Daily Life: pink ghetto or feminist triumph?
An analysis of the content of and responses to Fairfax’s women’s news website.

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Abstract

In the last five years a number of news companies around the world have launched women’s news websites attached to, but distinct from, the regular website for their newspapers. In February 2012 Fairfax launched Daily Life, a self-proclaimed “female-biased” website, the first Australian iteration of this women’s news website phenomenon. These websites have been new focal points for old feminist debates about separate gendered media spaces, and are particularly reminiscent of debates among feminist media theorists about the women’s pages of newspapers. This thesis will conduct qualitative content analysis of Daily Life’s most-viewed articles from its first year of publication in order to ascertain what content is popular on the website and how they portray women’s issues. In addition to this, results of a Daily Life reader survey will be discussed to understand how readers use and perceive the website. These results will be examined in the light of theoretical debates about separate gendered media spaces to see how Daily Life and other women’s news websites mitigate or contribute to problems of female representation in media. The thesis highlights the inequality still present in the way women are represented in the media and participate in the news industry. It examines the ideological complexities of producing a website for women, and analyses the many concerns raised about Daily Life, to ascertain whether women’s news websites help or hinder the feminist cause.

Keywords: media; gender; Daily Life; women’s pages; women’s news websites

Cover image from New Yorker cover, March 22, 1952
Statement of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis is my own, except in instances where acknowledged within the text. I also certify that this thesis has not, in part or whole, been submitted previously for assessment.

Any help that was received in the production of this thesis has been acknowledged.

I further certify that all human research involved in this thesis was conducted in strict accordance with the Human Ethics protocol approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Low-Risk Ethics Committee, with operates as a delegated sub-committee of the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number AH00091).

Signed: .................................

Date: .................................
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Introduction

Feminist scholars have been preoccupied by the problem of gender and the news media since the early 1970s. Since research began on the topic of gender and news media in particular, it has consistently found that women read less news (Domhoff 1978; Sydney Morning Herald media kit, 2013), work in smaller numbers and at lower levels in newsrooms (Gallagher 1981, 89; Hanitzsch & Hanusch 2012; GMMP 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010), and feature in far fewer news stories, as sources and subjects, than men (Gallagher 1981; Zoch & Turk 1998). Research has also shown that despite consistent efforts from feminists and other bodies, including the United Nations, to rectify these gendered imbalances, changes have not been significant (Gallagher 2001, Gill 2007a).

In the last four years – in most cases as an explicit attempt of news companies to address these gendered inequalities—there has been a rise in news organisations featuring a separate women’s news website, distinct from their main news website. Since 2009, Slate has launched its Double X blog for women (since renamed The XX Factor); the Huffington Post has launched HuffPost Women, together with a separate section on its politics site called Woman Up devoted to female-related political issues; OpenDemocracy, an online British magazine, began publishing 50/50, a separate section that focuses on international news stories about women; Salon launched Broadsheet; The New York Times began reprinting an online series from the International Herald Tribune called The Female Factor; and The Washington Post launched its women’s website, She the People.
Such women’s news websites are affiliated with and funded by a general newspaper, therefore they are different to other explicitly feminist websites such as *Jezebel* or *Feministing*, or women-focused consumer-style websites, such as, in the Australian context, *Mammamia, The Hoopla, Rookie, The Hairpin* and *Hello Giggle*. These women’s news websites, linked to larger news entities, differ by being, not simply websites aimed at women, but websites that aim to be the female-friendly version of an existing site. They can, therefore, be seen as an online iteration of the infamous women’s pages of newspapers, popular before the second wave of feminism, indeed Rosen has called these websites “the women’s pages of 1969 redux” (2012).

In February 2012, Fairfax launched *Daily Life*, the first, and to date, only example of these women’s news websites to be produced by an Australian newspaper company. *Daily Life* describes itself as “proudly female biased” (Daily Life Commenting Policy, 2012), featuring “a smart and irreverent take on the news designed specifically for women”, with stories provided by a “team of brilliant, female-dominated contributors” (Oakes 2012).

The website has been immensely popular; in September 2012, *Daily Life* reported over 57,000 unique browsers each day and 11.9 million monthly page impressions. (Nielsen Online Ratings Data, quoted in Tullock 2012). It has become – according to its chief editor – the “most clicked women’s website in Australia” (Oakes 2013), with an audience three times the size of *Mamamia*, seven times the size of *Marie Claire’s* website, and 24 times the size of *The Hoopla* (Tullock 2012).

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1 Popular Australian women’s website, run by former *Cosmopolitan Australia* editor, Mia Freedman. Not affiliated with any major news company.
2 Popular Australian women’s website, founded by entertainer Wendy Harmer. Not affiliated with any major news company.
However, when Fairfax launched *Daily Life*, it received very mixed reactions. The website presents itself as a great step forward, giving women a forum in which to voice issues that concern them and a community to participate in these discussions (Oakes, 2012). However some commentators have condemned *Daily Life* and other women-centric sites as being “pink ghettos” (Jaffe 2013), relegating issues that primarily affect women to a separate and less important media space, which has little influence on mainstream media (Campbell, 2012; Powell 2012).

These websites raise long-standing issues of contention in feminist media studies about the segregation of women’s writing, the desire to see the mainstream press more ‘feminised’, and the questions of why mainstream media has not changed more significantly to incorporate female perspectives, to allow for female writers, and to appeal to female readers. As such, *Daily Life*, and the women’s news website genre to which it belongs, presents a new focal point for old debates.

Adding to the difficulty is that, because these websites are aimed at women yet operate in a masculinist media culture; they are often dismissed without close engagement with their content and reception. As was the case with media theory about the women’s pages in newspapers, theorists tended to dismiss them on principle (Gill 2007a), rather than analysing their content, readership and uses, to understand what they were trying to achieve and how they were being received.
Research questions

This thesis engages with debates about separate women’s media through an empirical analysis of *Daily Life*. In particular, this thesis seeks to answer three questions: What content is popular on Fairfax’s *Daily Life* and how does it represent women’s issues? How do readers use and perceive the site? And to what extent can these answers assist in determining whether women’s news websites, such as *Daily Life* are pink ghettos or feminist triumphs?

Significance of research questions

While women’s news websites have received critical commentary on a popular level, they have been subject to very little academic research; indeed, at time of writing, no academic research had been published on *Daily Life*, or any of the women’s news websites worldwide. This is partly because they are so new to the media scene, and partly due to the historical tendency of media theorists to neglect women’s media as sites of analysis (Ang & Hermes 1991; Zoonen 1994; Gill 2007a). The significance of this research is increased by the absence of theoretical analysis of this emerging genre.

As the first Australian women’s news website affiliated with a major newspaper, a focus on *Daily Life* is particularly promising for understanding the trend of women’s news websites in the Australian context. This thesis examines the popularity, reception and reactions to the gender focus of *Daily Life*, and is, therefore, significant for making sense of the website, and as laying groundwork for future study.
While there are a handful of accounts of the history and debates surrounding women’s pages in newspapers (Harp 2003, Harp 2006, Jaffe 2012), such literature is scattered and insubstantial. Drawing together existing accounts, this thesis provides an historical overview of the women’s pages in the context of the feminist debates they engendered. This is significant because women’s pages represent an important piece of media history, and the current crop of women’s news websites can be seen as their 21st century manifestation.

This history and the theoretical critique of women’s pages and women’s news websites will be used, along with the results of content analysis and reader surveys of Daily Life, to help answer the third research question: To what extent can Daily Life assist us in determining whether women’s news websites are a pink ghetto or a feminist triumph?

The aims of this thesis, then, are three-fold. Firstly, it will offer an account of the women’s news websites that have appeared in the last four years, specifically, providing data about the content published on and reaction of readers to one such website, Daily Life. Secondly, it will offer a brief history of women’s pages and their similarities to the current crop of women’s news websites. Finally, it will draw conclusions about Daily Life, in order to contribute to the ongoing discussion among media theorists about whether separate media spaces help or hinder the cause of women.

**Recommendations for further research**

There are several areas of research that are related to but beyond the scope of this thesis. The first is an examination of the production of Daily Life. Examining the editorial structures and decision-making processes which go into making Daily Life would help to
understand the website better. However, due to space constraints, this element of research was not employed as it was considered to be of less pressing importance than an understanding of the content and reception of the website, for reasons outlined in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

Another area that is suggested for further research but was not possible to be studied at this time is the influence of Daily Life upon the representation of women in the mainstream Fairfax publications. It would be valuable to test whether the existence of Daily Life had any effect on the representation of women in The Sydney Morning Herald (the newspaper with which it is affiliated, and in whose office Daily Life editorial staff are based). Further research to ascertain if the existence of Daily Life led to an increase or decrease in the number articles about women or women’s issues in The Sydney Morning Herald would be valuable in answering the question of whether Daily Life is a “feminist triumph or pink ghetto”. However as Daily Life was established less than two years ago, it would be years before such a study would be possible.3

It was also beyond the scope of this thesis to compare the content and reception of Daily Life to any of its international counterparts, though this would also provide useful and interesting material of analysis.

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3 The researcher did request a list of the articles published on Daily Life that were then picked up and reprinted in The Sydney Morning Herald in subsequent days, as sometimes happens, from the editors. The researcher was informed that Daily Life keeps no record of how many of its articles are “back-published” in the newspaper. A recommendation for Daily Life would be to set up such a record to help gauge how influential their website is on discussions taking place in the general newspaper.
Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Literature Review

Chapter One outlines the debates in feminist media theory concerning the representation and participation of women in news media. The chapter also outlines the ways that a masculine culture and agenda asserts itself in subtle ways on the media profession and news content. This provides a helpful context for understanding why a women-focused website might be established, and shows the complex ideological debates surrounding the website’s launch.

Chapter Two: Women’s pages

Chapter Two outlines the history of the women’s pages and discusses how such a history might assist in analysing contemporary women’s news websites. The chapter will also provide a historical context for the content analysis of Daily Life discussed in Chapter Four and the survey results discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three examines the two methodologies used in this thesis: qualitative content analysis and online reader surveys. This chapter also reveals how these methodologies might mitigate some of the errors of earlier research into women’s media.

Chapter Four: Content Analysis Findings

Chapter Four provides results of the qualitative content analysis conducted on the four
most popular articles of each month of Daily Life’s first year of publication to address the first research question: What content is popular on Fairfax’s Daily Life and how does it represent women’s issues?

Chapter Five: Online Survey Findings

Chapter Five provides the results of the reader survey conducted in order to answer the second research question: How do readers use and perceive the site? As well as providing basic demographic data about Daily Life readers, it will describe the gendered focus of the website, its information, entertainment and advocacy roles, whether or not the website self-identifies as feminist, and how the segregation of women’s content is perceived by readers.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Chapter Six draws together the theory of Chapters One and Two with the results of Chapters Four and Five to draw some conclusions about Daily Life, and by extension women’s news websites. It addresses the third research question: To what extent can Daily Life assist us in determining whether women’s news websites are pink ghettos or feminist triumphs?
Chapter One – Literature Review

The ‘problem’ of the representation of women

In the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and ‘70s, the portrayal of women in the mass media was identified as a crucial battleground of the gender wars. Large-scale studies (Gallagher 1981; GMMP 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010) consistently found that in regard to the coverage of women, the media committed “both sins of omission and sins of commission” (Geertsema 2009, 154). Sins of omission referred to the fact that women appeared far less frequently in the media than men – from female characters underrepresented in television programmes (Gallagher 1981, 38), to women’s underrepresentation as news sources (Zoch & Turk 1998), news anchors and experts (GMMP 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010). Early studies reported that in no country from which data was available were women featured in more than 20% of news stories, and the percentage fell to as low as 4% in some countries (Gallagher, 1981, 77). This was identified as such a serious deficiency that regular international studies were instituted to monitor the state of women’s representation in the media in the form of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The GMMP has analysed radio, television, print, and more recently online, news across 108 countries on one day every five years.

The most recent GMMP study found that while media coverage had improved slightly since data was first collected in 1995, women were still represented at staggeringly low rates, with only 24% of news subjects being women, and women more likely featuring as ‘ordinary people’ when interviewed, as opposed to men who are more likely to be
interviewed as ‘experts’ (GMMP 2010, 2). This underrepresentation occurs even in countries such as Sweden, where women make up close to 50% of federal parliamentarians (Eie 1998), as well as in countries like Cambodia, where only 6% of news items are about women despite the fact that women represent 64% of the adult population and 55% of the labour force (Gallagher, 2001). The effect of such underrepresentation of women is to construct a reality of the world in which the lives of women are mostly invisible. "It is an unreal image of society that is presented when women, who represent 52 percent of our population, are relatively absent as news sources" (Zoch & Turk 1998, 764).

The sins of commission, referred to by Geertsema, describe how women were represented in the media in stereotyped ways. Studies found that even in news media, women were primarily represented as stupid, passive, dependent on men, of interest due to their relationship to men or their appearance, or fitting within these narrowly defined stereotypes: “the careful, home loving housewife; the tramp or sex-object; the efficient secretary; the femme fatale or model; and the devoted mother” (Gallagher 1981, 54).

In the past 30 years, the quality of representation has not changed dramatically: women still receive very different coverage to men. The 2010 GMMP found that 46% of news stories worldwide reinforce gender stereotypes (2010, 3). One example is that female politicians receive significantly less coverage than their male colleagues, even when their smaller numbers are taken into account; and they are likely to be discussed differently – with more focus on their age, marital status and physical appearance (Gill 2007, Ross 2002). Female politicians are also frequently photographed in domestic rather than parliamentary settings and referred to only by their first names; and reporters are more
likely to use their femininity rather than their politics or accomplishments to frame stories (Ross, 2004).

In her foundational work of feminist media analysis, Tuchman lamented these results, observing that the media “engage in the symbolic annihilation of women by ignoring women at work and trivialising women through banishment to hearth and home” (1978, 29). That Tuchman believes the media has such power is evidence of a belief, long held in media studies, that the media does not just reflect but rather shapes reality (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1948, 33).

Feminist media theorists see the mass media as such a crucial site of analysis, because they believe the media are "the prime vehicles for the construction and circulation of cultural values in the current era” (Djerf-Pierre, 2011, 43). In their view, the media does not simply reflect the gendered order of the world – replete with stereotyped images, sexist assumptions, and gendered hierarchies – but is actively involved in creating and perpetuating it (Gallagher 1981, Zoch and Turk 1998, Gill 2007, Creedon 1989). Such an understanding of the constitutive, rather than representational power of the media means a belief that media technologies are “technologies of gender” (1989, 1), which "quite literally… produce and constitute understandings, subjectivities and versions of the world” (Gill 2007, 12).

**Online discrimination and cyber-feminisms**

Since *Daily Life* is a web-based medium, it is important to consider the impact of the Internet for women. One might expect that since people can produce online content “with relatively little social, political, and economic capital” (Harp & Tremayne 2006,
in traditional media. Indeed, Ross notes that “feminist activism and politics are increasingly taking place on the Internet” and the impact of “cyberfeminist work” is revolutionary (Ross, 2004, 197). Hartley adds that the Internet is the “technically most egalitarian” media (Hartley 2000, 42), but both theorists caution that this egalitarianism mostly operates in theory rather than in practice, and the Internet, like traditional media, has a gendered structure (Youngs 2000).

The 2010 GMMP found that unequal gendered representation continues online, with women comprising only 23% of news subjects in online stories worldwide, compared to 24% of news subjects in print, television and radio news; and 42% of online news stories were found to reinforce gender stereotypes. These results led the GMMP researchers to conclude, “Internet news is a format in which gender biases become not only more visible but even more concentrated than in the traditional news media” (GMMP 2010, 3).

An example of online gender biases can be seen in the political blogosphere. Harp and Tremayne’s study found that female bloggers suffered from similar systemic exclusions as in offline political spaces (2006, 247). Among the top 30 political blogs in the US, only three had a woman as the primary author. The reasons female bloggers were excluded include: gender driven assumptions among those they surveyed about what topics women can or should be interested in (“women do not blog about politics”) (2006, 254), and biased assumptions about quality (“women’s political blogs are not popular because they lack quality”) (2006, 256). Harp and Tremayne also found structural gender-based discrimination present online: “The linking hierarchy of the blogosphere prevents women from becoming highly ranked” (2006, 254). Leading Harp and Tremayne to conclude that, “The blogosphere is similar to the situation in opinion writing and the
publishing world in general – a place where women's voices are marginalised.” (2006, 258)

**Gendered segregation in the media**

Gender essentialist thinking, which assumes that women produce and consume different media to men, has been shown to have an influence on the different types of stories that editors assign to female and male journalists. Female reporters are still more likely to cover local stories, while male reporters cover state, national, and international news (Zoch & Turk 1998); and women are more likely to be assigned to “lifestyle, background and ‘soft’ beats” (Ross 2001, 539) traditionally considered “low status parts of the industry” (Gill 2007a, 121). Even when women were assigned to “hard news” beats they are more often found in the beats “considered to be traditionally local, family-oriented, or ‘women’s’ stories,” such as “religion, health/ science/ medicine, and human-interest profiles” (Zoch & Turk 1998, 773). Zoonen writes that:

> To a substantial degree women tend to prevail in those areas that can be seen as an extension of their domestic responsibilities: in children’s and educational media...; in consumer and domestic programmes; in human interest and feature sections of newspapers; in entertainment programming. (1994, 51)

The large numbers of women in such ‘soft’ news beats creates, according to Ross, a “classic chicken-and-egg dilemma”:

> If more women are assigned to fashion, cooking, lifestyle and soft politics, it can hardly be a surprise that female journalists come to be seen by others – and even themselves – as good at, interested in, and even better suited to such beats. (Ross 2001, 539)
Zoch and Turk’s study of the gender of sources used in US newspapers found that women are still far less likely to be quoted as sources in news stories, especially on topics regarded as ‘hard news’ such as politics, or international news, and much less likely to be quoted at length, or in long stories. When they were quoted, women were most often either quoted as victims or because of their relationship with a man (1998, 771). Added to this, women’s perspectives are still consistently excluded from coverage of international ‘hard news’, such as coverage of war and terrorism (Lemish 2002; Bunting 2001) and in reporting of human rights violations and gains (Byerly 2002a; Ross, 2004).

Despite the majority of journalism graduates being women (Zoonen 1998), they still make up only 37% of journalists worldwide (GMMP 2010) because they gravitate towards sectors of the industry not typically regarded as journalism, such as public relations, information management (Zoonen 1998), advertising and media relations (Creedon 1993). When women do get work as journalists, it is most often in “what are perceived as the low status fields of journalism… like magazine publishing and infotainment television” (Zoonen 1998, 38-39). Gallagher writes that, “In general, women are relegated to areas which are seen as having only marginal importance” (Gallagher 1981, 90).

Lafky observed that the low regard of ‘women’s work’ in the media industry means that not only are women less likely to be promoted to editorial, or executive positions, but as women move into a previously male-dominated field “‘occupational resegregation’ occurs and women suddenly discover that their growing presence has led to decreased status and erosion of pay” (1989).
Such gender essentialist ideas were present in an opinion column written by Fairfax journalist Elizabeth Farrelly after Daily Life’s launch, condemning the website: “I don't usually read women authors… Because they're boring… In part this is an aesthetic thing. I like writing with a higher IQ and lower pH than most women can manage: tougher, edgier, stringier.” (Farrelly, 2012) That Farrelly is herself a well-regarded female journalist does not seem to affect her negative view of female writing. Views such as the ones espoused in her article are a popular manifestation of the idea that ‘important’ journalism is done by men, and articles written by women are of a lower quality, and are less important.

The masculine newsroom and news agenda

For decades, feminist media critics have alleged that the media is dominated by a male paradigm (Creedon 1993, Ross 2001). Many theorists hoped that the simple increase of female journalists in newsrooms would see a shift in the quantity and quality of representations of women in media (Creedon 1989; Zoch & Turk 1998; Hanitzsch & Hanusch 2012). This has marginally occurred as more women enter the industry and reach decision-making positions, and as elements of feminism become accepted as mainstream and are integrated into media discourse (Gill 2007b, 2009).

However, feminists realised that such a change was harder to achieve than expected as it involved dismantling and reconstructing accepted ‘masculine’ news structures, what Geertsema calls a “macho newsroom culture” (2009, 151). Geertsema argued that once this ‘masculine’ newsroom culture was revealed, one could also see “the limitations of simply increasing the number of female journalists in the newsroom without fundamentally challenging the way news works” (2009, 151). Rakow & Kranich argued
that, “Any improvements in women's treatment in the news will require not simply more coverage of women or more women journalists… but a fundamental change in news as a narrative genre” (1991, 9).

When searching for the difference that gender makes to the production of news, theorists often focus on the impact of gender on the individual journalist (Christmas 1997; Mills 1997). The danger of this is that it ignores the fact that, “the gendered nature of news work extends well beyond the level of the individual journalist” (Hanitzsch & Hanusch 2012, 261) and is embedded in organisational contexts.

Feminist media theorists have identified the presence of a “masculine newsroom hegemony” (Ross 2004, 114) in many ways. It can be seen in the high rates of sexual harassment and sexual discrimination reported by female journalists (Ross 2001, Zoonen 1994, Weaver 1992, Sieghart and Henry, 1998). There are also organisational procedures, leading to indirect discrimination, “which – by being less visible – tend to be more difficult to contest” (Zoonen 1994, 51). These less visible forms of discrimination include the popularity of informal recruitment procedures, “based on personal contacts and (‘old boys’) networks” (ibid); the “long-hours culture” of media workplaces (Ross, 2001, 532) and a “professional mythology” that journalists must be available 24 hours a day (Zoonen 1994, 53), which makes the challenge of balancing work and home life difficult particularly for women (Ross 2001, Zoonen 1994). Finally, Zoonen writes: “The most important barrier within the organisation comes from the attitudes of male colleagues and decision makers” (1994, 52). There are many accounts of sexism, either blatant or insidious, in newsrooms around the world (Castro 1988; Joshi 1987, Smith et al. 1989, Neverla and Kanzleiter, 1984). There are reports of women being given stereotypical, lowly regarded, reporting roles (Zoch & Turk 1998; Van Zoonen 1994),
and being excluded from key learning areas, such as sub-editing, night shift working and the informal pub and club culture (Zoonen 1994, 56).

Close examination of current news values reveals the dominance of masculinity in the news agenda itself. This should not be surprising, for news, while it masquerades as gender-neutral is of course “a cultural product that reflects the dominant cultural assumptions about who and what is important” (Gill 2007, 113). In light of this fact, writes Gill, “It is not surprising… that most news is designed for, about and by men” (2007, 114).

Hartley argues that journalism in its current state is masculine, because it is romanticised as: “the profession of violence. Journalism's heroic figures are the combative interviewer... the war junkie following... the adversarial investigative reporter, the crusading paper or programme... Journalism is combat” (2000, 40). Zoonen summarized survey data from around the world, which showed the ways female journalists perceive a masculine agenda asserting itself in a newsroom. These include the selection of newsworthy topics (“topics relevant to women are often neglected”) (2002, 35), the fetishisation of facts and factuality instead of an emphasis on causes and impacts, the choice of sources and spokespersons being overwhelmingly male “despite the growing numbers of female politicians, public officials and other professionals” (2002, 36). Mills argues that the exclusion of female perspectives is often the result of a sort of blind spot with respect to women’s experiences. She argues that male reporters are not hostile to reporting women-focused stories, but rather “such stories are not a priority for them: unlike their female colleagues, they do not live that reality every day” (Mills 1997, 50).
While the increased number of female journalists around the world might go some way to addressing this blind spot, it has not led to significant change, because what has occurred is simply “the incorporation of women journalists into a largely male profession” which has had the effect of “normalising’ what are essentially male-identified concerns and a male-directed agenda … in which male perspectives are constructed as unproblematic, uncontested and, most importantly, apparently value free” (Ross 2001, 533). These active and subtle expressions of a masculine culture and agenda mean that while journalism “masquerades as a neutral professional journalism ethos [it is]… actually organised around a man-as-norm and woman-as-interloper structure.” (Ross 2001, 535)

It was into this context of the exclusion of the feminine in media that Daily Life was launched. Indeed the problem of sidelining women’s voices and concerns was something Daily Life was established to address. It is important to understand that such a masculinist bias exists when evaluating Daily Life, because this will influence the evaluative criteria used by critics and readers of the website.

**Feminisation and tabloidisation**

Some feminists believe that in the last few decades news has become more accommodating of women’s issues and interests (Christmas 1997; Mills 1997; Ross, 2001) and we have seen “an expansion in the very conceptualisation of what news is…. Material of particular interest to women, which used to be ignored… is now spread throughout the paper” (Ross 2001, 539, 542). Or as Charles Moore, former editor of the UK’s Daily Telegraph put it, since “people woke up to the fact that 50% of readers were women” we have seen “a trend towards the feminisation of newspapers” (Moore 1996).
Zoonen writes that the focus on “intimisation and feminisation” (1991, 217) in the tone of media is evidence of a more ‘feminised’ press. But such a ‘feminine’ style has been received with ambivalence.

Suggestive, on the one hand, of a corrective move beyond a masculinised agenda and discourse, these trends can also be seen as reinforcing old gendered hierarchies, with rational debate of public issues still valued (as 'masculine') over affective explorations of personal or social relationships (deemed 'feminine', and consequently trivialised). (Macdonald 2002, 105)

Adding to this ambivalence is the fact that the ‘feminisation’ of the press and the ‘tabloidisation’ of the press are often thought to be synonymous.

Fear of tabloidisation at times borders on moral panic and the term is variously invoked to describe anything from the changing size of newspapers, to the increase in lifestyle content. It is mostly used to describe fears that news outlets seem to be drifting away from rational analysis and dispassionate investigation – traditionally considered axiomatic foundations of quality journalism – to content aimed to amuse and entertain readers (Holland, 1998; Macdonald, 2000).

One of the problems with such a knee-jerk response to cries of tabloidization is that it fails to identify what precisely is objectionable. Macdonald writes, “Clumsy and ill-defined neologisms such as 'tabloidization' or 'dumbing down'… do little to illuminate the precise nature of the alleged problem” (2000, 251). In the lumping together of misgivings, the gendered element of the debate can be obscured, for tabloidisation has historically been thought of as a feminisation of the press as well. As Holland writes:
From the 1880s and 1890s, the introduction of lightweight features and all types of trivia... has been seen as a feminisation of the new mass circulation press... the feminine had long been identified with the popular and accessible” (1998, 18). Huyssten has described how this soft ‘feminine’ content has historically been disparaged due to the “notion which gained ground in the 19th century that mass culture is somehow associated with women, while real, authentic culture remains the prerogative of men”(1986: 47, 46).

Such a link between feminisation and tabloidisation continues to the present day as editors have attempted to attract female readers through “myriad advertising-rich lifestyle sections” (Gill 2007a, 35). These sections are at once necessary for the financial survival of newspapers and at the same time decried as part of the great problem of tabloidisation; considered useful only “in order to finance what is seen as the "real" function of the papers (i.e. providing news, information and comment)” (Smith 1980, 241).

Viewing the ‘feminine’ and ‘tabloid’ as synonymous means that women’s interests and women’s culture can then be summarily dismissed as shallow and vapid, as not ‘real’ news, in fact as contributing to the downfall of real news. Gill argues that prior to the late 1980s, academic attention was rarely paid to media forms enjoyed by women, which had often been dismissed by theorists as being superficial and vapid. Gill argued that “this was not just a matter of academics ignoring popular culture; a specifically gendered dynamic was in play: it was understood as the dismissal of women's culture" (Gill: 2007a, 14).
Separating ‘tabloidisation’ from ‘feminisation’ is extremely important when considering specific debates concerning the women’s pages of newspapers and contemporary women’s news websites such as Daily Life. Critics may be prone to dismiss them because they contain a more personalised style, or because they contain lifestyle content, or simply because they define themselves as feminine. This thesis aims to be part of a corrective move against the out-of-hand dismissal of women’s culture, by paying close critical attention to the content produced on Daily Life, and treating as significant the views and interest of readers.
Chapter Two – The women’s pages

In order to understand the mixed reception *Daily Life* and other websites like it have received, it is essential to examine the history and debates surrounding the traditional women’s pages of newspapers.

Feminists have historically disagreed with one another as to whether separate women’s media spaces are an effective means of furthering women’s interests (Long 1972, Didion 1972). Despite the change in technology from women’s pages in a newspaper to women’s news websites, the debates they engendered have not changed substantially in 50 years.

These debates are complicated, and lucid presentation of them has been peculiarly lacking in a lot of feminist and media theory. For example in the otherwise excellent, *Gender and the Media*, Gill adopts a historically reductionist approach to women’s pages when she mentions them in her account of the history of feminist media studies:

> Although some people argued the point passionately on either side, in the end a sensible both/and politics prevailed, which acknowledged that the campaign for women-only spaces, and the campaign for women's interests to be taken seriously right across the output of the media were not mutually exclusive. (2007a, 35)

This simplistic account elides fierce debates that still persist regarding women’s media. These debates have not been settled in a satisfying way, as is evident in the mixed
reaction to women’s news websites. This thesis aims to present a summary of these debates, both to address this missing critical feminist history, and also as it is crucial to analysing Daily Life.

History

Women’s pages first appeared in newspapers in the late nineteenth century as a result of the circulation wars of the 1880s. By then “it appeared that every man who would buy a newspaper was already doing so,” (Tuchman, 1978, 25) and so female reporters were hired in order to appeal to female readers (Harp, 2006). The first regular women’s page in a newspaper appeared in the New York World in the 1890s (Jaffe, 2013) and women’s pages quickly became regular fixtures in most newspapers. A defining feature of these pages was that they were run by autonomous or semi-autonomous departments, which saw female readers “as a specialized audience” (Tuchman 1978, 25). Their brief typically included coverage of society, food and fashion (Jaffe, 2013), recipes and the occasional political article (Friedman, 2009), parenting, homemaking, relationship advice; and precluded coverage of the ‘hard news’ of the day (Tuchman, 1978).

The case for women’s pages

Women’s pages as places for feminist activism

Women’s sections were typically treated dismissively by newspaper editors; and their (usually female) reporters accorded lower status and pay than their ‘hard news’ counterparts (Hayashi, 2000; Gallagher, 1981). This is not to say that these women’s sections were not worthy of respect, even on masculinist terms. There were many
instances of reporters using the women’s pages to break serious stories about issues affecting women, and of editors using the women’s pages to spearhead activism on political and social causes (Tuchman 1978). For example, Vivian Castleberry, editor of the Dallas Times-Herald women’s pages from 1956 to 1984, reportedly “got away with murder because the … male editors never bothered to read [the women’s pages]. They were writing about birth control. Abortion. But it wasn’t considered ‘real news’” (Ivins, quoted in Jaffe 2013).

Tuchman writes that the women’s pages of US newspapers were crucial for disseminating information about the women’s liberation movement in the 1970s, at a time when editors were refusing to run articles about it. One reporter interviewed by Tuchman stated that, “‘If the feminist stories didn’t run on our page, they wouldn’t run anywhere’” (Gallagher 1981, 44). Another reporter declared the women’s page to be “‘the most revolutionary page in the paper’” (Tuchman 1978, 203).

Hayashi writes that the Home and Family sections – the women’s pages of major Japanese newspapers – were crucial for leading campaigns on issues such as environmental concerns and consumer rights, at a time when “other hard-news sections still regarded them as housewives’ chat” (2000, 149). This occurred despite the fact that reporters who worked for the Home and Family section were often excluded from the promotional track inside a newspaper, disallowed from belonging to Press Clubs, and felt “humiliated if told to work for the women’s ghetto” (2000, 150).

*Women’s pages structurally suited for activism*

One of the difficulties facing women in the newsroom is that many instances of gender
discrimination are latent, cultural, and long-standing. Indeed, the work of feminism has often been “thinking about issues, women’s place in the world and changing people’s heads” (Tuchman 1978, 192). However, professional news ideologies “identify *events*, not *issues*, as the stuff and substance of hard news” (ibid).

Separate women’s pages not driven by the daily deadline might, then, be the ideal forums for discussing feminism. As Creedon writes, “professional news conventions mandated that reporters seek hard news ‘events’… Such practices ensured the omission of coverage of the symbolic, issue-oriented problems that were central to the radical [feminist] movement’s development” (1989, 281). Tuchman offered the example of the different ways that a UN conference about women was covered on the general news pages – “[the article] was terse, ran on an inside page, and was primarily a 'shopping list of speakers’” and on the women’s page, “[the article] discussed the content of speeches, and analysed the political interaction among conference planners, American feminists, and Third World women” (1978, 203).

*Separatist media*

Another justification of separate women’s pages by feminists comes out of a radical feminist agenda, which claims that women should be creating separatist media. Creedon writes that if social change is to occur, “it is requisite that women establish various media formats to communicate through their own words and images, their own expressions of what feminist politics means” (1983, 293). This is particularly significant in light of the masculine news agenda discussed in the previous chapter. Steeves argues that rather than seeking acceptance into a masculine newsroom, women should be looking to establish “alternative feminist media in which women can freely express themselves in their own
language” (1987, 100).

Early advocates of media separatism called for women to halt all dealings with the mass media (Ferro et al. 1977, 118; Frye 1983). While women’s news websites don’t represent the separatist feminist ideal – published as they are by mainstream news organisations – they do offer women the opportunity to share views, critique society and write about their experience in a new, and largely female-defined medium.

Rectifying gender imbalance

Reporters interviewed by Tuchman argued that the success of women’s pages caused male editors to “realize the importance of topics covered by the staff of the women's page and that more women's stories were starting on page one” (Gallagher, 1981, 44). It was because of women’s pages that issues important to women, which had been traditionally neglected by newspapers, began to be reported on in mainstream news (Jaffe 2013).

Addressing the gender imbalance is also a motivation behind the rise of the women’s news websites, with many editors claiming to be motivated by the desire to rectify the underrepresentation of female writers, and women-specific content in newspapers. In the post explaining why the Washington Post was launching She the People, editor Raju Narisetti was quoted as saying, “women have been underrepresented by political sites and in political reporting… The Washington Post believes She the People will give a distinct platform to unique female voices who have interesting perspectives to share” (Washington Post, 2012).
In a blog post that is otherwise critical of women’s websites, Friedman acknowledges: “These outlets can serve to highlight topics that are under-covered in the mainstream press, give women writers a venue they can more easily break into, and convey debates between women in a more nuanced way” (2009).

The case against women’s pages

*Gender essentialism*

The first feminist concern with women’s pages in newspapers is that they serve to reinforce gender essentialism (Merritt and Gross 1978; Gill 2007a). Having a website specifically about women's issues raises the question of how one defines a ‘female’ or ‘male’ issue (Friedman 2009). Valenti writes:

The problem with branding certain types of articles "for women" is that it still advances a false gender divide. We can all agree that men parent, too. Men and women care about fashion and follow Hollywood gossip. Yet when these articles are [published on a women’s news website] … it perpetuates the false idea that women are interested in Forever 21 and Facebook but not torture hearings or health-care reform. (2010)

A related objection is that it creates a restrictive definition of masculinity. Epstein wrote in her criticism of the original women’s pages that one of the key arguments against them was the assumption:

that men's concerns have been met once their occupations and political and sports activities have been given attention... Ghettoising discussions of such
matters on women's pages reinforces outmoded views that men should not be concerned with families and their own and others’ emotional needs. (1978, 220-221)

Such a criticism bears repeating almost 40 years later as women’s news websites with their focus on parenting, relationships, and certain social and political issues re-emerge. Designating these subjects as women’s issues helps to create a normative notion of masculinity that discourages relational and emotional knowledge, and other traditionally feminine pursuits (Connell 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

*Segregating women’s content*

A long-standing concern of feminists regarding the existence of women’s pages in newspapers is the “ghettoisation” of women’s issues. This concern was articulated by feminists in the 1970s who believed that, “Placing news about women on the women's page reinforces the still-current view that the material is only appropriate for women and that it is less serious and important than news highlighted as general news” (Epstein 1978, 217).

This criticism certainly seems to be justified. Rosen writes that the women’s pages were able to discuss controversial issues, such as domestic violence, contraception and sexual harassment, primarily because “men never read it” (Rosen 2010). This same criticism re-emerged as women’s news websites were launched. Campbell expressed her concerns that *Daily Life’s* segregation of women’s issues would lead to the view that gendered issues “are only of interest to women, it belittles these complex, politically fraught topics and doesn’t allow us, as a culture, to take them seriously” (Campbell 2012).
Dividing women’s content from the general news sections of the newspaper also reinforces a masculine conception of news, and what is deemed newsworthy. When “newspapers continue to view women in the news as occasional oddities that must be tolerated” (Tuchman 1978, 29) rather than the essential content of news, the message is communicated that “if a woman demonstrates competence in some important sphere, it is an idiosyncratic event, not worthy of general notice and not to be judged by a universal standard - that is, a male standard” (Epstein 1978, 217). Or in the contemporary situation, purporting to offer a “female perspective on hard news” as Daily Life claims to do (Oakes 2012), suggests that hard masculine news is normative, and the female perspectives on this news are anomalous. As Valenti wrote of The XX Factor, “the tag-line, “the world as women see it”… promotes the idea that women’s opinions and perspectives aren’t normative, but somehow “other” than real, everyday opinions” (2012).

When newsrooms segregate the coverage of women and women’s issues into a separate page or website they are tacitly acknowledging that they consider the rest of the newspaper or the rest of the website to be masculine. Even if they identify the lack of representation of women in the news to be a problem, one that should be rectified through the launch of a women’s news website they still preserve the central newspaper or news website as a masculine space to which no changes need to be made. As Friedman writes:

The proliferation of woman-centric sites raises the sorts of questions that keep a feminist editor up at night. If Slate saw a demand for more content about women, why didn't it start publishing more articles for and by women on its main site? The decision to devote micro-sites to groups that aren't white men – The Root for
black readers, *Double X* for women readers – implies that Slate recognizes the need for more coverage that caters to women and people of color. But it doesn't want that coverage mucking up its main product.

When publishers create separate sites dedicated to women or to black people, they are signaling that they don't see a need to have their main site serve these people as core readers. They are, in essence, saying, "We want the ad revenue associated with your readership, but we don't create our homepage with you in mind." (2009)

*Women’s pages as trivia*

Feminist agitation in the 1960s and 1970s saw the women’s pages removed from newspapers in the hope that newspapers might integrate coverage of women into the general newspaper (Friedman 2009). In reality editors did not really remove the women’s pages so much as rebrand them. The new sections were given names like Style, Features, Life (Friedman, 2009), and this shift “was little more than a name change, and certainly not an attitude change” (Harp 2006, 198).

A key objection to women’s pages and women’s news websites is that they focus on lifestyle content, and when they do report on serious issues, these are drowned out by the focus on frivolous content. Didion wrote of these pages:

[Women] were being heard, and yet not really… Attention was finally being paid, and yet that attention was mired in the trivial. Even the brightest movement women found themselves engaged in sullen public colloquies about the inequities
of dishwashing and the intolerable humiliations of being observed by construction workers on Sixth Avenue. (1972)

Similarly, Epstein objected to what she called the “problem of 'mix’” on the women's page.

Modern treatment lumps together news on women astronauts, the Equal Rights Amendment, recipes for lobster Newburg, and the length of skirts. I suggest that the mix of news about women and the women's movement with food, fashion and furniture… diffuses its impact. (Epstein 1978, 218)

Gloria Steinem initially condemned separate women’s pages, but later changed her mind provisionally, writing that, “There is a need for women’s pages… [but] they should be more relevant than talking about subjects like turning artichokes into lampshades” (quoted in Friedman, 2009). Such criticisms have reemerged in debates surrounding women’s websites. Many critics acknowledge that much of the material produced on the websites is “thought-provoking”, “essential” (LaFrance 2013), generally of a “high quality” and the articles featured “are no longer about society, cooking and fashion. Most are tough, smart, incisive, analytic and focus on events, trends or stories that the mainstream online news still ignores” (Rosen 2010). Despite this, critics argue, the influence of these articles is greatly diminished by the fact that the websites also heavily feature lifestyle content, which is perceived as of low value.

Such a critique is present in the critical reactions to the launch of Daily Life, which Campbell disparaged as “basically six more days’ worth of Fairfax’s glossy lift-out Sunday Life, conveniently online to leverage advertiser dollars.” (2012) She claims that despite Daily Life editor, Sarah Oakes’ promise that the website would aim to deliver “a smart
and irreverent take on the news designed specifically for women” (Oakes 2012), in reality, ‘serious’ content is “hard to find within the overall mix of traditional lifestyle content… The site does not truly offer a female perspective on hard news, but rather is an entertainment site with a superficial focus on celebrity and consumerism” (Campbell 2012). Powell added:

Fairfax launched Daily Life this morning, their new site for the laydeez, and my goodness it’s insulting. Fashion, beauty, celebrities, handbags, and please kill me now… it’s insulting to tell us that “our news” is only fashion and famous people… I call it belittling nonsense that reduces women’s interests to shopping and famous people (2012).

Because criticisms of Daily Life, and women’s news websites generally have been focused on the presence of superficial content, this research will be conducting content analysis of popular Daily Life articles, so as to gauge whether the criticisms are valid or the result of the conflation of the feminine with tabloidisation, discussed in the previous chapter.

It is worth noting that for some feminist critics, it is not lifestyle content in general, but the particular ideology present in some lifestyle content – most notably that which emphasizes beauty culture (Wolf 1990; Jeffreys 2005; Hermes 1995), and promotes a subservient relationship with men (McRobbie 1999; Gill 2009) – that is evidence of a regressive ideology. McRobbie argues that to dismiss in its entirety a media form because it contains “mixed” content is misguided. She writes that a thorough and complete dismissal of women’s magazines, for example, ignores research that women’s magazines have been significant in providing forums for discussion of women’s issues that might not find discursive space elsewhere (Gill 2007a), and ignores the post-structural “turn to pleasure” (Gill 2007a, 13) which examines the way readers take in and enjoy media texts
as crucial to analysis (McRobbie 1999, 47). Instead, McRobbie advocates “negotiation” of such complicated media. This thesis will take McRobbie’s caution on board, attempting to understand why *Daily Life* is so popular with a mostly female readership, instead of engaging in the outright dismissal of *Daily Life*, because it contains lifestyle content and therefore does not meet some ideal feminist standard.
Chapter Three – Methodology

This thesis uses two methodologies to best answer the research questions. Firstly, qualitative content analysis was employed to analyse the most popular articles from the first year of *Daily Life*’s publication (February 2012 – January 2013). Secondly, an online survey of *Daily Life* readers was conducted, in order to understand how readers use the site, and how they view the gendered nature of it.

Content analysis of articles

Content analysis was crucial for this project because women’s media, such as *Daily Life*, are often summarily dismissed for focusing on lifestyle content. Because criticisms of women’s news websites often amount to an attack based on the type of content on the website, the most crucial task for a researcher analysing the political implications of such a website is to examine what content is actually being produced by that website.

The content analysis of the articles helps to answer the first and third research questions. Firstly, content analysis is necessary to answer: What content is popular on Fairfax’s *Daily Life* and how does it represent women’s issues? This content analysis goes some way toward answering the third question: To what extent can *Daily Life* assist us in determining whether women’s news websites are pink ghettos or feminist triumphs?
Daily Life was selected as the website to study because it is the first example of a women’s news website, affiliated with a major newspaper to be launched in Australia. The period of 12 months since the website’s launch in February 2012 was selected as the period of inquiry, because at the end of this year Daily Life was the “the number one destination for Australian women online” (Fairfax Media AdCentre, 2013), and had a readership of 943,440 monthly unique browsers per month (Nielsen Market Intelligence 2013). This popularity indicates that Daily Life has been successful in attracting a sizable (mostly female) readership.

The list of most viewed articles was provided by Daily Life Deputy Editor, Candice Chung, at the request of the researcher and articles were then downloaded by the researcher from the website. The four most-viewed articles of each month of the first 12 months of Daily Life’s publication were examined, rather than simply the 50 most-viewed articles of the first year of its publication. This selection of content was made because it could be predicted that the website’s readership would have grown over the course of the first year, meaning that the most-popular articles of the first month of publication would have had fewer readers than the most-popular article of the last month, skewing the data toward the end of the year.

Selecting the most popular four articles from each of the twelve months makes a total of 48 articles, except that one article had been taken down from the website since publication. Though requested by the researcher, the editors did not provide the article (‘A trend-spotter’s guide to female desire’, the third most read article from April 2012), or an explanation as to why this article was unavailable for study. 47 articles was thought to be a large enough sample size to give a sense of the content of articles, and small enough that the labour-intensive method of qualitative content analysis could be applied.
Selecting the most-viewed articles for analysis properly accounts for reader pleasure and preference, things often neglected in studies of women’s media (Gill 2007, Zoonen 1991, Brundsen 1996). The researcher is aware that the fact one article is read more than another is not necessarily an indication that it reflects reader interest more than another, since it could be a result of the positioning and layout of articles on the website or newspaper. Fortunately, this study was affected in very minimal ways by such layout concerns. Daily Life’s homepage (screenshot featured in Appendix A) features five prominent articles each day, with smaller articles arranged around the features. The feature articles are given equal prominence by virtue of the fact that a rotating central image of each article is presented in the centre of the webpage with thumbnail links to each article underneath. This means that the simple fact of articles being ‘most viewed’ can be seen to be more of an indication of the subject matter appealing to readers than might be the case in another website or newspaper where layout has a more substantial effect on readership.

**Qualitative content analysis**

The articles were analysed using qualitative content analysis, a research method that is particularly suited to the close analysis of media texts. This method is similar to, and can be thought of as a hybrid of, quantitative content analysis and textual analysis.

Quantitative content analysis was the dominant methodology in media studies until the late 1980s (Gill 2007a), and the ‘counting’ function of quantitative content analysis has been a powerful persuasive tool for feminists critiquing media (Neuendorf 2010; Gill 2007a). Despite this, some researchers have criticized the methodological dominance of
quantitative content analysis in studies of gender and the media, on the ground that they are engaged in ‘just counting’ without in-depth analysis of the policies, attitudes and ideologies that shaped representations (Djerf-Pierre 2011, 45).

The methodology of qualitative content analysis attempts to address these failings in quantitative analysis. While little has been written on qualitative content analysis, most of its theoretical framework comes from nursing studies (Hsieh & Shannon 2005; Cole 1988; Elo & Helvi 2007). As a methodology it can be traced back to the publication of *The Challenge of Qualitative Content Analysis*, by German sociologist Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer believed that quantitative content analysis with its tendency to examine the surface content of texts led to incomplete and often “inaccurate analysis” (Kracauer 1952, 632). He suggested a method that considered both the surface meanings and underlying ideas of a text, and focused on the text as a complete entity, rather than breaking it down into smaller sites of analysis (Brennen 2013, 194). Unlike its quantitative equivalent, qualitative content analysis pays close attention “to the content or contextual meaning of the text… [and] goes beyond merely counting words to examine language intensely” (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1278). In this way qualitative content analysis closely resembles textual analysis, a methodology for which it is sometimes, erroneously, confused (Brennen 2013; Fursich 2009).

Textual analysis has been very important in media studies for studying the intricacies and complexities of gendered representations (Gill 2010; Fursich 2009). However, there is not a clear understanding of the way the methodology should be conducted, such that in media studies “we do not have available a single, published straightforward guide as to what [textual analysis] is and how we do it” (McKee 2001, 1). Because of this, textual analysis leaves itself open to the accusation of subjectivity and bias, with Harwood &
Garry writing that “research bias affects all stages of the technique from decisions on data collection methods to analysis and ultimately interpretation of results” (2003, 485). Consequently, researchers using textual analysis have to work very hard to assure readers of the reliability of their work.

The criticism of subjectivity becomes particularly important when it comes to research around gender and the media. There is such a lack of consensus among feminist researchers about what constitutes feminism, and how to interpret texts in a feminist way that Gill writes:

compared with the certainty and confidence of early critique, today's feminist media scholar is more tentative, less certain. Looking across the field there is no one single type of critical practice but a diversity, with very different perspectives. There is no agreement about how to interpret contemporary media culture.

(2007a, 38)

Qualitative content analysis has been selected as the methodology for this research, in part because of this confusion. As a methodology, it can examine latent, ideological, nuanced meaning in texts – in a way that quantitative content analysis struggles to – but qualitative content analysis still follows the analytic processes of its quantitative cousin to ensure reliability. Hsieh & Shannon write that, “Creating and adhering to an analytic procedure or a coding scheme will increase trustworthiness or validity of the study” (2005, 1286).

Hsieh and Shannon’s “analytic process of seven classic steps” (2005, 1285) for qualitative content analysis, replicate almost exactly the steps involved in a quantitative analysis (see Cole 1988, 55; Harwood & Garry 2003, 480). The steps in qualitative content analysis
are: formulating the research questions, selecting the sample to be analysed, defining the categories to be applied, outlining the coding process and the coder training, implementing the coding process, determining trustworthiness, and analysing the results (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1285); and this process was implemented in this research.

**Process**

For the purposes of this study, a combination of conventional content analysis, “in which categories are derived from the text during analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and directed content analysis, which uses existing theory to develop an initial coding scheme prior to research, was used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A coding sheet was drawn up with categories and questions based on theoretical reading (directed content analysis) and after an initial reading of the articles (conventional content analysis).

Content analysis was first conducted by a principal coder, the researcher. In order to evaluate the reliability of results and eliminate possible bias, an additional coder analysed a sample of the content. The coder was briefed in person about how to use the coding sheet, which also contained detailed instructions and definitions of categories, and then was left independently to code the articles. The additional coder re-analysed a sample of 17% of the total content, or eight articles, more than the suggested 10%, because the sample size was so small (Weerakkody 2009, 158).

The additional coder recorded agreement (PAo) of 82% with the principal coder’s results, which was above the prescribed minimum 80% agreement (Weerakkody 2009, 158). Examination of the results found that the principal and additional coder consistently disagreed on Question 5a and its following option 5c:
5a. Is this article written mostly in the first person, or about a personal experience of the author?

Yes ☐

No ☐

…

c. If no: Does the article contain any first person anecdotes or a personalised address?

Yes ☐

No ☐

When the coders disagreed on 5a, the coder who selected No for 5a – citing that the article was not written mostly in the first person – always selected Yes for 5c, agreeing that the article did contain first person anecdotes. The disagreement therefore was always a matter of degree – was the story mostly told in the first person, or did it just contain some first person anecdotes? – and coders never disagreed on the presence of first person in the articles, which is primarily what the question was there to test for.

Excluding Question 5, the principal coder and additional coder have a PAo of 86%, which is significantly above the prescribed minimum 80% agreement. This measure suggests that the content analysis undertaken in this thesis is reliable.

Reception analysis

It was beyond the scope of this study to focus on all three elements of the three-part media communicative chain suggested by Whannel: production, content, and audience reception (2000, 291). This thesis focuses on the content and audience reception of Daily Life, and uses appropriate methodologies to do so – content analysis and reader surveys. While analysis of the production of content, and attitudes of editors and writers at Daily
Life would add an interesting dimension to analysis of the website, analysing the audience reception of the website was seen to be of more pressing importance. This is because women’s media, and in particular the way women use such media, has historically been ignored in scholarship (Gill 2007a, 14; Zoonen 1994, 123; Ang & Hermes 1991).

Ang’s (1985) study of Dallas viewers is one of the first examples of the “turn to pleasure” (Gill 2007, 13), which saw a shift in focus to how women enjoyed and made meaning from media. Zoonen writes that such reception analysis:

> has produced a steadily increasing body of material about the tastes, preferences and pleasures of women. As such reception analysis is clearly a useful contribution to the larger feminist project to rescue women's experiences from marginalisation and invisibility. (1994, 122)

In light of the importance of reception analysis, and in order to answer the second part of the research question, How do readers use and perceive the site?, a reader survey was conducted.

**Internet survey**

As a methodology, surveys are widely used and “ideally suited to finding out about people's attitudes and opinions” (Stokes 2013, 171), crucial for this research project. The survey was distributed online, which seemed an effective way to reach Daily Life readers, given that it is a website.

The survey used a combination of closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions were designed to gather demographic information, and basic information about how
readers use the website. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share longer reflections on *Daily Life*. In this way, “broad data obtained from the survey could be supported by more qualitative information which would give depth to bold figures” (Stokes 2013, 233).

The researcher designed the survey after “becoming familiar with previous research into the specific area of research, and generally gaining an overview of the subject area” (Stokes 2013, 227). It consisted of 27 questions, taking the average participant approximately six minutes to complete, well below Weerakkody’s maximum of 15 minutes, (2009, 131). The survey was built and distributed using Survey Monkey software, which helped to avoid some of the dangers inherent to the survey methodology, as the website identifies some problematic question phrasing, for example double-barrelled or pointed questions (Weerakkody 2009, 137). The survey was distributed via social media, both from the researcher’s personal accounts, and via accounts of people selected by the researcher. The survey was also promoted on the researcher’s personal blog; and certain people known to the researcher who have blogs followed by large numbers of people were also approached to promote the survey. The bloggers approached were both male and female, of a variety of ages, lived in different Australian cities and blog about very different topics. This was done in an attempt to recruit a broad range of survey respondents.

Inevitably, such a non-probabilistic, targeted approach to recruitment “raises the concern of generalisability… [Since] posting announcements to particular newsgroups or websites is likely to select a particular type of user” (Hewson et al. 2003, 37). However, the data collected is meant to examine the different, individual experiences of readers, and not to produce generalisable data about how all *Daily Life* readers engage with the
website. This fits with Hewson et al.’s analysis that not having generalisable content is not “a major problem for Internet-based research. For one thing, there are many research questions where broad generalisability of data is not what is required” (2003, 37).

The survey was kept open for one month (14th August – 14th September). At the close of that period 142 people had completed the survey and data was analysed using Survey Monkey’s analytics tools.
Chapter Four – Results of Content Analysis

One of the key aims of this research is to provide an outline of the type of content popular on *Daily Life* during its first year of publication, in order to answer the first research question: What content is popular on *Daily Life* and how does it represent women’s issues? To this end, the results of the content analysis of the most-viewed articles of the first year of *Daily Life*’s publication were analysed. The key findings of the content analysis were that *Daily Life* is women-centric, personalised in mode of address, has a feminist, activist tone, and engages in redactional journalism, rather than breaking news.

These results also help to begin answering the third research question of the thesis: To what extent can *Daily Life* assist us in understanding whether women’s media is a feminist triumph or a pink ghetto?

**Article characteristics**

The most-viewed articles on *Daily Life* ranged from 550 to 1430 words, with the average length being 873 words (Q1, Coding Sheet, Appendix E). The most common genres of these articles were opinion pieces (57%) and first person reflections (23%), and the least common genre was the news story, of which there was only one (Q11).
While the topics of the most-viewed articles (Q6) varied significantly, a few trends were observed in the article subjects. Of the 47 articles, 10 related primarily to body image and the way it affects women, which is significant, in light of Wolf’s analysis that body image is a key fight for modern day feminism, with beauty culture functioning as “the most potent political sedative in women’s history” (1990, 187).

Another 10 of the 47 most popular articles were concerned with exposing some manifestation of sexism. The targets of such articles included: sexism on talkback radio, ironic sexism in the fashion industry, sexism toward politicians, sexist television programs, gay comedians making sexist jokes, the gender pay gap, and how gender discrimination can be subtle. With the exception of the article about the gender pay gap, it is interesting to note that many of these articles about sexism are concerned, not with concrete policy initiatives, but with the way that the media and those with cultural influence engage in sexism through the way they talk about gender. These articles are preoccupied with sexism on a representational level, which fits with the focus on the media as a key feminist battleground discussed in Chapter One of this research (Gill 2007a, Creedon 1989, Djerf-Pierre 2011). Moreover, these findings suggest that Daily Life functions as something of a media critic, reporting on debates occurring on and about other media outlets. These results indicate that Daily Life plays the role of sexism watchdog – analysing and scrutinising media representations of women and public discussions of gender.

After these two primary topics, three categories of article were equally common, with four articles apiece: articles about women’s sexuality; articles about parenting; and articles about the sexualisation of women in advertising and media.
It is interesting to note, when evaluating criticisms of the website based on its supposed preoccupation with lifestyle content that only five of the 47 articles were of a traditionally lifestyle nature, and these were about parenting (four articles) and food (one article), with none about any of the topics mentioned by critics – fashion, beauty, celebrity news (Powell 2012; Campbell, 2012).

The website’s woman-centrism

A key finding of the content analysis was that the website is clearly focused on its female readers. This is unsurprising, given the goal of the website is to reach women as a demographic (Oakes 2013), and given the explicitly stated aim of the site as “female-biased” (Daily Life Commenting Policy 2012). The woman-centrism was evident in many of the results, for example, 45 out of 47 articles (96%) were written by women (Q2). This is a significant finding in light of the most recent GMMP study, which found that only 37% of articles written on the day studied in 2010 were written by women (GMMP 2010). More female sources were quoted in the Daily Life articles than male sources (Q3), which is particularly significant given GMMP data that found that women were significantly less likely to be quoted in news stories than men (2010) and Zoch & Turk’s research which concluded that gender disparity in news sources indicated to readers that “women are virtually without power and thus have no access to information that would be of use to the public” (1998, 771). These results are evidence of deliberate attempts of Daily Life writers and editors to address certain gender inequalities in media representations.

Content analysis also found that 68% of the most popular Daily Life articles were gendered in nature. The question of whether or not a story is gendered is a problematic
and contested subject. The coding sheet offered specifications for what counted as a ‘gendered’ story:

- Does it identify itself as engaging with discussions particularly relevant for women, or debates about constructions of femininity? OR
- Does it identify itself as engaging with discussions particularly relevant for men, or debates about constructions of masculinity? OR
- Is it a story about gender and the way that contemporary gender relations happen?

That a large number of stories were about the constructions of masculinity and femininity and relationships between the sexes, fits with Gill’s account of the “preponderance of stories about gender, which seek to document and make sense of changing relations between men and women” (Gill 2007a, 129) written by female columnists in recent years. That such a large number of articles on Daily Life are about gender, and that these articles appeal to women, might be explained by Gill’s notion of “postfeminism” (2007b, 2009), which she argues is the cultural mood regarding gender that pervades Western countries in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. A key feature of this postfeminist sensibility is the confusion about gender relations, and the simultaneous repudiation of feminism and adoption of anti-feminist ideas (Gill 2007b, 161). Confusion about contemporary gender relations might explain why female writers and female readers are so preoccupied with attempt to understand, what McRobbie calls the “double entanglement” of feminist and anti-feminist ideas (2004).

An interesting point of comparison for Daily Life is The Sexes, a section of The Atlantic’s website. The Sexes was launched in 2012 and while it is “devoted to gender dynamics” (Barkhorn, 2012), it deliberately positions itself not as a women’s news website in the same vein as The XX Factor or Daily Life. In her editorial upon the launch of The Sexes,
Barkhorn wrote that their goal “isn't to be a women's site, but rather to focus on issues that affect men and women, from the perspective of both genders” (Barkhorn, 2012), to avoid the “danger of siloing off our coverage of these topics and of sending the message that a story about women… isn't a “real”… story (Barkhorn 2012).

An interesting subject for further study would be a comparison of Daily Life and The Sexes. In particular, it would be interesting to see if producing a website about “the roles that men and women play”, that is aimed at both men and women, is more effective in appealing to male readers than a website that discusses gender issues but is aimed at women, like Daily Life.

**Personalised style**

A key finding of the content analysis was that Daily Life employs a personalised mode of address. Q5 of the content analysis coded for whether the article was written primarily, or in part in the first person because a tone of “personalisation and intimisation” (Zoonen 1991, 217) is said to characterise ‘feminine’ news, whereas the model of dispassionate, objective, bystander journalism is considered to be more masculine (Macdonald 2000, 251-255; Hartley 2000, 45).

Content analysis found that 32% of articles were written primarily in the first person. Of the 68% not written primarily in the first person, all but one article employed first person at some point in the article. That is to say that 46 out of 47 of the Daily Life articles analysed in this study were written primarily or partially in the first person, with only one article eschewing the personal tone all together.
This result is quite significant, for it revealed that Zoonen’s ‘personalisation and intimisation’ thesis of female media can be seen to be true of *Daily Life*. This is not to say that this personal style is inherently female, but the fact that it is the dominant style published on Fairfax’s “female biased” website indicates to readers that the personal, anecdotal style is linked to femininity.

The fact that first person was employed so often is also almost certainly linked to the predominance of opinion pieces and feature articles on *Daily Life* (Q11), two genres likely to include the perspective of the journalist. Because this research employs both directed and conventional content analysis, “in which categories are derived from the text during analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) the researcher was able to add “first person reflection” as a category to Q11, Into which category does the article fit? First person reflections accounted for 23% of the most popular *Daily Life* articles.

**Feminist, activist tone**

A key finding of this research is that *Daily Life* engages in political discussions about women’s issues, assuming an activist, feminist tone.

The fact that almost all of the articles were found to employ first person (Q5) is not to say that they were all therefore concerned with minutiae or the domestic sphere. Q5b of the content analysis found that 62.5% of the articles written primarily in the first person aimed to connect a first person experience with a broader socio-political issue.

This question was posed because a key ground on which women’s media is defended is that it has a political advocacy role (Hayashi 2000; Tuchman 1978; Jaffe 2012), and
women’s media has often had to defend itself on the grounds that it is ‘serious’ journalism produced on behalf of women, instead of just talking about “turning artichokes into lampshades” (Steinem, quoted in Friedman 2009) or being mired in discussions about the “the inequities of dishwashing” (Didion 1972). In a masculinist paradigm where dispassionate, objective journalism is valued, articles written in the first person might need to be justified on the grounds that they attempt to connect the personal and the political (Macdonald 2000).

Q10 found that 77% of articles had an activist tone, “pushing for political action or consciousness-raising”. Q7 of content analysis found that 64% of Daily Life articles analysed were ‘feminist’ in nature. Drawing on Gill’s work about the complexities of defining anything as straightforwardly ‘feminist’ (2007a, 38), the coding sheet specified that the researcher was coding for whether or not a writer enters into discussions about feminism and its impact. Q7 asked: “Does the story deliberately position itself within feminist debates? i.e. Does it make reference to debates within contemporary feminism, or the impact of feminism upon contemporary society?”

Q7: Is the article feminist in nature?

![Bar Chart]

- Yes: 64%
- No: 36%
The fact that 64% of articles self-identified as feminist fits with results from the reader survey, 61% of respondents to which indicated that they thought the website was “very much” or “somewhat” feminist.

Moreover, during the reader surveys, the presence of a feminist ideology on the website was consistently cited by respondents in open-ended responses. 22 respondents to Q17, How do you see the female bias reflected in the content of Daily Life?, cited the presence of feminist ideas in the website as betraying its female-bias, “The website strives to critique the social and political factors which shape and affect women’s experiences”.

In response to Q24, which asked how respondents saw Daily Life’s feminist nature reflected, some respondents had qualms with the assertion that Daily Life was feminist “It is feminism but problematically so, I see it as very white middle and upper class, only-for-the-educated feminism”; “Just because it caters to women doesn’t necessarily mean its [sic] “feminist”. The articles are for women’s interest but not overtly about the “empowerment” of women”; “It thinks it is, but because it has a very specific view of
what counts as ‘feminism’ this locks out alternative viewpoints that clash with this majority view.”

Most of the respondents suggested that for various reasons, the website was in fact a feminist one. The key reasons for considering *Daily Life* as feminist were that the writers identified as such “[feminism is] the explicit self-understanding of the site”; because it discussed women’s issues “it supports women’s rights and provides a platform from which to discuss women’s issues”; talked about female empowerment “Because most content is based on shedding light on gender inequality, or it’s about empowering women”; assumed an activist tone, “It raises the issues of oppression of women at home and abroad quite boldly to agitate for social change”; and because it addressed a gap in the media, providing a perspective and talking about issues that have been neglected by traditional media, “challenge[s] some of the male views we read all the time.”

Given how frequently the feminist, advocacy tone was detected in *Daily Life* articles during content analysis and how many survey respondents commented on it, this advocacy role seems to be crucial to *Daily Life*. This is important when evaluating the website, and attempting to understand its appeal to female readers. It would seem the initial allegations of critics that the website would publish only trivial, lifestyle content (Campbell 2012; Powell 2012) neglects the presence of a political dimension to the website. Such a criticism, does not reflect the experience of readers, but imposes a particular ideological reading of the website onto it. This is not to say that *Daily Life* is solely, or even primarily concerned with political agenda setting and consciousness raising – respondents also repeatedly commented on the presence of lifestyle content – but the presence of a feminist tone was commented on and enjoyed by a majority of (female) readers.
This research found that *Daily Life* identifies itself, and to some degree, is identified by readers as a ‘feminist’ website, containing feminist opinions and engaging in debates and advocacy work traditionally the purview of feminism.

**Redactional in nature**

During the content analysis process, the researcher discovered that while articles featured a small number of sources interviewed by the writer (13 female, 10 male across all 47 articles, Q3), they also featured other writers quoted by the writer. The researcher was then able to add a question to test the number and gender of writers quoted, furthering Zoch & Turk’s gendered analysis of sources and helping to ascertain if the article was redactional in nature.

Hartley employs the term ‘redactional’ to discuss the new role of journalists in a society where citizens have access to vast amounts of news and information. In such an age, he writes, “the journalist can develop a new role as one who cuts through the crap. Journalists are search engines who provide editorial services for other users” (2000, 43). When there is so much information directly accessible to the public, “the journalist is well placed indeed, not as an original writer, but as a professional *redactor*… reporting is the reprocessing of existing discourse” (2000, 44).

Content analysis found that more writers were quoted than were sources interviewed by the writer (27 writers compared to 23 interviewees). Q11, Into which category does the article fit?, found that 57% of the most-viewed *Daily Life* articles were opinion columns, a
likely genre for “the reprocessing of existing discourse” (2000, 44); and only one article was a news story.

Moreover, 46 out of the 47 articles analysed were ‘soft news’, according to Tuchman’s definition, which is that: “knowledge of the event was not gleaned by a routine (perhaps daily) interaction with a recognized news generating institution and the knowledge is not viewed as being dated by the passage of one or more days” (1978, 201). Tuchman defended the publication of ‘soft news’ rather than daily breaking news, by the women’s pages on the grounds that it freed women’s pages to focus on long-standing, societal gender issues, rather than daily news events.

98% of Daily Life articles could be classified as ‘soft news’; some of the articles referred to events weeks, even months ago. Article 7, “Why women still can’t enjoy sex” begins: “Three weeks ago”; Article 41, “Behold: powerful, public parenting in action” published in December 2012, focused on an event that occurred “Earlier this year”; and many articles are not event-focused, but discuss broader issues, or even personal experiences of the authors from years previous. For example, Article 43 “I was in beauty pageants as a child” and Article 44, “I watched my own plastic surgery”, deal with events in the authors’ personal lives from at least ten years prior to writing.

These results combine to suggest that Daily Life is not primarily engaged in breaking news, but in reporting on events and issues that are long-standing or are already being discussed in the media. Because of this, Hartley’s notion of ‘redactional journalism’ is a helpful way of describing the mode of address common to Daily Life articles. It is difficult to know if this is mostly the result of editorial policy or resource constraints. It could be that Daily Life is engaging in redactional journalism quite deliberately, hoping
that the website might become something of a feminist media aggregator, as well as a media watchdog website. However, it should be acknowledged that conducting original news reporting is a considerably more expensive method of journalism than commentary and analysis, which does not require reporters and photographers out in the field. Consequently it might be financial, rather than editorial concerns which mean *Daily Life* features redactional content so heavily. Research that focused on the production of *Daily Life* – including interviews with editors and writers – would be valuable for understanding the editorial philosophy and economic constraints that might inform such content choices, and is a recommendation for further study.

This redactional tone of the website adds an interesting element to answering the third research question: To what extent can *Daily Life* assist us in determining whether women’s news websites are pink ghettos or feminist triumphs? If a key problem that websites like *Daily Life* is trying to address is the absence of coverage of women in the news, then the redactional discussion of sexism in the media will only affect change up to a point. The redactional task of reporting on the discussions and debates occurring in the world’s media is, without question, important for consciousness-raising and analysis. But a significant task in rectifying the ‘problem’ of female representation is that women’s websites also report on women. That is to say, women’s websites should not just write about how sportswomen receive significantly less coverage than their male counterparts (Bridges 2013; Squiers 2013; Wicks 2013), or how female authors are discriminated against (Edwards 2013; Macdonald 2013; Simmonds 2013). Instead they should start covering women’s sport and regularly reviewing art produced by women. They should not just write about the sexism faced by female politicians (Baird 2012), though this is important, but dedicate space to reporting on women politicians’ substantive policy initiatives.
Hartley acknowledges that redactional journalism “doesn’t have the same agenda-setting function for public affairs” (2000, 44). If *Daily Life* wants to be involved in agenda-setting work, changing the conversation about women and not just talking about how the conversation needs to be changed, then it also needs to report on events that affect women, women’s successes, their struggles, sport, and art. This is almost certainly a more expensive method of journalism, and may not be a financial option for *Daily Life*, particularly given the staff cuts that have taken place at Fairfax in recent years⁴, but would be a way of furthering the feminist work of the website.

The content analysis of the most-viewed articles of *Daily Life*’s first year of existence answers the first research question. The content that is popular on *Daily Life* is woman-centric, feminist in ideology, personalised in tone, and redactional in nature. Lifestyle content featured at very low rates in the most popular content, and so the great fear of critics that it would be a ‘pink ghetto’ full of “belittling nonsense that reduces women’s interests to shopping and famous people” (Powell 2012) can be seen to be unrealised. This research has found that *Daily Life* often represents women’s issues in a serious, political way and that readers identify it as a strongly feminist website. In particular, *Daily Life* functions as a watchdog of sexist representations of women in the media and in advertising, but it is redactional and does not break much news itself. Consequently *Daily Life* plays the role of commentator on sexism, rather than direct activist against it.

⁴ In June 2012, Fairfax announced it would cut 1900 jobs across the country by 2015, as one of a raft of money-saving measures (Zappone 2012). In October 2013, Fairfax announced that a further 20 redundancies would be offered across Fairfax’s News Media and Life Media arms, which *Daily Life* fits into (Heffernan 2013).
Chapter Five – Survey results

The online surveys conducted of *Daily Life* readers provided data to help answer the second research question: How do readers use and perceive the website? The key findings of the survey were that female readers use *Daily Life* differently to male readers; that readers were concerned about gendered segregation; readers were quite critical of the presence of lifestyle content on the website; and they felt that *Daily Life* addressed a gap in the media landscape. Moreover, as any evaluation of *Daily Life* must take seriously the uses to which it is put by readers, these findings also help to answer the third research question: To what extent can *Daily Life* assist us in understanding whether women’s media is a feminist triumph or a pink ghetto?

Female and male readers

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Daily Life*’s target audience is women, and this is reflected in the content studied, with more female authors, sources and writers quoted, and a majority of the content being gendered, and feminist in nature. What the survey results added to these findings was that female and male readers responded very differently to this gender focus.

Q7 of the reader survey, How often do you access *Daily Life*?, found that female respondents accessed the website overwhelmingly more than male respondents, and
there was a particularly large gap in the number of male and female respondents who accessed the website “Only very occasionally” (F: 37%, M: 58%).

**Q7: How often do you access Daily Life?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Number and percentage of female respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of male respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than once a day</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>9.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>13.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>6.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every few weeks</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21.21%</td>
<td>24.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only very occasionally</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>57.58%</td>
<td>42.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey found that not only did women access the website more than men, but that women enjoyed the website more than men. In response to Q13, What content do you enjoy reading?, a higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents enjoyed all of the article categories, except for opinion columns, which were enjoyed by fractionally more male respondents than female respondents (F: 70.21%, M: 70.37%).

**Q13: What content do you enjoy reading?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and percentage of female respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of male respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News articles</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.32%</td>
<td>40.74%</td>
<td>52.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature articles</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.72%</td>
<td>70.37%</td>
<td>76.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion columns</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food stories/recipes</td>
<td>70.21%</td>
<td>70.37%</td>
<td>70.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/fitness stories</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/celebrity news</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion stories</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories about ordinary people</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is unsurprising that a website aimed at female readers is enjoyed by women more than men, though this does point to the fact that such a website does indeed ‘silicon off’ coverage of women to a separate space that male readers are less likely to access. This means that when ‘serious’ issues relating to gender – women’s successes, gender-based discrimination, or sexual violence, for example, all of which concern both men and women– are discussed primarily on Daily Life rather than in The Sydney Morning Herald or on the main Fairfax websites, they may not receive the attention from male readers that they warrant, because the rest of the content does not appeal to men.

This hypothesis is furthered by the fact that male respondents expressed a particular distaste for, or at least disinterest in, the gender focused content of the website, a category most of this feminist, activist writing fits into. Q14, Why do you read Daily Life?, found that the most popular reason selected by female respondents was its specific focus on women (59%). This reason was only selected by 14% of male respondents, making it the least popular reason given by men for reading.

Similarly, in response to Q20, How important was the discussion of women’s issues to your enjoyment of Daily Life?, there was a very large gap (35%) in the proportion of
female and male respondents who declared the discussion of women’s issues to be “Important” or “Extremely important” (F: 59%, M: 24%). Even more striking was the 39% gap between the genders when it came to those who thought the discussion of women’s issues was “Not at all important” to their enjoyment of the website (F: 9%, M: 48%).

Q20: How important was the discussion of women’s issues to your enjoyment of Daily Life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and percentage of female respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of male respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>8 9.09%</td>
<td>12 48%</td>
<td>20 17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>28 31.82%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
<td>35 30.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>35 39.77%</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
<td>40 35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>17 19.32%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>18 15.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the open-ended questions, female respondents repeatedly expressed how much they enjoyed the focus on women present in the website: “Love it! They articulate my rage eloquently and perfectly”; “I don’t mind that its [sic] fairly female focused. I enjoy the articles as often they are relevant for me and my life.”

While there were some male respondents who expressed favourable opinions about the gendered content on the website, they were in the minority among male respondents, suggesting that in general women read Daily Life for its gender focus, whereas men read it despite its gender focus.
Several respondents expressed fears that segregating content by gender meant that issues important to women would not be read by men, nor receive mainstream coverage. “I like it a lot but I wish more men read it. Men will never read these articles because they are framed only as 'women's issues’”; “I sometimes feel uncomfortable with the gender focus. I think it is sad that these articles are relegated to female issues and are not in a forum that is more mainstream and accessible to men.” (Q25)

One male respondent confirmed that this fear was justified in his case: “I think the website caters mainly to women, as a male I have no issue with this at all, it just means that I wont [sic] be regularly using this website, due to other news websites having the same content that isnt [sic] geared towards women.”

If part of the agenda of the website is to promote discussion of women’s issues, issues that have traditionally been neglected or sidelined by mainstream media, then the fact that male readers are largely uninterested in this content is a disappointing finding for Daily Life. The fact that the feminist elements of the website are not gaining traction among male readers is significant, and combined with the findings of the survey regarding the segregation of women’s content, suggests that Daily Life is more pink ghetto than feminist triumph in this regard, at least.

**Segregation of women’s issues**

Several survey respondents expressed concerns about the cordonning off of women’s issues into a separate news space. These respondents gave voice to the debates outlined in this thesis that feminist media theorists have been engaging in for many years. One respondent suggested that relegating women’s content to a separate space was directly
antagonistic to feminism: “I associate feminism with something not involving being sequestered away from mainstream sites, but infiltrating them and getting a presence.”

Another respondent drew the link between Daily Life and the historical women’s pages.

In my view the tradition is as much aligned to the "women's" pages concept in the old SMH, updated and informed by feminism but not feminist per se. The whole paper is arguably more feminist than in the past... However this part of the paper [Daily Life]... bucks the feminist assumptions of the rest of the paper and is a throwback to the old tradition I have mentioned.

Other survey respondents voiced concerns that publishing content about women on a separate website implied that women and issues concerning them were secondary to mainstream masculine news. “In some ways it seems like Fairfax could sort of be shunting women's issues off to the side by having a separate site for them”; “when we still need to have intentionally 'separate' feminist content magazines within mainstream media outlets, then perhaps equality in gender discourse has not come as far as we would like.”

These respondents articulated common debates about women’s pages that have reignited since women’s news websites emerged five years ago. Harp writes that:

Placing women’s issues on special pages both spoke to editors’ perceived importance of the issue and diminished the worth of the story by indicating it was meant only for women and was of no concern to men. Those opposed to special women’s sections described them as ‘ghettoizing’ women’s content and serving as a ‘dumping ground’ for any content marginally related to women.

(Harp 2006, 100)
This research has found that *Daily Life* segregates content about women into a separate space, which fewer men read, and that male readers have little interest in the gendered and feminist content on the website. These findings also help to ascertain whether *Daily Life* is a feminist triumph or a pink ghetto, because they suggest that *Daily Life*, though feminist in tone, is not effective in expanding the conversation about women and feminism into the mainstream. Rosen’s criticism of the historical women’s pages would seem to be somewhat true of *Daily Life* as well: “women's pages fostered a vibrant discussion among women, but they weren't able to push that discussion out into the wider world where it would have a greater impact” (Rosen 2012). For this reason, *Daily Life* is, at best, a short-term, partial solution to the problem of women’s representation in media, which can only be addressed when news companies adapt their main websites and their newspapers to better include and represent women. *Daily Life* might be a helpful step to keep these discussions public, particularly given the findings of this research that they function as something of a sexism-in-media watchdog. But if *Daily Life*, and other women’s websites, do not help to boost mainstream discussions and reporting about women, they are not the long-term feminist triumph that some might have hoped.

**Lifestyle content**

An interesting finding of the survey was that readers perceived the website as containing inordinate amounts of lifestyle content, more than was reflected in the content analysis, and many expressed opinions that such content was shallow, unnecessary and harmful to the website’s reputation.
Lifestyle content was seen by many respondents as strongly linked to femininity. In response to Q17, How do you see the ‘female bias’ reflected in the content of the website?, 27% of all respondents cited the prevalence of lifestyle content as proof of its femininity: “The sections – food, fashion, life love and relationships, etc., are all stereotypically feminine”; “Fashion’ and ‘Beauty’ are drop down tabs. Would not occur on male website.”

Many respondents expressed negative judgments of lifestyle content on the site, often as a counterpoint to a positive appraisal of the more ‘serious’ side of the website. “Discussions on feminism and issues that feminism addresses, also the usual recepies [sic] what-to-wear stuff, vacant celebrity gossip”; “clearly lots of stuff directed at women such as recipes, horoscope, suggestions on women's fashion … (not so keen on these) but also a focus on analysis [sic] of current social and political issues and how they affect women”. This was by far the most common criticism of the website expressed throughout the survey, together with a belief that the tone of Daily Life was unintelligent: “i’m [sic] generally put off the website because all the headlines and links sound so gossipy… an ugly side of putting women all in the same room together”. Even some respondents to Q28, What would you like to see Daily Life do in the future?, who were happy with the website, urged it to focus less on lifestyle content. “More of the same but less celebrity focus”; “Get rid of fashion and celebrity stuff – its [sic] too frivolous”; and some respondents were even more forthright: “Less articles about mindless dribble, engage with the real issues facing women and don’t insult our intelligence by dumbing down the content”.

Some respondents noted the intelligence and seriousness of Daily Life’s content with a tone of surprise or defensiveness: “there are actually intelligent op-eds”; “it seems geared
more toward encouraging intelligence & deep thinking, rather than playing to stereotypes that women only like celebrity gossip & fashion articles”; “It has more depth than I first thought.” The fact that a large number of respondents felt the need to defend the fact that Daily Life contained intelligent content, or were surprised that the content was intelligent, not only shows the historic link between lifestyle content and women continues to exist, but it also suggests that the public perception of women’s media is that they are generally of low quality and low intelligence.

While the main criticisms from commentators at Daily Life’s launch, and the most scathing criticisms from readers in the survey were due to the website’s lifestyle content, lifestyle content did not feature significantly in the list of Daily Life’s most popular articles of its first year of publication. The topics of articles that might traditionally be considered “lifestyle content” were, for both male and female respondents, the least popular categories of articles (Q13). Even the most popular category among lifestyle categories – “Health/fitness stories” – was selected as enjoyable content by only 31% of respondents, compared to 70% who enjoyed feature articles and 77% who enjoyed the opinion columns.

Q13: What content do you like reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and percentage of female respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of male respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News articles</td>
<td>52 55.32%</td>
<td>11 40.74%</td>
<td>63 52.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature articles</td>
<td>74 78.72%</td>
<td>19 70.37%</td>
<td>93 76.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion columns</td>
<td>66 70.21%</td>
<td>19 70.37%</td>
<td>85 70.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food stories/recipes</td>
<td>34 36.17%</td>
<td>2 7.41%</td>
<td>36 29.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/fitness stories</td>
<td>34 36.17%</td>
<td>3 7.41%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This suggests that lifestyle content is not the main reason that readers engage with Daily Life, nor do they find the lifestyle content as interesting as the more ‘serious’ content contained in news stories, feature articles and opinion columns. This finding was also supported by the content analysis, which found that only five of the 47 articles (11%) could be classed as ‘lifestyle’.

An interesting result emerged from Q15, which asked readers to rank which of the three following goals of Daily Life they see as most important:

- Reporting information about domestic concerns and family life.
- Providing entertaining and enjoyable content.
- Directing public awareness to political issues and issues for social change.

Virtually an equal number of respondents saw the main goal of the website as “providing entertaining and enjoyable content” and “directing public awareness to political issues and issues for social change” – that is they saw the entertainment function and the advocacy functions of the website as equally important.

When average rankings are considered, all three goals of Daily Life – reporting on domestic concerns (1.91), its advocacy function (2.00) and entertainment function (2.09) – are quite evenly weighted.
Despite the fact that respondents self-reported as not being interested in lifestyle content, and that the majority of the most-read articles of Daily Life did not contain lifestyle content, it is impossible to ignore the fact that a great deal of the content that surrounds the main feature articles on the Daily Life homepage is lifestyle content (Appendix A). Indeed, it would be interesting to see the different readership statistics if one were to add together the smaller page views generated by the many smaller lifestyle articles and compare it to the page views generated by the main features. Such analysis was beyond the scope of this study, but is recommended as a subject of further research. The high volume of peripheral lifestyle content on Daily Life makes sense of a reader response such as this one: “It's rubbish. A little light entertainment but it mostly exists to
propel gender stereotypes. The fact you can shop at the bottom is insulting to a ‘news’ outlet.”

The presence of lifestyle content presents one of the most significant problems for Daily Life. Lifestyle content is so strongly associated with the feminine that it seems people assume a women’s website will primarily publish lifestyle content, with the occasional tokenistic ‘serious’ piece, even if such an assumption is unjustified. Editors must, then, negotiate not only the actual dilemma of how much entertainment-based lifestyle content to publish and how much serious, advocacy-style reporting to include, but how to balance these two goals in light of the gendered assumptions people make about their content.

Daily Life editors at this point, have a few options. They can decide, for the sake of credibility, that they will publish little to no lifestyle content and prove to their critics that they are in fact a ‘serious’ website. However, this might not be an option for financial reasons, as lifestyle content may be crucial for attracting advertising. Alternatively, Daily Life editors might decide that they do not agree with the masculinist mindset that lifestyle content, particularly content relating to women, is trivial and unimportant. They might, like some of the survey respondents in this research, consider some of the lifestyle content engaging and of value, not necessarily stupid or vacuous, “It’s a mix of hard hitting opinion pieces with light, but smart lifestyle content,” wrote one respondent. And many respondents spoke of their enjoyment of the lifestyle content when asked about what they found interesting about Daily Life.

The disparagement of lifestyle content has historically been gendered, with women’s culture considered low and uninteresting, and with private sphere concerns such as
parenting, food, relationships and health – traditionally the domain of women – considered unworthy of public discussion. In light of this, the publication of lifestyle content might be a deliberate ideological move, reclaiming women’s culture and women’s interests as worthy of public discussion. However, such a move is also problematic: not only does it attract the criticism of those who consider lifestyle content as synonymous with inane, vacuous, tabloid journalism; there might also be some validity to some criticisms of lifestyle content, in that ideologies present in lifestyle content can sometimes be regressive and anti-feminist, as was discussed in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to conflicting ideologies present in women’s magazines.

Some respondents identified contradictory discourses present on Daily Life, in particular, that some of the lifestyle content contained anti-feminist ideas. “I feel like some of the stuff contradicts itself- it will have a story about a kind of 'female empowerment' but then have stories about why you should look like a babe (which to me points to male oriented thinking)”; “it has articles that sort of try to say 'you're body shape isn't important', but then another that is 'why you should look like a babe all the time'”. It is interesting to note that such criticisms about contradictory ideologies are almost always directed at women’s media (McRobbie 2004; Jeffreys 1999; Gill 2009) and rarely directed at men’s media – men’s magazines, television programmes aimed at men etc. An interesting question for further study is how male-gendered consumer magazines frame their use of lifestyle content, and whether we expect a cohesive ideology from all news outlets or just women’s ones.

This thesis contends that lifestyle content represents an extremely troublesome question for women’s media. Women’s media are often dismissed as pink ghettos – uninteresting and invalid – for publishing lifestyle content, or even for the perception that they publish
it. On the other hand, editors might feel that publishing lifestyle content is a feminist act of defying masculinist norms. However, lifestyle content should be scrutinised, because it, perhaps more than other forms of content, can reinforce gender stereotypes and contain harmful repressive ideologies. It is up to individual editorial teams to decide how to handle this question. Perhaps they can only answer it in light of commercial interest, but the conclusion of this research is that women’s news websites should not be dismissed out-of-hand as regressive – pink ghettos – for simply containing lifestyle content. At the same time, such websites cannot be assessed or understood without taking into account lifestyle content as a key and problematic factor.

**Addressing the gap in the media landscape**

One of the most consistent and significant findings of the reader survey was that *Daily Life* addresses a gap in the media landscape; that through its female-focused content, *Daily Life* provided coverage of issues that respondents didn’t feel were being covered elsewhere.

In Q22, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *Daily Life* discusses issues that aren’t covered by other media outlets. Though there was no open-ended question that specifically asked about this subject, respondents repeatedly mentioned the fact *Daily Life* covered issues and discussed perspectives that were neglected in mainstream media.

Two respondents to Q17, How do you see the female-bias of *Daily Life* reflected in the content of the site?, eight respondents to Q23, Do you see *Daily Life* as a feminist website? Why?, three respondents to Q26, What do you find interesting about *Daily Life*?
and 18 respondents to Q25, What are your reflections on the gender focus of the website?, commented that *Daily Life* met a gap in the media landscape, providing content and perspectives that weren’t available elsewhere. Respondents stated that *Daily Life* contained: “a strong female voice [that] has been absent from mainstream media”; “It is a different perspective from mainstream media. I find it almost contradictory that it exists run by Fairfax – you would thing [sic] it was run by a women [sic] collective not a big media mogul who in other publications reflects societal [sic] misogyny…”

Many of these respondents expressed a view that mainstream media was masculine in nature, an idea discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. Respondents wrote: “It’s nice to see something that’s not so male-dominated”; “I think that having a female biased news media site is great as the history of media presentation is predominantly upper middle class male focused”; “Can be a helpful corrective to an otherwise male-weighted media.”

That this observation recurred so often throughout the survey and was made by so many respondents suggests that the lack of representation of women in the media and the masculinist bias of traditional news, identified in this thesis, has not gone unnoticed by readers. Indeed, it is the continued existence of this problem of female representation which prompted the founding of many of the women’s news websites (The Washington Post 2012; Oakes 2012), which are seen as attempting to rectify this imbalance by providing a space for the discussion of issues related to women traditionally neglected by mainstream media.

The third research question of this thesis, which asks whether *Daily Life* and websites like it are feminist triumphs or pink ghettos, is a complicated one, but when attempting to answer it, the fact that readers consistently reported that they found *Daily Life* a “helpful
corrective to an otherwise male-weighted media” is extremely significant. Whatever might be concluded about the long-term efficacy of separate women’s news websites, in the eyes of readers, *Daily Life* is providing a forum for the discussion of issues that are significant to women. If we are to take seriously the way that readers engage with and perceive the site, something that is crucial for feminist media analysis, then this is suggestive that *Daily Life* is in this respect, if not a feminist triumph, then at least in the short-term something of a feminist success.

The online survey gave insight into how readers use and perceive *Daily Life*, helping to answer the second research question of this thesis. It found that male and female readers engaged with the website differently, with male readers being uninterested in the gender focus of the website. This pointed to the fact that the segregation of women’s issues to a separate space really did mean, as some people feared it would, that issues relating to women would be ignored by men. Because this occurs and *Daily Life* does not expand the discussion of sexism and women into the mainstream, *Daily Life* cannot be considered as a permanent solution to the problem of female representation in the media. However, many respondents did identify the website as addressing a gap in the media landscape, which suggests that *Daily Life*, in providing a forum for the discussion of women’s issues, is, in the eyes of the readers, something of a feminist triumph. Finally, the presence of lifestyle content was of concern to readers, and the presence of such content is the most common reason that a website might be deemed a ‘pink ghetto’ by critics, and presents one of the most difficult issues for editors of a women’s news website.
Chapter Six – Pink ghetto or feminist triumph?

Daily Life was launched, according to editor Sarah Oakes, because “Back in 2011 Fairfax, the publisher of this website, decided there was a gap in their portfolio for an opinion-driven website that looked at news, current affairs and lifestyle content from a female perspective” (2013). While Daily Life has received mixed reactions, with some people infuriated by the sexism perceived in such a website, Oakes’ editorial suggested that Daily Life was launched with the goal of improving the representation of women, allowing female authors a platform, and creating a more inclusive gendered media space – as well as being launched for financial reasons (Campaign Brief, 2011; Tarr 2011; AdCentre 2013).

Daily Life offers itself as a solution, or at least a partial corrective, to the historical exclusions and under-representations women have undergone in the media. It proffers itself as a website presenting “a wide range of women’s voices… [and] agitating to give women’s issues a more prominent place on the public agenda” (Oakes 2013). This has been the question of this thesis. Is Daily Life, as Oakes hoped, a feminist triumph, expanding the conversation about women? Or has it become, as detractors predicted, a ‘pink ghetto’, which is summarily ignored by mainstream media and does little to change the masculinist agenda and structure of the news?

Qualitative content analysis of the most-viewed articles of Daily Life’s first year of publication has given insight into what content is popular on the website, and how Daily Life represents women’s issues. This analysis is particularly important because criticisms of the website at its launch centred on the fact that Daily Life’s content would be inane,
“belittling nonsense” (Powell 2012), and as a consequence, Daily Life would indeed be a ‘pink ghetto’.

The content analysis presented in this thesis found that such criticisms and fears were unjustified. Daily Life does adopt an overwhelmingly personalised tone and covers ‘soft news’ (as defined by Tuchman 1978, i.e. not breaking news), both of which are typically affiliated with a feminine style that may not be taken seriously by critics evaluating Daily Life using masculinist criteria. However, the majority of the articles connected personal experiences with broader political issues, a key task of feminism (Hanisch 1970), and ‘soft news’ has historically been valuable in reporting on long-running issues of gender discrimination. As for the presence of lifestyle content, which is the key element critics feared would push Daily Life into a pink ghetto, it was found to account for less than 11% of the most popular articles.

Moreover, Daily Life’s most popular content was overwhelmingly focused on women, and feminist in nature. In particular the site functioned as a watchdog of other media and advertisements, critiquing sexist representations of women. Because of this, Oakes’ declaration that Daily Life provides “feisty female commentary… and robust feminist debate,” (Oakes 2013) can be seen to be true.

The online reader survey, which sought to answer how readers use and perceive the website, found that readers overwhelmingly recognised this feminist bent to Daily Life. Moreover, they felt that a feminist-oriented, female-biased website like Daily Life was a rarity in the current media landscape and filled a gap in what they identified as a male-weighted media. The fact that so many readers who were surveyed identified the masculine bent of mainstream media reflects the seriousness of the gender bias in the
contemporary media situation, and is part of the reason that separate female-focused media spaces, like *Daily Life*, are thought to be necessary. “Is it any wonder that women’s magazines and websites still appeal?” wrote Rosen. “They provide space for women to talk to each other, since we’re still too often left out of the conversation in front of male audiences.” (2010) And such a goal seems, at least to some degree, to be working. LaFrance writes that, “many women-centric sites today are finding ways to instead amplify voices and perspectives that were previously sectioned off from broader audiences or not being shared at all.” (2013)

This research has found that *Daily Life* has produced feminist content, “amplified voices” of female writers, and is effective in raising awareness of issues facing women that they felt were neglected by mainstream news.

However, this does not mean that *Daily Life* is a feminist triumph. A key reason put forward by media scholars in defence of the historical women’s pages was that they made male editors “realize the importance of topics covered by the staff of the women’s page and that more women's stories were starting on page one” (Gallagher, 1981, 44). This study was unable to assess whether *Daily Life*’s work raising awareness of women’s issues means that more articles about women make it into *The Sydney Morning Herald*, though this would be an excellent topic for further research. But it did find that only a small proportion of *Daily Life* readers were men and most male readers expressed little interest, and in some cases a direct aversion, to the gendered and feminist content found there. Moreover many female readers, while enjoying *Daily Life*, felt that its existence was evidence that Fairfax was “shunting” them to the side and not taking them seriously as a readership.
These results suggest that *Daily Life* has so far been unsuccessful in its attempts to push the discussion of women and feminist issues beyond a discussion among women, to be taken seriously by male readers as well. In order for feminist change to occur, concerns about women need to be made mainstream, and in the words of *The Atlantic’s* Anne-Marie Slaughter, “men have to join the conversation—publicly, candidly, and loudly” (quoted in Barkhorn 2012), which is something not occurring at *Daily Life*.

This was the finding of the journalists who reflected upon the trend of women’s news websites in the USA over the past four years. LaFrance wrote that writers who succeed in women’s pages or women’s news websites often struggle “to find success in non-gendered media outlets” and the websites themselves “don’t often succeed in broadening the definition of a ‘women’s issue’” (LaFrance 2013). Voss wrote:

> We start Web pages that are for women by women, but it's a Band-Aid on the bigger problem, which is not taking issues that relate to women seriously. The women's pages are certainly good for women and journalism in the short term. But long-term change will only come from pushing general-interest publications to be fully inclusive of women readers and writers (Voss, in Friedman 2009).

Addressing the problem of female representation in the media is a monumental task. A ‘feminist triumph’ in terms of media representation of women would see a change to: masculine news culture, which makes it difficult for women to be hired and promoted to editorial, decision-making positions, and assigns female journalists to gender-biased, lower-status beats; the masculinist conception of what counts as news, with its focus on being a “profession of violence” (Hartley 2000, 45) and the exclusion of female sources, subjects and perspectives; and a disruption of the binary between female, tabloid, lifestyle, unimportant journalism and male, hard-hitting, serious, important journalism. In
short, what is required is not just “a fundamental change in news as a narrative genre” (Rakow & Kranich 1991, 9), but a fundamental change in the narrative, production and conception of news.

This is, of course, an immense undertaking, and the fact that Daily Life has not achieved a complete overhaul of the gendered ideals of news at Fairfax in less than two years, is by no means to suggest their feminist ideals are lacking, or that they have somehow failed. However, the danger of the existence of something like Daily Life is that it might cause Fairfax editors and executives to think they have met their obligations to women, and not consider more significant changes to their main news product, to newsroom culture, and newsgathering practices.

After all, in 2011, Fairfax executives realised they were not appealing to women and instead of critically assessing their news practices to see if they in any way excluded women, they decided to create a separate website for women, and leave their main website and newspaper intact and unchanged. That Daily Life has become a hub of feminist content, and is filling a gap in the media landscape in the eyes of female readers, is to the credit of its editors, but it does not rectify the gender inequity that underlies the fact that it is a separate, segregated website. This research has found that Daily Life contains the “intelligent, insightful and analytical content for Australian women” (Oakes 2013) that it promised, but in creating Daily Life as a separate structure, such content is segregated, denoted as secondary, and potentially stymies any further attempts to address gender imbalances at Fairfax. Therefore, the conclusion of this research is that Daily Life, while certainly a feminist website and a welcome addition to the Australian media landscape, cannot, at this point, be described as a feminist triumph.
Appendix B: List of most read stories on *Daily Life* (February 2012 – January 2013)

February 2012
1. Mossimo whatever were you thinking?
2. How to respect women
3. Should gay men make sexist jokes?
4. The biggest parenting mistake you can ever make

March 2012
1. Do you have a bitch face?
2. I took my kids to a sex and death museum
3. Why women still can’t enjoy sex
4. Are you a victim of microaggression?

April 2012
1. Society sandwiches
2. Matt Moran on the grill
3. A trend-spotter’s guide to female desire – not available on *Daily Life*
4. Sexist TV: a spotter’s guide

May 2012
1. How to spot a misogynist
2. Germaine, you broke our hearts
3. The number two question no woman wants to be asked
4. Hipster sexism

June 2012
1. Hair under your arms
2. I like a little something to hold on to
3. Why you shouldn’t dress for your shape
4. I regret having kids

July 2012
1. This woman went topless in the city
2. What we can all learn Ann Curry’s humiliation
3. Are we in need of sexual healing?
4. Disturbing ad labeled a work of art

August 2012
1. We need to talk about Honey Boo Boo
2. The 7 kinds of difficult people at work
3. Weighing Jackie O
4. A Christian take on porn

September 2012
1. GQ’s bizarre cover edit
2. The child and the pop star
3. Can we please stop the victim blaming?
4. Like a virgin but not quite
October 2012
1. Madonna’s most tasteless performance ever
2. Spring racing: was there ever a greater scam played on women?
3. Skinny privilege
4. What you can’t tell about a woman from her body shape

November 2012
1. Five burning questions about the Victoria’s Secret parade
2. Performative relationships
3. How to demean a woman
4. The video every woman needs to watch

December 2012
1. Behold powerful public parenting in action
2. Five things about women
3. I was in beauty pageants as a child
4. I watched my own plastic surgery

January 2013
1. Being photographed in your underwear doesn’t help feminism
2. Why I agreed to pose in a swimsuit
3. Is this the best worst celebrity interview ever?
4. Why ugly sex is important
Article References:


Appendix C: Ethics Approval

Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Wednesday, 7 August 2013

Dr Fiona Giles
Media & Communications; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: fiona.giles@sydney.edu.au

Dear Dr Giles,

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled “Pink Ghetto or Feminist Triumph: An analysis of the content and uses of Fairfax’s Daily Life.”.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2013/605
Approval Date: 02 August 2013
First Annual Report Due: 03 August 2014
Authorised Personnel: Giles Fiona; Wilcox Kate

Documents Approved:

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<td>11/06/2013</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

**Condition/s of Approval**

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.
Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Dr Fiona Gill
Chair
Humanities Low Risk Subcommittee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
Appendix D: Reader survey questions

Daily Life Reader Survey

You are invited to participate in a study of the way readers interact with Fairfax’s Daily Life website.

The study is being conducted by Kate Wilcox and will form the basis for the degree of Media and Communications (Honours) at the University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr Fiona Giles.

The online survey will ask you questions about how you interact with the website and how you see Daily Life fitting into the Australian media landscape. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete.

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are not under any obligation to give your consent and complete the online survey. You can withdraw at any time prior to submitting your completed survey by closing your browser. By submitting a completed survey you indicate that you consent to participation in this study. As the survey is anonymous your responses cannot be withdrawn after they have been submitted.

All aspects of the study, including individual responses, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to the survey answers. Daily Life will be provided with a summary of the results.

Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us to understand how Daily Life is used by readers. You are free to tell other people about the study.

If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact the Honours student Kate Wilcox at katetwilcox@gmail.com, or her supervisor Dr. Fiona Giles at fiona.giles@sydney.edu.au.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research, please contact: The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Fax) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.
1. By ticking this box I certify that I am 18 years of age or older, and that I have read and understood the above information and willingly consent to take part in this study.

Yes

2. Which category below includes your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-59
- 60 or older

3. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

4. What is your occupation? (Check all that apply)

- Part-time worker
- Full-time worker
- Stay at home parent
- Student
- Unemployed
- Retired

5. What industry do you work in?

- Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Education
- Banking/Finance
- Insurance
- Communications
- Transportation
- Government
- Retail
- Hospitality

Other (please specify)
7. How often do you view or access Daily Life?
- More than once a day
- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Once every few weeks
- Only very occasionally

8. Where do you most often view or access Daily Life?
- At work
- At home
- Other (please specify)

9. Have you ever shared a Daily Life article through a social media website?
- Yes
- No

10. Have you ever accessed a Daily Life article after seeing it shared by someone on a social media website?
- Yes
- No

11. Do you regularly read other Fairfax publications? (Check all that apply)
- Sydney Morning Herald - print version
- Sydney Morning Herald - website
- The Age - print version
- The Age - website
- The Australian Financial Review - print version
- The Australian Financial Review - website
- Other (please specify)

12. Which of the following news media do you regularly consume? (Check all that apply)
- Television news
- Talk shows/current affairs programs
- Newspapers
- News radio
13. What Daily Life content do you enjoy reading? (Check all that apply)
- News articles
- Feature articles
- Opinion columns
- Food stories/Recipes
- Health/fitness stories
- Entertainment/celebrity news
- Fashion stories
- Stories about ordinary people

14. Why do you read Daily Life? (Check all that apply)
- To keep up to date with news
- For commentary/analysis of news and issues
- Because of its specific focus on issues facing women
- For entertainment
- I like the style of writing
- Other (please specify)

15. What do you see as the main goals of the site? (Rank in order of importance)
  - Reporting information about domestic concerns and family life.
  - Providing entertaining and enjoyable content.
  - Directing public awareness to political issues and issues for social change.

16. Daily Life is an explicitly "female-biased" website, do you see this reflected in the content of the website?
  - Yes
  - No

17. How?
18. Do you see this reflected in the style of the website?
- Yes
- No

19. How?

20. How important is the discussion of 'women's issues' on Daily Life to your enjoyment of the website?
- Not at all important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Extremely important

21. How well do you think Daily Life functions as a forum for the discussion of topics that are particularly important to or specific to women?
- Not well
- Neither well or not well
- Well
- Very well

22. To what extent do you agree with this statement: Daily Life discusses issues that aren't covered by other media outlets?
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23. Do you consider Daily Life to be a "feminist" website?
- Not at all
- Not really
- Somewhat
- Very much

24. Why?

25. What are your reflections on the gender focus of the website?
27. What would you like to see Daily Life do in future?

Thank you for completing this survey!
Appendix E: Coding Form

Article # ______

Number of words: __________

Gender of author: ___________________

Number of sources interviewed by the author:
   Male: _____
   Female: _____

Number of other writers quoted by the author:
   Male: _____
   Female: _____

Is this article written mostly in the first person, or about a personal experience of the author?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

If yes:
   Does the story aim to connect a personal story with a broader political or social angle?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

If no:
   Does the article contain any first person anecdotes or a personalized address?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

What is the topic of the story?

________________________________________

Does the story deliberately position itself within feminist debates – ie. does it make reference to debates within contemporary feminism, or the impact of feminism upon contemporary society?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

Is the story ‘gendered’? More specifically:

• Does it identify itself as engaging with discussions particularly relevant for women, or debates about constructions of femininity? OR
• Does it identify itself as engaging with discussions particularly relevant for men, or debates about constructions of masculinity? OR
• Is it a story about gender and the way that contemporary gender relations happen?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐
Could this article be categorised as ‘soft’ news, in Tuchman’s definition, that it need not have gone to print immediately, that the editor could have held off printing it for a few days?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Does the article have an ‘activist’ tone, pushing for political action or consciousness-raising?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Into which category does the article fit:

- Opinion piece ☐
- News story ☐
- Feature article ☐
- Review ☐
- Other: ____________________

Does the article fit into any of these categories?

- the trend piece ☐
- the confessional sub-genre ☐
- the ’provocative’ column/rant designed to court controversy ☐
- the amusing ’home front’ column eg. about lazy husbands and accident-prone children ☐
- the ’daffy girl’ piece, in which a writer shares the dilemmas of her personal life ☐
- the stern comment piece in which the writer shares a feminist perspective on public affairs ☐
- None of the above ☐
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