded with images of the yummy mummy. Popular magazines frequently feature celebrity yummy mummies and these images are inescapable in grocery and drug stores. Women are also exposed to yummy mummies in television and film. Given the widespread presence of the yummy mummy discourse in Western society, it is surprising that few studies have explored this topic. While many quantitative studies have investigated the influence of exposure to media images of the thin, non-pregnant feminine ideal on non-pregnant female adolescents and adults (e.g., Brown & Dittmar, 2005; Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Harrison, 2001; Morry & Staska, 2001; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Strahan et al., 2008; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004; Yamamiya, Cash, Melnyk, Posavac & Posavac, 2005), the impact of media images of thin perinatal women has been under attended in the research and studies that have assessed the impact of women's exposure to media images of celebrity yummy mummies are seemingly non-existent. Although some researchers have attempted to gain insight into the yummy mummy discourse by analyzing the perinatal-body-related discourses that are promoted in magazines (e.g. Dworkin & Wachs, 2004; Jette, 2006), none of these studies have investigated how women negotiate these discourses. Therefore, it is important to explore how popular media promotes the yummy mummy discourse, how dominant discourses such as the can do it all and the good mother relate to the yummy mummy discourse, and how women engage with these often conflicting discourses.

3. Methodology

Contemporary discourses surrounding motherhood are becoming increasingly demanding. The yummy mummy discourse posits that women should focus on the shape and appearance of their bodies during the perinatal period; women should remain slim while pregnant, confining their physical growth to small, firm baby bumps, and should return to their slim pre-pregnancy shape immediately after delivery. This discourse pervades the media and is potentially deleterious to women's health and well-being. This study used discourse analysis in order to investigate how *Us Weekly* promotes the yummy mummy discourse, how discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles may be interwoven in the yummy mummy discourse and how these alternate discourses are used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and how readers engage with conflicting discourses and use or reproduce the yummy mummy discourse.

This chapter outlines the methodology and procedures used in the present study. The first section will explore the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of discourse analysis and will highlight the advantages of this methodological approach. The second section of this chapter will outline the research questions and the corpus of the study. The third and fourth sections will delineate the analytical procedures that were employed and how I addressed trustworthiness and validity.

3.1. Methodological Framework

3.1.1. *Constructing Discourse Analysis: Epistemological Foundations and Evolution*

This section will address the epistemological foundations and evolution of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is rooted in the constructionist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and has developed in opposition to positivist experimental psychology (McLeod, 2011). I will begin by providing a brief overview of the key ontological and epistemological tenets held by the constructionist paradigm in order to demonstrate how discourse analysis differs from traditional positivist approaches. I will subsequently identify important linguistic and philosophical contributions which furthered the development of discourse analysis. The primary aim of this section is to present the theoretical underpinnings of this approach and to locate discourse analysis in the field of social and psychological inquiry.

While positivistic tenets continue to dominate research in the natural sciences, a growing body of social and psychological research has embraced social constructionism. The ontological and epistemological tenets of constructionism sharply differ from those of the positivistic tradition and I will briefly highlight the differences between these approaches. Positivism holds that an objective reality exists and that it can be apprehended and measured through the implementation of rigorous methodological procedures (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Subsequently, the primary aim of positivist research is to identify universal and objective truths. The quest to identify “truth” “promotes the reification of things-or the unnecessary, unjustified, and often unjust conversion of mere hypotheses of observed regularities into fixed and unalterable definitions of those things” and can be harmful because “it encourages us to think

fatalistically about the status quo and to naturalize aspects of our existence that are not inevitable and that ought to be challenged and changed” (Weinberg, 2008, p 15).

Constructionist researchers do not pursue objective truth because reality is understood as mutable, relative, context dependent, and constructed and co-constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Social phenomena are perceived as “products of specific socio-historical and/or social interactional processes” (Weinberg, 2008, p. 14); as a result, constructionist research aims to explore the role of societal expectations on meaning-making processes (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). Constructionists Guba and Lincoln (2000) suggest that individuals understand the world by developing varied and complex subjective meanings of their experiences; these subjective meanings are created through interactions with others and are shaped by cultural and historical norms (as cited in Creswell, 2012). Constructionist research highlights and attempts to demonstrate the complexity of individuals’ views rather than reducing them to limited ideas or categories (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and seeks to identify how individuals construct, use, and transcend conceptual orientations (Weinberg, 2008). Mary and Kenneth Gergen (2003) posit that constructionism emphasizes “the power of relationships over individual minds, multiple worlds over single realities, collaborative interdependence over individual heroism, and dialogue over monologue” (as cited in Nikander, 2008, p. 430).

Demonstrably, the constructionist approach emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding social phenomena (Weinberg, 2008) and can produce a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of social phenomena which can raise awareness of social issues and encourage individuals to challenge the status quo. This approach is exceedingly valuable to counselling psychology research because it provides insight into meaning-making processes and can be used to deconstruct dominant discourses such as the yummy mummy. Subsequently, this approach sheds

light on cultural repertoires and can inform interventions that can potentially change women's meaning making processes by highlighting the oppressive, discriminatory, and deleterious aspects of this discourse (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

The field of discourse analysis is broad and has been adopted by divergent disciplines. Although each discipline approaches discourse analysis in a unique way, the fundamental tenets of discourse analysis remain the same: discourse analysis is guided by a constructionist epistemology, centres on the dynamics of human interaction through language and texts, and analyzes aspects of culturally based meaning making (Nikander, 2008). Discourse analysis is best characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about phenomena rather than as a method (McLeod, 2011).

Discourse analysis emerged from developments in the study of language and has further developed through disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, communications and media studies (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Language is tied to thinking and reasoning and is integral to our culture and our identities (Potter & Wetherall, 1987). Language is central to all social activities and our communication with one another depends on the sharing of a complex symbolic representational linguistic system (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Language is action oriented and allows individuals to express themselves, construct facts, explain, blame, instruct, and represent themselves (Nikander, 2008). A stronger social constructionist position suggests that language is constitutive and can create what it describes (Taylor, 2001). We construct things using words; we can use words to express and evoke emotion, to create our relationships, to construct our problems and to conceive their solutions (McLeod, 2011). For example, language communicates expectations surrounding gender roles and language can be used to enforce or challenge these expectations.

Taylor (2001) suggests that “the language available to people enables and constrains not only their expression of certain ideas but also what they do” (p. 9). For example, individuals in North American society are discouraged from using discriminatory language in order to reduce discriminatory practices. The idea that using discriminatory language can lead into practices is based on the idea that language is constitutive (Taylor, 2001). The way a particular group is portrayed through language can correspond to the way they are treated within society because language can be powerful; language can indicate or deny value and can position a group as part of a collective social group or as a separate entity that does not belong (Taylor, 2001). Language organizes our perceptions and facilitates meaning-making. Language also re-creates and erodes previous creations as part of ongoing social change (Taylor, 2001). For example, the meaning of the linguistic phrase *good mothering* has shifted over the millennium (as demonstrated in Chapter 2) and the ongoing transformation of this concept reflects social and cultural change. Therefore, the study of language is vitally important because language pervades our interactions with one another, is used to shape our attitudes, behaviours, beliefs (Swain, 2010) and identities, and can provide insight into how communicative practices within specific social and historical contexts can construct social phenomenon (Taylor, 2001).

Discourse analysis studies language and explores various forms of texts in order to provide a deeper understanding of how discourses reproduce and transform phenomena (Parker, 1992) and the way in which particular issues are given meaning in a specific social context (Potter & Wetherell 1987). The goal of discourse analysis is to analyse a text in order to identify “institutionally supported and culturally influenced interpretive and conceptual schemas (discourses) that produce particular understandings of issues and events” (Bacchi, 2005, p. 199). Texts are “constitutive of a

complex and multi-layered series of semiotic relations between language, people, technologies, cultures and so on” (Newman 2007, p. 158). Any form of communication that can be interpreted is considered to be a text (Parker, 1992). Written and verbal communication, literature, songs, games, fashion systems, advertisements, non-verbal behaviour, and images are all examples of texts and each of these contain discourses that can be analysed (Hvas & Gannik, 2008). For instance, an image depicting a man and a woman holding a baby conveys a narrative of a heterosexual family, which reflects the discourse of the heteronormative family.

Discourse analysis centres on textual analysis because language is constructive in nature and the constructions presented by texts are relative and provisional (Parker, 1992). The researcher attempts to discern why something was said, why the particular words were chosen, and how this language fits with or argues against different ways of viewing the world (Parker, 1992). Discourse analysis explores how meanings and actions are constructed through talk and text and thereby challenges the nature of social action (Nikander, 2008). Discourse analysis elaborates on the meanings of a text, transcends individual intentions (Parker, 1992), and highlights the social, cognitive, cultural, and political context in order to illuminate the interplay between ideology and text (van Dijk, 1991 as cited in Hinnant, 2009). Institutional practices, culture and individual’s opinions, emotions, identities and attitudes are an intrinsic part of textually mediated practices and discourse analysts explore how these phenomena are discursively constructed and reproduced (Nikander, 2008); discourse analysis examines “how people use discourse and how discourse uses people” (Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990, p. 213).

Michel Foucault, philosopher and social theorist, investigated the relationship between power and discourse and his work has greatly contributed to the field of

discourse analysis. According to Foucault (1972) knowledge is not a reflection of reality, rather truth and reality are discursively constructed and varied “regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false” (as cited in Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 13). For Foucault (1971), power and knowledge are intertwined; power is informed by knowledge and power permeates knowledge (as cited in Ball, 1990); discourse is imbued by both (Schneider & Davis, 2010). Power, discipline, and surveillance lead to the development of discourses that prescribe and describe types of pathology, rationality, and responsibility (Parker, 1992). Foucault does not suggest that power belongs to specific groups or individuals; instead, power is viewed as permeating social practices (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002).

Discourses are powerful because they shape the way individuals think about themselves and the world around them (Schneider & Davis, 2010) and can establish different subject positions by assigning authority to particular individuals (Hvas & Gannik, 2008). For instance, medical professionals are often referred to as experts and are placed in a position of authority; as a result, they can speak with authority about what is true and what is false and their opinions are perceived as more valuable than those who occupy non-authoritative or lay positions. Discourses transform the way individuals think in subtle ways and lead them to willingly adopt social practices that are informed by dominant discourses.

Feminist discourse analysis seeks to identify how power relations create subject positions, identities, and relationships between texts and discourses and strives to question these existing power relations (Baxter, 2008). Feminist discourse theory maintains that dominant discourses shape gendered expectations and often lead to discriminatory practices based on gender and sexuality (Baxter, 2008). This theory emphasizes that women are not passive recipients of gendered discourses; they can

negotiate the constraints imposed by dominant discourses and can transform, adopt, and resist existing versions of themselves and the world around them (Bacchi, 2005). By identifying their subject position, individuals can use existing contradictory discourses to reposition themselves and challenge the status quo (Bacchi, 2005). The process of reflection enables the observer to identify various layers of a discourse and connect a discourse to other available discourses (Parker, 1992). The contradictory nature of culture is reflected in conflicting discourses found in texts and “it is this presence of contradiction which allows room for resistance, the refusal to respond to dominant meanings” (Parker, 1992, p. 49). These discursive struggles can lead to social change as alternate discourses are used to change patterns in power (Hvas & Gannik, 2008). Therefore, the examination of discourses enables us to escape the influence of the discourses being scrutinized (Parker, 1992).

3.2. Inquiry Process

I used discourse analysis to examine articles published by *Us Weekly* magazine, a popular North American entertainment magazine, as well as readers’ responses to these articles. The exploration of popular cultural texts can provide insight into issues women face because these texts reflect and reinforce discursive constructions from the societies in which they circulate (Sha & Kirkman, 2009). Although entertainment magazines are not authoritative powers that repress individuals, the discourses they contain do “focus our energies, construct our conceptions of normalcy and deviance” (Bordo, 2003, p. 167). Subsequently, these messages can influence our behaviours and shape the expectations we have of ourselves and others. Women are the primary consumers of entertainment magazines and Johnson and Swanson (2003) suggest that the simple act of reading a magazine perpetuates the myths and ideologies contained

within it regardless of a reader's resistance to, or compliance with, magazines' messages.

3.2.1. Research Questions

This study was designed to explore the way in which *Us Weekly* entertainment magazine constructs and reflects discourses surrounding motherhood in North American society as well as how readers engage with these discourses. The three empirical objectives of this exploratory research study are as follows: 1) to identify how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted, 2) to determine how discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles may be interwoven in the yummy mummy discourse and how these alternate discourses are used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, 3) to analyze how individuals engage with conflicting discourses and use or reproduce the yummy mummy discourse.

3.2.2. The Corpus

The corpus for this study is comprised of 569 texts which were obtained from *Us Weekly* magazine and *Usmagazine.com*. I analyzed 47 articles published in *Us Weekly* magazine, 50 articles from *Usmagazine.com*, and 472 responses from contributors; all of which were published between March 19, 2012 and June 11, 2012. A close review of the online contributions revealed 315 distinct user names; this suggests that the responses were made by 315 different contributors. However, it is possible that some contributors may have created multiple Facebook or Disqus accounts using different names. Some contributors responded to multiple articles, while others only responded once. Table 4.1 briefly describes the distribution of responses among contributors.

Table 3.1. *Distribution of Contributors*

Type of Contributor	<i>n</i>	% of Responses
Frequent (≥ 10 responses)	2 (44 total responses)	9.3%
Moderate (5 to 9 responses)	8 (49 total responses)	10.4%
Occasional (≤ 4 responses)	305 (379 total responses)	80.3%

The entertainment magazine *Us Weekly* was chosen for this study because of its widespread distribution, popularity, focus on celebrity motherhood, online format, and target audience. *Us Weekly* was founded by The New York Times Company in 1977 and Wenner Media acquired the magazine in 1986 (PrimoMag.com, 2011). *Us Weekly* is exceedingly popular in North America and in the six month period ending December 31, 2012 the magazine's circulation reached 1,964,446 copies (Alliance for Audited Media, 2012). *Us Weekly* offers both traditional print and digital subscriptions and readers can also purchase individual printed copies of this weekly-issued magazine at most major grocery, drug, and book stores across North America. Readers can also access supplementary articles free of charge through the magazine's website *Usmagazine.com*. *Usmagazine.com* publishes articles on a daily basis and attracted 8.9 million online visitors between October, 2011 and March, 2012 ("Circulation", 2012). Readers are invited to contribute to each article published on *Usmagazine.com* through the Us Application for discussion. The Us Application allows readers to publicly comment on the online forum through Facebook or through a global comment application called Disqus once they agree to the *Us Weekly* Privacy Policy.

According to a reader profile report that occurred in the fall of 2011, 71% of *Us Weekly* readers are women, while 29% of readers are men ("Audience Profile", 2012). Of the women who read the magazine, 84% percent are between 18 and 49 years of

age (a median of 32.9 years of age) and have a median household income of \$68, 799 (“Audience Profile”, 2012). Approximately 71% percent of these women are employed and 61% report having attended college (“Audience Profile”, 2012). While 42% of the female readers surveyed reported being single, 43% reported being married and more than half of these women (52%) reported having children in their households.

Unfortunately, the report did not provide any statistics on the ethnicities of *Us Weekly* readers or the geographical locations of online contributors. Although these statistics are based on self-reports and may not be entirely accurate, they do provide some insight into some basic demographic characteristics of the women who read this magazine.

The corpus of study is comprised of articles published by *Us Weekly* and public responses to articles found on *Usmagazine.com*. I selected articles from a collection of printed issues of *Us Weekly* that were published between March 19, 2012 and June 11, 2012. Printed articles that reference motherhood or pregnancy were selected for analysis. Specifically, articles that included the terms pregnant/pregnancy, post-pregnancy, post-baby body, pregnancy weight gain/loss, baby bump, maternity, mother, motherhood, and postpartum were included in the initial stages of analysis.

In addition, a selection of articles published on *Usmagazine.com* between March 16, 2012 and June 7, 2012, alongside corresponding responses found on the public forum, were chosen for analysis. The articles, and corresponding responses, were selected for analysis if they were published in the “moms” section of *Usmagazine.com*, elicited a minimum of 2 reader comments, and centred on the appearance of a celebrity during pregnancy (or postpartum) or directly reference perinatal weight gain or weight loss. I visited the “moms” section of the *Usmagazine.com* website three or more times per week during the previously mentioned time period in order to collect articles and corresponding reader responses.

Each time I accessed *Usmagazine.com*, I reviewed recent articles that were posted in the “moms” news feed and selected articles for the corpus if they included body focused language. For instance, articles were selected if they included terms such as: weight, weight loss, weight gain, size, diet, bump, thin, fat, large, diet, bikini body, post-baby body, skinny, trim, fit, toned, and curvaceous. Articles that did not address the corporal size or shape of celebrity mothers were excluded. For example, articles that announced the pregnancy of a celebrity, centered on family vacations or focused on intimate relationships were excluded from analysis. Readers’ responses to the articles that met the inclusion criteria were also reviewed. However, some responses and postings were excluded; posts that appeared to be spam (i.e. advertisements for online jobs that did not address the content of the article or feed) and duplicate responses made by the same contributor were excluded. The selected articles, corresponding photographs, and responses were collected using Snipping Tool and these “snipped” sections were pasted into blank Microsoft Office Word documents.

3.2.3. Contributors and Confidentiality

This study solely used publicly available information and did not involve any interaction with the online contributors. The contributors were clearly informed that their comments are publicly accessible once they use the Us Application. The contributors were informed that other users “may reproduce, publish, distribute or otherwise use User Content in any media or format” when they agree to the *Us Weekly* “Privacy Policy” (“Privacy Policy”, 2012, ¶ 28). Although contributors agreed to the *Us Weekly* privacy policy prior to posting and were clearly informed that their contributions would become publicly available, I can reasonably assume that many contributors would not expect that their comments would become the subject of empirical analysis. Therefore, I have an

ethical responsibility to protect the anonymity of contributors even though they agreed to make their responses public.

Contributors were safeguarded from unwanted exposure and protected from harm or embarrassment through the use of alpha-numeric pseudonyms, through the exclusion of personally identifiable content contained in a posted response, and through the secure maintenance of collected data. Direct quotations of contributor's responses were only included in this thesis if they did not contain personal information that could potentially reveal their identity. Furthermore, individuals who attempt to identify online contributors by conducting an internet search using direct quotations found within this thesis will be unsuccessful because the responses collected for analysis are no longer posted on *Usmagazine.com*.

3.3. Procedure

The analysis was guided by Gee (2011) and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approaches to discourse analysis. As suggested by Potter and Wetherell (1987), I began analysis by photocopying each text onto white paper. I then began reading each text in order to identify recurring themes and to establish preliminary thematic categories. The individual paper copies of the texts allowed me to divide the texts into groups based on their general thematic categories as well as write comments in the margins. The preliminary thematic categories I established included, but were not limited to, post-baby bodies, perinatal bikini bodies, baby bumps, and perinatal weight gain and loss. Each text was assigned an alpha-numeric code which described the source of the text (print or online) and the order in which it was read. I then selected individual texts and used four broad questions to guide my reading of each. The four questions were:

1. How do women engage with the yummy mummy discourse?
2. How is the yummy mummy discourse promoted?
3. How are discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles interwoven into the yummy mummy discourse
4. How is the pregnant body constructed?

I used a colour coding system to emphasize segments of texts that addressed each question. For instance, text that reflected engagement with the yummy mummy discourse was highlighted in yellow, text that provided insight into how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted was highlighted in orange, references to and reflections of gendered and mothering discourses were highlighted in pink, and constructions of the pregnant body were identified using blue. Segments of text that addressed multiple questions were given bands of colour in order to ensure that they would be included in each relevant category. For example, the response "The most important thing after having a baby is the baby, not a public image" made by contributor O30/RQB addresses the good mother discourse and illustrates engagement with aspects of the yummy mummy discourse. The statement that "the most important thing after having a baby is the baby" suggests that this contributor aligns with the child-centred aspect of the good mother discourse. The contributor's prioritization of the baby over one's public image suggests that she rejects the idea that women should prioritize weight loss after having their babies which is a central aspect of the yummy mummy discourse. Therefore, this response was coded under the good mother discourse and under the rejection of the body back and immediacy aspects of the yummy mummy discourse.

During the initial stages of analysis, I followed Potter and Wetherell's (1987) guidelines surrounding inclusivity and included segments of text that initially seemed vaguely related to the research questions; Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that it is

important to “produc[e] a body of instances” that include “borderline cases” (p. 167). An example of borderline cases that were originally included in analysis was excerpts of texts that addressed behavioural descriptions of celebrities’ male partners. However, I decided to exclude these excerpts as the analysis progressed because this topic was beyond the scope of this study.

Once the text was analysed according to the themes, I then used a series of Gee’s (2011) strategic questions, which he calls *tools*, to enhance analysis. Gee’s (2011) tools promote a distancing from the material being analyzed by encouraging the researcher to question the taken-for-granted understandings that may be expressed in the texts. I reviewed all of Gee’s (2011) questions and identified questions that were most relevant to this inquiry. I did not apply all of Gee’s (2011) tools to the data because some questions were not pertinent to this study. For example, I did not use questions related to speaker’s intonation as this inquiry solely addressed written text. The following list outlines an adapted list of Gee’s (2011) tools that were used to strengthen analysis:

1. How is language being used? What values and social identities can be discerned from these statements?
2. What assumptions are being made? Is the language inviting an assumption or making an assumption? Who may align with these assumptions and who may not? How may an outsider interpret this? What may appear unclear or confusing to someone who does not share the same knowledge and assumptions I do? What knowledge and assumptions would be necessary to make this text clear?
3. Are other discourses or texts being referred or alluded to? What might this mean?

4. How does this communication enact a social language? What social languages are present?
5. What meanings have respondents given to the words and phrases in the articles? What meanings do I attribute to these words and phrases in this context?
6. What is the main topic? What are the subtopics? How are these related and how does the author connect them? Do the topics shift within a given text?
7. Do the words and grammar being used de-privilege other forms of knowing (e.g., scientific knowledge versus experience)?
8. How does the text make connections among constructs which potentially make them relevant or irrelevant to one another?
9. How does language construct what constitutes a social good (e.g., money, fame or beauty may be considered social goods) and who should possess these goods?
10. How does the text build or lessen the significance of certain things or people?
11. How does the text build, sustain or change relationships between the author, the audience, social groups or institutions?
12. How does the author position their own identity and those of others? Is the identity they are enacting socially recognizable?
13. What is the author trying to accomplish or do with their language?

I recorded the analysis of each article, along with the segments of text, in an Excel worksheet (for an example see Appendix). I then reviewed the data and identified emerging themes. The analytical process necessitated multiple readings of the data set and each text. Each time I reread the data I reflexively engaged with the material; I challenged and expanded thematic categories as well as previous analytical

interpretations using Gee's (2011) questions. I also considered established theoretical perspectives and observations and noted exceptions and concurrences.

3.4. Quality and Trustworthiness in Discourse Analysis

The concepts of reliability and validity have long been associated with the positivist tradition and historically qualitative approaches have been positioned as less reliable and valid in comparison. The doubts surrounding the validity of qualitative research stem from epistemological differences that exist between qualitative and quantitative traditions. Traditional quantitative research seeks to identify the truth and produce knowledge that is an accurate representation of reality that exists outside of ourselves (Smith & Hodkinson, 2008). This perspective seeks to separate the phenomena being studied from the researcher in an attempt to prevent the distortion of truth (Smith & Hodkinson, 2008). It is supposed that allegiance to strict procedural guidelines will allow the researcher to constrain their subjectivities and create a neutral environment that yields objective truth. Conversely, qualitative research seeks to gain a rich understanding of the complexities of human experience. Qualitative research aims to offer an interpretation or to identify a version of phenomena, not to capture the truth or a universal reality (Taylor, 2001).

Discourse analysis is a form of qualitative study that centres on the interpretation of text. Discourse analysis is not simply a subjective exercise that offers the researcher's opinion on a phenomenon (Gee, 2011). All interpretations are not equally valuable as some will be more valid than others (Gee, 2011). Specific criteria and analytic techniques employed by discourse analysts "can be used to validate the findings" of their study (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Subsequently, discourse analysis, like other forms of inquiry, uses specific techniques in order to validate and demonstrate

the trustworthiness of the knowledge produced by the study (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002).

This study has incorporated 4 techniques in order to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. The first technique is researcher reflexivity. As researchers, we work from within a broad social, theoretical, and historical context and our worldview inevitably inspires our empirical assumptions (Ryan, 2006). Our ideology, values, and subjective experiences shape our understanding of phenomena, as well as the knowledge produced by our investigations, and these influences are difficult to neutralize. Attempts to adopt an unbiased, objective approach to scientific inquiry in order to produce knowledge that is value-free (Taylor, 2001) (as promoted by the positivist tradition) are futile because objectivity is difficult, if not impossible, to attain. Discourse analysts generally have a relationship to the phenomena being investigated; they may belong to the same social group as participants or share similar attitudes and beliefs as those reflected in the discourses being investigated or of participants (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). Researcher reflexivity entails that the researcher reveals and evaluates their own subjective position, and scrutinizes their own analysis by conducting an interpretation of their interpretation (Anderson, 2008).

I maintained a reflexive approach throughout this study. In Chapter One I situate myself in a socio-historical context and describe my relationship with the phenomena being studied. I continued to evaluate my position through each phase of this study and ensured that I questioned my interpretations multiple times as I read, re-read, and re-formulated my analysis of the material. I recorded my personal responses to material, interrogated my decision making processes, and used procedural methods that helped expand my interpretation of the material. I also consulted with others in order to add to the depth of the findings.

I presented the data to two other people in order to encourage multiple viewpoints and to check for potential bias. I presented the data and analysis to Dr. Sharalyn Jordan, my senior supervisor, at various stages throughout the analytical process. Dr. Jordan's expertise and worldview both expanded and confirmed my interpretations of the material. I also discussed the data and my interpretations with my friend Jana Thiyagaratnam. Jana immigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka, is a mother, and completed an English Honours degree. I specifically chose to discuss my interpretations with Jana because of our socio-cultural differences; I believed that her unique worldview may challenge some of my interpretations, thereby broadening my perspective.

This study incorporates the techniques coherence and fruitfulness endorsed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), prominent academics in the field of discourse analysis. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that "analytic claims should give coherence to a body of discourse" (p. 170). Coherence guides analysts to demonstrate how discourses relate to one another and how the analysis compares to previous academic work (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Conversely, fruitfulness encourages the researcher to "generate novel explanations" and assess newly established discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This study thoroughly addresses existing research in this field and coherence is established throughout the findings and discussion chapters. I took special care to ensure that I did not privilege a particular interpretative perspective simply because it aligns with previous findings. Instead, I strove "to represent the different, and perhaps contradictory, voices" of authors and contributors (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 172) by highlighting competing and contradictory statements and interpretations. This study explores a burgeoning discourse that may affect women's mental health and wellness through an analysis of articles published by a contemporary entertainment magazine as

well as readers' responses. A review of the existing literature suggests that this study is unique and contributes to existing knowledge of this area of study.

The final technique that was used in this study involves the presentation of the findings. The presentation of the findings of this study "constitute part of the confirmation and validation procedures" that were used in this research (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 172). The findings chapter is designed to allow the reader to engage with the material and assess my interpretations. I present textual extracts and images alongside my interpretations and analytic claims in order to demonstrate my analytical process. This analytical transparency enables you, the reader, to evaluate my claims and further establishes the credibility of this research.

3.5. Concluding Comments

This research explores how individuals engage with the yummy mummy, a dominant gendered discourse, and documents how women use, reproduce, reject and enforce this discourse. Insights into these phenomena can be used to inform interventions, clinical practice, and further research in this field which can all benefit women's mental health. The findings of this research are outlined in the following chapter. The research questions guided my analytical interpretations of the texts and organization of the following chapter. The findings chapter combines rich examples of text with my analytical interpretations and provides readers with insight into my analytical process.

4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

The yummy mummy discourse is informed by the dominant North American gendered discourses of the sexy, thin-ideal female form and the good mother discourse, constructing desirable gendered ideals. The socio-cultural pressure to embody these dominant discursive constructions encourages surveillance and criticism of women's bodies and can adversely affect women's wellness and mental health. Understanding how this discourse is promoted as well as how individuals make meaning of dominant discourses surrounding motherhood can inform clinical practice and consequently enhance women's mental health.

I conducted an in-depth analysis of a series of *Us Weekly* magazine articles, which were published in the print or online versions of the magazine, as well as corresponding responses by on-line contributors published on *Usmagazine.com* between March 19, 2012 and June 11, 2012. In this chapter I will present the findings from this analysis. This analysis explores how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted, identifies alternative discourses that are used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and examines how individuals engage with conflicting discourses and use or reproduce the yummy mummy discourse. The chapter begins with an analysis of *Us Weekly's* use of the phrase *just like us* and the role this language plays in readers' engagement with the messages and values promoted by the magazine. Subsequent sections highlight how *Us Weekly* discursively constructs the yummy

mummy discourse and promotes both what is desirable and undesirable during pregnancy and postpartum, as well as contributors' engagement with the material. As a result, the analysis is organized according to the magazine's discursive positioning of celebrity mothers as successful or as failed yummy mummies during pregnancy and the postpartum period. The analysis will be presented along with the excerpts of text in order to facilitate an assessment of my interpretations and the chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings.

4.2. Celebrity Mothers are Just Like Us

Celebrity motherhood is a primary topic of exploration for *Us Weekly* and the magazine's use of the just like us discourse may promote the yummy mummy discourse by encouraging readers to align with and take up messages presented in the magazine. *Us Weekly* attempts to connect the reader to celebrities and to the magazine through their use of the term *us*. The magazine features a "Just Like Us" segment that depicts photographs and descriptions of celebrities engaging in mundane, everyday activities. Celebrities are shown eating lunch, pumping their own gas, walking their dogs, scratching their heads, and grocery shopping, among other things, just like us (Macaluso, 2012a; Witter, 2012a; Witter, 2012b). The magazine presents celebrities as "real" people and encourages the reader to feel more connected to celebrities who are generally perceived as inaccessible.

The linguistic term *us* is an inclusive pronoun that conveys a sense of belonging and suggests a relationship or alignment with others. Our social identity necessitates a negotiation between various categories and we may perceive ourselves as belonging to some social groups and as not belonging to others; we may define ourselves as part of the *us* ingroup or as part of the *them* outgroup (Schmid, Hewstone & Al Ramiah, 2011).

Us Weekly's persistent use of the term *us*, both in its name and content, encourages identification with celebrities and a sense of belonging to their social group. The reader is included in a dialogue with the celebrity through the magazine's use of the term *us*. For example, articles will reveal private information about a celebrity and frame it as a conversation: Celebrity X "talks with *Us*" and "confirms to *Us*" (for an example see Puliti, 2012, p. 45). The connotative use of *Us* sets a tone of collusion; it subtly includes readers in the interactions with celebrities and may encourage readers to perceive themselves as belonging to an elite ingroup.

The analysis of the contributor's comments reflects the reproduction of and alignment with the just like us discourse. For example, a contributor uses the just like us discourse to construct a defence of Simpson's pregnancy weight gain when she writes "damn, give the girl a break. Sure, she's a celebrity, but that doesn't mean she isn't just like everyone else" (O31/RM). Other women compare their personal experience of pregnancy to that of featured celebrities. One contributor defends Hilary Duff's return to the gym ten days postpartum by disclosing that she, the contributor, "was ready to go back" (O11/RA) to working out at the gym within days of delivering her baby. By likening her experience to that of Duff's, this contributor both reinforces the value of returning to the gym soon after delivery and suggests that she perceives herself as just like Duff in this regard.

Many contributors use celebrities' first names and directly address particular celebrities in their responses. These responses reflect a sense of familiarity and suggest that these contributors perceive themselves as sharing a commonality with the celebrity in question. For instance, one contributor speaks directly to celebrity Alyson Hannigan in an attempt to assuage Hannigan's fears of having the "the biggest baby bump in Hollywood" (Ravitz, 2012b, ¶ 4) when she writes "rest easy Alyson -- you are

nowhere near being the blimp that Jessica was during her pregnancy. You look ten times better” (O33/RC). Other contributors write congratulatory notes to celebrities. In response to an article that features Drew Barrymore’s burgeoning baby bump, a contributor writes “Well of course she is pregnant...Congrats Drew!!!! [sic]” (O27/RJ).

Contributors’ responses suggest that they relate to celebrities, share similar personal experiences, and may perceive themselves as belonging to the same group all of which attest to the effectiveness of the just like us discourse. The *just like us* discourse also encourages reader alignment with discourses presented by the magazine, including the yummy mummy discourse. A sense of connection to celebrities may encourage readers to take up the values and aesthetics associated with the yummy mummy discourse which are promoted by the magazine.

The following sections will detail the discursive constructions of specific celebrities as yummy mummies, good mothers, and failed yummy mummies as well as present examples of contributors’ engagement with these discursive constructions.

4.3. Tori “Yummy Mummy” Spelling: Can Good Mothers Wear Crocheted Monokinis?

Tori Spelling embodies the yummy mummy aesthetic and her fourth pregnancy is regularly featured in *Us Weekly* during my data collection period. Spelling’s fourth pregnancy is announced in *Us Weekly* and title of the article reads: “See Pregnant Tori Spelling’s Tiny Baby Bump!” (Ravitz , 2012c). Pregnant celebrity “bumps” are discussed in numerous articles and this discursive construction seems to negate women’s subjective experiences of pregnancy. Instead of gaining insight into Spelling’s experience of pregnancy, the reader is directed to focus solely on her body. Spelling’s pregnant belly is framed as an object to be scrutinized, as an accessory. The article

references the size of Spelling's bump, inferring that size matters, and reflects yet another dimension of women's pregnant bodies that has become the subject of critique. Spelling's body is described as being "svelte" despite being "pregnant for the fourth time...just five months after giving birth" (Ravitz, 2012c, ¶ 2). The accompanying image depicts a thin, three month pregnant Spelling wearing a form-fitting red dress which grazes a virtually imperceptible pregnant belly (see image 4.1). Spelling's physical appearance demonstrates that she was able to return to her pre-pregnancy shape soon after delivering her third baby and was able to continue to maintain a thin physique during the early stages of a subsequent pregnancy.

Contributor's responses to this article suggest an alignment with this perinatal aesthetic. For example, a contributor writes "her body looks great" (O23/RB). Another contributor asks "how did she lose all that weight? She was HUGE! [*sic*]" (O23/RB). This contributor's comment expresses interest in her weight loss methods and simultaneously criticises the shape of Spelling's body during her third pregnancy. Her use of the word "HUGE" (O23/RB), emphasized with capital letters, suggests that Spelling former pregnancy bump should have been smaller or that Spelling formerly deviated from the yummy mummy aesthetic.

Figure 4.1. Pregnant Tory Spelling



Figure 4.1. An image of pregnant Tory Spelling. Adapted from “See Pregnant Tori Spelling’s Tiny Baby Bump!” by Ravitz, J., 2012c, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Spelling appears to epitomize the yummy mummy aesthetic; remaining thin and firm, gaining weight only in her abdomen, and dressing her pregnant body in revealing clothing. In an article titled “Pregnant Tori Spelling Unveils Bikini Body”, the author describes Spelling “show[ing] off her impressive pregnant bikini bod [...] in a sexy orange bikini” (Ravitz, 2012d, ¶ 3) (see image 4.2). The magazine’s endorsement of the yummy mummy aesthetic is evident. The author uses the word “impressive” to describe Spelling’s pregnant body; thereby positioning her body as desirable. Spelling is objectified. The article primarily focuses on her body and suggests that she intended to “show off” her body to others (Ravitz, 2012d, ¶ 3). The contemporary discursive constructions surrounding pregnancy presented in *Us Weekly* and reproduced in reader’s contributions position pregnant women as sexual objects.

Discursive constructions surrounding good mothering are also reflected in this article. The author speaks to Spelling's mothering ability when he reports that the "star stayed hydrated with a cold drink and also kicked back with a nice read [...] all about the first year of motherhood" (Ravitz, 2012d, ¶ 4). Spelling's decision to "stay hydrated" suggests that she is following medical guidelines and may imply that she is staying hydrated for her fetus. Her choice in literature, a book exploring the "first year of motherhood", suggests that she is concerned about following expert recommendations surrounding motherhood. This article seemingly prioritizes Spelling's slim, sexy, perinatal appearance and then shifts to her child-centred, expert guided behaviours. This coverage of Tori Spelling exemplifies how *Us Weekly* links the beauty and good mothering discourses in their construction of the yummy mummy.

Figure 4.2. Pregnant Tory Spelling in an Orange Bikini



Figure 4.2. In this photograph Spelling is approximately eight months postpartum and in her second trimester. Adapted from "Pregnant Tori Spelling Unveils Bikini Body" by Ravitz, J., 2012d, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Contributors' responses to this article vary. One contributor writes "I'm sure she is a wonderful mom. She seems very involved with her children" (O15/RF). This statement speaks to Spelling's mothering ability and points to the child-centred aspect of good mothering; if you are "very involved" with your child then you are a good mother. On the other hand, another contributor suggests that Spelling "should try spending time with her daughter instead of reading that book" (O15/RF) inferring that Spelling is a bad mother because she isn't child-centred enough. The intensive child-focused type of mothering advocated by this contributor is challenged another who writes "Her daughter is sitting two inches from her [...] maybe the kid doesn't want to be talked to every minute of the day. AND [sic] Tori has every right to relax with a book even though she has kids" (O15/RC). This contributor's response reproduces the idea that mothers do not have to maintain a constant child-centred approach to mothering and are entitled to care for themselves. These examples provide insight into how readers are taking up and resisting the intensive mothering discourse.

The majority of the contributors reference Spelling's appearance. One contributor writes "no stretch marks, no cellulite—4th pregnancy—she looks GREAT!" (O15/RJ). Many contributors agreed that Spelling's shape was "impressive" (O15/RI), "beautiful" (O15/RG), and "fantastic" (O15/RL), suggesting that the perinatal body shape exemplified by Spelling aligns with their conceptualizations of beauty. These comments reflect the dominant beauty discourse in North American society; attractive women are thin, smooth and blemish free.

However, contributors' reactions to Spelling become dichotomized when the television star is photographed wearing "a sexy, black crocheted monokini" (Finlayson, 2012a, ¶ 2). According to *Us Weekly*, Spelling's swim suit selection "left almost nothing to the imagination" (Finlayson, 2012a, ¶ 2). It appears that the actress enters dubious

territory when she puts away her “sexy orange bikini” (Ravitz, 2012d, ¶ 3) and chooses to wear her too sexy “black monokini” (see figure 4.3). The magazine sudden critique of Spelling’s “too sexy” bikini body reflects a double bind that exists in North American culture. The dominant beauty discourse encourages women to be sexy, but modesty and respectability pervade other dominant discourses surrounding women’s roles, particularly motherhood. Women must attempt to navigate these conflicting imperatives and the analysis of contributors’ responses provides insight into how women negotiate and make meaning of these imperatives.

Figure 4.3. Pregnant Tory Spelling Wearing a Black Monokini



Figure 4.3. Spelling is going to the pool with her husband and youngest daughter. Adapted from “Pregnant Tory Spelling Wears Skimpy Black Monokini” by Finlayson, A., 2012a, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Although many contributors continue to celebrate Spelling’s “amazing” (O16/RF), “great” (O16/RR) and “fabulous” (O16/RT) looking pregnant form, it seems as though

other contributors perceive her sexy swimwear selection as evidence that she may be a bad mother. For example, one contributor writes:

For goodness sake, Tori - you are the mother of four - show some modesty! I am the mother of six and am very fit too, but I still cover myself appropriately. Nobody wants first hand [sic] knowledge of your fresh bikini wax. When your kids are older, they will see this photo and they won't be thinking "Wow, my mom was hot!" They'll be thinking, "How embarrassing - what was my mom thinking!" (O16/RA).

This assertion is supported by contributors who suggest that Spelling should be more modest (O16/RP; O16/RO; O16/RC) and by those who imply that her swimsuit choice made her appear “tacky” (O16/RH) and “tasteless” (O16/RI). However, some women reject the construction that a woman’s clothing choices reflect her character or mothering ability. For example, one contributor rejects the notion that women should face public scrutiny based on their clothing choices. She reproduces a Liberal feminist discourse regarding women’s freedom to choose and entitlement to own their sexuality when she writes “wearing a bikini or skimpy bathing suit while pregnant (or any other time, for that matter) may not be for everyone, but if that is what she feels comfortable doing, then so be it! Lay off!” (O16/RG). Another contributor does not associate Spelling’s monokini with her ability to parent and suggests that even though she “doesn’t like swimsuits like this” she believes that Spelling “looks great and [...] seems to have it all together with her seemingly perfect family” (O16/RP).

The contributors’ responses to this article illustrate the tensions that exist between the beauty imperative to be sexy and the good mothering imperative to be modest and respectable, as well as how these women negotiate these tensions. Based on contributors’ responses it appears that modesty and respectability are more generally associated with being a good mother when compared to being sexy. This is further evidenced through the analysis of contributors’ responses to Reese Witherspoon.

4.4. Reese “Fit and Fabulous” Witherspoon: Good Mothers Wear One-Piece Swimsuits

Reese Witherspoon is positioned as a yummy mummy and a good mother by *Us Weekly* and readers alike. Witherspoon is depicted as modest by *Us Weekly* and this is demonstrated by the coverage of her burgeoning baby bump. Unlike other pregnant celebrities, who are consistently described as “showing-off”, “revealing” and “displaying” their new baby bumps, Witherspoon is often described as covering-up her baby bump. For instance, articles describe Witherspoon as “shield[ing] her pregnancy curves” (Johnson, 2012a, ¶ 2), “cover[ing] up her small baby bump” (Ravitz, 2012e, ¶ 5), and “ebbing on the more conservative side [...when she wore...] a black one-piece bathing suit that covered up her tiny baby bump” (Finlayson, 2012b, ¶ 8). However in another article, the seemingly modest Witherspoon is described as “show[ing]-off her growing belly [... by] wearing a plunging black swimsuit” (Johnson, 2012b, ¶ 2). Witherspoon is depicted as wearing the very same black, one-piece swimsuit that was previously described as conservative (see image 4.4). The disparity between the authors’ descriptions illustrates two dominant discursively created gendered positions: The Madonna and the whore. One author constructs Witherspoon as modest by reporting an attempt to cover-up, while the other uses language that sexually objectifies her.

Contributors’ appear to reject the second author’s objectification of Witherspoon and praise Witherspoon’s modesty. For example, a contributor writes “that swimsuit is hardly plunging. Nice to see a celebrity who doesn’t ‘let it all hang out’ [...] congrats on having a sense of modesty” (O28/RF). Similarly, another contributor writes “finally a prego [*sic*] celebrity who isn’t in a bikini. She looks great. Modesty is a good thing” (O28/RH). These and other contributors seem to reproduce and align with discursive

constructions surrounding women's respectability and subsequently reject the sexualisation of the pregnant form.

On the other hand, some contributors enforce the sexualizing aspect of the yummy mummy discourse. For example, in an article that compares the "different, but equally sexy maternity beach styles" of bikini clad Kourtney Kardashian and one-piece wearing Witherspoon (Macaluso, 2012b, ¶ 2) one contributor writes "Kourtney looks hot! Reese looks dowdy" (O14/RA) and another contributor disparages Witherspoon's more conservative swimwear choice when she wrote "Don't mistake class for snob. Courtney [sic] looks way better" (O14/RB). *Us Weekly* invites readers to identify who "has the hotter beach bump style" (Macaluso, 2012b, ¶ 5) and further promotes the objectification and scrutiny of women.

Figure 4.4. Pregnant Reese Witherspoon



Figure 4.4. Witherspoon is photographed while on vacation with her family. Adapted from "Reese Witherspoon Debuts Pregnant Beach Body!" by Johnson, Z., 2012b, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Us Weekly also promotes the culturally situated, dominant discursive constructions of good mothering. *Us Weekly* positions Witherspoon as a good mother; the magazine speaks to her child centeredness as they describe her “frolick[ing] in the water” with her children (Johnson, 2012b, ¶ 2) and “hitting the resort gym [with daughter Ava] in the mornings” during their family vacation in Costa Rica (O’Neill, 2012, p.65). The magazine also speaks to her commitment to her family by publishing this statement:

Despite being one of Hollywood's highest paid actresses (she commands up to \$15 million per film), family has always been a priority No. 1 for the Tennessee native. [Witherspoon states] “I don’t wake up to make movies...I wake up to have a wonderful family!” (Andersson, 2012, p.54).

The coverage of Witherspoon implies that she prioritizes family life and spending time with her children and is willing to sacrifice her career in order to raise her children.

Us Weekly discursively positions Witherspoon as yummy mummy exemplar. An article depicts Witherspoon, in the second trimester of her pregnancy, playing tennis and reports “Reese Witherspoon isn’t letting her pregnancy slow her down!” (Eggenberger, 2012a, ¶ 1). The author describes Witherspoon as “looking stylish in a cute purple skirt”, as “an avid runner”, and reports that she took “a two-hour hike with [her] pal” prior to playing tennis that day (Eggenberger, 2012a, ¶ 3). Witherspoon appears to have boundless energy as she prioritizes staying in shape during her pregnancy and this article suggests that yummy mummies are impervious to the fatigue and physical discomfort that other women experience during pregnancy.

Witherspoon’s immunity to some of the symptoms of pregnancy is also reflected in an article that covers her attendance at the Cannes Film Festival. After making a transatlantic flight, “a radiant Reese Witherspoon was all smiles” and “despite being several months pregnant, the 36-year-old actress didn’t look the least bit jet lagged”

(Finlayson, 2012c, ¶ 2). During her interview, Witherspoon exclaims “I feel great” (Finlayson, 2012c, ¶ 5) and was “surprisingly not tired” (Finlayson, 2012c, ¶ 7).

This article also highlights other aspects of the yummy mummy aesthetic as embodied by Witherspoon. The article features an image of Witherspoon’s wearing a “fitted black Versace mini dress with flattering ruched detail that enhanced her growing baby bump” (Finlayson, 2012c, ¶ 5). Witherspoon’s body appears sleek and slender and her thin arms, legs and face frame a firm pregnant belly. In line with the yummy mummy aesthetic, Witherspoon is fashionably dressed and well-accessorized; she is depicted wearing “diamond drop earrings, her massive engagement ring, bright fuchsia heels and black Versace sunglasses” (Finlayson, 2012c, ¶ 5). The readers that respond to this article all align with the aesthetic demonstrated by Witherspoon and promoted by *Us Weekly*. One contributor describes the star as “look[ing] perfect” (O20.5/RD).

Contributors also interpret Witherspoon’s yummy mummy aesthetic, her pregnant form and fashion style, as suggesting that she is a good mother. For example, a contributor (O20.5/RC) writes “Wow, she’s so responsible and looks like a mom” and another contributor positions Witherspoon as a pregnancy role model when she writes “Jessica Simpson could learn much about diet and exercise while pregnant from Reese” (O20.5/RB). Witherspoon is positioned as a good mother and as an exemplar of the yummy mummy aesthetic because she is thin, fit, perky and fashionable. In this way the magazine links the good mother discourse with the yummy mummy aesthetic and contributors reproduce this connection.

4.5. Vanessa “Dressed to Impress” Lachey: Maternity Musts for Yummy Mummies

Like Witherspoon, Vanessa Lachey, formerly Vanessa Minnillo, is also positioned as a good mother and a yummy mummy role model by both *Us Weekly* and contributors. Lachey, like Witherspoon, seems immune to the physical and emotional discomfort associated with pregnancy. Lachey describes pregnancy as being “fun” and claims that she has “no complaints” associated with pregnancy (Johnson, 2012c, ¶ 2). Lachey’s physique exemplifies the thin-pregnant ideal and she reportedly monitored her eating habits throughout her pregnancy. Lachey reports that she is “not going to throw caution to the wind” by eating whatever she likes during her pregnancy (Johnson, 2012c, ¶ 7). Lachey comments that her baby is “developing and growing” and that she “thinks about everything [she] eat[s] and drink[s]” in order to “maintain [her] caloric intake” because “the only gift [she] can give [her] baby right now is what [she] put[s] in [her] mouth” (Johnson, 2012c, ¶ 6). Lachey also reports that she is “conscious about trying to stay active” for her baby (Johnson, 2012c ¶ 6). Lachey uses the child-centered aspect of the good mother discourse and expert recommendations to guide her eating habits and exercise regimen and her self-reported behaviours suggest that she believes that good mothering begins at conception.

All of the contributors who respond to the content of this article use praise to reinforce Lachey’s appearance and behaviours. For example, Lachey’s physical appearance is described as “hot” (O2/RI) and “beautiful” (O2/RB). The use of these adjectives suggests that these contributors align with the dominant discursive construction of beauty. One contributor (O2/RF) implies that Lachey is a good mother who is focused on the health of her fetus when she writes “[Lachey] seems to be taking great care of herself and her baby with what she eats. She’s wise to maintain a healthy

caloric intake. Otherwise she'll put on excess weight that she and the baby don't need". This contributor highlights the relationship between following expert recommendations surrounding diet and being a good mother.

Lachey's maternity style is promoted by *Us Weekly* and is featured in a double-page layout in the May 14, 2012 issue of the magazine. Lachey's "bump style" further positions her as a yummy mummy exemplar and readers are encouraged to replicate her "edgy looks" (Davis, 2012, p. 34). Lachey is shown wearing five different outfits during various periods of her pregnancy and each outfit is catalogued; the names of the designer's are included as well as the cost of specific items (Davis, 2012). For example, in one photo Lachey is described as wearing "Gucci's \$1,195 black chain heels [which] anchored her Halston dress and Theory blazer" (Davis, 2012, p. 34). This article promotes contemporary, yummy mummy maternity style and simultaneously advertises designer items. Readers learn what they need to buy and wear in order to embody the fashionable, well-accessorized appearance associated with the yummy mummy aesthetic.

4.6. Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi: A Failed Yummy Mummy "Trades Partying for Pampers"

The content and tone of the magazine coverage of celebrities such as reality star Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi and Jessica Simpson, whose bodies do not fit the yummy mummy aesthetic, differ from that of celebrity mothers who embody the yummy mummy aesthetic. Snooki and Simpson are depicted as the antithesis of yummy mummies and I will refer to this construction as the failed yummy mummy discourse. Failed yummy mummies are discursively constructed as dressing less fashionably, as experiencing

more unpleasant symptoms associated with pregnancy, and as being more irresponsible than their yummy mummy counterparts.

An analysis of the coverage of Snooki's pregnancy illustrates how *Us Weekly* magazine positions celebrities as failed yummy mummies. Snooki's transition into motherhood is featured in an article titled "We are Not Going to Screw this Up" in the March 19, 2012 issue of *Us Weekly*. The title of the article suggests that Snooki is in a precarious position and that she may indeed "screw things up" despite professing the contrary. The article uses a number of techniques to undermine Snooki's candidacy as a good mother. For example, the article states that "though 'maternal' is not a word most would associate with the reality star—after all, she once bragged about passing out drunk in a garbage can—she insists she is ready to trade partying for pampers" (Puliti, 2012, p. 45). This passage portrays Snooki as reckless and challenges her readiness and capability for motherhood. Snooki's recklessness is then further demonstrated through an inset article that provides a pictorial and descriptive timeline of her irresponsible, alcohol-fueled behaviours. The images depict the reality star exposing herself, getting arrested, engaging in a physical altercation and accidentally urinating on the dance floor at a nightclub (Puliti, 2012, p. 46). The assumption that an individual's past predicts their future appears to be reflected in this article and is essential to the strength of the magazine's discursive positioning of Snooki as likely to be a bad mother.

The magazine also incorporates assessment methods in order to further demonstrate Snooki's unpreparedness for motherhood as well as the public's perception of her mothering potential. The interviewer administers a "Mini Mommy Quiz" in order to assess "how savvy...Snooki [is] about real-life parenting" (Puliti, 2012, p. 49). The administration of the quiz, and published results, demonstrate the magazine's attempts at using scientific methods to position Snooki as a bad mother. The questions in the

Mini Mommy Quiz are based on medical, scientifically derived data and ask questions such as: “How many diapers does a baby typically go through over the course of a week?” (Puliti, 2012, p.49). This type of questioning may reflect the association of good mothering with being informed by, and following, expert advice. The magazine also conducts a poll of the public’s opinions of Snooki’s mothering potential. *Us Weekly* asks 100 people in New York City’s Rockefeller Centre to state whether or not they believe Snooki would “make a good mom”; only 19 percent of participants report that she would make a good mother (Puliti, 2012, p. 46). The inclusion of the timeline describing her “wild past” (Puliti, 2012, p. 46), the administration of Mini Mommy Quiz, and the use of a public opinion poll all discursively construct Snooki as lacking the ability to be a good mother.

An analysis of this article also reflects how the magazine highlights aspects of the reality star’s characteristics which are antithetical to those of yummy mummies. Unlike Witherspoon who is previously described as wearing a Versace mini-dress (Finlayson, 2012c) and Lachey whose exemplary maternity fashion sense is featured in a double-page spread (Davis, 2012), Snooki is derisively described as wearing "a black sweatshirt, pink sweatpants and Uggs" (Puliti, 2012, p. 45). Furthermore, Snooki’s physical symptoms of pregnancy, such as her unrelenting morning sickness and exhaustion, are discussed throughout the article (Puliti, 2012); which contrast with Witherspoon’s apparent immunity to pregnancy symptoms. Although Snooki does not appear to fulfill some aspects of the yummy mummy discourse, she appears to demonstrate a desire to be perceived as a yummy mummy.

Snooki’s statements, published in this article and others, suggest that she aligns with and internalizes aspects of the yummy mummy discourse. Snooki, who has likened her own her pre-pregnancy shape to that of a meatball (Saad, 2013), appears to be

focused on attaining the thin-perinatal ideal promoted by the yummy mummy discourse. For example, an excerpt from the aforementioned article describes the interviewer offering Snooki some crackers in an effort to help settle her stomach and reports that Snooki declines to eat them stating, "They have carbs" (Puliti, 2012, p.45). In another article, Snooki reports "trying to eat [sic] healthy -- fruits, lots of jelly and Italian ices. Nothing fattening at all" (Johnson, 2012d, ¶ 10). Snooki references fellow failed yummy mummy Jessica Simpson and contends that Simpson "indulged in everything that she wanted" and subsequently claims that she "would die if [she] were [Simpson's] size" during pregnancy (Johnson, 2012d, ¶ 8). Snooki's statements suggest that she is actively trying to lose weight and monitor her pregnancy weight gain in an effort to attain the pregnant thin-ideal body shape. Snooki outlines her future priorities and states: "I want to have the baby, lose the weight and have...the wedding" (Puliti, 2012, p. 48). And, when the reality star is asked if she would breastfeed her baby she replied, "I want to because I want to lose weight quicker" (Puliti, 2012, p. 48). Snooki's statements reproduce the idea that women should prioritize weight-loss immediately after delivery in an effort to return to the thin-ideal and suggest that she internalizes the yummy mummy discourse.

Furthermore, Snooki's statement surrounding breastfeeding reflects how the yummy mummy discourse may have shifted women's conceptualizations of breastfeeding. The discursive construction of breastfeeding as a perinatal weight-loss method pervades articles surrounding postnatal weight-loss published by *Us Weekly* and is reproduced in Snooki's comments as well as those of contributors. For example, *Us Weekly* lists "breast-feeding, avoid[ing] processed fare, stick[ing] to whole foods like vegetables and grilled meats" as postpartum weight-loss strategies employed by Beyonce Knowles (Grossbart, 2012, p.51). Contributors also cite breastfeeding as an

effective weight-loss method. For instance, one contributor writes “I gained 75-lbs with my son (and I was a tiny lil [*sic*] thing). I lost it all in 8 weeks by breastfeeding. It worked wonders” (O8/RB). The construction of breastfeeding as a weight-loss strategy is reductionistic; it negates important aspects of breastfeeding such as the role breastfeeding plays in infant health and maternal-infant bonding and directs women to focus on their physical shape as opposed to other more meaningful features of motherhood.

Snooki is positioned as a failed yummy mummy. In contrast to the coverage of yummy celebrity mummies, Snooki is depicted as being unfashionable and her unpleasant symptoms of pregnancy are highlighted. *Us Weekly* discursively constructs her as being irresponsible and likely to be a bad mother, thereby linking failed yummy mummy status with bad mothering.

4.7. Jessica “Failed Yummy Mummy” Simpson: Perverse Pop Tart Eating Fetus Abuser

Unlike Witherspoon and Spelling, Jessica Simpson does not embody the yummy mummy discourse while pregnant; as a result, she faces widespread negative scrutiny surrounding her pregnant shape and dietary practices. An exploration of the media coverage of Simpson’s pregnancy weight gain demonstrates how *Us Weekly* positions Simpson as a failed yummy mummy, how the yummy mummy and good mother discourses intersect, how contributors engage with these messages, and how the surveillance of women’s bodies is promoted and enacted.

In order to position Simpson as a failed yummy mummy, there is a disparity in the language used to describe Simpson versus the language used to describe yummy mummies. *Us Weekly* refers to the bumps of yummy mummies as “tiny” (Ravitz, 2012c,

¶ 3), “small” (Ravitz, 2012e, ¶ 3), or simply as “bumps” whereas Simpson is described as “super-pregnant” with a “massive” bump (Ravitz, 2012f, ¶ 3). Furthermore, references to Simpson’s weight gain as more than recommended draw on expert informed discourses to further emphasize her failed yummy mummy status. *Us Weekly* states that “most women who are pregnant are not supposed to gain more than 25 pounds” (Ravitz, 2012a, ¶ 5). Simpson is described as gaining “a lot more” weight than medically recommended and is discursively positioned as deviating from the thin-pregnant ideal (Ravitz, 2012a, ¶ 4).

Simpson’s deviation from the thin-ideal during her pregnancy is also widely criticised by contributors. Contributors frequently reproduce the expert derived recommendation that women should gain 25 pounds or less during their pregnancy. For example, a contributor writes “Jessica gained too much weight (you are only supposed to gain 25 lbs)” (O33/RK). Others use Simpson’s deviation from the medically informed pregnancy weight gain recommendation to position Simpson as a reckless mother and to justify critiques of her physical appearance. For instance, a contributor states “I don’t think there is anything ‘healthy’ about her weight gain. She is on the fast track to diabetes and having a really difficult birth” (O35/RI); a contributor remarks that Simpson is “absolutely the size of a house” and suggests that her size may result in “preeclampsia” (O31/RX) and another contributor refers to Simpson as “HUGE!” and recommends that if Simpson “wants to be healthy for that baby, she is going to have a lot to lose after the birth” (O31/RIA). The expert advice regarding maternal weight gain appears to shape how some contributors make meaning of Simpson’s body size. These contributors reproduce medically based discursive constructions surrounding maternal health, which seem to catastrophize excess weight gain, in order to reinforce their

critique of Simpson. These contributors position Simpson as a bad mother by suggesting that her pregnancy weight gain is endangering her fetus.

Other contributors comment on Simpson's size and use cruelty to enforce the thin yummy mummy aesthetic. For example, a contributor snipes "[Simpson] is so huge! LOL---it's just funny how big she got! Shamu!" (O43/RER). One contributor remarks that Simpson "looks like the Goodyear blimp [*sic*]" (O31/RJR) and another contributor suggests that Simpson's size made her appear as though "she's going to give birth to a 5th grader!! [*sic*]" (O31/RJ). The use of cruelty in the form of name calling and badgering positions failed yummy mummies as deserving of harsh criticism. These pernicious comments further stigmatize women who do not embody the thin ideal and promote the yummy mummy aesthetic as the only acceptable body shape.

Us Weekly further positions Simpson as a failed yummy mummy and as antagonistic to her fetus by highlighting Simpson's "unhealthy" pregnancy diet in numerous articles. In one such article a disheveled looking Simpson is shown pushing a shopping cart brimming with groceries (see Figure 4.5). The article catalogues some of Simpson's "crazy cravings" and infers that her "salty snacks" are only the beginning of her poor dietary choices ("Jessica's crazy cravings", 2012, p. 12). "Junk-foods" such as buttered Pop-Tarts, Cap'n Crunch cereal ("Jessica's crazy cravings", 2012, p. 12), Laffy Taffy, and Kraft Macaroni & Cheese covered in seasoning salt are identified as prominent components of Simpson's pregnancy diet (Finlayson, 2012d, ¶ 5). Simpson is also reported to consume "a lot of Tums" ("Jessica's crazy cravings", 2012, p. 12). *Us Weekly's* repeated references to Simpson's diet reflects an expertly informed discourse surrounding healthy dietary practices and uses common knowledge surrounding unhealthy foods to suggest that she may not be eating the right foods for her fetus. Many contributors label Simpson's diet as unhealthy. For example, a contributor argues

that Simpson's diet consists of "just garbage" such as "cheesecake, mac and cheese, fries, and buttered poptarts [*sic*]" and expresses concern that "fruits, veggies, lean protein, dairy, [and] whole grains" are absent from the star's diet (O31/RS). Another contributor suggests that Simpson's "huge" body and diet are "not healthy" and that "she is irresponsible" (O31/RFA). This contributor's response reproduces the medical discourse surrounding healthy body weight and diet and simultaneously challenges Simpson's credibility as a good mother because of her seeming disregard for expert dietary recommendations (O31/RFA).

Figure 4.5. Pregnant Jessica Simpson



Figure 4.5. Simpson is shown grocery shopping and is described as eating salty snacks and needing to take Tums to manage her pregnancy cravings. Adapted from "Jessica's crazy cravings" by *Us Weekly*, 892, p. 12. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

However, the mean-spirited and widespread denouncement of Simpson's pregnancy weight gain insights a backlash. Famous mothers publically defend Simpson and reprimand the media for disparaging Simpson during her pregnancy. In an attempt

to normalize Simpson's experience, Whoopi Goldberg discloses that she gained 90 pounds during her pregnancy, Sarah Palin voices her support by stating that she "would have wanted to punch [Simpson's critics] in the neck" (Ravitz, 2012a, ¶ 8), and Tori Spelling insists that Simpson's critics should "lay off" because "pregnancy is a special time" and mothers should be able to choose how to be pregnant (Finlayson, 2012e, ¶ 2). Many contributors reject the media's surveillance of Simpson and suggest that people should "mind their own business" (O34/RF; O35/RE; O35/RK; O35/RL) because "everyone's body is different" (O35/RL). Contributors call the media's coverage of Simpson "bullying" (O35/RP; O35/RM) and some suggest that the critical coverage of Simpson's weight may promote anorexia and bulimia (O35/RE; O34/PGA). Contributors also reject the thin-ideal promoted by *Us Weekly*, suggesting that Simpson "looks beautiful" (O31/RB) and that being "happy and healthy" is more important than appearance (O35/RJ). Simpson also rejects the yummy mummy aesthetic while pregnant stating that she is at "her heaviest and feels the most confident" because she takes "pride in being a mom" and her transition into motherhood enables her to "love her body more than ever" during her pregnancy. These responses demonstrate a range of resistance strategies. For example, appreciating the functionality of the pregnant body, minimizing the importance of appearance, acknowledging that body size is not necessarily correlated with health, and admonishing cruel critiques of women's bodies were all strategies that were used to resist the yummy mummy aesthetic.

Simpson's appreciation for her pregnant body seems to shift as she approaches her third trimester. *Us Weekly* reports that "in her third trimester, Simpson was already beginning to worry about how...she'd bounce back" to her pre-pregnancy weight (Ravitz, 2012g, ¶ 6). Simpson's concerns about "bouncing back" to her pre-pregnancy weight

suggest that she internalizes the postpartum aesthetic informed by the yummy mummy discourse.

The yummy mummy discourse promotes a rapid return to the thin, non-pregnant ideal during the postpartum period and *Us Weekly* directs readers to solely focus on the physical appearance of new mothers as opposed to their experiences of motherhood. The magazine routinely highlights celebrities' bodies soon after delivery. For example, Candice Crawford is praised for "look[ing] incredible 2 [sic] weeks after baby" (Ravitz, 2012h, ¶ 1). Crawford is described as looking "sensational and slim in a spandex mini-skirt" only two weeks after having her baby (Ravitz, 2012h, ¶ 3). Similarly, Victoria Secret model Alessandra Ambrosio appears to "bounce right back post-pregnancy" and "looks nearly as slim and trim as she did during her pre-pregnancy days" within a month of giving birth (Finlayson, 2012f, ¶ 2). Urgency is a central theme to postpartum weight-loss, and those who can lose their pregnancy weight the fastest are celebrated. By presenting images of new mothers during various time periods postpartum, *Us Weekly* discursively establishes a precedent for how women should or could look during the weeks and months after giving birth. Rapid weight-loss during the postpartum period is construed as a significant, highly desirable achievement and the experiential aspects of new motherhood are largely ignored.

Simpson reproduces aspects of the yummy mummy discourse when she suggests that "as soon as [she] heals from the C-section, she is extremely determined to get back in the gym and work out" because "she wants to show the world" that she can lose the weight (Finlayson, 2012d, ¶ 3). Simpson's statement frames postpartum weight loss as a highly valued accomplishment and promotes the idea that women should start trying to lose their baby weight as soon as possible. Another article includes one of Simpson's tweets which reads "New goal: Look like Jessica Alba after baby" (Johnson,

2012e, ¶ 7). Alba, a yummy mummy exemplar, “had just shown off a rocking bikini bod [sic] four months after having daughter Haven” (Johnson, 2012e, ¶ 7).

Us Weekly features Alba, among others, in an article titled “How Stars Get Thin Fast!” (Grossbart, 2012, p. 50). The article describes Alba as a “5-foot-7 stunner” who engages in 90-minute workout sessions at the gym “several times a week” in addition to taking “core focused spinning classes at SoulCycle” which reportedly burn “a staggering 500 to 700 calories” (Grossbart, 2012, p. 51). The article reports that Alba “make[s] healthy choices” in regards to her diet and uses “a 1,200-calorie-a-day meal-delivery plan” (Grossbart, 2012, p.51). Alba’s strategy to get thin fast entails maintaining an extreme caloric deficit and investing a substantial amount of time in physical activity designed to sculpt her postpartum body. The attainment of Alba’s “stunning” body requires a considerable amount of time and money both of which are generally in short supply for new mothers. *Us Weekly* reproduces expert medical discourse and discursively constructs Alba’s diet as healthy when they reference her “nutritious snacks” and “healthy” dietary choices (Grossbart, 2012, p.51). However, as opposed to focusing on maternal health, the article promotes behaviours designed to drastically reduce postpartum weight, encouraging women to bounce back to a thin, “beautiful”, and unrealistic yummy mummy physique.

The contributors who respond to articles about Simpson’s postpartum weight loss plans challenge the idea that women should prioritize weight-loss promptly upon delivering their babies; they demonstrate resistance when they suggest that this discourse is unhealthy and puts undue pressure on new mothers. For example, one contributor suggests that Simpson should be able to “enjoy being with her little girl” and that “there’s no need to rush into losing weight” (O10/RA). Another contributor posits that society’s “emphasis on losing baby weight [is] so ridiculous and superficial!” and that

“the most important thing [women] should be worrying about after giving birth is being a good mother and making sure [their] baby is happy and healthy!” (O6/RH). This contributor contends that being a good mother who is child-centred takes precedence over the embodiment of the thin-ideal. A male contributor describes the pressure to lose baby-weight as “a competition” and suggests that “Hollywood puts too much pressure on wearing a bikini a month after giving birth” (O6/RF). However, this contributor then writes “looking forward to Daisy Duke though!” (O6/RF). This contributor’s statements demonstrate his negotiation of the yummy mummy discourse and the dominant discourse on beauty; he appears to reject the idea that women should feel pressured to quickly return to their pre-baby shape during the postpartum period, but aligns with dominant discursive constructions surrounding women’s beauty, namely the thin-ideal. Other contributors reject the idea that women should rapidly lose their pregnancy weight and speak to the potentially harmful consequences of this discourse. They suggest that women are “killing themselves to look good” (O6/RC) and that pressure to return to a “bikini ready body” quickly after having a baby requires that women “beat their bodies into submission” (O6/RB).

4.8. Jenna “Voice of Reason” Fischer: What’s Wrong With “Junk in Your Trunk”?

Actress Jenna Fischer comments on the contemporary pressures of motherhood in an *Us Weekly* article. She suggests that new moms face a host of pressures and that “expectations of what your body is supposed to look like” is the last thing women should worry about (Macaluso, 2012c, ¶ 3). Fischer describes rapid weight-loss in the postpartum period as “unnatural” (¶ 2) and is “angered by the posing in a bikini six weeks after having my baby trend” (Macaluso, 2012c, ¶ 4). Fischer rejects the yummy

mummy discourse and suggests that this discursive construction places additional pressures on women. Fischer posits that “new mothers should get a free pass” (Macaluso, 2012c, ¶ 4) reflecting the construction that the perinatal period should provide a reprieve from comparisons to the thin beauty ideal. Furthermore, Fischer contends that women should celebrate the fact that they “created a human being” rather than be concerned with having “a little more junk in the trunk” (Macaluso, 2012c, ¶ 5). Fischer draws attention to the function of the postpartum body and suggests that the body should be celebrated for its role in creation instead of admonished for not “being a size 2 [sic] six weeks after leaving the hospital” (Macaluso, 2012c, ¶ 7).

Contributors’ responses to Fischer’s comments were mixed. Many contributors supported Fischer’s assertions. For example, a contributor writes: “It’s a shame that women have to feel self-conscious after having a baby because they’re not a fvckin [sic] size 4” (O37/RG). This contributor rejects the idea that a woman’s size should influence their sense of self. However, her use of language in the phrase “women *have* to feel self-conscious” implies that she perceives the relationship between women’s appearance and sense of self as inevitable and unalterable. Conversely, another contributor contends that women’s identities are complex and that women “are more than a number on the scale”, rejecting the notion a woman’s appearance should define her sense of self (O37/RB). This contributor also challenges the idea that the attainment of the yummy mummy aesthetic is indicative of a woman’s mothering abilities when she writes: “Really, why does it matter if you can wear a bikini 6 weeks after having a baby? Is that really the measure of success for motherhood?” (O37/RB).

Other contributors enforce the yummy mummy discourse. One contributor minimizes the emotional, relational, and physical work associated with pregnancy when she snipes: “Sorry, I didn’t know ‘creating’ a human was so hard. Not all moms have to

balloon while pregnant. It's called 'put down the chocolate cake'!! [sic]" (O37/RF). This contributor's response suggests that she perceives the maintenance of a thin physique during pregnancy as important and attributes weight gain to a lack of self-control. Her statement reflects an alignment with the yummy mummy aesthetic as well as the discursive construction women's bodies as unruly and in need of control. Another contributor draws on expert recommendations surrounding pregnancy weight gain and argues that women are "only supposed to gain 25 pounds during pregnancy and it really shouldn't take more than 6 weeks to get your body back" (O37/RD). This contributor posits that women who follow expert advice will be able to attain the thin postpartum aesthetic promoted by *Us Weekly* and North American society.

4.9. Kate "Post-Baby Body" Hudson: The Postpartum Yummy Mummy

Us Weekly positions Kate Hudson as a postpartum yummy mummy role model. The coverage of Hudson implies that she embodies both the yummy mummy and good mothering discourses. Hudson's return to a slim, toned baby fat-free physique is documented throughout the data collection period. Hudson's post-baby bikini body is widely promoted through a number of articles. "Hot Pics [sic]! Kate's a Hot Mama!", "5 [sic] Ways Kate Hudson Maintains Her Post-Baby Body" (Shy, 2012), and "How Stars Get Thin Fast! Score Your Best Body Yet!" (Ravitz, 2012e, p.50) are examples of articles that celebrate Hudson's postpartum body and outline the techniques she uses to lose her baby weight. Hudson's "slimdown [sic] secret[s]" are described in the May 7, 2012 issue of the magazine (Sultan & Wolff, 2012, p. 24). In order to achieve a lean and taut postpartum body within months of having her son, Hudson "works her core with Pilates", "bikes everywhere[,]...dances in a home studio and goes for 5-mile outdoor runs";

Hudson eats "vegetables and lean proteins" and "to slim down quickly, the star cuts out alcohol" (Grossbart, 2012, p.54). The description of Hudson's "slimdown [sic] secret[s]" (Sultan & Wolff, 2012, p. 24) reproduces medically based language and dominant expert advice on diet and exercise. For example, the terms "core", "lean proteins" and "cuts alcohol" are all rooted in medical discourses surrounding diet and nutrition. The magazine also invites readers to "get the star's Pilates perfect body" (§ 2) and to "get Hudson's flat ab [sic] diet plan" by clicking on a link which connects them to the lifestyle and shopping website Popsugar (Shy, 2012, § 5). Hudson's post-baby body is an advertising opportunity and those who wish to emulate the yummy mummy role model are invited to purchase products that will help them achieve their goal. Hudson "has no baby fat left" (Sultan & Wolff, p. 24), and all of the articles featuring Hudson centred on the thin and toned postpartum body and suggest that women in the postpartum period should be interested in the attainment and maintenance of the postpartum body. The postpartum aesthetic exemplified by Hudson appears to align with many contributors' conceptualizations of attractiveness. For example, one contributor writes "her figure is perfect" (O5/RA) and another contributor writes "she looks awesome (O5/RB). Good for you Kate ☺". The statement "Good for you Kate" (O5/RB) also implies that mastering the postpartum body is a worthwhile and praise worthy endeavour.

Us Weekly further promotes the yummy mummy aesthetic by associating happiness and having fun with the attainment of the toned and thin feminine ideal body. For example, in an article about Hudson's "toned and lean" post-baby body, Shy (2012) describes the star as "perennially sunny" (§ 1) and subsequently states that "Hudson knows that staying in shape (even while pregnant) is all about having fun" (Shy, 2012, § 4). In another article, the caption reads "The happy mom shows off her superfit [sic] new body" and includes an image of a laughing Hudson wearing a bikini (see image 4.6)

(Sultan & Wolff, 2012, p. 24). Furthermore, *Us Weekly* also associates happiness with the embodiment of aspects of the good mother discourse. An article reports that Hudson's "secret to happiness is about putting her family first" and quotes the star as saying "I'm more concerned with if I'm raising my son properly, with what makes my family happy, [and] with what makes me happy" than other's perceptions of her appearance (Shy, 2012, ¶ 6). In her quote, Hudson reproduces aspects of the good mothering discourse; it seems that her child's and her family's needs take precedence over her own needs. Hudson is positioned as an exemplar that has attained the yummy mummy aesthetic and has demonstrated a commitment to good mothering which have both led to her happiness and increased life satisfaction. The coverage of Hudson illustrates how dominant gendered discursive constructions intersect in *Us Weekly* as well as how the magazine further promotes the yummy mummy aesthetic.

Figure 4.6. Kate Hudson Postpartum



Figure 4.6. Hudson is photographed eight months after delivering her second child. Adapted from "Hot! Kate Hudson Shows Off Amazing Bod in Tiny Bikini 8 Months After Baby" by Ravitz, J., 2012i, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

4.10. Aishwarya Rai: A Mother's "Duty" to "Bounce Back"

Us Weekly published a series of articles which centres on the widespread critique of Aishwarya Rai's heavier, post-pregnancy body (see image 4.7). The Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai has been called "the most beautiful woman in the world" (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 1). However, Rai's "fail[ure] to lose her baby-weight" immediately after giving birth seems to challenge her title as the world's most beautiful woman and has made her the object of harsh criticism (Eggenberger, 2012b, ¶ 1). A number of websites have been created to shame the actress for her pregnancy weight gain (Eggenberger, 2012b, ¶ 1). An article in *Us Weekly* describes an online video that "juxtapos[es] images of [Rai] pre and post-baby -- overlaid with the sounds of elephants trumpeting" which has "been viewed more than 500,000 times" (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 3). Comments taken from the insulting website are included in the article and demonstrate viewers' engagement with the yummy mummy discourse. For instance, one viewer claims that "it is [Rai's] duty to look good and fit" and another states that "[Rai] needs to learn from people like Victoria Beckham who are back to a size zero weeks after their delivery" (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 4). These individuals' comments enforce the idea that women should prioritize weight loss after they have a baby and maintain an ultra thin physique during the perinatal period.

Figure 4.7. Aishwarya Rai Postpartum



Figure 4.7. The photo on the left is of Rai pre-pregnancy and the photo on the right is of Rai seven months after delivering her baby. Adapted from “Aishwarya Rai to Flaunt Post-Baby Curves at Cannes: See Her Past Looks” by Eggenberger, N., 2012b, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

The responses from *Us Weekly* contributors varied; a few contributors enforce the thin yummy mummy aesthetic, while the majority of contributors either reject or display mixed engagement with aspects of the yummy mummy discourse. Exemplifying her enforcement of the yummy mummy discourse, a contributor writes:

The only women who think she looks great or better now are the fat cows themselves. There's no excuse to be this fat after pregnancy, or even during pregnancy. It's called eating to [*sic*] much. I hope she eventually loses weight though, for her own sake (O30/RH).

Another contributor reproduces the language found in the article that describes Rai's “duty to be thin” (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 4) and demonstrates her alignment with the thin beauty ideal when she writes:

It's kind of [celebrities'] duty or place to be thin and attractive...again it's not like they don't have the money to do it...maybe people are sick of fat people everywhere in hollywood [sic] or wherever...there are enough fat people in society, can they keep them off the big screen and out of the media and reserve the media for 'attractive thin' people sheesh [sic] (O30/RJ).

These women's comments are discriminatory; they position fat as the enemy and fat people as inferior. For instance, the statement "the only women who think she looks great or better now are the fat cows themselves" (O30/RH) implies that fat women's opinions are less valuable. One contributor suggests that society is "sick of fat people" and that their presence in society is offensive (O30/RJ). Other contributors demonstrate their alignment with the thin-ideal post pregnancy body in more subtle ways. For example, a contributor writes that Rai "must be hiding the baby fat" with her sari and that her weight gain was "a shame [because] she was so beautiful" (O1/RB). This contributor's comment implies that Rai is no longer beautiful because of her weight gain.

A series of *Us Weekly* articles about Rai challenge the critique of Rai's body and present the Indian media's criticism of her as "cruel" (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 4). The articles quote columnist Shobhaa De as saying "The role models being held up are Angelina Jolie and Victoria Beckham...this whole business of looking desperately skinny two weeks after giving birth is a Western import" (Macaluso, 2012d, ¶ 4). *Us Weekly's* decision to address this topic demonstrates the tensions that exist in North American culture. On one hand, *Us weekly* routinely promotes the thin ideal and the yummy mummy discourse; on the other hand *Us Weekly* challenges this discourse when fans begin to enforce these very same ideals the magazine promotes.

The contributors' responses to these articles are particularly valuable because they demonstrate various ways in which women challenge and resist the yummy mummy discourse. Some women present the thin-ideal as a socio-historical construction and use this logic to support their rejection of the yummy mummy

discourse. For example, one contributor identifies different beauty discourses that were popular in different historical periods; she writes "in the 16th or 17th century...curvy women were considered the beauty and skinny women were considered disgusting" (O1/RA). One contributor rejects the idea that women should to strive to return to a thin pre-pregnancy shape immediately after delivery and describes this discourse as a "harsh idealistic perspective on beauty" (O30/RTB). Subsequently, she posits the question: "When will women stop being oppressed by the wicked demands of others?" (O30/RTB). Another contributor asserts that Rai "is caught between reality and fantasy. The reality of what life is vs. the fantasy her industry sells" (O30/RBB). This statement interrupts the just like us discourse by highlighting Hollywood's role in selling a fantasy and succinctly points to the tensions that exist between the reality of women's biological development over the lifespan and the dominant, culturally upheld beauty ideals promoted by the media.

As women age, their bodies change and their appearance will inevitably move farther and farther away from the youthful, thin feminine ideal. Rai's entry into motherhood necessitates a physical transformation. However, as she fulfills one aspect of dominant gender role expectations by becoming a mother, she begins to move away from discursive gender role expectations surrounding physical attractiveness. Some contributors maintain that her new role as a mother should take precedence over her appearance. For example, one contributor writes "after you have a baby your priorities change" (O30/RF), another contributor contends that "her FIRST [sic] [priority] is to her baby" (O30/RAB), and an additional contributor reasons that Rai "is more concerned with being a mother than being rail thin" (O39/RG).

Rai's shape is celebrated by some contributors, reflecting the discursive construction that beauty comes in many shapes and sizes. For example, contributors

write: “People can be beautiful big or small” (O30/RC) and “Rai is a beautiful woman no matter what size she is” (O30/RE). One contributor perceives Rai’s postpartum aesthetic as enviable and writes “I would cut off my right arm to be ‘fat’ and pretty like that” (O30/RZ). Another suggests that Rai “should wear her extra baby weight with pride and stop covering up...why do we continue to hate on women? It’s disgusting” (O39/RC). This response is of particular interest because she challenges the objectification of women, rejects thin ideals, and effectively reframes dominant construction of baby weight as being shameful or unattractive by saying that baby weight is beautiful and is should be a source of pride.

Contributors also simultaneously align with and reject aspects of the yummy mummy discourse. For example, a contributor writes “[Rai] is the mother to a 6 [sic] month old infant. How can we be so MEAN [sic] and SELFISH [sic] to expect her to be what our eyes want to see, just because she is a star? And at what cost, her BABY [sic]?” (O30/RV). This contributor’s response refers to the critique of Rai as “mean and selfish”, but appears to align with the yummy mummy aesthetic when she infers that the thin ideal is “what our eyes want to see”. This contributor also reproduces aspects of the good mother discourse when she implies that Rai’s celebrity status should not interfere with a child-centred approach to mothering. Furthermore, this contributor speculates that prioritizing postpartum weight-loss can potentially endanger an infant’s welfare.

4.11. Can Curvy Women be Yummy Mummies Too?

Although *Us Weekly* generally presents thinner celebrities as yummy mummy exemplars, the magazine also endorses the physical appearance of curvier celebrities: Beyonce Knowles and Pink. It is important to note that although Knowles and Pink are physically larger than yummy mummy exemplars such as Hudson, Alba, Spelling, and

Witherspoon, they are much slimmer than many American and Canadian women; the average American woman is 5'3" tall and weighs 166.2 pounds and 41 percent of Canadian women are classified as overweight or obese (CDC, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2012). *Us Weekly* describes Knowles as “flaunt[ing] her amazing figure” three months after the birth of her daughter (see image 4.8) (Johnson, 2012f, ¶ 1). The magazine describes Knowles’ fuller, healthy-looking, curvaceous body shape as “amazing” even though it differs from the ultra thin, toned physiques generally promoted by *Us Weekly*. The promotion of Knowles’ body suggests that *Us Weekly* was discursively expanding the parameters of “amazing” bodies to include curvier bodies.

Figure 4.8. Beyonce Knowles Postpartum



Figure 4.8. The photo depicts Knowles on vacation three months after giving birth. Adapted from “Beyonce Flaunts Amazing Figure in Low-Cut Black Swimsuit” by Johnson, Z., 2012f, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Some contributors embrace *Us Weekly*’s construction of Knowles’ body, while others reject the magazine’s construction and enforce the dominant North American discursive construction of beauty. For example, contributors embrace Knowles’ body

when they describe her body as “beautiful” and “to die for” (O13/RG) and write “she looks great to me” (O8/RJ). Another contributor supports the expanded conceptualization of feminine beauty and suggests that the contemporary dominant beauty discourse reflects an “Anglo” version of beauty that glorifies thin women in “bikini[s] with shapeless ass[es]” (O13/RB).

However, many contributors reject the magazine’s positioning of Knowles as a yummy mummy. For example, one contributor writes: “Amazing figure? We are obviously looking at 2 different people. She needs to first push her [breasts] up to where they are supposed to be and then lose about 5-10 pounds” (O13/RE). This contributor enforces the yummy mummy discourse and the expeditious attainment of the thin ideal post delivery. Other contributors suggest she looks “pretty big” (O8/RP) and that she has “manly shapeless legs” (O13/RC), reflecting a collusion with the dominant beauty discourse that promotes a thin, toned, fat-free body as the ideal feminine shape.

Us Weekly also features Pink’s postpartum body. The magazine describes Pink as “show[ing] off her toned stomach” while wearing a “mismatched bikini” (Finlayson, 2012g, ¶ 2). Pink’s body appears to be a healthy size and her musculature is well defined (see image 4.9). Pink’s body shape, like Knowles’, deviates from the thin-ideal exemplified by Alba, Spelling, and Hudson, among others, and some contributors highlight this deviation by calling her “fat and chunky” (O12/RM) and by suggesting that she should “look a little better” a year after giving birth (O12/RD; O12/RN).

Some contributors’ engagement with images of Pink’s post-baby body suggests that readers may perceive celebrities who are curvier as being better mothers than those who are ultra-thin. For example, a contributor writes “[Pink] is obviously more concerned with spending time with her family and being healthy than trying to look like a stick figure” and this sentiment is echoed by many other contributors (O12/RE). This

contributor reproduces the good mother discourse and implies that Pink prioritizes family life and remains child-centred instead of spending time away from her family to focus on her body. This contributor's statement also implies that celebrities who are "stick figure[s]" are worse mothers because they prioritize their bodies instead of their children. The analysis of contributors' engagement with the material reflects the double-bind encountered by mothers. Mothers must attempt to balance being family focused and child-centred with being thin and attractive and these demands often conflict. Another contributor suggests that Pink's relatable shape is refreshing and writes "It's nice to see a Hollywood mom who's not focused on being the next 'Body After Baby' article, trying to see how fast she can starve herself back to size zero as soon as the baby pops out" (O12/RJ). This contributor frames the pressures women experience surrounding postpartum weight loss as a competition and suggests that women may be engaging in harmful behaviours in order to attain the promoted aesthetic.

Figure 4.9. Musician Pink Postpartum



Figure 4.9. Pink is photographed at the beach less than a year after having her daughter. Adapted from “See Pink’s Bikini Body 1 Year After Giving Birth” by Finlayson, A., 2012g, *Us Weekly*. Copyright 2012 by *Us Weekly*. Reprinted with permission.

Us Weekly’s attempts to discursively expand the parameters of what constitutes an “amazing” or “toned” body are resisted by some contributors and taken up by others. Contributors who reproduce aspects of the good mother discourse, and interpret Pink’s body to be a reflection of her commitment to motherhood, seemed to embrace her shape. However, those who solely analyze the shape of Pink’s body reject *Us Weekly*’s construction of her body being toned and attractive. The contributors’ responses to *Us Weekly*’s construction of Knowles’ body as “amazing” were also mixed. Contributors did not reproduce aspects of the good mother discourse when they engage with the description and image of Knowles’ body. Instead, readers solely comment on her appearance which is praised by some and disparaged by others. The analysis of these articles illustrates how contributors may be particularly resistant to expanded

constructions of attractiveness especially in regards to the thin ideal female body shape. The criticism and defence of Pink's appearance reflects the double-bind women in contemporary society encounter. On one hand women are expected to embody the thin ideal, but may face critiques for neglecting their children in favor of prioritizing their appearance; on the other hand women are expected to be child-centred, but may face criticism for neglecting their own appearance and deviating from the thin ideal.

4.12. Summary and Conclusion

The analysis of content published by *Us Weekly* magazine provides insight into diverse aspects of the yummy mummy discourse. *Us Weekly* magazine encourages the surveillance and objectification of women's perinatal bodies through the promotion of the yummy mummy discourse. The magazine promotes the yummy mummy discourse through its use of the just like us discourse and coverage of celebrity women. The magazine invites readers to feel connected to the celebrities featured in the magazine by presenting celebrities as relatable and just like us. Readers who perceive themselves as being similar to celebrities may be more likely to embrace the messages and values promoted by the magazine. Articles scrutinize celebrity mothers and define desirable and undesirable characteristics while discursively positioning celebrity mothers as yummy mummy exemplars or as failed yummy mummies. Yummy mummy exemplars are generally presented as sexy, stylish, heterosexual women who restrict their weight gain throughout their pregnancies and rapidly return to the thin, toned ideal feminine shape in the postpartum period. Celebrities who embody the yummy mummy aesthetic are discursively constructed as happier and as having more pleasant pregnancies than those who are constructed as failed yummy mummies. The yummy mummy discourse is further promoted through comparisons to failed yummy mummies; in this way the

reader learns the value and benefit of attaining yummy mummy status and the consequences of failing to embody this aesthetic.

Us Weekly links aspects of the good mother discourse with the yummy mummy discourse. The good mother discourse posits that good mothers should follow expert recommendations and be child-centred, among other things. The magazine frequently references expert recommendations surrounding diet, exercise and body weight and depicts yummy mummies as adhering to these recommendations for the benefit of their fetuses. In this way, the thin and toned pregnant bodies of celebrity women are discursively constructed as healthy bodies that will maximize fetal development. *Us Weekly* also describes some yummy mummies as women who put their families first and “frolic” with their children (Johnson, 2012b, ¶ 3; Finlayson, 2012g, ¶ 2).

The good mother discourse is also reproduced in some contributor’s responses; however, unlike *Us Weekly*, contributors use the good mother discourse to both challenge and support the yummy mummy discourse. Many contributors perceive pregnant yummy mummies as good mothers because their thin pregnant shape suggests that they were putting their fetuses’ needs before their own and following expert recommendations surrounding diet and pregnancy weight gain. Conversely, many contributors interpret celebrities’ deviation from the thin ideal in the postpartum period as evidence that these women are child-centred and family focused rather than focused on the attainment of the thin ideal. Many contributors who enforce the yummy mummy aesthetic appear to reproduce aspects of the good mother discourse in order to justify their critiques of the appearance of celebrities in the perinatal stage and many of the contributors who reject the yummy mummy aesthetic reproduce aspects of the good mother discourse to justify these women’s deviation from the thin ideal.

Contributors' engagement with the thin, toned yummy mummy aesthetic also varies. While many contributors appear to align and enforce the yummy mummy aesthetic as attractive and necessary, others reject the promotion of this aesthetic and argue that women can be beautiful at any size. A few contributors critically analyze the yummy mummy discourse. Some identify the discourse as a socio-historical construction that oppresses women and others address the harmful implications this discourse has on women's health. In the following chapter I will compare this analysis to established work in this field, discuss the strengths and limitations of this study, and discuss the implications of this research on women's wellness and mental health.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. The Present Study

This inquiry explored how *Us Weekly* magazine promotes the yummy mummy discourse, to identify how alternate discourses surrounding mothering and women's roles may be used to support or challenge the yummy mummy discourse, and to analyze how individuals engaged with conflicting discourses and used or reproduced the yummy mummy discourse. Discourse analysis was used to analyze content published by *Us Weekly*. The corpus included 569 texts which were published between March 19, 2012 and June 11, 2012. The texts included articles published in the printed weekly issues of the magazine, articles published in the "moms" section of *Usmagazine.com*, and contributors' responses, which corresponded to the selected articles, published on *Usmagazine.com*.

Investigating the yummy mummy discourse is valuable for counselling psychology as a field because the yummy mummy discourse informs potentially harmful beliefs and practices which can adversely affect women's mental health and wellness. Very few studies have examined the media's promotion of the yummy mummy discourse and even fewer have explored how individuals engage with and negotiate this discourse. Therefore, it is essential to gain insight into the promotion of this discourse in order to expose how this discourse is constructed and disseminated, and how the media shapes our perceptions of what is desirable and what is not. The analysis of contributors' responses to content published by *Us Weekly* provided insight into how individuals

challenge, resist, and take up the yummy mummy discourse as well insight into factors that increase the strength and discursive power of this discourse. These findings further demonstrate that individuals are not simply powerless recipients of information, but actively challenge harmful aspects of dominant discourses which can potentially benefit mental health. Insight into these processes is extremely important to produce knowledge that can be used to inform clinical practice, mental health initiatives and future research designed to help women resist potentially harmful messages, subsequently improving mental health.

5.2. Key Findings in Context

5.2.1. *Fat Phobia, Health and the Good Mother*

The yummy mummy discourse promotes a thin, toned ideal physique during the perinatal phase that mirrors the non-pregnant thin, toned, ideal female body extolled in North American society. For example, pregnant yummy mummies maintain a thin physique throughout their pregnancies by limiting their pregnancy weight gain to 25 pounds, most of which is confined to a firm, rounded pregnancy bump. Furthermore, upon delivering their babies, yummy mummies prioritize weight loss and use diet and exercise to expeditiously sculpt their bodies back to the thin, toned, non-pregnant ideal body shape. The analysis revealed that the aesthetic associated with the yummy mummy discourse may be particularly pervasive because it reflects dominant discursive constructions of beauty and is reinforced by health and good mothering discourses.

Us Weekly discursively constructed the female body as a project that should be mastered through diet and exercise; fat is constructed as being undesirable. This finding corresponds with the previous work of Bordo (2003), Dworkin and Wachs (2004) and

Jette (2006) which are addressed in the literature review. Fat has been associated with a lack of discipline and overindulgence and North American society has long positioned fat as the enemy (Bordo, 2003). Fat has become increasingly abhorred in contemporary society as a result of medical discourses surrounding obesity; the medical discourse appears to legitimize the public scrutiny of those whose bodies deviate from the thin ideal. Excess fat has been identified as a major risk factor for a series of chronic diseases including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes (WHO, 2013). As a result, individuals who transgress the thin ideal by carrying “excess” fat have been discursively positioned as unhealthy and are likely to face public scrutiny that is veiled as concern for their health and well-being (Rice, 2007); this was apparent in the analysis of content pertaining to Jessica Simpson. Excess weight gain during pregnancy was associated with being unhealthy and potentially endangering the fetus.

Deviation from the thin pregnant ideal was interpreted by some contributors as indicative of irresponsible mothering; as discussed in the previous chapter, Celebrity mother Jessica Simpson reportedly gained too much weight during her pregnancy and was publically scrutinized by contributors and *Us Weekly*. Simpson’s pregnancy cravings and “excessive” weight gain were the focus of numerous articles. Simpson was positioned as unhealthy solely based on her weight and shape, reflecting the medically informed discursive construction of excess weight as being linked to chronic disease. Simpson’s weight and shape were viewed as resulting from poor dietary choices that may adversely affect her fetus. These findings are supported by Chavkin’s (1992) and Heffernan et al. (2011) work. Chavkin (1992) proposed that pregnant women who do not follow expert recommendations are viewed as hostile to their fetuses and are likely to face public censure. Heffernan et al. (2011) suggest that contemporary society’s

increased familiarity with the medical recommendations surrounding pregnancy may increase the social control and surveillance of pregnant women's behaviours.

Us Weekly also presented curvier postpartum bodies that challenged the thin yummy mummy ideal. *Us Weekly* described the fuller bodies of Pink and Beyonce Knowles as "amazing" and "toned". The positive coverage of Pink's and Beyonce's bodies could be driven by the singers' commercial success. For example, Beyonce is a global brand; her record sales have exceeded \$75 million and her name and image have been used to sell numerous products including Pepsi cola and clothing from the fashion brand H&M (Davies, 2013). Beyonce was ranked as the 32nd most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine in 2012 (Davies, 2013) and her relationship with corporate sponsors may encourage more favorable media coverage. Regardless of the magazine's motivation, the inclusion and celebration of these celebrities' fuller figures by *Us Weekly* expanded the yummy mummy discourse to include women who were within the mid to high range of the healthy weight range, as opposed to limiting yummy mummy status to those whose bodies were at the low end of the healthy weight range or underweight.

Contributors' responses to this expanded discourse were mixed. While some contributors aligned with the discursive construction of Pink's and Beyonce's bodies as attractive, many contributors rejected this construction and reproduced the construction of the thin, toned female form as the physical ideal in their responses.

In *Us Weekly*, thinness was discursively constructed as being attractive, desirable and indicative of health and self-control in line with Levine and Murnen's (2009) findings. The magazine outlined the diet and exercise regimens of many celebrity yummy mummy exemplars and framed their behaviours as desirable and healthy. The association between thinness and health was reproduced in the both the

articles published by *Us Weekly* and the contributor's responses. Thinness and health were also linked to good mothering. Pregnant celebrity mothers who embodied the yummy mummy aesthetic were positioned as healthy and fetus focused by *Us Weekly* and contributors alike. *Us Weekly* highlighted these women's "healthy" dietary choices and linked these choices to their decision to prioritize their unborn babies' needs before their own. Monitoring weight gain through "healthy" dietary choices and fulfilling their unborn babies' needs reflected the child-centered and expert-guided aspects of the good mother discourse and effectively positioned these women as being good mothers.

Contributors praised pregnant celebrities who embodied the yummy mummy aesthetic and frequently reproduced the conceptualization of them as good mothers. *Us Weekly* also linked women's shape with mothering ability in more subtle ways. For instance, the magazine regularly featured exceptionally thin, attractive celebrities playing with their children, visually linking the child-centred aspect of the good mother discourse with the yummy mummy aesthetic. Dominant discourses on health and good mothering are well established and widely accepted; as a result of alignment with these discourses, the yummy mummy aesthetic achieves increased power.

Interestingly, many contributors did not interpret deviations from the thin ideal during the postpartum period as reflective of a diminished commitment to motherhood. Instead, some contributors perceived celebrities curvier looking bodies as indicative of the celebrities' increased commitment to family and motherhood. It seemed that these contributors regarded being a good mother more highly than embodying the thin ideal; this finding supports Johnston and Swanson's (2003) assertion that being a mother continues to be the most valued gendered role for women in contemporary society. Therefore, women who appear to embody characteristics associated with the good

mother discourse may be less likely to face public criticism based on their inability to attain the thin ideal.

5.2.2. Social Comparison: Celebrities are Just Like Us

The just like us discourse, employed by *Us Weekly*, encouraged readers to view celebrities as being similar to themselves and may subsequently encourage women to perceive celebrities as belonging to a similar social group. Women may also perceive celebrities as sharing values or social categories like motherhood, womanhood, or ethnicity for example. Self-Categorization Theory suggests that individuals internalize characteristics of their social group which influence their self perception (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Therefore, readers who perceive themselves as belonging to the same social group as celebrities may be more likely to internalize the values and aesthetic endorsed by the magazine and to compare their physical appearance to that of celebrities. The extraordinary weight management behaviours and carefully crafted appearances of celebrities become normalized when the magazine presents celebrities as typical human beings or as being just like us. Women who compare their appearance to that of celebrities are likely to experience increased negative affect (Ridolfi, Myers, Crowther & Ciesla, 2011; Yamamiya et al., 2005) and may experience lower self-esteem, increased body dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety if they also internalize the thin ideal (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Many contributors appeared to align with the thin ideal and reproduced and enforced this discursive construction in their responses. The messages promoted in *Us Weekly* may encourage women to internalize the thin ideal and compare themselves to the unrealistic images of celebrity women featured in the magazine which can adversely affect women's mental health.

5.2.3. Promoting Surveillance

The analysis identified that *Us Weekly* routinely objectified celebrity women in the perinatal stages of pregnancy and encouraged self-surveillance as well as the surveillance of others. Numerous articles referred celebrities' shapes, sizes, sexiness and levels of attractiveness. Celebrities were referred to as "hot mamas" and "sexy" and their various body parts were described as "tiny", "toned", "slim", and "massive" among other descriptors. The magazine described celebrity mothers as "showing-off", "flaunting" and "revealing" their bodies. This language sexually objectifies women in the perinatal phase and reduces them to sexual objects. *Us Weekly* also objectifies pregnancy by primarily focusing on women's "bumps". Women's bumps were framed as accessories; objects to be scrutinized based on their size and shape. The objectification of these women's bodies, including their pregnancy bump, took precedence over women's subjective experiences of pregnancy, conveying the message that physical appearance during pregnancy is more valuable than the other transformative processes that occur as women enter motherhood. Many contributors' responses solely evaluated the appearance of celebrity mothers, reproducing the surveillance and objectification modeled by the magazine.

Us Weekly encouraged readers to also monitor their own bodies and to compare themselves to celebrities through the magazine's use of the just like us discourse. *Us Weekly* taught women how to lose weight and to monitor their own bodies by describing weight related strategies used by celebrity women. The magazine reported that pregnant women should gain no more than 25 pounds during their pregnancies. The World Health Organization recommends that women with a Body Mass Index (BMI) under 18.5 should gain between 27.56 and 41.45 pounds and that women with a healthy BMI gain 28.22 pounds during their pregnancies, in order to protect against having a

baby whose weight is too low for their gestational age (Ota et al., 2011). A birth weight that is too low for a baby's gestational age is a major predictor of failure to grow, neonatal mortality, impaired cognitive development and the development of chronic diseases in adulthood (Ota et al., 2011). *Us Weekly's* 25 pound or less pregnancy weight gain recommendation was widely reproduced by contributors and may encourage women to gain too little weight during their pregnancies. The magazine also promoted diet and exercise regimens and encouraged women to get their "slimspiration [sic]" from celebrities who embody the yummy mummy aesthetic (Grossbart, 2012, p. 50). New mothers who are breastfeeding require an increased caloric intake of 505 kcal per day during the first six months of lactation; maintaining a drastic caloric deficit during the postpartum period could adversely affect the health of lactating women and their breastfed infants (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2004). The magazine encouraged women to compare their own bodies to those of celebrities, to engage in dieting behaviour which seemed extreme and potentially unhealthy in some instances, and to purchase the right products in order to transform their bodies into the version of beauty conveyed by the magazine.

5.2.4. *The Business*

The yummy mummy discourse appears to be lucrative. *Us Weekly* promotes the yummy mummy aesthetic by featuring yummy mummy exemplars and censoring failed yummy mummies, by encouraging the surveillance of women's bodies and social comparisons to celebrity women, and by linking the aesthetic to increased happiness and good mothering. The yummy mummy aesthetic is positioned as being desirable and as a normative standard that women should measure themselves against. In this way,

Us Weekly creates a need. Women receive the message that they “need” to embody this aesthetic if they want to meet the standards for attractiveness.

Us Weekly also offers women a solution to the need the magazine propagates. The magazine encourages women to believe that they can look like the celebrities featured in the magazine if they buy the right items. If women purchase the diet related issues of the magazine, they can learn the diet and exercise tips and tricks of yummy celebrity mummies and embody the promoted aesthetic if they follow the guidelines. *Us Weekly* publishes information regarding the gyms celebrities frequent, the names of celebrities’ personal trainers, and the clothing designers they wear in order to remain fashionable. The magazine appears to incorporate advertisements into the articles and this placement may encourage readers to believe in the products more than they would if the products were sold in a separate advertisement.

Us Weekly’s brand description speaks to the magazine’s commitment to consumerism:

The Us Brand is a cultural catalyst; an unrivalled entertainment and celebrity infused multi-media proposition that engages millions of young, modern, consumers with high household incomes who create demand for leading consumer brands. From lipsticks to laptops, cocktails to crossovers, handbags to hotels, Us Brand consumers live life outloud [*sic*] and want the very best (“Delivering to a higher degree”, 2012, n.p.).

This statement implies that readers create the demand for goods and that the magazine is simply giving them what they are asking for. However, *Us Weekly* furthers demands for consumer goods designed to enhance women’s appearance by both promoting the yummy mummy aesthetic and by suggesting that this aesthetic is attainable if women simply purchase the products advertised within the magazine. The magazine sells the idea that the thin ideal exemplified by celebrities is attainable and encourages women to

prioritize the achievement of this unrealistic aesthetic which can adversely affect women's mental health.

5.2.5. *The Double Bind*

Women must negotiate discursively constructed societal ideals that often conflict and this can create a double bind. For example, aspects of the yummy mummy discourse and the good mother discourse conflict and it is impossible for women to exemplify both. The yummy mummy discourse encourages women to focus on their appearance. Pregnant women must monitor their weight gain, remaining thin and toned apart from their bump, and must prioritize weight loss immediately after delivering their baby. Yummy mummies must appear expertly coiffed and dress fashionably and sexily. Conversely, good mothers must be respectable and dress modestly, be child-centred and put their families' needs before their own. Guided by expert advice, the good mother is emotionally invested in her children and purchases the right products for them in order to maximize their developmental potential. Both of these discourses are time consuming, expensive, and require prioritization and, as a result, women cannot possibly exemplify both.

Women who internalize both discourses must attempt to negotiate competing constructs. For example, women must prioritize their bodies and prioritize their children while adopting a modestly sexy personal style. It is difficult for women to prioritize their body and physical appearance while they are prioritizing their children and family life; moreover, attempts to pursue both leaves little time for anything else. These often conflicting dominant discourses create a double bind for women because as they move towards the embodiment of one discourse, they are generally deviating from the other. Women who concentrate on maintaining an appearance that aligns with the yummy

mummy ideal may be seen as “bad” mothers because they are at the gym instead of at home with their child. Conversely, my analysis showed that a mother who is child-centered and forgoes physical activity in order to immerse herself in family life and child care may be viewed as a failure because she is unable to achieve the yummy mummy aesthetic. Furthermore, most women in contemporary society also work outside of the home. Women must negotiate their careers and family life on top of their physical appearance and it is exceedingly difficult to balance all of these discursively constructed expectations in order to do it all (Hays, 1996). These discourses create double binds which can generate feelings of inadequacy and guilt among women (Hays, 1996). Therefore, women who attempt to embody the dominant discourses in Western society are likely to feel inadequate regardless of the discourse they strive to live by.

5.3. Strengths and Limitations

This study centered on a discourse analysis of *Us Weekly*'s coverage of, and contributors' responses to, the appearance of celebrities in the perinatal period. Various factors have influenced the strength of this study. In this section I will present the strengths and limitations of this study by discussing my role as a qualitative researcher, choice of method and corpus, and interpretation of the material.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach to data analysis and does not aim to identify generalizable truths about the phenomena being examined. Instead, this research is designed to present the meaning and significance of phenomena that are derived from an interpretive process (Taylor, 2001). It is impossible to separate the researcher from the research process and my worldview has inevitably influenced every aspect of this project. For example, my personal interests and experiences led me to

explore this topic and have influenced my interpretation of the data. However, this does not mean that the findings presented are simply my opinion.

Care was taken throughout the research process to increase the quality and trustworthiness of this work. I maintained a reflexive approach. I highlighted personally relevant experiences and assumptions and discussed my background in order to position myself within this project and to provide insight into my worldview. I recorded my initial reactions to the material and interrogated my assumptions using Gee's (2011) questions. The reflexive process enabled me to identify personal biases that may have reduced the effectiveness of my interpretations. For example, when I began this project I assumed that women who embodied the thin perinatal ideal were engaging in potentially harmful dieting behaviours and should not be featured in magazines. Reflexivity allowed me to see that that my interpretations could be perceived as disparaging of thin women and that I needed to take care to critique the discourse rather than the women themselves in order to avoid reproducing the surveillance and critique of women.

Trustworthiness was further demonstrated through the coherence and fruitfulness of this work. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), coherence and fruitfulness increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Coherence illustrates how discourses fit together and how analysis aligns with previous academic work while fruitfulness refers to the scope of analysis and the importance of generating novel explanations of phenomena (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In order to address coherence, I outlined relevant academic literature in the literature review and drew connections between these findings and previously established academic knowledge throughout the findings and discussion chapters. In order to establish fruitfulness, I selected a robust corpus which included content that was found online and in print. I conducted a

multilayered analysis using rich examples to investigate how the yummy mummy is promoted by *Us Weekly* as well as how readers engaged with the material. I provided thick descriptions of the material and included deviant cases in order to add to the richness of the findings. I also included excerpts of text along with my interpretations in order to maintain transparency. The findings of this study contribute to existing knowledge in this field and my approach to this study indicates the trustworthiness of the findings.

Although this study has much strength, it also has limitations. The articles included in the corpus and the emphasis on written content may have limited the findings of this research. Articles were selected if they addressed the bodies of celebrities in the perinatal stage, while articles that discussed other aspects of celebrities' lives were excluded from analysis. The exploration of perinatal body related articles was necessary in order to address the research questions; nevertheless, the inclusion of a broader array of articles addressing celebrity motherhood published during the same time period or in other magazines may have resulted in richer data and added to the depth of this research. This study only explored articles published by *Us Weekly* during a three-month period. The exploration of a single magazine over a short period of time limits the data to a single historical context. The inclusion of other magazines in this study may have provided more insight into the research questions. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the images included in articles, the placement of the articles within the magazine and online, and the size of the articles may have also contributed to the depth of the findings. However, this approach would have been exceedingly time consuming and was beyond the scope of this study.

In order to explore how readers engage with the material, I analyzed contributors' responses to articles that were published online. The analysis of naturally occurring

interactions can be advantageous (Taylor, 2001). For example, the contributors' responses used in this study were not guided by my questions or influenced by my presence as they may have been in a research interview. However, contributors' responses were generally brief and analysis was solely based on the information shared. Contributors' responses were also made in a public forum and this may have encouraged participants to edit themselves or to maintain an identity that is consistent with what they believed was appropriate for this socio-historically based context. The anonymity associated with posting comments online may have also led some contributors to create a persona that is unlike their own or to express views designed to antagonize other readers; however, it is also possible that contributors' responses were more genuine because they were made in an informal setting, they could maintain their anonymity if they desired, and they were not influenced by my presence. The analysis of text based interactions provides insight into how individuals engage with discourses, but is limited in that it only allows the researcher to explore conceptual aspects of this type of interaction and does not provide insight into embodied aspects of interactions with discourse.

Despite having some limitations, this study succeeded in yielding trustworthy findings that contribute to the academic literature in this field. Although this research can inform clinical practice and health promotion initiatives, this study is only exploratory and future research is needed in order to thoroughly explore this topic.

5.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Further research into the yummy mummy discourse, as well as women's engagement with this discourse, is needed in order to gain a deeper understanding of how this discourse may be affecting women's well-being. Studies that explore how

women in the perinatal period engage with this discourse are necessary. Women in the perinatal period experience a series of physical, relational, and emotional transformations as they enter motherhood and these factors may impact their engagement with the yummy mummy discourse. The exploration of pregnant and postpartum women's engagement with the yummy mummy discourse could provide deeper insight into other factors that increase the internalization of this discourse. For instance, woman may align with the yummy mummy discourse as a way of resisting being defined by motherhood. Remaining thin and sexy may be a way of maintaining an aspect of their pre-pregnancy identity. Additional research could also identify the pervasiveness of this discourse within the community, identify whether or not demographic characteristics affect women's engagement with the discourse, and identify additional resistance strategies which could be used to inform interventions designed to encourage women's resistance of potentially harmful messages.

Future studies could analyze different media in order to determine how divergent media address the yummy mummy discourse. While entertainment magazines are highly visible, they are not the only media that promote this discourse. Studies that explore television, film, and various types of websites would also greatly contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Furthermore, obtaining knowledge of the various factors that lead to the promotion of this discourse would be exceedingly useful. For example, conducting interviews with authors and editors of *Us Weekly* may provide insight into why this discourse is so frequently promoted. The promotion of the yummy mummy discourse could be directly related to magazine and advertising sales; it is possible that consumers enforce this aesthetic by purchasing more magazines when they feature a yummy mummy as opposed to a "failed" yummy mummy on the cover. Insight into the

motivation behind the promotion of this discourse could inspire alternative discourses that directly challenge the yummy mummy discourse and could inform interventions.

5.5. Implications

In addition to having implications for further research in this field, the findings of this exploratory study have implications for practice which could potentially improve women's mental health and wellness. Pregnancy has traditionally been conceptualized as providing women with a reprieve from striving to attain the thin ideal. Earle (2003) posits that the "pregnant body has been traditionally seen, by feminists and others, as a potential site of resistance to the wholesale objectification and commodification of women's bodies within modern Western societies" (p. 250). The findings from this study suggest that women in the perinatal stage are becoming increasingly objectified through the promotion, enforcement, alignment and reproduction of the yummy mummy discourse and that women in the perinatal stage are concerned with the attainment of the thin ideal. For instance, celebrity women and contributors spoke about monitoring their pregnancy weight gain and many reported concerns about returning to their pre-pregnancy figures soon after delivery. The responses from the majority of the contributors suggested that the yummy mummy aesthetic was widely perceived as attractive and achievable. Studies have shown that postpartum women are at risk for increased body dissatisfaction during the postpartum period (for an example see Rallis et al., 2007). Furthermore, Walker et al. (2002) suggest that body dissatisfaction post-delivery, and 6-weeks postpartum, may be a significant predictor of depressive symptoms. The yummy mummy discourse may make weight and shape concerns even more salient during this period.

Practitioners who work with new and expectant mothers should be aware of this discourse and that weight and shape concerns during the perinatal period may be increasingly common. Women who internalize this discourse may be at risk for depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating behaviours. Extreme dieting behaviours can adversely affect the physical health of women and their children. Therefore, it is important that mental health clinicians and physicians directly address body image related concerns in their work with new mothers in order to create an open dialogue with their clients and to identify potential issues.

Addressing body related concerns with new and expectant mothers may be particularly important for mental health clinicians. New and expectant mothers may experience a sense of failure surrounding their perinatal bodies and may subsequently experience feelings of guilt and shame because they are preoccupied with their bodies rather than their transition into motherhood and their changing roles and relationships. The good mother discourse is pervasive and new mothers may feel trapped as they try to negotiate good mothering with the attainment of the yummy mummy aesthetic. Feelings of guilt and shame may make some women reluctant to share their experiences. Direct inquiry about body related concerns may encourage clients to discuss their concerns. Subsequently, clinicians can engage women in conversations about the contradictory nature of dominant gendered discourses, help women critically engage with oppressive discourses by teaching them how to deconstruct dominant discourses, and encourage women to identify alternative ways of meaning making.

By analyzing contributors' responses to articles published by *Us Weekly*, I was able to reveal ways in which women can effectively challenge and resist the yummy mummy discourse. For example, some contributors identified the yummy mummy aesthetic as being a socio-historical construction that oppresses women. These

contributors critically engaged with the messages presented by the magazine and this type of engagement appeared to enable them to resist this discourse. Other contributors drew on alternative discourses in order to challenge the yummy mummy discourse. For example, some contributors suggested that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes and others reproduced aspects of the good mother discourse that prioritized being child-centered over attaining the thin ideal. Other contributors rejected the objectification of women's bodies by drawing on the functionality of the perinatal form. Each of these strategies can be used to broaden women's perspectives on the yummy mummy discourse and could be used to inform clinical practice.

The yummy mummy aesthetic promoted in North American society is a gender specific, socio-historical discursive construction; therefore, a feminist approach to therapy would be highly effective in helping women critically engage with this discourse. Feminist therapy raises awareness of power dynamics that perpetuate sexism and oppression and addresses how contextual factors and gender role expectations affect psychological well-being (Daniels, 2007). A feminist approach would help women: to identify the oppressive, socio-historically based messages embedded in the yummy mummy discourse, to acknowledge the disparity between societal expectations for men and women promoted by dominant discourses, and to understand how these messages adversely influence their mental health. This approach encourages women to recognize that their distress is often rooted in, and exacerbated by, contextual factors (Daniels, 2007). This awareness enables women to view the "problem" as being outside of themselves, making them less likely to perceive themselves as inherently deficient (Daniels, 2007). Feminist therapy also aims to develop women's strengths and competencies, to openly address oppression and social injustice in order to promote positive environmental changes, and to empower women to live according to their own

values, as opposed to the disempowering values promoted by society (Daniels, 2007). In this way, feminist therapy can benefit women on an individual and a societal level.

A narrative approach to counselling may also be particularly useful when working with women who are struggling with dominant discursive constructions. Narrative psychology posits that an individual's identity is constructed through stories and that these stories provide insight into individual's meaning making processes of lived experiences (Crocket, 2013). Women who internalize the yummy mummy discourse may "story" themselves as a failure because of their inability to embody the yummy mummy discourse. Using a narrative approach to therapy, clinicians can listen for alternative stories that transcend their story of failed yummy mummy status and invite clients to explore alternative possibilities. Conversations surrounding the previously mentioned resistance strategies exhibited by the contributors in this study may open up other ways of thinking about the self and the stories surrounding the thin ideal presented in North American society. Clinicians can also help new mothers identify their personal values, strengths, skills and competencies. In this way, clinicians can help women focus on what they are doing right instead of what they are failing to do.

The dissemination of these findings through further publication can benefit women's mental health. The publication of this work in an academic journal or in a book that focused on mothering or body image would enable practitioners to access this information and may help them better understand possible concerns of expectant and new mothers. Women may also directly benefit from reading this work. Women would gain insight into discursive processes and learn how dominant gendered discourses can create feelings of never being good enough.

Furthermore, the knowledge produced by this study could also be used to inform workshops. Workshops that explore the yummy mummy discourse would allow women

to share their experiences with one another in a supportive environment and gain insight from other participants. A workshop could teach women how to critically engage with dominant discursive constructions and could subsequently benefit their mental health.

5.6. Conclusion

To conclude, this study contributes to the academic literature in women's studies, media studies, and counselling psychology and can be used to improve women's health and well being. The study increases the awareness of the yummy mummy discourse and demonstrated how women in the perinatal stages are sexually objectified by *Us Weekly* magazine. This research identifies how the yummy mummy discourse is promoted by *Us Weekly* and provides insight into how individuals engage with, use, reproduce, negotiate, align with, challenge and resist this discourse. The analysis also uncovers how dominant discourses surrounding health and good mothering were used by *Us Weekly* to strengthen the power of the yummy mummy discourse as well as how readers used the good mothering discourse to challenge the yummy mummy discourse. This research also illustrates how *Us Weekly* teaches women to compare themselves to celebrities, to monitor their bodies as well as the bodies of other women, and to emulate the weight loss strategies and product purchases of celebrity mothers. These findings provided insight into social phenomena that may be contributing to women's postpartum anxiety, self criticism and low mood and can be used to inform clinical practice, health promotion interventions, and further research into women's engagement with the yummy mummy discourse, all of which can benefit women's mental health and well being.

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Appendix.

Example of Data Analysis Using Excel

Article	Ques.	Excerpt of Text	Label	Analysis
P19/p.51	C	"Jess dreamed since she was a young girl about being a mom. Dreams come true! And friends say Simpson is acing her new role. 'Everyone is marveling at what a natural Jessica is...she was born to be a mom'"	Motherhood as fulfillment discourse	Fulfilling gender role
P19/p.51	C	"Jess dreamed since she was a young girl about being a mom. Dreams come true! And friends say Simpson is acing her new role. 'Everyone is marveling at what a natural Jessica is...she was born to be a mom'"	Good mother discourse	Natural skill
P19/p.52	C	"Her pregnancy craving included cantaloupe with salt, buttered Pop Tarts and Cap'n Crunch"	Anti YM	Dietary recommendations
P19/p.53	B	Simpson will " have to come down from cloud nine soon...[Simpson] aims to shed the pregnancy pounds within a year to fulfill her \$4 million deal with Weight Watchers. As soon as Jessica heals from the C-section, she is extremely determined to get back in the gym and work out"	YM Promoted	Body back
P19/p.53	B	Simpson will " have to come down from cloud nine soon...[Simpson] aims to shed the pregnancy pounds within a year to fulfill her \$4 million deal with Weight Watchers. As soon as Jessica heals from the C-section, she is extremely determined to get back in the gym and work out"	Aspects of YM	Business of YM
P19/p.53	B	Simpson will " have to come down from cloud nine soon...[Simpson] aims to shed the pregnancy pounds within a year to fulfill her \$4 million deal with Weight Watchers. As soon as Jessica heals from the C-section, she is extremely determined to get back in the gym and work out"	Aspects of YM	Fit and fabulous
P19/p.53	B	"If [Simpson] wants to do this, she'll need to work out a good five days a week"	YM Promoted	How To Be a YM
P19/p.53	A	"Simpson tweeted. "New goal: Look like Jessica Alba after baby. Job well done, lady!" "	Align with YM	Body back
P19/p.53	A	"Simpson tweeted. "New goal: Look like Jessica Alba after baby. Job well done, lady!" "	Align with YM	Fit and fabulous
P19/p.53	B	"Simpson tweeted. "New goal: Look like Jessica Alba after baby. Job well done, lady!" "	YM Promoted	Role model
P19/p.54	B	Simpson "The singer's middle has been a national discussion since 2009...photos of the normally 107-pound star wearing high-waisted jeans at a chili cook-off had President Barack Obama remarking she was 'in a weight battle'...while pregnant, she was subject to ridicule from none other than 'Snooki' Polizzi [who said] 'I would die if I were her size'".	YM Promoted	Surveillance
P19/p.54	A	Simpson "The singer's middle has been a national discussion since 2009...photos of the normally 107-pound star wearing high-waisted jeans at a chili cook-off had President Barack Obama remarking she was 'in a weight battle'...while pregnant, she was subject to ridicule from none other than 'Snooki' Polizzi [who said] 'I would die if I were her size'".	Enforcing YM	Thin is beautiful
P19/p.54	B	Simpson "The singer's middle has been a national discussion since 2009...photos of the normally 107-pound star wearing high-waisted jeans at a chili cook-off had President Barack Obama remarking she was 'in a weight battle'...while pregnant, she was subject to ridicule from none other than 'Snooki' Polizzi [who said] 'I would die if I were her size'".	YM Promoted	Anti ym
P19/p.54	C	"Simpson wants to slim down before her wedding...a source [says] 'she won't walk down the aisle until she's back in good enough shape that she'll look great in the wedding dress she wants' "	Beauty discourse	Thin is beautiful

P19: Gee's Question #1

Values: being a natural mother, finding parenting effortless, being in a heterosexual "partnership", being completely child-centred and staying excited about parenting, not complaining about being a new parent, describing parenthood as being "blissful", getting one's body back asap, looking like a YM role model (Alba), using surveillance to keep women's shape in line (negative coverage of JS mom jeans photo and pregnancy weight), aligning with dietary recommendations, having a "support crew", winning the "war" with one's weight, being thin when you get married, getting married

P19: Gee's Question #2

Assumptions: that you should focus on your weight and work to be thin prior to getting married, that losing the baby weight should be a priority immediately after delivery, that Jessica Alba is a YM role model, that you should provide extravagant things for your child, have a doting partner that helps with the baby, that being a natural mother means not complaining and being in a "blissful" state, that good mothers view motherhood as a dream come true.