

Feminism, celebrity and lifestyle in the Australian digital news site *Mamamia*

Hannah Garden and Kim Toffoletti

Prompted by claims of feminism's increased profile in popular media discourse, this article explores where and how feminism appears in the online Australian women's digital publication *Mamamia*. As one of the largest and most well-known Australian online news networks catering for a female audience, it is emblematic of the kind of mass media cultural product in which popular feminist discourses are said to circulate. Therefore, *Mamamia* offers a rich site through which to chart where and how feminist themes, agendas and sensibilities manifest in online content directed at female readers, and to investigate the various forms that feminism might take. A content analysis of the site indicates that feminism is depicted positively and that it is invoked in ways that enmesh political/activist agendas with commercialised and celebrity postfeminist forms. In finding that *Mamamia* publishes content that discusses and engages with feminism in a diversity of ways, we argue for a nuanced understanding of postfeminism that can account for new forms of feminist address and expression in women's digital media cultures.

Introduction

At present, feminism as an activist movement and popular identity is enjoying a renewed visibility in a number of Western countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom and North America. This resurgent interest in feminism finds expression in varied popular forms such as music, television, film, the news media and online forums. Prominent examples include *Lean In*, the 2013 bestseller and self-styled feminist corporate manifesto by Facebook CEO Sheryl Sandberg, and African-American singer Beyoncé's American Music Awards performance in 2014, in which she incorporated a large-scale sign that read 'feminist' into her act. In the Australian context, 2015 and 2016 saw a widening of feminist concerns in popular media and politics, particularly in relation to issues pertaining to domestic violence and the culture of misogyny found on social media (Hermant 2016; McNally 2015). Even the current Australian Liberal

Corresponding author:

Hannah Garden, Deakin University
Email: hannah.g@deakin.edu.au

(conservative) Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declared himself a feminist in the lead-up to the federal election (Hunter 2016), echoing sentiments made by other high-profile male politicians around the globe espousing their feminist credentials, such as US President Barack Obama and former British Prime Minister David Cameron (Hemmings 2016). This renewed visibility of feminism has invited questions about the role played by current forms of popular feminism and their relationship to postfeminist media culture (Gill 2016; McRobbie 2015).

Situated relative to debates around the relationship between postfeminism, popular feminism and women's media cultures, this article examines the ways that feminism is made visible in the online Australian women's digital publication *Mamamia*. Taking as our starting point claims of feminism's resurgence in popular media culture, we use a content analysis approach to gauge where and how feminism appears in this mainstream media site. As one of the largest and most well-known Australian online news networks, catering for a female audience, *Mamamia* is emblematic of the kind of mass media cultural product in which popular feminist discourses are said to circulate. Therefore, *Mamamia* offers a rich site through which to chart where and how feminist themes, agendas and sensibilities manifest in online content directed at female readers, and to investigate the various forms that feminism might take. In finding that *Mamamia* publishes content that discusses and engages with feminism in a diversity of ways, we argue for a nuanced understanding of postfeminism that can account for new forms of feminist address and expression in women's digital media cultures. In mapping the appearance of feminism in a popular online women's news site, our findings advance existing studies of feminism's relationship to media and popular culture by identifying and taking account of new forms of popular feminism preoccupying the mainstream cultural imaginary. In analysing the ways in which feminism appears in *Mamamia*, we situate our analysis historically and culturally within a late-capitalist era where a fragmented and pluralistic mediascape is reorienting how feminist identity politics and social justice agendas are presented, practiced and understood within contemporary Australian life (Taylor 2008).

This paper begins by engaging with the various conceptual understandings of postfeminism, which is followed by a consideration of *Mamamia's* place in the Australian media landscape. We then locate our study within the field of feminist media studies scholarship devoted to the examination of popular genres and texts for women. The methods of data collection and analysis are outlined before moving on to a numerical

breakdown of the content. Lastly, we reflect on what these numbers can and cannot tell us and directions for further research into the way that feminism is approached and disseminated on *Mamamia*.

Postfeminism

It is widely acknowledged that postfeminism is a highly utilised yet deeply disputed term within feminist studies of the media (Genz and Brabon 2009; Gill 2007; Tasker and Negra 2007). Postfeminism has variously been categorised as an epistemological position, a historical shift in relation to feminism, a backlash against feminism, and as a cultural sensibility (Gill 2007). These divergent approaches to the term provide different understandings of the relationship between postfeminism and feminism, politics, academic knowledge and popular culture. Feminists who view postfeminism as an epistemological break with second-wave feminism seek to respond to the theoretical challenges of postmodernism and poststructuralism as well as critiques from postcolonial and black feminist thought (Genz and Brabon 2009). Postfeminism in this sense questions the modernist underpinnings of second-wave feminism rooted in the unified category of 'woman' and liberal humanist understandings of progress and emancipation (Gill 2007). Understood as a historical shift, postfeminism is characterised temporally as the period following the women's movement that took place in the West during the 1960s and 1970s (Gill 2007, 255). In this formulation, postfeminism's relationship to feminism can take a number of directions including an understanding of postfeminism as a new and improved feminism - one that is not opposed to femininity or suspicious of mainstream culture (Hollows 2000). Another way that postfeminism has been conceptualised relative to feminism in the post second-wave era is as a form of 'backlash' feminism, that is, a media culture where feminism is seen to be outdated and instead of making women happy has made their lives worse (Faludi 1992). Those who advocate for understanding postfeminism as a sensibility see it neither purely as a temporal shift nor theoretical position. Rather, a postfeminist sensibility provides a lens or set of criteria through which to analyse complex contemporary representations of gender in the media (Gill 2007, 255).

Many of these definitions hinge on the relationship that postfeminism has with earlier versions of feminism. For scholars who take postfeminism to be either a historical or epistemological shift, this relationship is one of growth and feminism's coming of age (Yeatman 1994; Brooks 1997).

Postfeminism in this sense has a positive relationship with feminism, building on its key insights yet addressing the more problematic and exclusionary elements that characterised both academic and activist feminism of the second wave. This view counters backlash discourses that interpret postfeminist culture as anti-feminist and engaged in negating the gains of earlier feminist movements. In a slightly different register, postfeminism as a cultural atmosphere or sensibility, as understood by scholars such as Rosalind Gill (2007) and Angela McRobbie (2004, 2009), takes postfeminism to be a complex entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist ideas and representations. In this sense postfeminist media culture takes many feminist ideas as common sense such as women's formal legal equality, agency and independence yet refracts them through the lens of consumer culture and individualism, repudiating collective feminist politics and a feminist identity (McRobbie 2009). It is in this last sense that the renewed visibility of feminist activism and the claiming of feminist identity in mainstream culture has been viewed as something distinct and new (McRobbie 2015). Given the aim of this study is to explore how feminism appears in *Mamamia*, we do not adopt or advocate one particular approach to postfeminism over another, but instead seek to consider how these various ways of conceptualising postfeminism can be utilised to understand how feminist politics is promoted in *Mamamia*.

Mamamia

Mamamia is an independently-owned digital news site targeted at an adult female audience. The site, launched in 2007 by former *Cosmopolitan* magazine editor Mia Freedman, is one of the first separate online news and lifestyle sites aimed at women started in Australia. Since its beginnings as a blog, it has grown into a large digital media company: the Mamamia Women's Network. When speaking about her motivation for starting *Mamamia*, Freedman expressed her desire to create a site/community for women where they could access content about motherhood, celebrities, and lifestyle, while also finding politically engaged critique and current news (Lieberman 2012). Freedman has also stated that she had no intention of creating an independent or niche site. Rather, she asserts that she wanted to speak to a mainstream audience.

Mamamia is a productive and relevant site to consider when examining the reinvigoration and popularity of feminism in the media, for a range of reasons. In addition to its promotion of itself as a platform committed to women's issues, the site also has a broad reach and high user figures,

reaching around 4 million women per month (*Mamamia* 2016). This compares positively to other major Australian digital publications targeted at women, such as Vogue.com and Fairfax media's women's lifestyle site *The Daily Life*, which respectively maintain 1 and 2 million users per month (Fairfax Media 2015). These sizable audience figures gesture towards the growing popularity of digital media formats as a source of news, information, entertainment and advice for Australian women (Roy Morgan 2015). As a media form, it is instantly accessible at any time and place through portable devices such as mobile phones and iPads. It offers a high turnover of new content that is designed to appeal visually and verbally to an imagined ideal of everyday Australian femininity and offers a means for women to collectively share content that resonates as relevant to their lives. Digital media like *Mamamia* is thus a key site through which to contemplate the circulation of meaning around the role and place of feminism in contemporary culture. This follows in the media and cultural studies tradition of scholars such as Stuart Hall (1997, 1) who argues that media and cultural texts are sites for the production and circulation of meaning. If, as *Mamamia* claims on its website, it has a reputation for 'knowing what women want better than anyone else in the country', then examining how it engages feminism can help reveal which women's issues are currently most visible and how this produces meanings about desirable forms of feminist expression.

Women's Media Culture

Mamamia fits within what Angela McRobbie (2015) calls 'the feminine mass media' - a cultural product that is directly targeted at women, aiming to address their concerns and the conditions of their lives. A great deal of feminist media and cultural studies research has looked at women's genres and texts, including women's magazines, romance novels, 'chick lit', female-centred television programs and soap operas (see, for example, Ang 1985, Gill 2007, Harzewski 2011, Modleski 1982, Radway 1984). These genres and texts have been identified as primary sites of cultural production that address a female audience, exhibit a feminine sensibility and speak to women's experiences. Feminist scholars researching women's cultural production and/or women's media have often adopted a cultural studies emphasis on taking popular culture seriously as a site of academic research, with an aim to counter the mainstream devaluation of women's culture.

Although early feminist work on women's culture sought to take these sites seriously as objects of academic analysis, they also often took the form of ideological critique of the anti-feminist or patriarchal elements of these texts and genres, as evidenced in Ellen McCracken's (1993) analysis of women's magazines. She argues that these texts work to create a master narrative of appropriate femininity, emphasising the need to consume a range of products to successfully craft and maintain this femininity. In recognising that women's magazines invoke a women-centred articulation of the world, McCracken suggests that they do so in ways that reproduce dominant social values and norms. McCracken acknowledges that readers gain pleasure from these texts, yet she makes it clear that these pleasures are not 'innocent' and in fact serve to reproduce dominant social norms (see also Dubino 1993, Wetherell 1995).

Reacting against such textual determinism was the turn, in both wider cultural research and feminist cultural research, towards thinking about the pleasures of popular culture and, in particular, the pleasures that women readers gain from feminine genres (Ang 1985; Modleski 1982). Related to the turn towards pleasure was the critique of ideological work that engaged in a dismissal of women's culture due to its feminine sensibility, creating a hierarchy of seriousness that devalued women's cultural output, such as romance novels and magazines (Radway 1984). This research offered an important corrective to readings of women's culture as mass indoctrination, and recognised that women who consume popular genres do not simply passively consume texts.

Also pertinent to this study is research examining how feminism has influenced women's cultural texts and been incorporated into these genres. As a number of feminist media scholars have noted, instead of feminism standing outside popular culture, it is now partly constructed and disseminated within the media and popular culture (Hollows and Moseley 2006; Gill 2007; Genz and Brabon 2009, La Masurier 2007, 2009). The conceptualisation of feminism as an authentic political and activist movement existing outside of popular culture and the mainstream has been challenged by a number of feminist media scholars who examine how feminism has been expressed and made through and within the popular. Popular feminism has been conceptualised as both a feminism that uses a popular medium to convey its message (Farell 1998), and as the way in which feminist ideas circulate within mainstream popular culture (Hollows and Moseley 2006). Debates about popular feminism often centre on whether a feminism expressed through popular culture

and the media is able to effect political change, or is necessarily depoliticised due to its reliance and intermingling with mainstream culture and the market.

In the early days of the second-wave women's movement, the relationship between feminism and popular culture was vexed. As Hollows and Moseley (2006) state, the women's movement saw itself as a movement outside of and in opposition to dominant culture. In this understanding of feminism, feminism was an activist movement, and popular culture was a key site for the maintenance of a repressive gender ideology. Yet, Hollows and Moseley (2006) strongly resist the idea that a 'real' and authentic feminism can exist as an outside to popular culture. They argue that for many feminists coming of age in the 1980s and later, their experience of feminism is directly informed by its inclusion in popular culture, rather than as an activist movement. They dispute that popular feminism, and feminism within popular culture, is inherently conservative. Although they dispute the dichotomy of an authentic activist or political feminism contrasted with an inauthentic popular feminism, Genz and Brabon take a more ambiguous stance on popular feminism, maintaining that the popular may operate as a site 'that interlaces complicity and critique, subordination and creation' (2009, 26).

Motivating our methodological analytical approach to this research is a feminist media studies approach that takes seriously women's texts as important aspects of women's leisure time and everyday life. It is relative to what McRobbie (2015, 9) has identified as a 'blossoming of new feminisms across so many different locations' that our research invites questions about the relationship between feminist visibility and postfeminist ideas, the type of feminism that is gaining visibility in the mainstream, and emerging forms that popular feminism is taking, which see feminism entangled with a 'celebrity economy' (Hamad and Taylor 2015) manifested in versions of 'hip' (Keller 2015b), 'aspirational' (McRobbie 2015) and 'confidence' feminism (Gill and Orgard 2015). Building on these literatures, we consider the particular ways in which forms of new media, such as online digital sites, whose wide-ranging accessibility is aided by the exchange of information via social media platforms such as Facebook, are contributing to the circulation of popular feminist discourses.

Method

One of the key aims of this article is to ascertain the extent to which one of Australia's most popular online women's websites engages with feminism. In order to do so, we employ a content analysis method to determine where feminist language, themes and references are present in the content of the online media site *Mamamia*. Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of texts and documents that is used to map and quantify the content in terms of predetermined categories (Bryman 2008, 274). It is a widely-used method in feminist analysis of the media, especially to measure proportions of male and female representations in media texts or to quantify the roles that men and women occupy on television (Gill 2007, 43). While content analysis can be effective in providing hard data on issues such as the under-representation or stereotyping of women, it has been criticised for the fact that it perceives the media as a mirror of reality as opposed to a crafting and shaping social force. It has also been critiqued for only addressing manifest content rather than deeper meanings (Gill 2007, 44). Despite these criticisms, as a method of data collection and interpretation, content analysis serves a number of important purposes in this study. Firstly, it provides a means through which to measure empirically whether the current renewed interest in feminism observed by Gill and others is evident in the content of articles published by *Mamamia*. Secondly, it allows for the construction of a framework to identify patterns in the types of feminism that are invoked and discussed, and to consider how these articles are potentially contributing to an understanding of the role and meaning of feminism in Australian socio-cultural life. Finally, in the context of the wider, ongoing examination of Australian women's digital media news sites being conducted by the first author, it serves as a preliminary foundation for qualitative research, providing an overview of content before other textual methods are employed. In the context of the larger research agenda, content analysis constitutes a first phase from which to ground further thematic textual analysis by revealing if, how and where feminism is a predominant focus of widely-read, mainstream digital news publications like *Mamamia*. Thus while the scope of this current article is limited to presenting the findings of content analysis of the *Mamamia* site, it is anticipated that future research will yield deeper insights around how feminist themes and language are utilised in women's popular digital media.

To provide an overview of the content published by *Mamamia*, all of the articles published by the site in the one month period spanning the 1st to

the 29th of February 2016 were collected. At the time of data collection *Mamamia* consisted of a network of four related websites - its main site (titled *Mamamia*) and three subsidiary sites aimed at niche demographics - *Debrief Daily* (aimed at women aged 40 and over), *The Glow* (with a focus on health and beauty), and *The Motherish* (content devoted to motherhood and parenting). In this study, the focus of analysis is on articles published on the main site, as the preliminary analysis of the subsidiary sites indicated considerable overlap with content on the main site. We note that in mid-2016, after the data collection period, the sites were merged to bring all content under the main site; hence replicating the study may result in additional and/or alternative categories to those identified in this study. The data collection yielded 880 articles; 26 of these were aggregations of local and international news collated by *Mamamia*. The collated articles were removed, leaving 854 articles, which provide the content for the following analysis. These articles were then coded into categories using the software program NVivo. The categories were chosen based on the already available tags used on the site to break the content down into sections. Each article was assigned to only one category area and this coding provided a numerical overview of the 7 main categories that the site publishes on. These categories are news and opinion, lifestyle, beauty and style, relationships, health, parenting and entertainment. Further coding of each article was undertaken to determine the topic areas each article addressed. It is from this more detailed coding that we can determine the prevalence with which feminism appears as a topic for consideration in content published by *Mamamia*, and the form that a focus on feminism might take. By measuring and mapping the output of a site like *Mamamia* over an indicative one month period, we provide one way to look at how feminism is situated, constructed and circulated in mainstream online women's media. We contend that a content analysis of the output of *Mamamia* provides a constructive lens through which we can begin to fathom some of the ways in which feminism is being mobilised within mainstream online women's media, and the types of feminism that are being presented.

Results

Out of 854 articles collected over a one month period, the most frequently occurring category that *Mamamia* published on was entertainment (265). Articles categorised as entertainment related included content about Hollywood actors, stories about local celebrities, often people with a

profile in the Australian entertainment industry and media, as well as any content related to popular culture that included reporting on and references to television shows, awards shows, reality television and viral internet content. This category also included recaps of recent episodes of Australian reality shows such as *My Kitchen Rules* and *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here*. Following this, the next largest category was content that was tagged as news and opinion (214), followed by lifestyle (131), parenting (99), relationships (74), health (46), and beauty and style (24).

Results show that the *Mamamia* website publishes limited content that makes direct references to feminism (either in the title and/or body of the article), or employs explicitly feminist terminology. Out of the 854 articles sampled, 44 articles were identified as directly engaging feminism. An article was classified as feminist if it demonstrated a concern with issues arising out of second and third-wave women's movements seeking to address systemic and structural conditions informing the conditions of women's lives. This included critiques of patriarchal society, sexism, women's cultural representation, gender roles and stereotypes, sexual harassment, along with calls for gender equality, attentiveness to the politics of cultural diversity and difference, and greater female representation in all areas of public life (Hewitt 2010).

Content identified as feminist according to this definition was then grouped under the following four topic areas - feminism (23 articles), sexism (7 articles), gender equality and female representation (11 articles), celebrating female achievements (3 articles). The code 'feminism' referred to any article that directly used the word feminism or feminist as well as articles utilising feminist terminology such as 'patriarchy' or the 'male gaze'. The code 'gender equality' referred to any article that addressed gender equality, or talked about the need for women's equal representation in politics, the corporate world, sport, and the entertainment industry. 'Sexism' included any content that addressed sexism in advertising, politics, the media and everyday life. The code 'celebrating women' was categorised as content that focused on celebrating female achievement in everyday life as well as culture and the entertainment industry.

We consciously differentiated content with an explicitly feminist address and presentation from articles demonstrating what Gill terms a postfeminist sensibility (2007); that is, modes of cultural address that appropriate and draw upon feminist ideas but rework them through themes such as empowerment and choice in a consumerist vein. This

allowed us to also measure more popular understandings of feminism that may not be accommodated by definitions informed by social-justice driven feminist theory and collective praxis. A more popularist mode of feminist address is consistent with the language of postfeminism, which discusses ideas such as women's independence, empowerment and choice but does not explicitly reference feminism. This takes the form of articles touching on themes of sisterhood, girl power, financial independence, empowerment, body image and beauty ideals, and work-life balance framed as individual concerns. These fit broadly within the area of postfeminism, including women friendly ideas that do not directly engage with feminist critiques. Out of the 854 articles selected for analysis 58 included references to these ideas.

Discussion

The numbers generated from a month-long content analysis of articles published on the *Mamamia* website demonstrate that feminist issues and concerns do appear in new forms of digital news media directed toward women. When taking account of the contested meanings over feminism, a total of 102 articles were found to positively address feminism in some way – 44 that referenced feminism and feminist ideas aimed at critiquing gender injustice and 58 that invoked (post)feminist language of autonomy, choice and empowerment. However, while feminism is claimed in multifarious, complex and sometimes problematic ways, and feminist issues are highlighted, this content is dwarfed by the majority of content regarding celebrities, popular culture and lifestyle advice that makes no mention of any form of feminism, or exhibits a postfeminist sensibility. This is not to say, however, that the majority of lifestyle-oriented content is not feminist, if we are to take into consideration a women's media culture perspective that seeks to acknowledge the pleasure and possible meanings this content might hold for women as they negotiate the gendered realities of their everyday lives (Ang 1985). By giving credence to female-centric content that encompasses the realms of the private and domestic, intimate relations and emotion, consumerism and appearances, *Mamamia's* content can be understood to serve the important feminist function of revaluing the feminine and promoting female endeavours. For example, a great deal of the entertainment and celebrity-focused content includes articles documenting the achievements of female pop stars and promoting and producing content about female-centred television shows and movies like *Gilmore Girls* and *How to be Single*.

Mamamia's content demonstrates, in line with recent literature on the resurgence of interest in feminism that a number of feminist media scholars have pointed out (Gill, 2016; McRobbie 2015; Negra 2014), that decrying feminism is no longer the norm in mainstream women's texts. The content that *Mamamia* publishes shows that feminist terms such as 'misogyny', 'the male gaze', and 'sexism' are back in vogue, as well as the label 'feminist' being claimed in some articles - along with talk about gender bias, discrimination in the workplace, and gender stereotypes in popular culture. As Gill (2016) has noted, the more pronounced inclusion of feminism has not dislodged the characteristics of postfeminist culture, which focus on individual choice and empowerment, a preoccupation with the body, as well as a focus on consumerism. All these elements are visible in the content that *Mamamia* publishes, prompting a deeper consideration of how to make meaning of such contradictions and complexities in modes of feminist address.

Further breaking down the content to examine where and how feminism is spoken about in *Mamamia* reveals that feminism appears in a variety of contexts. Firstly, a great deal of the feminist content on *Mamamia* occurs in the news category. This is often reporting on political developments, or events in the sporting world or everyday life that have relevance to women. For instance, this category included articles such as "Why are we still Waiting for a Sex Discrimination Commissioner", commenting on the Australian government's failure to appoint a representative to this position, as well as reporting on new gender equal travel allowances for female athletes. This sits in line with what other studies of feminism in the news media, such as those by Dean (2010) and Sheridan *et al.* (2006) have demonstrated; namely, that while the media addresses and reports on feminism, this often takes the form of a palatable or liberal feminism that does not represent a major challenge to the status quo. Similar critiques are offered by Gill (2016) and McRobbie (2015) in their consideration of new forms of resurgent feminisms. They have asserted that while it appears as though feminism has been revitalised across a range of cultural sites, there is a need to pay attention to the ways that the characteristics of a postfeminist sensibility continue to operate even in conditions of greater feminist visibility.

Secondly, there is crossover in much of *Mamamia's* feminist content with celebrity and popular culture. For instance, many of the discussions of feminism and sexism on *Mamamia* are more often than not filtered through reference to the entertainment industry, as seen in the reaction to the Australian breakfast television host Samantha Armytage's interview

with US actor Kristin Davis on the commercial television morning program *Sunrise*. Armytage was criticised by a number of female journalists claiming her 'bimbo' attitude was a disservice to feminism. *Mamamia* published in total five articles referring to this incident, including an interview with Armytage titled "Mia Freedman interviews Samantha Armytage re Sunrise skit", where Armytage comments that the criticism she has faced from other female journalists lets down feminism. This scenario speaks to the complex entanglements characteristic of newer forms of feminist expression. Critiques of Armytage, which went viral on social media, indicate the utility of women's media cultures to provoke debates about feminism in popular ways. In one of the articles *Mamamia* published on this topic, Georgina Dent (Mamamia Women's Network associate editor) focuses on the way the media itself had framed this debate as a *catfight*. Dent argues that men's public disagreements are not discussed in this way, and this framing is indicative of a sexist media environment. This particular article exhibits an understanding of the sexist dynamics of media *catfights* that feminist scholars have commented on (Douglas 1994). These moments reveal postfeminist media culture as a space that provides both potential for the discussion of feminist ideas as well as potentially anti-feminist ideas (Genz and Brabon 2009), troubling interpretations of resurgent feminism in the mainstream media as a dilution of 'real' feminism or as somehow 'less' feminist than earlier feminist forms (Hollows and Moseley 2006). While the majority of articles published by *Mamamia* on this incident (barring the above-mentioned Dent article) frame feminism as a battle of words between individual privileged women in the media industry rather than a movement aimed at addressing the structural inequalities experienced by women in the media business and other areas of life, examining the range of articles addressing the Armytage incident nevertheless makes evident that feminism is being approached in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways; a reminder that it is dialogic and always in process.

In *Mamamia*, feminism and gender equality are also often talked about in relation to representation in movies, television programs, or Hollywood awards shows. Examples of this include articles such as "Susan Sarandon at the SAG awards: why I'm glad she wore that" discussing the criticism of US actor Susan Sarandon for wearing nothing but a bra under her tuxedo at the Screen Actors Guild Awards. The language in this article couches this Hollywood moment as a feminist issue by suggesting that comments on women's appearance are a form of sexism and gender discrimination on the basis of a woman's age and appearance. The crossover of celebrity and feminism has become highly visible in celebrity

culture in recent years, eliciting a range of responses from feminist critics on the political efficacy of celebrity feminism (Hamad and Taylor 2015), which often focuses on the tensions between feminism and the 'sexualised star system' (Brady 2016). This suggests that while a greater visibility of feminism via celebrity culture can help to normalise and spread feminist ideas, new kinds of feminist politics embedded within a celebrity economy often rest upon problematic ideas about gender, femininity, beauty and the celebration of wealth and consumption. Here we identify the tensions these new forms of feminism invoke; tensions that hinge on many of the same issues that characterise debates around popular feminism and postfeminism; namely what are the political implications for feminism when it intersects with consumer culture, aspirational lifestyle, and the imperatives of commercial entertainment industries?

It has been suggested that celebrity feminism taps into the hypervisibility and cultural capital of celebrities, and that their championing and claiming of feminism therefore helps to raise the consciousness of a wide group of women (Hobson 2016). At the same time, there is limited focus in *Mamamia* articles on the privileges that celebrities possess in terms of social class, wealth and beauty, which means there is a need to question and interrogate the feminist messages that become visible through these channels. The forces that drive the celebrity system cannot be discounted when examining celebrity and feminism, especially if one adopts a broader intersectional feminist critique that aims to respond to wider inequalities in society pertaining not only to women's representation but to disability, economic inequality, racial inequality and wider social justice concerns. As Gill (2016, 7) has noted, feminist visibility in the media is rarely 'located in the broader context of neoliberal capitalism' and other inequalities brought about by this system.

Thirdly, a number of articles that were included in this content analysis were articles where gender equality, feminism or sexism was not the major focus of the content. Rather, these articles included references to feminism or terms such as 'the male gaze' mentioned only in passing. For instance, in a humorous review of the Australian reality television program *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here* titled "Rosie Reviews for the Binge: I'm a Celebrity", the author briefly mentions that one of the contestants on the program, Laurina Fleur, is her accidental feminist hero. Further examples of this type of feminist namechecking occur in an opinion piece about the eighties movie classic *Grease*, where the author discusses the dated sexual politics of the film and declares the tough girl character Rizzo her feminist hero. We can understand these references as

part of the rebranding of feminism as a hip identity to claim among a certain segment of mainstream culture, which can open up feminism to a wider audience by making it more accessible and acceptable (Keller 2015b, Valenti 2014). Recognising the way that feminism is made 'hip' through popular media opens up possibilities to critically question how 'uncool' aspects of feminism that are not so easily integrated into mainstream notions of respectable femininity and sexual desirability may or may not be taken up in digital spaces (Filipovic 2015, Gill 2016).

It has been suggested that social media has the potential to transform how gender inequalities and other social justice concerns are being discussed and by whom (Keller 2015a). In a digitally networked environment where audiences can share and respond to issues and debates circulating in the media, the global reach and circulation of mediated content can provide a broader context through which diverse groups of women may access, respond, contest and challenge the neoliberal capitalist order, hence offering a platform for new online forms of feminist political activism (Keller and Ringrose 2015). Although it is beyond the scope of this research to determine who is reading and sharing *Mamamia's* content, and how readers are responding to it in collective discussion threads, the examples discussed here demonstrate the possibilities that online women's media content may create for political engagement, even if individual media articles published by *Mamamia* might present only a partial perspective on particular gender or feminist issues.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the findings from a preliminary content analysis of data collected from the mainstream women's website *Mamamia*. In line with recent work in feminist media studies, it has shown that feminism is being spoken about in positive ways in mainstream cultural products targeted at women, countering repudiation or backlash discourses. Our findings also suggest that feminism is being circulated in a postfeminist context that blurs any clear distinction between 'traditional' and newer feminist forms and sees feminist issues embedded in more celebrity and lifestyle-oriented content.

Although there is some evidence that women's issues and feminism are being reported on with greater frequency in the media, and feminism is garnering positive attention in the media mainstream, gender inequality remains a stubborn feature of everyday life. The persistence of sexism in

and beyond the media raises questions around the complex operations of power by which greater social awareness of gender issues has not lead to a transformation in inequitable gender relations of power (McRobbie 2015). Greater feminist visibility in the mainstream media thus raises a number of challenges for feminists analysing digital media content, including a consideration of where and how feminist voices have been incorporated, what types of feminism are privileged, what constitutes feminist political action in the twenty-first century, and who benefits from the mobilisation of feminist sentiment in various cultural and political contexts. Interrogating how a site like *Mamamia* approaches and claims feminism amidst its considerable focus on celebrity, lifestyle and entertainment content can help to illuminate the ambivalences of popular feminism expressed through commercial channels.

While this analysis cannot determine the readership and circulation of articles that constitutes feminist praxis (analysis of likes, shares, retweets, and audience responses are beyond the scope of this project), it can help to identify and track some of the multiple ways that feminism is being taken up in mainstream media targeted at women. In this regard, our findings highlight the need for new conceptual approaches to make sense of the recent popularisation of feminism in digital media content and respond to the changing operations of gender relations and the articulation of gendered subjectivities in our contemporary moment.

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Author Biographies

Hannah Garden is a HDR candidate at Deakin University. Her current research focuses on Australian online women's websites and their engagement with feminism. Drawing on understandings of postfeminist media culture, she examines the ambivalence of popular feminism expressed through mainstream media.

Email: hannah.g@deakin.edu.au

Kim Toffoletti is a senior lecturer in Sociology at Deakin University. Her research explores gender identities and relations in popular cultural, sporting and leisure contexts.