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Fostering a hunger for health: Food and the self in 'The Australian Women's Weekly'

Tanja Schneider
Institute for Science, Innovation and Society, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Teresa Davis
Discipline of Marketing, The University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, consumers in Australia and elsewhere have increasingly been confronted with a fast growing number of health food products. This profusion of health foods is accompanied by a proliferation in popular culture of professional nutritional advice on 'what is good to eat'. The genre of lifestyle magazines is one popular medium via which healthy eating practices and health foods are frequently reported. In this paper we use a visual discourse analysis of food-related editorial and advertorial content sourced from the long running and popular The Australian Women's Weekly to investigate how lifestyle magazines have been one important locus for constituting health conscious consumers. Taking up a Foucauldian governmentality perspective we trace how this active, responsible conceptualisation of the consumer, which we refer to as 'healthy food consumer', has increased in prevalence in the pages of The Australian Women's Weekly over time. Based on our analysis we suggest that the editorial and advertorial content offers models of conduct to individuals about what possible preventative activities in which to engage, and plays an important role in shaping how we think about taking care of our health through eating.

Keywords: food consumption; health sociology; governmentality; technology of the self; advertisement; Australia; lifestyle magazines; healthy food consumer

INTRODUCTION

A number of scholars have examined women's and men's magazines and their content. Apart from exploring the history and emergence of women's and men's magazines (e.g. Braithwaite 1995; Crewe 2004; Dancyger 1978; Jackson *et al* 2001; White 1970), these scholars have addressed issues such as representations of femininity and masculinity (e.g. Benwell 2003; Ferguson 1983; Gauntlett 2002; Scott 2005; Shevelow 1989; Winship 1987), the economic forces that shape the content of magazines (McCracken 1993), the role of women's magazines in readers' everyday life (Hermes 1995) and the representation of particular social practices, such as cleaning (Martens and Scott 2005). Importantly, a number of researchers have examined changing representations of food and eating in women's magazines, focusing on cookery columns (Mennell 1985; Regnier 2003; Warde 1997), food advertisements (Barthes 1957/1989; den Hartog 1995; Gallegos 2002; Hill 1995; Hollows 2006; Parkin 2006; Warde 1993) or a combination of food-related advertisements and editorial items (McVie *et al* 2007; Santich 1995). We follow the example of these researchers and examine the representations of food and eating in one popular Australian magazine, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, spanning the second half of the twentieth century. We argue that by employing a Foucauldian governmentality perspective as theoretical framework we can explore not only changing representations but changing problematisations of eating.

Governmentality is concerned with the management of social as well as individual bodies and an analysis based on this concept aims for an examination of 'techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour' (Foucault 1980:81). Hence, 'to analyse government is to analyse those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilise and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups' (Dean 1999:12). The management of social and individual bodies is not confined to the state, as the term government might suggest, since these techniques and procedures do not necessarily emerge from the state but from a variety of sites and institutions which have as their target human behaviour (Foucault 1982/2000:341). As Bratich *et al* note, governmentality 'is an attempt to reformulate the governor–governed relationship, one that does not make the relation dependent upon administrative machines, juridical institutions or other apparatuses that usually get grouped under the rubric of the State' (2003:4). 'The conduct of conduct' is thus the focus of the governmentality perspective, which allows for an exploration of 'the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (Foucault 1982/2000:341); for example, how populations and individuals non-coercively come to take up certain behaviours (such as eating healthily), which are generally in the interest of the state without a law being in place that enforces such behaviour, and how indeed they come to perceive such behaviour as being in their own interest.

Based on this theoretical framework we explore how individuals have been invited in the pages of *The Weekly* to consider their eating practices as problematic, and how they are interpellated to manage this problem. We are interested in tracing both changes and continuities in problematisations of eating practices. We suggest that this format of problematising eating and then offering possible solutions is epitomised in *The Australian Women's Weekly* advertisements which employ this format to educate, inform or guide readers on how to manage their eating and their health. In terms of methodology we employ a visual discourse analysis in our examination of the selected content of *The Women's Weekly* since we want to draw particular attention to (a) the role images (in addition to text) play in articulating an ethics of what to eat, and (b) how changing representations of healthy eating practices and healthy eaters contribute to the dissemination of new subject positions – in particular the subject position of the 'healthy food consumer'.

THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY

On the basis of its immense popularity since its first publication in 1933, *The Women's Weekly* is an Australian national media institution. In the 1950s and 1960s one in four Australian households subscribed to *The Weekly* and it enjoyed the highest circulation per head of population of any women's magazine in the Western world (Sheridan 2000:321). In 2008 its readership was 2,621,000, making it the top-ranked women's magazine and most widely read monthly magazine in Australia (Roy Morgan Research 2008).[1] Its proud self-descriptions on its website as 'icon', 'bible' for Australian women', and 'jewel in the crown of Australia' reflect its status as a cultural institution.

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[1] Since 1983 *The Women's Weekly* has been published as a monthly magazine. Nonetheless, the magazine continues to carry 'Weekly' in its title.

We argue that confining our analysis to the genre of magazines is particularly appropriate since Australia has the highest per capita consumption of magazines in the world (Bonner 1997). We focus exclusively on *The Australian Women's Weekly* because it is the most influential diffuser of food, health and diet trends in the country (Ripe 1993; Santich 1995).[2] Moreover, a number of studies have been undertaken on representations of femininity (Sheridan *et al* 2002), ethnic food (Gallegos 2002) and health (Bonner *et al* 1998) through *The Australian Women's Weekly*. These studies inform and provide context for our research into representations of food and eating. More closely related to our interests is Santich's (1995: chap. 7) research on dietary advice in *The Weekly*. Santich shows how this advice reflects nutritional knowledge at the time: dietary advice on the benefits of protein in the early twentieth century was followed by advice on vitamins in the 1930s, itself succeeded by an era of low-fat advice.

However, instead of understanding *The Women's Weekly* primarily as a mirror which reflects the (nutritional) ideas, opinions and values of its time (see Marchand 1985), we suggest *The Weekly* be seen as a mirror in which readers look to compare their own behaviour, looks, thoughts and aspirations with those the magazine portrays as socially acceptable (see Schroeder and Zwick 2004). As Povlsen has put it, 'when we read magazines, we are reading them to find future images, idealised images of ourselves' (1991:132). Thus from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective, magazines can be viewed as one cultural site where individuals can find models of conduct (see Foucault 1984/1997:291). In this respect we suggest that magazines can be understood as 'technologies of consumption' teaching their readers to consume or eat healthily by establishing 'a "public habitat of images" for identification' (Rose 1999b:105). Moreover, magazines as technologies of consumption offer:

> a plurality of pedagogies for living a life that is both pleasurable and respectable, both personally unique and socially normal. Consumption technologies offer new ways for individuals to narrativise their lives, new ethics and techniques for living which do not set self-gratification and civility in opposition (Rose 1999b:105).[3]

In the remainder of this article we discuss *The Women's Weekly* as a visual technology of consumption which provides its readers with an ethic of what, where, how, how much, with whom and how often to eat.

METHOD

The collection of advertorial and editorial content from *The Women's Weekly* took place in early 2007 and was informed by a broad research interest in advice on healthy eating. Thus we sampled advertisements, columns and articles on the topics of food and nutrition using a historical slice sampling strategy (Martens and Scott 2005; Sheridan *et al* 2002). We included the first year of each decade from 1951 to 2001 and the first weekly issue for each month until 1981, then each monthly issue in 1991 and 2001 (monthly publication commenced in 1983). In order to provide recent material for analysis an additional year, 2006, was sampled. As Martens and Scott point out in their study of changing representations of cleaning in the British magazine *Good*

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[2] In addition to the monthly magazine, advice on food and eating is offered in a series of cookbooks, and on a website containing a wide variety of recipes and dietary advice. Moreover, *The Women's Weekly* launched a daily television show called *Fresh*. This multi-channel marketing strategy supports the penetration of *The Weekly's* dietary advice in the market.

[3] Many of the studies on or into women's magazines cited above highlight the advisory role of women's magazines. For instance, Martens and Scott (2005) argue convincingly that women's magazines have the role of an adviser in a complex world. We suggest that it is useful to comprehend this advisory role of women's magazines in the area of food and eating in the context of an increasing gastro-anomy (Fischler 1980). For a more detailed elaboration of this argument, see Schneider and Davis (2010).

Housekeeping, such a sampling approach is usually associated with breadth and generality and is frequently employed and deemed appropriate for an investigation of changes and continuities in particular discourses over time (2005:384). Moreover, this sampling strategy allowed for a gradual familiarisation with *The Women's Weekly*'s content, which was of considerable practical significance as one of the researchers had only lived in Australia for two years at the time of data collection.

Our approach to data analysis was (broadly defined) a Foucauldian visual discourse analysis, based loosely on Rose's (2003) procedural guidelines. This form of analysis concentrates on how conceptualisations of a phenomenon (in this case, healthy eating) are discursively constructed, how individuals are positioned by discourse and how these discursive formations legitimate social practices. According to Foucault, one should ask:

> Who is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (langage)? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own speciality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who – alone – have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse? (1969/1972:50).[4]

Foucault (1977/1980) suggests that discourse produces subject positions since individuals obtain their knowledge through discourses which shape their thinking of themselves and of the world. Moreover, he stresses the inherent relations of power and knowledge in any discourse (Foucault 1976/1978:100). This nexus of knowledge and power that materialises in specific institutions has the capacity to (trans)form the subject's thinking in subtle ways through freely adopted social practices.

Although we do not regard the visual to be the primary source of evidence which should come to replace textual sources, we suggest that it is crucial to analyse the complex, mutually constitutive relationship between what can be said and what can be depicted (see Maasen *et al* 2006:7–8). We thus draw in our study on literature that allows for a detailed analysis of the visual as well as the text (Maasen *et al* 2006; Rose 2003; Schroeder 1998, 2003; Schroeder and Zwick 2004; Scott 1994).

Our research initially focused on becoming familiar with the texts and images, by reading/viewing each advertisement and editorial feature separately and making initial notes on the data sample. Subsequent analysis consisted of three steps (Miles and Huberman 1994:9). First, each of us coded the food-related content (text and image) individually. During this initial analytical step we independently read and viewed the sampled food-related articles, columns and advertisements focusing on key words and recurring visual images (Rose 2003:159). Second, we each re-examined the food-related articles, columns and advertisements to identify the central themes based on the previously identified key words and images. Finally we discussed and compared the key themes.

In the remainder of the article we will discuss a number of editorial features and advertisements in more detail. We have chosen these articles and advertisements as exemplars which provide illustrative examples for reflecting on food, health and subjectivity. We do not claim that these articles and advertisements are representative, but suggest that they allow us to discuss in depth how consumers at different points in time have been invited to see and make sense of food consumption through visual displays and textual descriptions of goods, bodies and relationships. In particular, we found these features and advertisements useful to reflect on the relationship between representation and identity in visual as well as textual materials.

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[4] Foucault illustrates the importance of asking who is speaking when noting that 'medical statements cannot come from anybody; their value, efficacy, even their therapeutic powers and, generally speaking, their existence as medical statements cannot be dissociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to make them, and to claim for them the power to overcome suffering and death' (Foucault 1969/1972:51).

PROMOTING HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES IN *THE WEEKLY*, 1951–2006

Based on our analysis we found that a strong discourse of healthism (see also Crawford 1980; Greco 1993) pervaded the food-related magazine content in all sampled decades. However, we observed that how practices of healthy eating are promoted as part of the discourse of healthism changed over time. Based on our analysis of the collected editorial and advertorial content, we found eating was represented as *a way to improve health* in 1951, 1961 and 1971. In 1981, and increasingly in 1991, 2001 and 2006, eating was represented as *a way to prevent disease*. This change in representation reflects wider sociocultural changes in the area of health and nutrition, since in the 1970s and 1980s the attention of public health experts and nutritionists shifted from infectious to chronic diseases. In this context the consumption of particular foods which were (for example) high in fat was deemed detrimental to health; leading health and nutrition experts encouraged Australians to reduce the consumption of foods high in (saturated) fat (Santich 1995).

Although the representation of food and eating changed over time, what did not change is that eating is problematised primarily in terms of food choice. More precisely, food choice is continually problematised in relation to nutritional principles. This is evidenced by a plethora of articles and advertisements which highlight what is good to eat with frequent reference to nutritional research findings that prevailed at the time. In particular, the concept of 'food needs' is explicitly or implicitly used in articles and advertisements to problematise food choice in relation to the body's scientifically determined needs. Thus food choice is framed by expert knowledge systems that present ways of consuming healthily. Nevertheless, there occur variations in the problematisation of food choice. In earlier issues of *The Weekly* the mother–housewife's food choices were commonly problematised in relation to making sure she would serve nourishing family meals to improve family health. The tone of the editorial and advertorial content directed to the mother and housewife was commonly educational and informative, giving the impression that *The Weekly* sought to transform its presumably female readers into better educated and informed mothers/housewives. In the later issues of *The Women's Weekly* which we analysed there were many articles and advertisements where individual food choice (although primarily that of the female individual) is problematised in relation to taking care of one's own (bodily) health. Overall, the tone of the articles and advertisements in the later issues of *The Weekly* is less educational. Instead of educating its reader top–down *The Women's Weekly* presents itself as a friend/partner or guide in women's quest for healthy living.

Following Foucault we suggest that the practices of healthy eating presented in *The Weekly* from the 1980s onwards can be understood as 'technologies of the self':

> which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988:18).

By indicating ways people can prevent disease through eating, *The Women's Weekly* guides its readers in their practices for disease prevention. Thus *The Weekly* encourages a 'continual enterprise of self-improvement' (Rose 1999b:130) with the ultimate aim of assisting transformation through (nutritional) expertise and product endorsement – transformation into a 'healthy food consumer'.

Using this term we reconsider McKnight's and Grace's concept of the health consumer (Grace 1989, 1991; McKnight 1986).[5] McKnight describes the health consumer as a 'medically engineered mythical being [that] has entered the fantasy life of modern society and emerged as client' (1986:78) as the result of an increasing commodification of health care in the 1980s. Grace has shown in her study of the field of health promotion that this fantasy has turned into a reality. She found that the discourse of health promotion, its underpinning concepts and assumptions parallel the discourse of marketing, essentially constructing the individual subject as a health consumer (1991:334; see also Moulding 2007).

Subsequently, we will discuss in more detail the emergence of the healthy food consumer in relation to the changing representations and steady problematisation of eating in *The Women's Weekly*. Drawing on selected content we illustrate the changes and continuities we have identified with the ultimate aim of demonstrating how *The Weekly* discursively constructs the subject position of an active consumer who is enterprising and self-caring.

FROM TAKING CARE OF OTHERS TO TAKING CARE OF THE SELF

Healthy Families

While some of the food-related content of *The Women's Weekly* in the health improvement years (1951, 1961, 1971) refers to entertaining friends, the majority offers advice for preparing healthy meals for the family. Hence the bulk of the advertorial and editorial features define and describe as normal the situation where the mother–housewife prepares all family meals, picnics and snacks. In this context the housewife (often displayed in an apron) is portrayed as the guardian of the family's health. One way to fulfil her duty of caring for the family is through the provision of nutritious meals and healthy snacks. Thus in the pages of *The Women's Weekly* in 1951, 1961 and 1971, the family is depicted as the context in which healthy eating takes place under the auspices of the caring housewife, who not only feeds the family but feeds them healthy meals.

This duty of the mother–housewife becomes apparent, for example, in an advertisement for eggs (3 February 1951, p. 62). This advertisement, authorised by the Egg Producers Council, shows a woman, man and young boy, most likely representing a family, seated around a table, with no background scenery visible. The young boy is eating a boiled egg and in his left hand holds a piece of bread. Overall, the scene evokes a family breakfast. The title of the advertisement states in a large font 'Serve more eggs for more nourishing family meals' and in the right corner one can also read in bold 'Order extra EGGS this week!'. In the advertisement text the Council explains why readers should increase egg consumption: eggs are 'nature's richest and most completely balanced food', 'contain *every* food element necessary to sustain life', are 'twice as rich in body building protein as any other food', and so on. A black arrow draws attention to a text box in the left corner, which repeats the (ostensible) reasons to eat eggs. They:

- are twice as rich in body building protein as other foods!
- contain all the known vitamins, except vitamin C!
- contain every essential mineral, including blood-enriching iron!

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[5] More recently, Henderson and Petersen (2002b) have published an edited book on the increasing commodification of health care in which they highlight that in contemporary societies health is increasingly viewed as a commodity and individuals are conceptualised as health consumers (2002a:1). Irvine, a contributor to the volume, argues that in Australia the subject position of the health consumer materialised in public discourse in the 1960s and 1970s (2002:32).

In summary, the advertisement's message is that the more eggs the mother–housewife serves the better, because by serving more eggs she fosters her family's health. Increased egg consumption is mainly encouraged by reference to nutritional knowledge about protein, vitamins, and minerals which was prevalent at the time.

Many researchers have shown that food manufacturers employ the findings of nutrition science to advertise their products (for example Levenstein 1988; Whorton 1982). In our view, it is also crucial to recognise how this exclusive reference to scientific nutritional knowledge (held and disseminated by a relatively small group of nutrition experts) displaces both traditional forms of food knowledge that mother–housewives might have drawn on to prepare nourishing family meals in the past. Thus the discourse of nutrition evident in this advertisement for eggs has the power to redefine what (or who) is a 'good' mother and housewife – namely, one who is preparing and serving food for her family in accordance with nutritional knowledge at the time.

This discursive power is also evident in an advertisement for Vegemite (27 January 1951, p. 39). The advertisement depicts a middle-aged women with a young boy (presumably mother and son) and a female scientist in a scientific laboratory. All three sit behind a desk which is covered with laboratory equipment (e.g. a microscope) and in the back of the black and white photograph can be seen another table or side board covered with more equipment. The scientist (wearing a white coat and behind the microscope) looks at and talks to the boy, who returns the look but in a timid fashion. His mother, however, seems more interested in what the scientist has to say and listens attentively. The visual is overwritten with '"Mothers know best", say Scientists' and the text continues in bold, but smaller: 'Laboratory tests PROVE that vegemite contains nearly three times as much Vitamin B1 as other yeast or Vegetable extracts'. In other words this advertisement tells us that mothers have always known that Vegemite is good for their children and family. Now, however, science has come to support mothers–housewives' experience-based food knowledge by proving scientifically that the goodness of the food can be precisely measured and named: 'Tests have shown Vegemite to be a rich source of Vitamin B1, niacin and riboflavin'.

This advertisement is particularly interesting in the way it illuminates the relationship between mothers–housewives and scientists. There is no rivalry depicted in the visual or text, nor are any contrasting opinions mentioned. Science presents itself as an ally of the mother–housewife whose motherly instinct is approved by scientific testing. Thus we would argue that a discourse of nutrition – part of a larger discourse of science – comes to define the mother–housewife, by positively reinforcing her competence in the area of food by providing her with a new scientific way of explaining the goodness of food. At the same time this discourse carries along the obligation to know the nutritional needs of the family and cater for them accordingly. This is highlighted in the advertisement when it states 'daily supplies of these elements are essential to children's healthy growth and development', which is presented in this advertisement first and foremost as having a good appetite and clear complexion, and gaining steady weight. Hence health is related to proper nutrition in the Vegemite advertisement. Such a mutually enforcing relationship between eating according to nutritional principles and improving health is evident in nearly all food-related reportage in *The Women's Weekly* at that time.

Another advertisement which illustrates how the mother–housewife and food expert agree is a Kellogg's Corn Flakes advertisement (27 January 1951, p. 48) that states: 'Mother knows Kellogg's best!'. Nearly half the space of the advertisement is taken up by a photo showing a bowl of Kellogg's Corn Flakes decorated with sliced banana. In the middle of the bowl there is a spoon on which is written 'One third of your daily food needs – here'. Next to the bowl of cereal are a can of milk and a box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. The advertisement is entitled 'BIG – that is the only word for this delicious and nourishing breakfast of' – and the readers' eyes are directed towards the drawing of the cereal box on which the company and brand name are depicted to finish the sentence – 'Kellogg's Corn Flakes'. Underneath this, the cereal is promoted with the slogan 'Bigger Flakes... Better Flavour... Bigger Value!', followed by the explanation: 'One plate of Kellogg's Corn Flakes with fresh fruit and butter [constitutes] one third of your daily food needs'. Moreover, the cereal is promoted as a quick and easy breakfast solution which takes 'Only 30 seconds to serve [and produces]... no greasy washing up... no messy pots and pans'.

What we find in this advertisement is a concern with the cost of and effort involved in preparing a traditional cooked breakfast for the whole family.[6] This image of Kellogg's Corn Flakes as an economical and efficient alternative to a traditional breakfast is reinforced by the statement of a male food expert in the advertisement: 'It isn't necessary to quote prices... you know what you have to pay for eggs, bacon, tomatoes, fish, lamb's fry etc. these days. One serving of Kellogg's Corn Flakes is but a fraction of this cost'. The food expert is dressed in a white coat, reminding the observer of a doctor or scientist, and apparently addresses the adjacent apron-clad mother–housewife. The food expert informs us that 'one plate of Kellogg's Corn Flakes with milk and sugar is equal in energy value to three eggs, two big helpings of lamb's fry and three fish!'. Thus Kellogg's Corn Flakes is presented by an expert authority as a cheap, easy alternative of equivalent energy value to a big traditional breakfast.

Although our discussion here has focused on three advertisements from 1951, we found evidence that the same themes – home economics (nutrition, economy, efficiency, cooking), health and family – dominated reportage on food and eating and promotion of food products in *The Weekly* during the health improvement years. These three discourses constitute the subject position of the good mother–housewife in the pages of *The Women's Weekly*. Unsurprisingly for a women's magazine, the vast majority of the editorial and advertorial content was either depicted or referred to women in a family situation. However, the articles and advertisements on food and eating were not depicting or talking to any woman, but in a concerted effort speak to the woman as mother–housewife. This reflects in many respects the gendered relations of caring and feeding highlighted in DeVault's (1991) seminal study on 'Feeding the Family'.

What is notably absent from our collected data from the health improvement years is any reference to the health of the housewife, mother or woman herself. Few articles or advertisements present women as having any specific nutritional needs, preferences, dislikes or desires. This is plainly demonstrated in an advertisement for a cheese product 'Velveeta' by Kraft (1 August 1951, p.48). In the advertisement none of the reasons 'why women like Velveeta' is a personal statement, such as that she likes the taste. (This position is reserved to the husband who exclaims 'That's the flavour we have waited for'.) Instead the advertisement notes that women like Velveeta because it spreads instantly, has a firm-slicing texture, and most importantly saves butter. This reinforces our impression that women are mainly defined in their role as housewives and mothers whose duty is to manage the home efficiently and economically and to take care of (the health of) others, not to take care of themselves or their own health.

A single exception to this general tendency to display women without any specific food needs or preferences of their own is an advertisement for Kellogg's All Bran (3 February 1951, p. 57).

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[6] This reference to economical cooking and easy preparation of food is evident in many food-related features in *The Weekly* in 1951 and 1961.

The 1951 breakfast cereal advertisement promotes Kellogg's All Bran, a breakfast cereal 'made from the vital outer layers of wheat'. Two thirds of the advertisement is dedicated to a picture story narrating in photos and speech balloons the story of Mrs Hunter. As we learn, Mrs Hunter is feeling run-down after her grown-up children have left home and lacks any enthusiasm for her favourite sport, golf. She attributes this to her old age and decides to consult a doctor. The handsome young doctor assures her that it is not old age which is tiring her but 'lack of regularity'. To become regular, he advises her, she does not even need any medicine: a change in eating habits will be the best remedy. Thus, he recommends Kellogg's All Bran, which supplies 'smooth-acting bulk which helps prepare internal wastes for easy, gentle and natural elimination'. In the text accompanying the advertisement, Kellogg's All Bran is presented as a natural laxative, and health and blood tonic. All Bran's high iron and vitamin content are said to be 'more protective […] than whole wheat itself!'. Moreover, Kellogg's All Bran is described as a wholefood that gives energy and strength – 'instead of taking it out of you'. Next to this description a picture of the packaging of All Bran is displayed on which the statement 'A natural laxative food' is visible. In the right corner of the advertisement some serving suggestions are explained: either sprinkled over favourite breakfast cereal or with fruit, milk and sugar.

As we see in the advertisement Mrs Hunter learns from the doctor that she has specific food needs and if she follows his advice she will feel regular and energetic again. This relationship between eating habits and health or energy status is further reinforced in the advertising text where Kellogg's All Bran is described as rich in Vitamin B1, which is good for the nerves; Vitamin B2, good for the eyes; Calcium for the teeth; Phosphorus for the bones; and Niacin for the skin.

This Kellogg's All Bran advertisement is one of the few texts in the health improvement years in which the woman is displayed and described as having particular food and health needs.[7] However, the woman is still presented within a family situation. Her so-called ill health is even described in relationship to the changing family situation. Furthermore, the woman is presented as a relatively passive subject who accepts medical advice about the health-enhancing qualities of a food product from a general practitioner.

This passivity of the subject is a recurring phenomenon in the health improvement years. This finding echoes Bunton's (1997) observation in his study of health-related content in *Good Housekeeping*, in which texts in the 1950s and 1960s frequently spoke to a rather docile subject who was educated top–down about how to improve his/her health. Visually this relative passivity of the subject is expressed in the collected data from *The Women's Weekly*, for example in the attentiveness of women and children listening to doctors' or scientists' advice. Moreover, if one compares the visuals of the health improvement years with those in the disease prevention years (discussed in detail in the next section) the depiction of women changes significantly over time. Whereas in the earlier advertisements she was at most depicted as active when cooking or baking in the kitchen or participating in some family sporting activity, in later advertisements she is repeatedly depicted outside the home, often engaging in some sporting activity (e.g. running) by herself or with a female friend.

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[7] In the few cases that adult women were described having particular food and health needs these were related to women needing particular foods for their nerves. For example, in a Vegemite advertisement (1 February 1961) we can read that 'MOTHER likes Vegemite for two reasons... it's good for her nerves and it's so economical... goes such a long way when spread on toast, bread, biscuits, rusks... or mixed in soups, stews and gravies'. It is only in relation to the woman that the issue of nerves is brought up, thus giving the impression that hysteria is definitively a female condition that can probably be alleviated by means of attending to female food needs.

As Bunton has noted, the passivity of the subject – in what we term the health improvement years – is enhanced through indirect address of subjects in many advertisements (1997:233). By this he means that subjects are not always spoken to directly but often indirectly through an intermediary such as the doctor or scientist. This was apparent in the Kellogg's Cornflakes and Kellogg's All Bran advertisements which we discussed above. In both cases a scientist/doctor speaks to the imagined audience to inform them about the health benefits of eating the nutritious products. Nevertheless, as the egg advertisement shows, some early advertisements did address the reader directly. However, we suggest that the educational tone employed puts the female subject into a similarly docile position, able only to take up the advice offered and thus be a good mother–housewife, or refrain from doing so and be an irresponsible mother–housewife. Thus we detect a moralising and normalising power inherent in the visuals and texts in *Women's Weekly* in so far as readers engaging with them have limited options through which to imagine themselves and construct frames of meaning and frames of normality.

Overall, we found little concern with diet-related diseases in the first data subset. Neither the food-related reportage nor the food advertisements alluded to the relationship between consumption of particular foods, such as foods high in fat, and possible diseases, such as coronary heart disease. On the contrary, most reportage and promotion referred to the relationship between nutritional properties of food and their positive effects on health. The 1971 advertisement for Miracle margarine is the first advertisement we found that was less concerned with the provision of enough food (to the family) than with overconsumption and its potential detrimental health effects (7 July 1971, p. 40). The advertisement informs the reader that doctors believe a diet high in saturated fats raises cholesterol levels in the blood stream, and suggests that a good way to satisfy appetite and cut down on those fats is to replace them with poly-unsaturated fats such as Miracle margarine. The advertisement relies mainly on text, which occupies half the advertisement space, to convey this information. An image of the product occupies the remaining space. This advertisement represents a transitional advertisement, in so far as it is an early example of a discourse of nutrition which centres on disease prevention which we found to dominate later food reportage and promotion (from 1981). What is interesting is that this early disease prevention advertisement still sees the family as the place where healthy eating is taking place and thus addresses – more in line with earlier advertisements – the housewife.

The advertisement begins with a bold printed statement: 'Cut down on saturated fats in your family's daily diet,' and continues to address the housewife even more directly in the advertising text:

> You're the kind of loving wife that likes to see her husband (and the family) at their healthy best? Here is a little message about how you can help them.

Which housewife does not care to be a 'loving wife' and see her husband and the family at their healthy best, let alone refuse to help them? Hence we suggest that the discourse of nutrition inherent in the Miracle advertisement has the power to create the dichotomous conceptualisation of the mother–housewife as either irresponsible or responsible and thus produces a moral discourse around the concept of motherhood.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FAMILY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE HEALTHY FOOD CONSUMER

We found that in 1981 the discourse of nutrition as part of a wider discourse of home economics still constructed women as housewives; however, women were no longer defined as exclusively concerned with the family and its health but increasingly as concerned with their own health – albeit in the very narrowly defined way of bodily appearance. Two advertisements which show these distinct subject positions available to women in 1981 are an evaporated milk advertisement (3 June 1981, p. 93) and an advertisement for Yomix yoghurt (4 March 1981, p. 70).

Whereas the Yomix advertisement still referred to the family when stating that Yomix Yoghurt 'will be a hit with the whole family and will be good for them too' the evaporated milk advertisement makes no reference to the family at all. Half the space of the evaporated milk advertisement is taken up by a photograph of a set of scales which 'weighs the weight' of a can of evaporated milk. Written underneath the photo is the slogan 'A nice way to watch your weight'. The advertisement informs readers that the product only contains 2% fat as opposed to other full cream evaporated milk products, which normally contain 8% fat. It further explains that the product includes some fat 'because milk products without fat are watery and tasteless'. 'Just because you have to watch your weight, it doesn't mean your good taste has to suffer'. Moreover, the advertisement refers to a free recipe leaflet which will help the consumer to discover low calorie cooking. There is still a focus on food preparation in this advertisement; however, the rationale for using (low fat) evaporated milk has changed from providing healthy and nourishing family meals to a more individualised concern with watching one's weight.

By 1991 we found little textual or visual reference to the family in food-related reportage and promotion, and the housewife seemed to have disappeared from the pages of *The Weekly* altogether. Only a few advertisements provided serving suggestions (by displaying recipes or referring to a recipe booklet), and the majority of advertisements display women in public places rather than private homes. What is more interesting, however, is that women are portrayed as having individual needs and preferences, diverging from earlier representations of women which showed them as exclusively interested in their family's needs and preferences. To some extent this shift can be attributed to gender equality discourses, as well as readership changes due to the publication of a range of new women's magazines in Australia.

Simultaneously, *The Weekly* shifts its reportage from taking care of the family's health to taking care of one's own (female) health. Advertisements for Bega So-Light cheddar cheese in 1991 (May 1991, p. 232, December 1991, p. 236) visually depict the new woman as fit and active (using Australian athlete Kerry Saxby as a model), and concerned to reduce dietary fat and cholesterol and maintain a healthy balanced diet. Moreover, the advertisement states that fit and active people like Kerry Saxby 'know how important it is, especially for women, to ensure they receive sufficient calcium'. This new, more individualised, nutritional responsibility is also detectable in advertisements for Lean Cuisine ready-to-eat frozen meals (March 1991, p. 94–95) which promote the consumption of their products as a way to 'get back in control of your diet and stay looking good and feeling good'. This successful control of the diet is symbolised in the Lean Cuisine advertisements by a slender body shape that acts as a marker of being in control.

Little reference is made to the family, and instead the individual is increasingly presented as part of the Australian population, a population with a serious health problem: 'The Australian diet has one of the highest concentrations of fat in the world' (Lean Cuisine, March 1991, p. 94–95); 'between 30 and 50 per cent of all Australians [are] overweight…' (Lean Cuisine, May 1991, p. 89); 'Believe it or not, 48% of the Australian population will die from heart disease' (Uncle Toby's Crunchy Oat Bran, October 1991, p. 276). This Australian problem is given detailed consideration in a feature article entitled *Eating Better for Less*[8] that states:

> it makes good sense to eat well-balanced, nutritious meals, especially when you weigh the assets, such as good health and well-being, against the liabilities and costs of illnesses and diseases. …When planning your meals, bear in mind that the foods we eat largely determine how healthy we are. We've all heard the warnings that as a nation we are consuming too much fat, too much salt and too much sugar. All of these excesses can contribute to diet-related degenerative diseases and conditions such as obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes and some forms of cancer, adding to our health bills, while reducing our quality of life (Eating Better for Less, September 1991, p. 250).

Thus increasingly, readers of *The Weekly* are advised to become actively involved in maintaining health and preventing disease by eating according to nutritional principles. For instance, the article *Eating Better For Less* provides advice via a whole array of 'healthy hints' and also lists the 'Guidelines for Better Nutrition' produced by The Australian Nutrition Foundation.[9]

From our analysis of the food-related reportage and promotion in *The Weekly* it becomes apparent that the discourse of nutrition has moved out of the realm of home economics and moved into the area of public health. By this we mean that nutrition is referred to no longer only in the context of household management and childrearing but increasingly in the context of individual health care management which contributes to the public health of Australia as a nation. This finding is further supported by reportage in the disease prevention years where we found various advertisements and articles that refer to taking up a healthy lifestyle or a healthier way of life. For instance, a Yakult advertisement (August 2001, p. 144) promotes consumption of a particular food product implicitly within a whole lifestyle package (e.g. riding your bike to work, carefully regulating your professional life, maintaining a balanced diet, etc.). As we learn from the advertising headline:

> Yakult is great for people always on the go who want to look after themselves but don't have the time. If you are stressed, eating poorly, taking antibiotics or just feeling run down, the 'good' bacteria in your intestines may be losing the battle against the 'bad bugs' (Yakult, August 2001, p.144).

In the upper left corner the Yakult advertisement depicts a middle-aged man in the kitchen. The accompanying advertorial text introduces him as Sumith Perera, a regular consumer of Yakult. The text explains his initial reasons for drinking Yakult: prolonged use of antibiotics that might have damaged the 'good' bacteria in his digestive system. The text also mentions that 'although he has no health issues, hereditary factors have made him conscious of stomach problems' (both parents had their gall bladders removed). The advertisement presents a man who actively self-scrutinises his state of health. He takes into account genetic risk factors which are not (yet) detectable in the form of concrete illness symptoms, and a more recent illness experience that forced him to take antibiotics. Based on the advice of a dietitian friend he started drinking Yakult as a preventative measure. In his view, 'Yakult is a little insurance policy; a way of doing something positive to maintain good health'. He presents himself as keenly involved in his health care by taking up a range of preventative measures (e.g. moderate exercise, eating a balanced diet and maintaining a work–life balance) which complement his dietary preventative actions. It appears that he is not waiting to be looked after by a wife or his mother; to the contrary he decided to take up the habit of drinking Yakult on a daily basis on the advice of a dietitian friend.

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[8] Interestingly, the use of the word 'less' in this article refers on the one hand to concerns of economy and thriftiness when purchasing foods but on the other hand 'less' also refers to eating less; that is, reducing consumption.

[9] This article avoids any direct address of a mother–housewife in the text. However, in one instance it refers to the whole family in the food selection process which gives the impression that one person (presumably a mother figure) is taking care of the family cooking.

One might think this is a single man living on his own with no one else who might take care of his dietary health; however, as becomes apparent from the text, Sumith is married to Jenny and they recently became parents to their first child. Although Jenny occasionally sneaks a bottle, Sumith is the only one in the family who drinks Yakult consistently. Thus the family has not disappeared entirely from the reportage and promotion of food-related products and practices in *The Weekly*. However, as becomes apparent from analysis of this advertisement the family is no longer the primary site where healthy eating needs to take place. Rather, each individual (male and female) is asked to scrutinise his/her lifestyle, and particularly eating habits, for any inherent health risks and to adopt preventative measures such as eating particular 'healthy' foods to avert future diseases.

We therefore suggest that in the editorial and advertorial content of the disease prevention years discussed above we can see an increasing individualisation of eating. Instead of a mother–housewife providing a family with healthy food in the form of a cooked meal, increasingly women are portrayed as having specific nutritional needs and preferences with respect to food and eating. In particular they are portrayed as taking care of their health by engaging in both healthy eating practices and physical activity. Similarly, men are portrayed as taking care of their health by paying attention to their dietary habits, with both men and women engaging in healthy eating regimes to prevent lifestyle diseases. Children are depicted as having specific nutritional requirements distinct from adults. Hence we can see from the pages of *The Women's Weekly* how a mother as guardian of the family is no longer responsibilised for the health of her family by providing healthy meals, but how each individual is now asked to consider his/her eating habits in the light of contemporary nutrition knowledge. This encouragement to self-inspection is detectable in many editorial and advertorial texts and visuals in 2001 and 2006.

In sum, we found the themes of self-care, health, beauty, fitness and nutrition to be prominent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2006. The fit and trim human body becomes the centre of attention in the food-related articles and advertisements which highlight the power of individuals to take charge actively of their bodily health through exercise and healthy diet. However, eating a healthy diet according to nutritional principles is rarely depicted as a sign of asceticism or restraint. Frequently, the act of balancing one's food consumption according to nutritional principles is depicted as pleasurable because healthy foods taste good and one will feel good about eating particular healthy food options. Moreover, individuals are interpellated via textual and visual cues to consume responsibly to maintain health and prevent disease. Generally, pictures show slim figures with little sign of ageing or disease; in some cases advertisements employ 'shock tactics' by using images that evoke the frailty of life.[10]

Thus the ideal individual in the disease prevention years is an individualised healthy food consumer who takes care of him-/herself by consuming or purchasing healthy food products, who eats a balanced diet and pays attention to the newest nutritional research. This ideal female,

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[10] We refer here to an advertising campaign for Caltrate, a calcium supplement that we sampled from *The Women's Weekly* in 2006. We found three different advertisements that promoted the same product by depicting skeletons next to images of 'real' people to alert readers to their potential risk of having undetected osteoporosis.

male or child consumer is an entrepreneurial figure who in the name of health engages in regular exercise, quits smoking and eats a balanced diet. Moreover, the self-care regimes in which the healthy food consumer should engage are often presented as beneficial not only for the individual him-/herself (to prevent disease) but for the Australian public at large.

EXPERTISE AND THE (SELF-) GOVERNMENT OF HEALTHY FOOD CONSUMERS

Based on our analysis and following Coveney's study of nutrition (2006), we suggest that nutritional knowledge provides a code of conduct for individuals to govern themselves. In this process of self-governance experts play a crucial role – in particular through the nutritional or lifestyle advice they offer. As Nikolas Rose suggests, ordinary people take on knowledge and attitudes from professionals and internalise them as codes of conduct (1999b:92). As a consequence, expert knowledge has the power to produce subjects; that is, consumers who are capable of taking care of themselves. In *The Weekly,* numerous experts voice their views about what constitutes a healthy diet, as we have shown in our discussion of 55 years of editorial and advertorial features. Whereas in the past medical doctors or scientists often expressed views on healthy eating, over time nutritionists have successfully claimed this area of expertise. This becomes apparent in the rising number of advertisements which refer to or cite individual nutritionists, nutritional research studies, or have their product endorsed by nutritional and medical research institutions (e.g. the Heart Tick by The National Heart Foundation).

Moreover, *The Women's Weekly* itself has followed this development by introducing a monthly column succinctly entitled 'Eat Right', in which nutritionist Karen Inge provides nutritional advice to readers. This one-page column is usually divided into a section providing general advice on healthy eating and a smaller section where a reader can ask one diet-related question that Inge will answer. For example, the May 2006 column is entitled 'Eat to save your life', and in the subtitle we learn: 'It's not so much what you shouldn't eat, but what you should eat that can help protect you from heart disease. Karen Inge looks at the foods with heart benefits'. The column begins by emphasising that 'heart disease is still the leading cause of death in Australia for both men and women'. In this context Inge explains, 'what we eat can make a big difference in decreasing some of the major risk factors for heart disease'. However, Inge suggests that instead of only reducing the consumption of particular unhealthy foods, it is crucial to take into account the whole diet; in fact the whole lifestyle, as eating healthily is only one lifestyle factor amongst others such as stress management, being physically active, giving up smoking and watching alcohol intake. She encourages her readers to change their diet by including regular consumption of fish, olive oil, plant foods and nuts 'to keep your heart in good shape'.

This particular column is a good example of the problematisation of food choice in the disease prevention years. By problematising individuals' food choices and offering advice to address this problem, the nutrition expert gives the impression of empowering readers by sharing her up-to-date knowledge with them. We suggest, however, that this sharing of nutritional knowledge leads to greater responsibilisation of each individual for his/her eating practices and the potential effects of such eating on health. Furthermore, this column illustrates how a 'problem and solution' format (with the solution always being to consume [more of] the presented products) which is commonly employed in advertisements has found its way into the editorial content of *The Weekly*. Drawing on such a format *The Weekly* transforms life's problems (such as potential future disease) into smaller preventative tasks related to food consumption, that the individual can seemingly manage or prevent him-/herself by taking one step at a time.

The deployment of this problem/solution format echoes Bauman's (1990) observation that life in late modern Western consumer societies is viewed as a series of problems which the individual has the duty and responsibility to solve. Bauman describes the emergence of a consumerist attitude, by which he means that individuals are faced with a plethora of options amongst which to pick and choose to realise their potential. Based on the editorial and advertorial data from *Women's Weekly*, we suggest that expert announcements help to construct a privileged subject – the healthy food consumer. Nutritionists may view their work as a contribution to consumer empowerment, thinking more information will lead to better-informed choices. However from a Foucauldian perspective experts essentially assist in the process of (self-)government.

CONCLUSION: FOSTERING A HUNGER FOR HEALTH

Our analysis of the food-related content of *The Women's Weekly* from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective shows that a strong discourse of healthism (see also Crawford 1980; Greco 1993) pervades the food-related magazine content in all sampled decades. This discourse of healthism has the power to redefine the relationship between public and private in questions of health care, towards increasing self-care aimed at disease prevention. Thus from a governmentality perspective, the discourse of healthism seeks to reconceptualise how consumers think about taking care of their health. In our discussion we have focused particularly on the role promotional activities play in shaping how consumers think about taking care of their health. Related to this we suggest that the 'marketing of self-care' inherent in nutrition promotion highlights the responsibility each and everyone has for his/her health. Moreover, we propose that the marketing of self-care inherent in nutrition promotion offers models of conduct to individuals about what possible preventative activities in which to engage. In the *Women's Weekly* readers are invited to follow the following model of conduct:

1. Consider their current food choices and examine their actual eating habits;
2. Compare these choices and habits to those eating suggestions presented as healthy from a nutritional scientific point of view; and
3. Actively engage individually in dietary changes to achieve healthy eating habits which will enhance health or prevent potential future diseases.

To these ends advertisements as well as articles and columns educate and/or advise readers to engage in practices of self-inspection, self-examination and self-reflection related to eating. Implicitly these recommendations in the media encourage Australians to increase their self-knowledge about their eating habits. This coupled with increased nutritional knowledge provided by a number of experts and increased food (product) knowledge is said to empower them to make healthy food choices. Hence the process of accumulating self, expert and product knowledge and putting this knowledge into practice in everyday life is presented as a process of empowerment in *The Weekly*'s food-related content. Moreover, this process of empowerment is depicted as a transformative process in which the subject will become the ideal self presented in the more recent issues of *The Weekly*: a responsible healthy food consumer who actively reflects on his/her food choices to achieve personal health and wellbeing.

However, the process of accumulating self-knowledge is not so much a journey to one's 'true' self, as Rimke (2000) suggests in her study of self-help books, a similarly prescriptive genre to that of magazines. In her view:

> Modern self-help texts give priority to the problem of knowing the self. Knowledge about the self derived from self-help techniques is assumed to be foremost a matter of discovering who and what one is. But while the advice, dicta and techniques in self-help books appear

> to assist the discovery of the 'real' self, what actually occurs is an artificial discursive and extra-discursive construction of the self.... In the process of 'discovering who one really is', the techniques do the work of self-invention.... In this sense, neither the self nor help is achieved. Instead, the self becomes reinvented by its dependence on a novel system of 'popular' expert truth (Rimke 2000:70–71).

The vital role of systems of 'popular' expert truth for the constitution of the self has also been noted by Bunton (1997) in his study on health reportage in *Good Housekeeping*. Bunton suggested that by taking up expert knowledge on health propagated in the magazine, individuals are governed at a distance. Put differently, individuals govern themselves according to expert pronouncements. This self-government or government at a distance is according to Bunton a typical strategy of institutions in advanced liberal or neoliberal societies in which an individualised responsibility for health is promoted (see also Rose 1992, 2006).

In broad agreement with Rimke's (see also Hazleden 2003) and Bunton's arguments we suggest that *The Weekly* instructs its readers about 'the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself', or as Foucault would also refer to this *rapport à soi*, ethics (Foucault 1982/1991:352). This suggestion resonates also with Rose's view that cultural and consumption technologies such as lifestyle magazines highlight the ethical aspects of choosing certain ways of life or lifestyles (1999a:477).

But why would anyone want to follow dietary guidelines or lifestyle advice offered in magazines? As Rose puts it, 'in the new modes of regulating health, individuals are addressed on the assumption that they want to be healthy, and enjoined to freely seek out the ways of living most likely to promote their own health' (1999b:86–87). Health and being healthy thus can be understood as an imperative (Lupton 1995:4). Inherent in such a conceptualisation of health is a strong moral tone, which has the capacity to normalise individual behaviour to conform to the prevailing imperative (Coveney 2006; Greco 1993). Violating the imperative of health by (for instance) overeating leads to an unfit bodily appearance, which then invites judgement for being an undisciplined person (Guthman and DuPuis 2006). Moreover, unhealthy behaviour is increasingly depicted as acting against one's own best interest since the consumption of excess fat or insufficient fibre can lead to serious diseases and illnesses.

Thus what we see in the analysis of the food-related reportage and promotion of *The Australian Women's Weekly* from 1951 to 2006 is a tendency to educate and remind individual consumers about their responsibility for public health issues. Consumers are expected to adopt self-care in relation to their eating practices and the state is required to create an environment in which personal choice and responsibility can be exercised. We witness how individuals are increasingly asked to take on responsibility for their own health and to consider their lifestyles and the risks inherent in these. Based on our analysis we suggest that ideas about healthy eating practices presented in *The Australian Women's Weekly* reflect neoliberal governmental rationalities as they stress spousal, parental or self-management of food consumption and minimal state intervention in the market in the form of industry regulation (see also Henderson *et al* 2009). We conclude that the ideal management of the health and well-being of the Australian population is increasingly depicted as being by means of self-regulatory activities of the individual consumer; an essentially free and autonomous being who is one of the key resources of governmentality.

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