

“Glowing femininities” and “skinny privilege”: digital media and the promotion of a ‘clean eating’ lifestyle

Roseline Nicholls and Paul Gilchrist

Abstract

‘Clean eating’ is the process of eliminating ‘dirty’ foods and ingredients from diets. Extant research has focused on public health concerns; the specific role the media plays in communicating dietary and health advice to clean eating adherents has been less well considered. This chapter explores the enrolment of digital media in the ‘clean eating’ movement and examines the social media platforms employed by influencers to provide recipes and health advice to followers. We show how ‘clean eating gurus’ Ella Woodward, Madeleine Shaw, Niomi Smart and Alice Liveing have documented and performed their ‘wellness journeys’ on a variety of social media platforms and through printed books; encouraging others to ‘eat smart’ and ‘get the glow’. Through a critical discourse analysis of their media texts, we reveal a framing of an affluent conspicuous consumer that poses as an idealistic, morally superior individual, in the process creating a distance between those who are privileged enough to afford a ‘clean’ lifestyle and the working class ‘other’. Drawing upon critical literatures across social science, we develop the concepts of “glowing femininities” and “skinny privilege” to help explain and expose the cultural politics of ‘clean eating’ in its framing of idealised bodies, lifestyles and ethical consumerism.

Introduction

Clean eating is a dietary practice and lifestyle trend that focuses on the exclusion of foods considered to be ‘dirty’ and ‘unhealthy’ and advocates ‘fresh’, ‘natural’, and ‘wholesome’ foods for health and personal wellness (Allen, et al., 2018). The movement gained popularity in the mid-2010s, largely sparked by bloggers and ‘clean eating’ websites and further popularised via content shared through social media platforms. Clean eating websites promote the diet as a

lifestyle choice, claiming to change a person's life and remedy chronic or newly discovered ailments (Allen, et al., 2018; Walsh & Baker, 2020). Borrowing ideas from established diet trends such as Paleo and Atkins, clean eating spearheaded innovations in detox diet culture. The definition of a 'clean' diet is ambiguous and influencers, or what we refer to as 'clean eating gurus', have added to the confusion through their diverse personal recommendations of particular 'clean' foods and diets, with some promoting ethically sourced meats, others championing alkaline diets and still others concerned about the consequences of gluten for inflammation in the body, amongst myriad clean alternatives (Shaw, 2015). As a lifestyle approach, clean living moves beyond dietary restriction and focuses on body maintenance and personal changes to boost energy, achieve spiritual balance, and minimise environmental footprints (McCartney, 2016), and such approaches have been promoted too by clean eating gurus, as they embrace and popularise wellness practices and routines.

Clean eating has fallen within the ambit of scholarly interest in the relationships between digital media and food and is a signal example of the blurring of online and offline in the emergence of new dietary and lifestyle practices (see Baker & Walsh, 2018; Lupton, 2018; Baker & Walsh, 2020; Braun & Carruthers, 2020; Pilař, et al. 2021). Clean eating exists within a changing food mediascape where there is a convergence of traditional and social media where content flows across multiple media platforms (Jenkins, 2006). Cross-media strategies are adopted by clean eating gurus to produce resources in traditional media, such as cookbooks, with social media platforms used to promote their blueprint for eating and living within the communicative conventions and tools of the platform. Scholars have detailed how the creation, sharing and management of food blogs has become a culturally significant leisure pursuit which can be viewed through the lens of 'serious leisure' (Cox & Blake, 2011) and 'conspicuous consumption'

amongst other leisure theorisations (Cleave, 2020) and new research has extended the interest in food blogging and the digital mediation of the culinary (Rodney, et al., 2017; Lewis, 2020) to detail new practices in everyday digital lives; for instance, how Instagram users employ photo editing and hashtags in their visual self-presentation, identity-making and modes of belonging to clean eating communities (Baker & Walsh, 2018). Recent commentary has placed influencers under critical scrutiny, particularly young female gurus, for the roles they have played constructing, curating and sharing meanings of 'good' food (Goodman & Jaworska, 2020) and especially their production of idealised food imagery as they advocate for responsible consumption and the making of healthy subjects (Walsh & Baker, 2020; Drylie Carey, et al., 2021). Audience research has revealed other dynamics at play. Young females have been shown to favour influencers over traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth 2017; Schouten, et al., 2020; Pilař, et al., 2021): the sharing of intimate, relatable, and personal information with their followers through platforms such as Instagram lends influencers an authenticity and credibility unmatched by experts that worked within traditional media and, consequently, this begins to radically alter how we think about the part media plays in the making of food personalities as trusted guides for health and wellbeing and their relationships to impressionable consumers (Goodman & Jaworska, 2020).

Stephanie Alice Baker and Chris Rojek are at the forefront of research into lifestyle gurus and online influencers. Their recent book, *Lifestyle Gurus: Constructing Authority and Influence Online* (2020), explains that lifestyle gurus are able to achieve their microcelebrity status in similar ways to celebrity chefs by creating a dedicated and carefully constructed persona. The self-promotion attributes of social media encourages users to follow the guru's account to build a strong fan-base. Baker and Rojek detail the specific templates for success, which include the cultivation of

an aspirational though relatable persona; a captivating narrative involving a transformation from ailment or sadness to success, health and happiness; aesthetically appealing images, photographs and videos to form a curated profile; metrics alongside posts to document personal performance and goals reached. Some of these attributes are shared with the aspirational and idealistic lifestyles popularised by celebrity and amateur culinary personalities. For instance, modern cookbooks contain a visual vocabulary that is aspirational, escapist and at times fantastical (Bower, 2004). They have also been shown to advance the routes to success, health and happiness lay within a normative ideal of a domestic lifestyle which inscribes particular feminine subject positions (Hollows & Gillis, 2009). Food bloggers and, as we show below, clean eating gurus, have also presented the domestic kitchen and the home as a wholesome space of comfort and cleanliness that can nurture individuals and families. Photographs typically show a relaxed atmosphere of orderly food preparation that exudes culinary confidence and domestic authority (Wilkes, 2021). Yet, as Rodney et al. (2017: 687) warn, the femininity expressed through food “is not tied to a singular trope (e.g., the self-sacrificing homemaker), but can take multiple forms: prioritizing pleasure, bodily self-care, expressing concern for family members, and shopping ethically to care for the planet”. We thus need to exercise caution in heralding the rise of the online food guru for what appears to be a postfeminist empowering image of freely chosen pleasure (O’Neill, 2020). The image of the clean eating guru is complex and potentially contradictory, accommodating a neoliberal entrepreneurialism at the same time as an image of the ‘domestic goddess’, which can be critiqued for a re-valuation of feminine care work and a return to nostalgic images of femininity (Duruz, 2004; Luckman & Phillipov, 2020).

The photogenic, young female clean eating guru has begun to attract special scrutiny. Karen Wilkes (2021) has produced a wonderfully sharp critique of the carefully constructed images of

lean and beautiful women poring over their vegetable juices in their well-appointed Chelsea apartments. Health and dietary choices are communicated, Wilkes shows, that on the surface make manifest a moralising middle-class resourcefulness and ability to live within chosen lifestyle parameters, though these are ‘choices’ that elude people living in poverty. In this chapter we provide an alternative empirical focus to these important critical studies of digital food culture and femininity, deepening the critical interrogation of upper-class, white, heteronormative privilege in clean eating and wellness culture more broadly (Goodman and Jaworska, 2020; Wilkes, 2021). We take up the invitation from Goodman and Jaworska to document the re-inscription and re-enforcement of whiteness and middle-class proclivities in alternative food networks and add further commentary on how the guru is enrolled in these processes through the visual vocabulary of social media platforms.

We explore clean eating as a lifestyle trend that has enrolled both traditional and digital media in the transmission of its health and wellness philosophies. Using an interpretive content analysis, we undertook a close textual reading of the traditional and social media outputs from five leading and commercially successful British clean eating gurus – Jasmine Hemsley, Alice Liveing, Ella Mills, Madeleine Shaw and Niomi Smart. All had produced cookbooks following initial online interest and all have maintained a digital presence through social media platforms and websites. They were selected based on their levels of engagement and digital following to provide a representative range. For instance, Madeleine Shaw and Jasmine Hemsley have smaller followings (<300,000) and lower engagement levels (0.76% and 0.86% respectively) compared to Niomi Smart and Ella Mills who have a larger following (>1 million) and higher engagement levels (1.65% and 1.45% respectively) (Social Blade, 2020). We employed a targeted sequential purposeful sampling method, focusing on social media outputs from 2015-2020 across all well-

known platforms in the first instance, then looking for information-rich cases of interest (Patton, 2002) until a saturation point had been reached where no further insights were produced in the analytical themes that emerged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Three stages were adopted in the coding process: open coding into smaller conceptual labels; axial coding, sifting the data for new themes and grouping labels into categories; and, selective coding, to identify the final themes and categories to analyse (Neuman, 2011). Three discernible themes were developed from the cultural meanings of the images and associated texts, which shed light on the production of normative lifestyle discourses surrounding food, health and the body: (1) youthful skin and 'glowing femininities', (2) 'skinny privilege' and the ethics of food consumption (2), and (3) 'day-in-the-life' aesthetic snapshots and lifestyle instruction. The analysis offered in this chapter is attentive to the curation of femininity and attempts to expose the cultural politics of clean eating in its framing of idealised bodies, domestic lifestyles and aspirational lives. The concepts of 'skinny privilege' and 'glowing femininities' are offered as ways of foregrounding these features, highlighting the normative and exclusionary nature of a clean eating lifestyle as it is presented to followers on social media. The next sections provide further detail on the evolution of clean eating and the rise of the clean eating guru. This is followed by discussion and analysis of data findings and a concluding discussion.

Clean eating as a dietary and lifestyle practice

Clean eating is a dietary practice that has risen to public consciousness in the last decade. While it has never been strictly defined, it is often referred to as a lifestyle that encourages the removal of foods that are deemed to be 'unnatural', typically those foods containing additives, chemicals,

and preservatives (Allen, et al., 2018). The exact regime of the diet, apart from ‘what not to eat’ are unclear and other diets have been included within the ‘clean eating’ label, such as the Paleo diet, ‘Low Carb High Fat’ and raw food diets, all of which are based on the shared ideals of extreme nourishment, restrictive eating patterns, and the avoidance of ‘polluted’ foods (Baker & Walsh, 2020; Nevin & Vartanian, 2017). Its supporters argue that by restricting diets to only consume foods classified as ‘clean’ – most notably fruits, vegetables, ‘superfoods’ and low-gluten, ancient grains – and by eliminating food groups such as dairy and carbohydrates, adherents will be able to look and feel ‘better’ (Staudacher & Harer, 2018). The practice has been seized upon by food producers, with organic, free-from (mostly wheat and dairy) and ‘natural’ products marketed as ‘clean’ and research has shown that supporters actively avoid foods deemed ‘unclean’ or ‘dirty’, abstaining from ultra-processed foods, dairy and red meat (Asiolia, et al., 2017). However, the exact distinctions between which foods are ‘clean’ and which are ‘dirty’ is complex, with some leading proponents endorsing plant-based diets and others swearing by grain-free diets or the healing powers of special ingredients or recipes (Cloake, 2017).

Clean eating exists within a family of wellness practices concerned with purifying the body and removing pollutants. ‘Cleansing’ and ‘detoxing’ are practices and rituals of self-care and self-maintenance designed to remove toxins from the body (Nevin & Vartanian, 2017). A range of products and services, predominantly targeted toward female consumers, have become mainstream offerings and these have been promoted by celebrities and wellness influencers (Baker & Rojek, 2020; Kjær, 2019). Exactly what it is that is perceived as a ‘toxin’ or ‘pollutant’ is never fully explained within wellness discourse, however, the language describing these cleanses is deliberately vague, hence why celebrity and influencer endorsements are so vital (Baker & Rojek, 2020). Having become so popular in recent years, detoxing has transformed into its own

industry worth an estimated \$50 billion USD, selling products including supplements, activated charcoal powders, vitamins, juice cleanse kits, vaginal steaming spas and detoxing teas (Grand View Research, 2019). As well as physically removing toxins, detoxing and cleansing practices are also thought to provide incredible purification benefits to improve mind, body and spiritual health (Lally, 2017). Despite these claims, scientists and medical professionals have stressed there is no evidence that these practices extract toxins from the body (Goldacre, 2010, Kjær, 2019). Many cleansing practices have been labelled dangerous by medical professionals for being hazardous to physical health, such as vaginal steaming, which Vandenburg & Braun (2017) found can cause severe damage and infections. Still, what all of these practices have in common is a narrative that equates cleanliness with moral virtue and without these self-purification practices the body becomes dirty and impure and the person is deemed morally suspect (Baker & Rojek, 2020). The stigmatisation of working-class dietary habits and bodily maintenance (or lack of) is implicated in this moral framing; a high-status diet of speciality food and ascetic adherence to purity for clean eating adherents is contrasted with the carb-heavy, sugary, and ultra-processed foods that satiate the working-classes (Johnston, et al., 2018: 294).

Akin to other wellness, health and fitness practices and lifestyles, clean eating has been subjected to critique about the truth of its reputed health benefits. The shine on the movement became tarnished when health reports and news articles published toward the end of 2016 began to connect clean eating to the eating disorder ‘orthorexia’ or ‘orthorexia nervosa’, taken from the Greek “ortho’s”, meaning to correct, and “o ‘rexis”, meaning appetite (Barthels, et al., 2019). Orthorexia nervosa has been defined as an extreme restrictive diet that involves a pathological obsession with healthy eating with devotees focusing on food quality, being ‘clean’, ‘pure’ and toxic-free, to the extent that the body becomes malnourished (Staudacher & Harer, 2018), and

those with the eating disorder suffer extreme weight loss (Braun & Carruthers, 2020). The ease at which false, unregulated health and nutritional information can be accessed and shared through digital media means the clean eating movement is prone to charges of being complicit in the production of dangerous and misleading health advice, and this is a particular issue for vulnerable groups (Rousseau, 2012). Furthermore, a high-profile case involving the Australian wellness guru Belle Gibson eroded trust and authority in the health claims of clean eating, as Gibson falsely attributed the adoption of a clean dietary and lifestyle healing plan as a cure for her terminal brain cancer; a fraudulent claim and a scam that saw Gibson later face charges for deception and breaking consumer law (Rojek, 2017; Xu & Lee, 2017). What has struck commentators, however, is the relationship of the scandal to influencer authenticity and trust in the micro-celebrity of wellness gurus. Baker and Rojek (2020) argued that the abundance of digital lifestyle gurus who portray ‘self as a project’, where the individual is encouraged to take control of their own lifestyle, health and identity, allowed Gibson to ‘sell’ her beliefs without question. The visibility provided through Instagram and updates to her blog showed her audience that she was indeed living an idealistic lifestyle and beating cancer, and that was enough.

Clean eating gurus and digital media

Bucking the trend of what Turner (2009) labels the “demotic turn” to ordinary people in our mediascapes, we find that the most high-profile promoter of clean eating is Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow. Paltrow has produced multiple best-selling cookbooks including *The Clean Plate* and *It’s All Good* and started a lifestyle blog which formed the foundations for the wellness

brand goop.com which launched in 2008 and which attracts over two million visitors per month (Goodman, et al., 2017; Johnston, et al., 2018; Brodesser-Akner, 2018). Alongside the provision of revitalising recipes, goop.com hosts articles on the latest cleansing detox trends and sells obscenely priced items from the shop section, including the infamous ‘THIS SMELLS LIKE MY VAGINA’ candle. Goop originated as a platform for Paltrow to share lifestyle tips and personal recommendations, sharing the wealth of knowledge she accrued from travelling the world and living the Hollywood celebrity lifestyle. Paltrow wanted a trustworthy and authentic website for this purpose and it now describes itself as an “alternative source of wellness information” (Baker & Rojek, 2020, 109). Goop relays a range of health and wellness philosophies and techniques, many associated with alternative medicine and complementary therapies, including Reiki energy healing, the consumption of superfoods and psychedelics (Mudry, 2018). Paltrow has been heavily criticised by medical experts for endorsing pseudoscientific claims (Goodman, et al., 2017; Rousseau, 2015) and in 2018 was ordered to pay a \$145,000 USD fine for sharing false information (Baker & Rojek, 2020). Despite this controversy, Goop has continued to grow, keeping up with digital media trends and even released a successful podcast series in March 2018 offering advice and recommendations on detox, cleanliness, nutrition, relationships, and wellness, intertwined with interviews with other wellness ‘experts’. Netflix series have since followed. Paltrow’s position as a celebrity has provided her with a powerful influential voice to shape public understandings of ‘good’ healthy eating, living and wellbeing. She is a perfect example of a celebrity’s ability to capitalise on alternative health practices (often taking, or basing them, on traditional non-western and indigenous knowledges and practices) and commodifying them as a necessary luxury (Goodman, et al., 2017; Baker & Rojek, 2020). Nevertheless, Crispin (2018, 44) warns “It’s a mistake to dismiss Paltrow’s embarrassingly named business as just another study in well-heeled feminine self-care gone wild” and argues that Paltrow and Goop

exploit the health anxieties and body-image concerns of upper middle-class women. But it is a business model that appears to be working. The company is now estimated to be worth \$250 million USD mostly owing to product sales from the website, especially the Goop product line of fashion, books, beauty, and wellness products for those wanting to pick up a \$75 hyaluronic face serum or a \$100 cork yoga mat (Brodesser-Anker, 2018).

Paltrow and Goop are undoubtedly market leaders, and this serve as a point of inspiration for a cadre of clean eating gurus following in her wake who have used digital media to come to public prominence as advocates and enthusiasts for clean eating wellness practices, and who now offer a range of products and services, alongside their own aspirational lifestyle advice. Instagram has acted as the main social media platform, documenting the adherence to a clean lifestyle in the seductive range of “food selfies” that are posted by the influencers (Lupton, 2018, 71). Other images document how “the good life” can be led and feature health- and fitness-related imagery that is targeted at women, frequently displaying images of slim or thin female bodies to suggest that by adhering to their recipes and lifestyle guidelines they too can achieve a ‘healthy’ (slim) body (Carrotte, et al., 2015; Leer, 2018). Instagram creates a hub for followers to receive advice on clean eating trends (Baker & Rojek, 2020). As of November 2021, over 48 million posts have been uploaded to Instagram under the #cleaneating and 61 million for #eatclean. The use of hashtags is an important tool for the social media influencer as it creates a searchable archive of images posted across the platform that relate to the topic in the hashtag and users can either search by topic or word or can click on an existing hashtag on a photo to bring up the archive (Baker & Walsh, 2018). The vast majority of images posted show plates and bowls of food, heavily altered images that are brightened to enhance the colours. Among the popular images

shared are those of green smoothies, açai bowls, rainbow coloured fresh fruit platters and avocado toast, demonstrating the right kinds of ‘clean’ foods to consume.

The clean eating gurus we investigated all maintained an active Instagram account, though their fame and influence was established in traditional media. Bloggers such as Ella Mills (née Woodward) (Deliciously Ella) and the Hemsley sisters, Jasmine and Melissa (Hemsley + Hemsley), came to public attention through their messages about eating well and restricting the consumption of gluten, grain or refined sugar. The interest shown in the Hemsley sisters’ blog for *Vogue* magazine soon saw them land a television programme for Channel 4 on how to eat well. In 2015, Ella Mills’ debut cookbook *Deliciously Ella*, drawn from a successful blog of the same name, was the UK’s fastest-selling cookbook, with sales totalling just under 500,000. Sequel titles have followed in quick succession (O’Neill, 2020). Fellow clean eating gurus have mined their blogs to write their own clean eating cookbooks (Tandoh, 2017). The visual aesthetics of clean eating blogs meant that it was perfect content for photo-sharing sites such as Instagram and soon gained a cult following. Over the last decade British food culture has seen other young women influencers and entrepreneurs enter the marketplace and mediascape. They have extended the visual repertoires of clean eating in uploads of food preparation practices, bodily maintenance and health and wellness routines, moving beyond the plate to the body, home, and wider environs. In the sections below we detail the three prominent themes found in our interpretive content analysis of the imagery and texts of clean eating digital media content.

Naturally beautiful: youthful skin and ‘glowing femininities’

Feminine body ideals are widely recognised as being promoted on social media and through advertising (Fardouly, et al., 2015; Lou & Tse, 2021; Prjnak, et al., 2020; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017; Vartanian & Dey, 2013). Having naturally beautiful facial features such as blemish-free, clear, smooth skin and shiny, thick hair and a youthful 'glow', are important factors in the creation of an idealised female figure (Rhodes, 2006). These same features are present in the visual imagery of clean eating gurus who consistently display their natural beauty regimes. This encompasses imagery of the use of natural beauty products (e.g., make-up, hair dye, deodorants), skincare products, supplements and fitness routines designed to maintain a slim appearance. The gurus repeatedly uploaded content sharing their views on the importance of natural beauty products and practices, which were often aimed at 'tackling' signs of ageing, such as drinking marine collagen powder and dry body brushing (Shaw, 2018). Signs of ageing were then implied to be signs of not looking after yourself, leaving the body to age naturally and in an undisciplined manner rather than solving the 'issue' and reinforcing anxieties over visible ageing (Coupland, 2007).

The next stage from successful self-care maintenance regimes is to achieve 'glow'. The idea of glowing is very important to the clean eating and wellness community. It connects to western beauty and feminine ideals of 'glowing' or radiant skin which has long been considered an indicator of healthy womanhood (Erdman & Poutahidis, 2014). Further, the idea of glowing is most popularly used when describing the 'glowing' appearance of pregnant women, considered to be the most powerful and ultimately feminine experience and bodily performance (Dahl, 2018; Ryan, 2013). Dyer (1997, 122) suggests that the idealised white woman in visual culture possesses glowing skin and is commonly depicted with beaming light that permeates her body, radiates out through her skin, making her appear glowing, almost angelically pure and perfectly

feminine. Glowing is consistently used by clean eating gurus, most notably by Amelia Freer (Nourish and Glow) and Madeleine Shaw, in her cookbooks, *Get the Glow* (2015), *Ready, Steady, Glow* (2016) and *A Year of Beautiful Eating: Eat Fresh. Eat Seasonal. Glow with Health, All Year Round* (2017) and her (2019-2021) podcast 'Get Your Glow Back', oriented toward the health and wellbeing of mums. Glow is not a natural state simply conveyed by the camera. The influencers frequently use lighting techniques, both in their vlogs, on Instagram and in cookbook photographs, where they are filmed in front of sun-facing windows, allowing sunshine to fall on their shoulders and face, emphasising clear, healthy and bright skin, radiating warmth and positivity in ultra-feminine style. The illusion conjured, these magicians reveal the secrets to the audience: follow good routines, eat well, get the glow. As O'Neill (2020, 3) observes, "health is understood not simply as freedom from disease, but a kind of preternatural exuberance and luminous vitality". Wilkes (2021, 10) comments too that the lighting techniques employed "constructs whiteness and elevates white skin as possessing some kind of otherworldly quality".

Beauty is not only skin-deep. A clean eating lifestyle is presented as a 'fix' to being fat, sick, tired and possessing a post-pregnancy body. These properties are apparent in the cookbooks produced by clean eating gurus which establish a narrative of transformation. Each cookbook begins with a section titled 'my story' or 'my health journey', which describes how they used to be suffering with illness, were constantly bloated, or how they felt "tired and uncomfortable" (Shaw, 2015: 6). Alice Liveing explains how before she started clean eating she felt: "So low in confidence and spent my time constantly comparing myself to others. Everywhere I looked there was someone prettier and thinner. How could I be doing so much exercise and getting bigger? I knew it was bad, but I didn't know how to fix it" (Liveing, 2016: 14). Liveing uses before-and-after photos in her 'Body Bible' to show that "a simple change is all you need". This change equates to losing

weight with happiness; overly-exaggerated smiles in the ‘after’ shots making the ‘before’ bodies look unhappy and problematic. The message clearly aligns with how the advertising industry has emphasised how excess weight is changed through committed personal effort and a positive attitude (Puhl & Heuer, 2010). Clean eaters blame ‘dirty’ foods for producing unhappiness, highlighting the capacity to become the “hottest, happiest and healthiest you” (Shaw, 2015: 6) once you start eating clean, consuming foods with revitalising properties that will “nourish your body, give you glowing skin and make you feel happy” (Woodward, 2015: 245). The authors adopt a neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility which shifts the blame on the food and wellbeing choices of individuals, continuing predominant stereotypes of fat bodies as greedy, lazy, lacking self-discipline and morally suspect (Longhurst, 2005) and ignoring the structural conditions responsible for food choice and healthy habits (Monaghan, et al., 2013). Despite the disavowal of a diet, the cookbooks nevertheless rove the theme of overconsumption and self-control (or lack thereof): Madeline Shaw (2015: 13) asks, “Can you really eat only one biscuit and walk away?”

‘Skinny privilege’ and ethical food consumption

Discovering new foods and developing good eating habits and dietary preferences are an essential part of the everyday life of the clean eater (Walsh & Baker, 2020). Within the clean eating guru’s social media presence, mentions of eating ethical, organic, healthy or whole foods are prevalent and this coincides with the general upward trend in the popularity of ethical and sustainable food production, distribution and consumption in advanced economies (Lewis & Huber, 2015). The practice of ethical eating involves eliminating foods or making food choices with minimal

social, environmental, and ecological impact, as seen for example in veganism or the use of Fairtrade products. These ethical food choices have also consistently been associated with greater expense – often 10-40% more (Winter & Davis, 2006) – and often restricted accessibility, either physically (Caraher, et al., 1998), or culturally, requiring dedicated knowledge of how to use ethical foods and ingredients (Johnston, et al., 2018; Koch, 2018). The Instagram posts of clean eaters show their confidence in patronising premium grocery stores, such as Wholefoods and Planet Organic, which pride themselves on selling ‘exotic’ produce, superfoods and other ethical health foods; their higher food prices linked to the privilege of its white, elite clientele (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Johnston, et al., 2018; Johnston & Szabo, 2011). Clean eating gurus actively promoted organic as “the best option” (Shaw, 2015: 60-61), though the transition from clean eating to wider concerns with wellness extends beyond the injunction to eat well as more subtle guidance is provided on the impact of a good diet as a foundation of a healthy lifestyle (O’Neill, 2020). There are instances of a romanticised stylisation of ethical consumption. In one Instagram upload (April 15, 2020), Niomi Smart is captured picking up a delivery from her doorstep. She is casually dressed, hair gracefully styled, shown in a slimming side profile, smiling brightly and bathed in warm sunlight. The image reprises a ‘glowing femininity’. She tells her followers the food is “organic and as fresh as it gets”, having been obtained from a local zero waste shop. Other clean eating gurus tag their posts with the hashtags #zerowaste or #sustainable or explicitly frame their post around the subject of zero waste and sustainable consumption. YouTube videos provide more in-depth promotion of zero waste consumer behaviours and lifestyles. Madeleine Shaw’s video ‘Come Shopping with Me’ is filmed in a zero-waste inspired grocery shop and extols the virtues of zero-waste living. A collaborative language is used to appeal to a collective ethical consciousness, with the guru positioned as a sustainability hero by spreading knowledge and information on climate politics in a display of what Goodman et al. (2016) would argue is

‘spectacular environmentalism’. They are framed as enlightened citizens, demonstrating through their individual acts how we can all, as consumers, participate in sustainable living by following their example (Baker & Rojek, 2020; Lewis, 2018).

However, the opportunities to adopt these sustainable lifestyle habits aren’t equal. The shopping spaces the influencers promote and use are either high-end branded, premium grocery stores or small zero-waste bulk stores. Both are specialised and tend to be located in affluent parts of London or eco-popular hotspots such as Brighton and Bristol (Cloake, 2017). The encouragement to make ‘better choices’ through zero-waste consumerism is not matched by the reality of the exclusionary nature of such consumption, especially for people on lower incomes or living in food deserts (Caraher, et al., 1998; Cummins & MacIntyre, 2002; Koch, 2018). Being unable to shop in these spaces, consumers cannot match the practices needed in order to be classified as moral citizens, trying their best to solve global climate issues (Johnston & Szabo, 2011). In this way, the clean eating guru’s food media communicates how wellness foodscapes should be, sharing specific food and dietary guidelines through their recipes, ‘haul’ videos and photos of meals posted as powerful images of what constitutes a worthy, flawless and moral person who cares about their own and the planet’s health. As Tompkins (2005) argues, each food discourse has its own relationship to bodies as a means to construct and shape the ideal body, not just physical appearance but a ‘moral’ body who is environmentally aware and working towards perfection in sustainable and ethical consumption.

A day in the life: aesthetic snapshots and lifestyle instruction

The clean eating guru's online content centres the theme of everyday life; this is especially prevalent through platforms such as Instagram which are designed to share snapshots of the everyday (Abidin, 2015; Baker & Rojek, 2020). The images uploaded are carefully curated to maintain their dedicated aesthetic despite Instagram's design as a platform to share images of spontaneous happenings in real-time. The intensely edited and framed content is perceived as more authentic in comparison to a celebrity photograph shot by paparazzi as it is sandwiched between posts depicting real-life friends (Abidin, 2015). The use of Instagram has evolved so that it has become less common to only follow friends and therefore pictures are reaching much wider audiences who don't personally know the photographer or uploading user (Zappavigna, 2016). By making their uploaded content seem personal, the guru ensures their followers maintain invested in following their social media presence as if they were a close friend (Jerslev, 2016).

Alongside this, the uploaded content is of professional quality, being staged and carefully organised to maintain a desired aesthetic. Choices are made on composition and background and photographic filters are employed to create visually cohesive content that stimulates an active visual gaze from their audience (Zappavigna, 2016; Zulli, 2018; Walsh & Baker, 2020). Studies have shown that, despite content being heavily edited and staged, digital influencers are perceived to be more trustworthy than traditional celebrities or corporate brands (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Yang, et al., 2021), which is surprising considering the episodes of incredulous scientific claims that have accompanied the health advice provided by some wellness influencers. The platform Instagram perfectly emphasises the importance of aesthetics where lifestyle gurus are expected to use image or video media to depict a desirable life (Baker & Rojek, 2020). In particular, the most popular style of photography known as "snapshot aesthetic" (Colliander & Marder, 2018: 34) is used and relates to a style of photograph that portrays an

average scene or state that appears as though it were taken by an average user, not a professional photographer. Despite the majority of photos portraying an average everyday situation, the influencers still make the images – sometimes with the support of a professional photographer or digital media marketing assistant - and present an idealistic lifestyle. Snapshots have included images of purchases made at market stalls, chopping ingredients, weighing produce with their children, slurping smoothies, picnicking outdoors, taking food from the oven, showing batches to camera, and tucking into the meals.

Amongst the popular genres of YouTube videos that the gurus create are those titled ‘A Day in the Life’ or ‘What I Eat in a Day’ videos. These vlogs document daily life, focusing on diet as well as daily activities such as yoga, meditation, and shopping. For instance, Niomi Smart’s ‘What I Eat in a Day’ video (Smart, 2020) shows a ‘self-care’ day divided into structured tasks: running, yoga and eating vegan food. A frozen smoothie bowl is consumed between exercise and skincare routine, followed by sunbathing and reading. She expresses disappointment with herself for not accomplishing all to perfection, admonishing herself for waking up late. Smart here defaulted on the influencers’ template for success in adhering to numerated personal performance goals (Baker & Rojek, 2020). Madeleine Shaw’s (2019) ‘Day in the Life’ YouTube video follows a similar pattern: a smoothie with protein powder, non-dairy milk and superfoods (blueberries and collagen powder) is prepared and consumed before Shaw writes out a meal plan for her son and visits Planet Organic. Returning home, she then prepares batch meals, ensuring she is organised for the week ahead. This is something Ella Mills also promotes in her ‘30-Minute Meal Prep’ video, telling her followers that meal prep is the way to go for those leading a busy life. Jasmine Hemsley shares her eating schedule on her Instagram page, explaining how she makes sure to eat dinner between 6-6.30pm as she believes this is a sure way to improve mood, digestion, sleep and

energy (Hemsley, 2020). These examples are typical of the clean eating guru's lifestyle, which is scheduled and structured into a routine to an extreme degree, the food they eat as important as exercise and other wellness activities.

Concluding discussion

There is some justification for thinking that clean eating is a case of new smoothies in old bottles. Clean eating influencers have produced content that replicates hegemonically feminine bodies which have been prevalent in the mediated femininity of celebrity chefs and their popularisation of the 'domestic goddess' trope and traditional feminine values (Leer, 2018; Luckman & Phillipov, 2020). Clean eating bears a kinship too to contemporary #tradwife discourses which make a virtue of women staying at home, household divisions of labour, and satisfaction derived from feeding and nurturing self, partner and family. We concur with similar conclusions drawn by Rodney et al (2017) on the public presentation of a successful domestic food femininity through the new digital food mediascape. These are young women who walk the line between indulgence and restraint, discipline and pleasure, leisure and the sheer bloody hard work of it all. The clean eating guru sits firmly within a neoliberal imperative of digital guru media, able to profit from the compulsion to self-manage health and wellness in advanced neoliberal societies and successfully able to commodify knowledges accrued on journeys of transformation to attract followers keen to try the lifestyle and consume products on offer (see Lawrence, this volume). The clean eating guru offers a recipe for a new lifestyle which is both aspirational and entrepreneurial. But the contemporaneousness of clean eating media should not be overstressed for there are strong correspondences to the escapist fantasies presented in traditional food media

and within critical commentary of cookbooks as a literary genre (Dennis, 2008; Mac Conlomaire, 2013). Neuhaus (2003: 1) observes, for example, that cookbooks: “contain more than directions for food preparation. Authors infuse their pages with instructions on the best way to live one’s life – how to shop, lose weight, feed children, combat depression, protect the environment, expand one’s horizon, and make a house a home.” Taking this into account adds important context and a note of caution in rushing to celebrate the innovations in health lifestyle promotion afforded through digital media.

Despite these parallels, digital media has undoubtedly played a crucial role in the emergence and evolution of clean eating as a dietary practice, leisure and wellness phenomenon. Food blogs, vlogs and photo-sharing applications have attracted millions of followers and a small cohort of entrepreneurial young women have profited from the interest shown in their particular brands of healthy living and lifestyle instruction. Our intention has not been to traduce their creative efforts, nor to sneer at their mediated personas of obsessive healthism. Rather, we have sought to shed further critical light upon aspects of media production that have been enrolled in the making of a food culture that can inform on postfeminist constructions of femininity, domesticity, nurture and care in contemporary advanced societies. Scrolling through thousands of images of clean eating has confirmed that ‘gastroporn’ remains a serious cultural phenomenon (Dennis, 2008) with its digital photographic manifestation lending credence to David Balzer’s contention of the banality of ‘curationism’ in modern everyday life (Balzer, 2015). Yet, looking beyond screen and away from the plate, a lifestyle of committed corporeal and ethical concern is revealed, one that makes use of a digital communicative infrastructure to promote behaviours and alternative food practices that are passionately engaged with seemingly positive transformations to health and happiness. The “aspirational but relatable food femininity”

(Rodney, et al, 2017, 15) being performed makes it difficult to critique. Who can truly knock the youthful optimism of a skilled cook, writer and photographer living their good life? Who can challenge the clean eating follower who decides to tackle their own health issues when inspired by the narratives of transformation presented in the intimate vlogs of the guru? However, as we have shown, the critique is on firmer ground when it raises questions about the ability of people to replicate the routines, practices and bodies of the clean eating guru. We have highlighted too how the digital media content of the clean eating guru raises questions of social power. The 'glowing femininities' illuminate racialised processes in the making of an ideal womanhood that tarnish the corporeal clean eating ideal and expose its artifice. The types of consumerism encouraged reinforces the affluent base of 'skinny privilege' and the exclusivity of the lifestyle (cf. O'Neill, 2020; Wilkes, 2021). To understand clean eating is thus to acknowledge the complicity of the clean eating guru in the promotion of unattainable bodies and the social reproduction of gender divides and class privilege (Skeggs, 2004). The images of clean living are both tantalisingly aspirational *and* out of reach for the many.

References

- Abidin, C. (2015). Communication intimacies: Influencers and perceived interconnectedness. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media & Technology*, 8, 1-16.
- Alkon, A. H. & McCullen, C. G. (2011). Whiteness and farmers markets: Performances, perpetuations . . . contestations?. *Antipode*, 43(4), 937-959. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00818.x>
- Allen, M.M., Dickinson, K. & Pritchard, I. (2018). The dirt on clean eating: a cross sectional analysis of dietary intake, restrained eating and opinions about clean eating among women. *Nutrients*, 10(9), 1266. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10091266>
- Asiolia, D., Aschemann-Witzel, J., Caputo, V., Vecchio, R., Annunziata, A. Næs, T. & Varela, P. (2017). Making sense of the "clean label" trend: A review of consumer food choice behavior and discussion of industry implications. *Food Research International*, 99(1), 58-71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2017.07.022>
- Baker, S.A. & Rojek, C. (2020). *Lifestyle gurus: Constructing authority and influence online*. Polity Press.
- Baker, S.A. & Walsh, M.J. (2018). 'Good morning fitfam': Top posts, hashtags and gender display on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, 20(12), 4553-4570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818777514>
- Baker, S.A. & Walsh, M.J. (2020). You are what you Instagram: Clean eating and the symbolic representation of food. In D. Lupton & Z. Feldman (Eds.), *Digital food cultures* (pp.53-67). Routledge.

- Balzer, D. (2015). *Curationism: How curating took over the art world and everything else*. Pluto.
- Barthels, F., Barrada, J. & Roncero, M. (2019). Orthorexia nervosa and healthy orthorexia as new eating styles. *PLoS ONE*, 14(17), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0219609>
- Bower, A. (2004). Romanced by cookbooks: *Gastronomica*, 4(2), 35-42. <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2004.4.2.35>
- Braun, V. & Carruthers, S. (2020). Working at self and wellness: A critical analysis of vegan vlogs. In D. Luton & Z. Feldman (Eds.) *Digital food cultures* (pp.82-96) Routledge.
- Brodesser-Akner, T. (2018, July 25). *How goop's haters made Gwyneth Paltrow's company worth \$250 million*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/25/magazine/big-business-gwyneth-paltrow-wellness.html>
- Caraher, M., Dixon, P., Lang, T. & Carr-Hill, R. (1998). Access to healthy foods: part I. Barriers to accessing healthy foods: Differentials by gender, social class, income and mode of transport. *Health Education Journal*, 57, 191-201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001789699805700302>
- Carotte, E.R., Vella, A.M. & Lim, M.S.C. (2015). Predictors of "liking" three types of health and fitness-related content on social media: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 17(8), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.4803>
- Cleave, P. (2020). Food as a leisure pursuit, a United Kingdom perspective. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 23(4), 474-491. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2019.1613669>
- Cloake, F. (2017, February 18). The cult of clean eating in a fast-food nation. *The New Statesman*. <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/food-drink/2017/02/cult-clean-eating-fast-food-nation>
- Colliander, J. & Marder, B. (2018). "'Snap happy' brands: Increasing publicity effectiveness through a snapshot aesthetic when marketing a brand on Instagram. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 78, p. 34-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.015>
- Coupland, J. (2007). Gendered discourses on the 'problem' of ageing: Consumerized solutions. *Discourse & Communication*, 1(1), 37-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307071984>
- Cox, A.M. & Blake, M.K. (2011). Information and food blogging as serious leisure. *ASLIB Proceedings*, 63(2), 204-220. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00012531111135664>
- Crispin, J. (2018, September 1). Beyond Goop and evil: The curious feminist logic of Gwyneth Paltrow's self-care empire. *The Baffler*, 41, 42-49. <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/beyond-goop-and-evil-crispin>
- Cummins, S. & Macintyre, S. (2002). "Food deserts"—evidence and assumption in health policy making. *British Medical Journal*, 325(7361), pp. 436-438. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.325.7361.436>
- Dahl, U. (2018). Becoming fertile in the land of organic milk: Lesbian and queer reproductions of femininity and motherhood in Sweden. *Sexualities*, 21(7), 1021-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136340717718509>
- Dennis, A. (2008). From apicius to gastroporn: Form, function, and ideology in the history of cookery books. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 31(1), 1-17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44982180>
- Djafarova, E. & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
- Djafarova, E. & Trofimenko, O. (2019). 'Instafamous'—Credibility and self presentation of micro-celebrities on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432-1446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491>
- Drylie Carey, L., Irwin, M. & Yule, J.A. (2021). Social media, social comment and the moralising media-landscape. In E.L. Ritch & J. McColl (Eds.) *New perspectives on critical marketing and consumer society* (pp.63-72) Emerald.
- Duruz, J. (2004). Haunted kitchens: Cooking and remembering. *Gastronomica*, 41(1), 57-68. <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2004.4.1.57>
- Dyer, R., (1997). *White: Essays on race and culture*. Routledge.

Erdman, S.E. & Poutahidis, T. (2014). Probiotic 'glow of health': it's more than skin deep. *Beneficial Microbes*, 5(2), 109-119. <https://doi.org/10.3920/BM2013.0042>

Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P.C., Vartanian, L.R. & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood. *Body Image*, 13, 38-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2014.12.002>

Goldacre, B. (2010). *Bad science: Quacks, hacks, and big pharma flacks*. McClelland & Stewart.

Goodman, M. K., Littler, J., Brockington, D. & Boykoff, M. (2016). Spectacular environmentalisms: Media, knowledge and the framing of ecological politics. *Environmental Communication*, 10(6), 677-688. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2016.1219489>

Goodman, M.K. & Jaworska, S. (2020). Mapping digital foodscapes: Digital food influencers and the grammars of good food. *Geoforum*, 117, 183-193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.09.020>

Goodman, M.K., Johnston, J. & Cairns, K. (2017). Food, media and space: The mediated biopolitics of eating. *Geoforum*, 84, 161-168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum/2017/06.017>

Grand View Research (2019). *Detox product market size, share & trends analysis report*. Grand View. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/detox-product-market>

Hemsley, J. (2020, October 15). Dinner before dusk. *Instagram*. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGX1WZQq3tL/>

Hollows, J. & Gillis, S. (2003). *Feminism, domesticity and popular culture*. Routledge.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.

Jerslev, A. (2016). In the time of the microcelebrity: Celebrification and the YouTuber Zoella. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 5233-5251.

Johnston, J. & Szabo, M. (2011). Reflexivity and the Whole Foods Market consumer: The lived experience of shopping for change. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 28(3), 303-319. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-010-9283-9>

Johnston, J., Cairns, K. & Oleschuk, M. (2018). A kind diet: cultivating consumer politics, status, and femininity through ethical eating. In K. LeBesco & P. Naccarato (Eds.) *The handbook of food and popular culture* (pp.286-300) Bloomsbury.

Kjær, K.M. (2019). Detoxing feels good: Dieting and affect in 22Days Nutrition and good detoxes. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(5), 702-716. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1508050>

Koch, S. (2018). Trends in food retail: The supermarket and beyond. In K. LeBesco & P. Naccarato (Eds.) *The handbook of food and popular culture* (pp.111-123) Bloomsbury.

Lally, M. (2017, July 16). Jasmine Hemsley: How to have a healthier summer: *The Telegraph*, 14.

Leer, J. (2018). Gender and food television: A transnational perspective on the gendered identities of televised celebrity chefs. In K. Lebesco & P. Naccarato (Eds.) *The handbook of food and popular culture* (pp.13-26) Bloomsbury.

Lewis, T. & Huber, A. (2015). A revolution in an eggcup? Supermarket wars, celebrity chefs and ethical consumption *Food, Culture & society*, 18(2), 289-307. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174415X14190821960798>

Lewis, T. (2020). *Digital food. From paddock to platform*. Bloomsbury.

Livinge, A. (2016). *Clean eating Alice: Eat well every day*. HarperCollins UK.

Longhurst, R. (2005). Fat bodies: Developing geographical research agendas. *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(3), 247-259. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132505ph545oa>

Lou, C. & Tse, C.H. (2021). Which model looks most like me? Explicating the impact of body image advertisements on female consumer well-being and consumption behaviour across brand categories. *International Journal of Advertising*, 40(4), 602-628. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487/2020.1822059>

Luckman, S. & Phillipov, M. (2020). 'I'd (still) rather be a cyborg': The artisanal dispositif and the return of the (domestic) goddess. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(4), 458-474. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877919899959>

Lupton, D. (2018). Cooking, eating, uploading: Digital food cultures. In K. LeBesco & P. Naccarato (Eds.), *The handbook of food and popular culture* (pp.66-79) Bloomsbury.

- Mac Con Iomaire, M. (2013). Towards a structured approach to reading historic cookbooks, *M/C Journal*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.649>
- McCartney, M. (2016). Margaret Macartney: Clean eating and the cult of healthism. *British Medical Journal*, 354, i4095. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.i4095>
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. 2nd edition. Sage.
- Monaghan, L.F., Colls, R. & Evans, B. (2013). Obesity discourse and fat politics: Research, critique and interventions. *Critical Public Health*, 23(3), 249-262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0581596.2013.814312>
- Mudry, J. (2018). Nutrition, health and food: “what should I eat?”. In K. Lebesco & P. Naccarato (Eds.) *The handbook of food and popular culture* (pp.274-285) Bloomsbury.
- Neuhaus, J. (2003). *Manly meals and mom's home cooking: Cookbooks and gender in modern America*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Neuman, W.L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 7th edition. Allyn & Bacon.
- Nevin, S.M. & Vartanian, L.R. (2017). The stigma of clean dieting and orthorexia nervosa. *Journal of Eating Disorders*, 5(1), 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-017-0168-9>
- O'Neill, R. (2020) 'Glow from the inside out': Deliciously Ella and the politics of 'healthy eating'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549420921868>
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Pilař, L., Kvasničková Stanislavská, L., Kvasnička, R., Hartman, R. & Tichá, I. (2021). Healthy food on Instagram social network: vegan, homemade and clean eating. *Nutrients*, 13, 1991. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13061991>
- Prnjak, K., Pemberton, S., Helms, E. & Phillips, J.G. (2020). Reactions to ideal body shapes. *The Journal of General Psychology*, 147(4), 361-380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221309.2019.1676190>
- Puhl, R.M. & Heuer, C.A. (2010). Obesity stigma: Important considerations for public health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(6), 1019-1028. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.19491>
- Rhodes, G. (2006). The evolutionary psychology of facial beauty. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 199-226. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190208>
- Rodney, A., Cappeliez, S., Oleschuk, M. & Johnston, J. (2017). The online domestic goddess: An analysis of food blog femininities. *Food, Culture & Society*, 20(4), 685-707. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2017.1357954>
- Rojek, C. (2017). The case of Belle Gibson, social media, and what it means for understanding leisure under digital praxis. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 20(5), 524-528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2017.1290142>
- Rousseau, S. (2012). *Food media: Celebrity chefs and the politics of everyday interference*. Bloomsbury.
- Rousseau, S. (2015). The celebrity quick-fix: When good food meets bad science. *Food, Culture and Society*, 18(2), 265-287. <https://doi.org/10.2752/17514415X14180391604404>
- Ryan, M. (2013). The gender of pregnancy: Masculine lesbians talk about reproduction. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 17(2), 119-133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2012.653776>
- Schouten, A.P., Janssen, L. & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. influencer endorsements in advertising: The role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 258-281. <https://doi.org/10.0180/02650487.2019.1634898>
- Shaw, M. (2015). *Get the glow: 100 delicious and easy recipes that will nourish you from the inside out*. Orion.
- Shaw, M. (2018, August 9). My anti-ageing secrets / How To Dry Brush | The BEST Monthly Facial. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeblu4bsjHM>
- Shaw, M. (2019, April 28). A Day In The Life | FOOD SHOP, MEAL PREP & HOME WORKOUTS. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6m0h4pX2rKM>

- Simpson, C.C. & Mazzeo, S.E. (2017). Skinny is not enough: A content analysis of Fitspiration on Pinterest. *Health Communication*, 32(5), 560-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1140273>
- Skeggs, B. (2004). *Class, self, culture*. Routledge.
- Smart, N. (2020, April 15). Now more than ever it's important to support small local businesses. *Instagram*. https://www.instagram.com/p/B_AnUV2j8c1/
- Social Blade (2020). Social Blade. <https://socialblade.com/instagram>
- Staudacher, H.M. & Harer, K.N. (2018). When clean eating goes dirty. *Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology*, 3(10), 668. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253\(18\)30277-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253(18)30277-2)
- Tandoh, R. (2017, January 23). Bad fad – Ruby Tandoh on how clean eating turned toxic. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jan/23/bad-fad-ruby-tandoh-on-how-clean-eating-turned-toxic>
- Tompkins, K. W. (2005). Literary approaches to food studies. *Food, Culture & Society*, 8(2), 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.2752/155280105778055326>
- Turner, G. (2009). *Ordinary people and the media: The demotic turn*. Sage.
- Vandenburg, T. & Braun, V. (2017). 'Basically, it's sorcery for your vagina': Unpacking Western representations of vaginal steaming. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 19(4), 470-485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2016.1237674>
- Vartanian, L.R. & Dey, S. (2013). Self-concept clarity, thin-ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison as predictors of body dissatisfaction. *Body Image*, 10(4), 495-500. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.05.004>
- Walsh, M.J & Baker, S.A. (2020). Clean eating and Instagram: purity, defilement, and the idealization of food. *Food, Culture & Society*, 23(5), 570-588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1806636>
- Wilkes, K. (2021). Eating, looking and living clean: Techniques of white femininity in contemporary neoliberal food culture. *Gender, Work & Organisation*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gawo.12620>
- Winter, C.K. & Davis, S.F. (2006). Organic foods. *Journal of Food Science*, 71(9), 117-124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-3841.200.00196.x>
- Woodward, E. (2015). *Deliciously Ella: Awesome ingredients, incredible food that you and your body will love*. Hodder & Stoughton.
- Xu, E. & Lee, T. (2017). Illness bloggers and sickness scams: Communication ethics and the 'Belle' Gibson saga'. *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, 14(2-3), 72-79.
- Yang, J., Teran, C., Battocchio, A.F., Bertellotti, E. & Wrzesinski, S. (2021). Building brand authenticity on social media: The impact of Instagram ad model genuineness and trustworthiness on perceived brand authenticity and consumer responses. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(1), pp. 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2020.1860168>
- Zappavigna, M. (2016). Social media photography: Constructing subjectivity in Instagram images. *Visual Communication*, 15(3), 271-292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357216643220>
- Zulli, D. (2018). Capitalizing on the Look: Insights into the glance, attention economy, and Instagram. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 35(2), 137-150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2017.1394582>