FEMINIST DISCOURSE AND WHITE PRIVILEGE:
SERVED UP FRESH AND TASTY?

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This thesis is a textual analysis of *Fresh and Tasty* (FAT), a woman’s snowboarding magazine. My analysis focuses on the ways in which the magazine functions as a site of feminist discourse and constructs whiteness. FAT makes a number of important feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding in the U.S. and, in doing so, becomes a site of feminist discourse that works within and through both feminist and anti-feminist discourses. The magazine seems to exemplify the “I’m not a feminist, but…” phenomenon, and the equality/difference binary common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse appears throughout FAT as well. Although both discursive moves serve important functions, they are politically limiting and problematic insofar as the magazine represents systemic feminist analyses of power and privilege as “complaining” and obscures differences among women. FAT’s feminist political potential is also undermined by its visual and discursive constructions of whiteness. Whiteness is represented as normative, and femininity is constructed as white femininity, both of which are symptomatic of white privilege. I conclude my analysis by raising questions about the political limits and implications of FAT’s version of feminist discourse.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A recent The New York Times Magazine article on snowboarding and the 2002 Olympic Winter Games includes approximately forty-six references to professional men snowboarders and only five references to professional women snowboarders (O’Brien 32-35).¹ This lack of media attention to women riders as athletes is especially telling when compared to the article’s three references to the “strip club” that a group of male riders frequent during a qualifying event (32-34), as well as the references to “cute local girls” (32), “picking up chicks” (35), and “looking forward to the Swedish cross-country-skier girls” (35). This article is particularly troubling in that, published only a few months ago, it shows just how little things have changed for women in snowboarding. Yet the article and its sexist representation—as well as its heterosexism—are emblematic of snowboarding and snowboarding discourse in the U.S.

Snowboarding is discursively and materially characterized as masculine and as sexist.² A range of periodicals describe snowboarding as “a macho sport” (Waxler and Gordon 76), “a macho young man domain” (“Women’s Interest” 9), “the ranks of...teenaged boys” (Chesky 1), and “the domain of grungy, Gen X White boys” (Claire McIntosh 78), complete with “often obnoxious, teenage boy...‘yar dude’ banter” (Sutker 53). Snowboarding is also described as “the last frontier of the ‘no girls allowed’ posses,
a Gen X boys’ club” (Edut 22), possessing “the ugly, ancient attitude of sexism” (Chesky 2). These discursive characterizations both reflect and are reflected by gendered participation in snowboarding. According to the Sports Business Research Network, 73.1% of snowboarders were men and 26.9% were women in 1995, 73.5% men and 26.5% women in 1996, 76.3% men and 23.7% women in 1997, and 76.4% men and 23.6% women in 1998. Thus snowboarding is materially and discursively informed by sexism and dominated by men.

Not surprisingly, then, “mainstream” snowboarding magazines in the U.S. are dominated mostly by images of and articles about men snowboarders, and when the magazines do pay attention to women, they do so in ways that visually and discursively construct women snowboarders as Other and women as objects of male heterosexual desire. An example of an article that constructs women snowboarders as Other is Robyn Hakes’ “Ladies’ Room: Behind Closed Doors with the Women of Snowboarding,” which is premised on an assumed audience of men to whom “[t]he mystery surrounding women and our behind-closed-doors conversations…the secrets locked in the minds of female riders” need to be “reveal[ed]” (51). In contrast to such articles about “women snowboarders,” articles about “men snowboarders” are not marked as such, and articles about “snowboarders” are usually about men; men are positioned as the privileged norm and women as the Other. It is also common for snowboarding magazines to publish images that construct women as objects of male heterosexual desire, including within photograph collages of snowboarding images. One example is a photo collage that includes an image of an unidentified woman in a half shirt lying on her back on a bar; a man, presumably a bartender, pouring alcohol in her belly button; and another man,
identified as a snowboarder, smiling, resting his hand on her groin, and preparing to retrieve the alcohol from her bellybutton ("Open Shutter" 82). Such images usually have little obvious connection to the other images in the collages—the other images being of people, usually men, snowboarding—other than that the men pictured are sometimes identified as snowboarders. Yet the visual presence of these images receives little or no discursive commentary or explanation, so their inclusion not only privileges heterosexuality, but also points to one place of women in snowboarding magazines: as objects of male heterosexual desire. In constructing women as objects of male heterosexual desire and as exceptions to the male norm of snowboarding, snowboarding magazines trivialize the accomplishments of women snowboarders as athletes.

1.1 The First and Only Women's Snowboarding Magazine

Produced by this sexist snowboarding discourse, but also evidencing a point of rupture within it, is Fresh and Tasty (FAT), described by its creators, Bethany Stevens and Melissa Longfellow, as "the first and only women's snowboarding magazine." FAT was published quarterly from Sept./Oct. 1995 to Feb. 1998, for a total of eleven issues. Standard features of the magazine included editor's notes; letters from readers; articles on various snowboarding topics; coverage of snowboarding events; annual buyer's guides, including technical information on snowboarding products; advertising; photography spreads; interviews with women working in the snowboarding industry; profiles of women snowboarders; instructions for doing particular snowboarding tricks; music-related articles, interviews, and reviews; and a comic strip featuring a woman snowboarder as hero. Described by a book on third wave feminism as an example of a
third wave "glossy-but-still-independent zin[e]" (Baumgardner and Richards 135), FAT makes a number of feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding in the U.S. that challenge the sexism of snowboarding discourse. Here I outline just three of these many contributions.

One of the primary ways in which FAT ruptures sexist snowboarding discourse is by filling its pages with images of women snowboarders. Within email interviews, I asked creators Stevens and Longfellow, "What were your overall goals for creating and publishing Fresh and Tasty?" They responded as follows:

The whole point of Fresh and Tasty was to put role models out there of women participating in snowboarding—showing women as active participants, not just girlfriends of snowboarders. I had noticed when I went snowboarding that when I rode with my guy friends it was hard to get inspired to try a new trick or a big jump, but if there were girls doing it then I would say, "If she can do it, then I can do it." So the goal of the magazine was to take away the question "Can I do it?" and instead address the question "How do I do it?" We...just wanted to put pictures...out there to inspire girls to participate so that equality couldn't be denied. (Stevens, Email Interview)

...we loved snowboarding so much we would pour over every magazine photo and video when away from the snow. Realizing that the images of girls really inspired us, we constantly scoured the pages for photo credits to see if it was a girl. Those were the ones we studied, marveled over, aspired to be. We figured, "if she can do [it], then I could do it. That could be me." However, only about 6 of those images in a 250-page magazine wasn't enough. We thought[t] how great it would be if the magazine was filled with images of girls doing amazing things. So you wouldn't have to scour for the few. You could just flip each page leisurely, marveling at the kick-ass tricks and airs and adventures that "she" was into. (Longfellow, Email Interview)

A goal for both Stevens and Longfellow was to fill the magazine with images of women snowboarders as athletes in order to inspire girls and women to snowboard. Stevens further emphasizes this goal within her "Editor's Note" to the October 1996 issue. She writes, "Fresh and Tasty was created to counteract and diminish the negative images of women received when women are portrayed as weak, or merely decorative...the visual
image has such tremendous power and *Fresh and Tasty* is dedicated to filling its pages with strong, positive images of women” (4). True to its creators’ goals, each issue of *FAT* is full of photography of women snowboarding. For example, within the same issue that contains this editor’s note, I count 51 photographed images of women athletes riding through the snow and air on their snowboards. By visually representing women snowboarders as the norm, and as primarily athletes rather than sex objects, *FAT* counters the sexist representations found in other snowboarding magazines.

A second way *FAT* counters sexist snowboarding discourse is by giving credit for women’s accomplishments in the snowboarding industry to the women riders, rather than to companies that sell “women-specific” snowboarding products. These companies are typically positioned “as a solution” to the problems of women’s material and representational absence relative to men within snowboarding and snowboarding texts (Lucas 149). Such a positioning is evident in popular culture texts, marketing-specific texts, and snowboarding-specific texts. For instance, in a *Newsweek* article, “Boarding’s Year of the Woman,” Caroline Waxter and Jeanne Gordon write that, “many in the industry are making it easier for women to get up and riding in what has been largely a young man’s world” (76). Another article in *Marketing to Women*, “Women’s Interest in Snowboarding Snowballs,” similarly gives much of the credit for this “snowballing” to companies: “The reason for the increase in snowboarding’s popularity among women lies, in part, in the fact that several companies are now catering to the women’s market with specially-designed boots, better-fitting fashions and lighter, thinner snowboards” (9). Finally, in *Sick: A Cultural History of Snowboarding*, Susanna Howe, while also recognizing the achievements of individual women snowboarders, credits much of the
changes for women in snowboarding to “the early mid-'90s explosion in the women’s recreational market” (119). Thus companies that sell women-specific snowboarding products are positioned as solutions that make possible women snowboarders’ accomplishments in beginning to overcome their material and textual underrepresentation.

In contrast, FAT positions women snowboarders, their hard work as athletes, and, in some cases, their struggles against sexism as the solutions that make possible these improvements. For example, in “She Ain’t Done,” a piece on professional rider Shannon Dunn, who “has become the representative of women in snowboarding” (21), Stevens writes that, working together with another professional woman rider, Tina Basich, “Shannon Dunn helped to promote the idea of women-specific clothing, push the level of standards of riding, and bring integrity to the women’s events in snowboarding. Working together, they had opportunities they might have missed, had they tried to go it alone” (23). Here Stevens mentions Dunn’s work to promote women-specific clothing as just part of what she has accomplished. Also, Stevens attributes the idea of women-specific clothing to Dunn’s accomplishments, rather than the other way around, and emphasizes that Dunn’s accomplishments can be credited in part to her “working together” with another woman rider. Stevens goes on to detail Dunn’s training routine, demonstrating her dedication and determination as an athlete (24). The article concludes as follows:

Shannon Dunn has done it. She has made a career out of what she loves. She has forged the way for others to make a career out of what they love. Shannon Dunn is a successful professional athlete. Who would have ever believed that snowboarding was once considered a men’s only sport? Snowboarding has come a long way and Shannon Dunn has been a strong influence on the shape it’s taken. (24)
This conclusion again emphasizes Dunn’s accomplishments as a professional athlete, and it credits much of the changes in the position of women within snowboarding to the influence of Shannon Dunn.6

While FAT does credit women snowboarders, rather than companies, with improvements to the position of women in snowboarding, the magazine also makes a third feminist contribution on behalf of women in snowboarding by encouraging the industry that women are consumers of snowboarding products, thus directing industry attention to women and the need for women-specific products.7 Stevens stated this purpose of the magazine in response to my question, “What did you hope to accomplish?” She responded as follows:

Our hope was to encourage the manufactures to address women’s needs and take into account the different shape of a woman’s body as compared to a man’s and make clothes, boots and boards that fit us. We also wanted to provide a forum to provide women with exposure so that they would be valued by companies and would therefore be sponsored—we wanted to support a women’s professional market. (Email Interview)

This intent is evidenced throughout each and every issue of FAT, especially in advertisements for women-specific snowboarding products and in yearly buyer’s guides full of such products, both of which function to address and develop a “women’s market.” FAT explicitly makes its case for this market in “Media Kit No. 3”:

SIA’s (Snow Industries America) 1996 National Snowboard Survey concludes that one in three snowboarders is female—a continued increase from years past. In addition, our resort/rental shop survey found that 45-55% of new snowboarders and snowboard rental customers were women. And everyone knows that beginners are future snowboard addicts. Fresh and Tasty magazine is the most effective way to communicate directly to this valuable market. The demand is huge for technical, functional snowboarding gear, events, and experiences tailored to the female snowboarder.
Although this statement is certainly shaped by the magazine’s need to sell advertisements in order to stay in business, it makes the case that much of FAT attempts to make: that it is in the interest of the snowboarding industry to direct attention specifically to women. Stevens also expresses this function of FAT within her “Editor’s Note” to the April 1997 issue, where she thanks readers “for supporting our effort to convince the snowboard industry that women are just as likely to spend their hard earned cash on a snowboard, some boots, and some vids” and claims that “the industry has finally realized that women are the fastest growing segment of the fastest growing sport” (2). Thus FAT functions on behalf of women and snowboarding in part by directing industry attention to women as consumers and athletes.

Insofar as FAT makes these feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding, it functions as a site of feminist discourse, a site where feminist arguments are both advanced and challenged. This function of the magazine is explicitly recognized by its creators. I asked both Stevens and Longfellow, “Would you describe the magazine as ‘feminist’? Why or why not? What is your own definition of feminism?” Stevens responded that, “Yes, Fresh and Tasty is a feminist magazine” (Email Interview). I quote Longfellow’s response, which also recognized the magazine as feminist, at length:

Recently...I had the privilege (and pleasure) of having dinner with Gloria Steinem, a real hero of mine, and she had somehow heard about Fresh and Tasty. We were chatting about the challenges of a women’s magazine that is about empowerment rather than beauty or fashion. Although we never intended to create a magazine based on or dealing with Feminism, in the process of making a magazine about snowboarding that was from a female perspective, Bethany and I found that the challenges we faced had everything to do with Feminism and its reason for being...faced with unexpected criticism, from both females and males, we learned firsthand what Feminism meant and why it was necessary—because even a non-political endeavor, like a snowboarding magazine, is held to a
different standard than your "normal" (male-centric) magazine. The normal magazines didn't claim to be male-based, they just were... We couldn't believe that people couldn't see what we were doing for the reality of it. HELLO— GIRLS ARE TREATED LIKE SECOND CLASS PEOPLE IN THESE MAGAZINES!!!!!! ARE YOU SERIOUS??! YOU DON'T SEE THAT??!!! It was at this point we realized WHAT feminism really is. (Email Interview)

As Longfellow's response makes clear, FAT functions as a site of feminist discourse by virtue of working on behalf of women in snowboarding and thus becoming a place where feminist arguments are both made and critiqued.

1.2 Theoretical Framework & Methodology

My selection of FAT as an object for analysis reflects at least two of what Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook identify, in Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research, as aspects of feminist methodology: "attention to the affective components of the research act" (9)—in this case, as a starting point—and "use of the situation at hand" (11). My desire to analyze FAT has been motivated simultaneously by, on the one hand, the intense pleasures I experience while snowboarding and looking at snowboarding magazines and, on the other hand, the intense anger I feel while thinking critically about the degree to which snowboarding as a sport and snowboarding magazines as texts reflect and are implicated in systems of sexism and racism. I love snowboarding, and I love looking at snowboarding magazines; I especially love looking at FAT because of the ways in which it works against sexism on behalf of women and snowboarding. At the same time, I realize that the degree to which I can easily enjoy riding and looking at snowboarding magazines, including FAT, is symptomatic of unearned privileges I can count on as a person who has been socially categorized as white in contemporary U.S. contexts. My goal in this thesis is to
productively engage my feelings of pleasure and anger not only by recognizing FAT’s feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding, as I have done, but also by critically analyzing FAT’s version of feminist discourse and constructions of whiteness.

The bodies of literature that inform my critical analysis of FAT are theoretical and in turn inform my methodologies. My analysis is primarily informed by poststructuralist theory in the area of discourse studies and by critical race theory in the areas of critical white studies and black feminist thought. The methodology I most use is textual analysis, including discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, and visual analysis. In addition to this methodological emphasis on textual analysis, I also draw sparingly on the texts of email interviews with the creators of FAT, Stevens and Longfellow. After they agreed to be interviewed, both were sent the same set of general questions. Though I quote the creators’ interview responses where relevant, my arguments are based primarily on my analysis of the magazine as informed by poststructuralist and critical race theories.9

In chapter two, I draw primarily on poststructuralist theory in the area of discourse studies in order to analyze the ways in which FAT functions as a site of feminist discourse. I focus on how the magazine and its reliance on the “I’m not a feminist, but…” phenomenon and the equality/different binary work within and through feminist and anti-feminist discourses, both reproducing and altering certain aspects of these discourses. Using the concept of discourse as theorized in the work of Michel Foucault, I primarily read the magazine as constituted by and symptomatic of these feminist and anti-feminist discourses (ctd. in Scott 100). Yet, at the same time, I also acknowledge the ways in which the magazine and its creators become speaking subjects with agency. In “Eclipsing the Constitutive Power of Discourse: The Writing of Janette
Turner Hospital,” Bronwyn Davies argues that, even as subjects constituted through discourses are subjugated, they also “become speaking subjects” through that process and can thus exercise agency and “eclipse” the power of the very discourses that constitute them (179-180). As speaking subjects with this sort of agency, the creators of FAT make rhetorical choices—based on their audience, purpose, and context—about how to negotiate the feminist and anti-feminist discourses that constitute them. Insofar as FAT repeats feminist and anti-feminist discourses in ways that alter them, the magazine represents what Judith Butler calls a “subversive repetition,” in which agency is evidenced in variation within repetition. Thus the magazine and its creators are both subjects constituted by feminist and anti-feminist discourses and speaking subjects that reproduce and alter those discourses.

In chapter three, I draw primarily on critical race theory in the areas of critical white studies and black feminist thought in order to analyze the ways in which the feminist political potential of FAT is undermined by its visual and discursive constructions of whiteness as an unremarkable norm and of femininity as white femininity. I analyze FAT’s constructions of whiteness as an unremarkable norm to make visible and interrogate what Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. describe, in their introduction to “The White Issue” of Transition: An International Review, as “the inevitable silence of whiteness, its ‘transparency,’ its status as the unexamined norm against which all differences are measured” (5). I also analyze the ways in which FAT further normalizes whiteness by constructing femininity as white femininity. As black feminist theorists such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde have long pointed out, the degree to which white feminists do not make visible and interrogate the
silence and transparency of whiteness as normative leads to homogenizing constructions of the category “woman” that are based primarily if not solely on white women though not marked as such.¹⁰ FAT is a feminist project that both generally normalizes whiteness and specifically constructs the category woman as white and, as such, the magazine is both symptomatic of and implicated in the privileging of white women at the expense of women and men of color.

My engagement with the field of critical white studies and attention to constructions of whiteness proceeds, but with reservation. In Richard Dyer’s analysis of cultural representations of whiteness, White, he argues that attention to “racial imagery of white people” is needed not

…merely to fill a gap in the analytic literature, but because there is something at stake in looking at, or continuing to ignore, white racial imagery. As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. (1)

Dyer further asserts that critical white studies can function to call into question this construction of white people as “a human norm” and, in doing so, can “dislodge them/us from the position of power, with all its inequities, oppression, privileges and sufferings in train” (2).¹¹ Theorized in this way, the field of critical white studies seems politically necessary and productive. Yet, cautioning against assumptions that work on whiteness inevitably functions in liberatory ways, Appiah and Gates point to some of the dangers of this field:

While much of the work on whiteness is intriguing, there is a danger of insularity, a narcissistic temptation by the often confessional nature of writing about one’s own skin. There is a danger, as well, of making whiteness too interesting—something one always aspires to, or rebels against. One can’t help but register a concern that a “white studies” by, for, and about white people might displace examinations of groups that have only begun to be considered legitimate subjects of academic inquiry in the last thirty years. (5)
The concern that academic legitimacy of the field of critical white studies might be used as justification for white scholars doing work only about and for white people is certainly valid. In the case of this project, my selection of FAT as an object for analysis was not motivated by a desire to do work in the area of critical white studies; rather, I pursued the project for other reasons and later came to a recognition that interrogating rather than eliding the whiteness of the magazine is my analytical and political responsibility. Yet, while proceeding with my critical analysis of FAT’s constructions of whiteness, I have asked myself many times, “Are you critiquing constructions of whiteness only so that you can feel better about focusing on a white sport and a white magazine?” The question has not gone away, nor should it, but I have determined that the risk of critically examining whiteness in this project—as opposed to participating in the magazine’s elision of whiteness—seems to be outweighed by both the responsibility to do so and the potential productiveness of doing so. As such, I attempt throughout this project to recognize its limits, yet to proceed in hopes that, in the words of Patti Lather, “...perhaps it is the very questioning engagement of our intervention that is the politics of what we have done” (220-221).

1 In counting references to professional snowboarders, I only count one reference per person per paragraph; the number of references to men snowboarders would be much higher if multiple references to the same person within paragraphs were counted.
2 This characterization is not surprising given the extent to which snowboarding is both a sport and a subculture (Murray 56). The characterization of sport as masculine has been well documented—“masculine imagery has been at the heart of sporting discourse” (Horne, Tomlinson, and Whannel 173)—and conceptualizations of subculture are similarly characterized, so that “the very term ‘subculture’ has acquired such strong masculine overtones” (McRobbie and Garber 114).
3 I cite statistics for these years because FAT was in publication from 1995 to 1998.
4 In response to questions about the title for the magazine, the following explanation was included in an early issue of FAT: “It was very cold when we got up. No showers, no breakfast. In fact, no daylight. Just a foot of fresh and boards into the car for the four-hour trek up to Jay Peak, Vermont. Kilgore’s is the general store in the town of Jay where we would always stop for breakfast. We ordered their famous light, fluffy, and delicious pancakes, in anticipation of a great day to come. The box of Kilgore’s special pancake
mix read, 'Mix the following ingredients to whip up some fresh and tasty flapjacks.' Later, giddy with joy as we surfaced the powder, we yelled what a 'fresh and tasty' day it was...” (“The Fresh and Tasty Story” 4).

5 In “Nike’s Commercial Solution: Girls, Sneakers, and Salvation,” Shelley Lucas “critically examine[s] the ways in which Nike has situated itself as an active participant in current cultural conversations about girls’ and women’s participation in sport...” (149).

6 Another article on “one of the most featured professional snowboarders” (Stevens 19), “The Power of Freedom: Victoria Jealousy,” details Jealousy’s struggles against lack of encouragement for women athletes and against media pressure to be thin in order to attract men (26). Jealousy credits the influence of other women snowboarders with the achievements that have come out of her struggles against sexism (26). Also, in “U.S. Open ‘96,” a collection of “…some deep thoughts from various people at the final weekend of...snowboarding’s largest national event, the 14th annual U.S. Open,” at least fifteen different people comment on the improvement of the women snowboarders and the level of riding in the women’s division; almost all of them credit these improvements to the women riders, and not one credits any company (36, 38, 42, 44).

7 There are indeed limitations to “market equality,” as Alexandra Chastin makes clear in Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market, but, at the same time, market equality does result in improvements for some women snowboarders. I briefly return to this question in my conclusion.

8 My description of FAT as a site of feminist discourse and as advancing feminist arguments is informed by a recognition that there are multiple and sometimes contradictory feminisms (Beasley ix). Although FAT and the arguments it advances do not represent every version of feminism, they do represent a version of feminism.

9 Although I go on to discuss poststructuralist theory and critical race theory as distinct and as each informing one of my two chapters of analysis, these theoretical fields do indeed overlap as does my use of them in both chapters.

10 See especially hooks’ Ain’t I a Woman and Lorde’s “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” I refer here to black feminist thought because of the degree to which it informs this project, but there are of course a range of other critical race feminisms that develop similar theoretical analyses. Drawing on work by black feminist theorists in particular is productive for this project in part because doing so leads to analysis of the ways in which conceptions of whiteness are meaningful only in relation to conceptions of blackness in contemporary U.S. contexts so influenced by dualistic thought. Yet, to whatever degree doing so further reifies the white/black binary, the productivity of the project is undermined as theorized by Susan Stanford Friedman in “Beyond White and Other: Relationality and Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse” (5).

11 See also Kobena Mercer’s discussion in Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies on the need to “make whiteness visible” (215).
CHAPTER 2

WORKING THROUGH FEMINIST AND ANTI-FEMINIST DISCOURSES

This chapter critically analyzes Fresh and Tasty’s version of feminist discourse. The first section of my analysis considers the ways in which the magazine seems to exemplify the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon. By taking feminist positions while avoiding identification with feminism, FAT works within and through both feminist and anti-feminist discourses. In doing so, the magazine avoids the potential problem of using powers available to women without paying debt to feminism. Instead, it functions as a form of de-facto feminism, but while perpetuating problematic constructions of feminists, most interestingly as “complainers.” The second section of my analysis deconstructs the equality/difference binary common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse as it appears in FAT. The magazine consistently frames its possible arguments and strategies in terms of either the equality position or the difference position, usually taking the difference position. Although this discursive move works to defend the need for both a women’s snowboarding magazine and women-specific snowboarding equipment, I argue that it is politically limiting and problematic.
2.1  "I’m Not a Feminist, But..."

FAT’s version of feminist discourse seems to exemplify the widely documented “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon.¹ Misciagno describes this phenomenon as one “where women will begin statements in support of a feminist position with the phrase, ‘I’m not a feminist, but...’” (7), and Duncombe describes it as a “phenomenon in which women who hold beliefs associated with feminism do not self-identify as feminists” (99). FAT seems to exemplify this phenomenon because, although it is in many ways a feminist magazine and a site of feminist discourse, Stevens and Longfellow, in contrast to their interview statements, do not identify themselves as “feminists” or the magazine as “feminist” anywhere within its pages, and both they and other writers rarely use the words “feminist” or “feminism” within the magazine. Stevens’ interview with Michelle Barnas from Pure Snowboards, a company that “designs, tests, and manufactures snowboards specifically for women,” is an explicit example of the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon (“Pure” 48). Stevens asks Barnas a question about “the idea behind” and need for “a women specific snowboard line,” and quotes Barnas’ response as follows:

Basically there are 216 companies out there whose boards are mainly product tested by and designed by men except for the women pro models. Every girl and even some guys were riding a Dunn model and because of this Pure was born. We’re not a bra-less wearing, hairy arm pit feminist group stating that we want our own mountain to ride on, on our Pure boards. We want people to know that if guys like Pure boards they can buy them, but they are designed by females for females. To have a girl take a board and say this is too wide, this is too stiff, okay let’s change it here, change it there, let’s do this to it, and a board company that is solely into catering to girls’ physiques, that’s what Pure is all about. (48-49)²

Barnas takes a feminist position insofar as she points out that most companies create snowboards tested and designed by men and claims that there is a need for companies
that create snowboards tested and designed by women to serve women’s needs. Yet she makes clear that Pure Snowboards is not a “feminist group.” More important than this explicit example of the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon, though, is the extent to which the magazine more subtly exemplifies the phenomenon by avoiding and perhaps even rejecting feminist labels while taking feminist positions.

That FAT exemplifies the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon is in many ways understandable. FAT’s repetition of this widely documented phenomenon could be a rhetorical choice made by the magazine’s creators given their specific audience and general context. In an email interview with the author, Stevens describes the magazine’s audience as “women with the expected target market being teenagers (12-24),” and FAT’s “Media Kit” claims “Fresh and Tasty readers are predominately younger women. 88% are between 15 and 28 years old.” Contemporary young women’s fear of and resistance to feminism is documented by many of the same scholars and writers who discuss the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon and by teachers of introduction to women’s studies classes. The backlash against feminism and climate of anti-feminism that characterized the 1980s and 1990s in the U.S. are also equally well documented. Given a specific audience of young women likely to fear and resist feminism and a general context of anti-feminism and backlash against feminism, it might be more rhetorically effective for FAT to advance its version of feminist discourse by not identifying with, and perhaps by even rejecting, the label “feminist.” Regardless of whether or not FAT’s repetition of the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon is a conscious rhetorical choice, the existence of this phenomenon represents a discursive position that speaks to both the power of feminist discourses and the power of anti-
feminist discourses. That FAT takes this position says less about the particular approach of the creators of FAT and more about the power of these discourses and the ways in which they overlap in often-contradictory ways. Taking the discursive position of “I’m not a feminist, but…” allows FAT to simultaneously work within and through both feminist and anti-feminist discourses.

Although it is understandable that FAT unquestioningly works within and through feminist and anti-feminist discourses by taking the “I’m not a feminist, but…” position, there are potentially problematic implications of taking such a position. One is that FAT might use powers that are in many ways available to women because of feminism, without recognizing the debt owed to earlier feminists. Yet FAT seems to avoid this possibility in two exceptions to their general avoidance of the labels “feminist” and “feminism.” In the first exception, an interview with singer and musician Jill Sobule, Longfellow asks Sobule “Are you a feminist?” Sobule responds as follows:

Well, there’s another artist on my label who I love and adore, she’s a bit younger than me and her saying something like “I don’t like those feminists.” And I’m like, “If it weren’t for those feminists you probably wouldn’t be having the power you have right now.” Part of it is that it’s become this ugly word, partly because of icky leadership and also the media. I don’t say things like “I am a woman hear me roar,” but I think it’s important for women to do positive things like the magazine you’re doing. (“She Kissed a Girl” 61)

Sobule’s response exemplifies the “I’m not a feminist, but…” phenomenon insofar as she avoids a direct confirmation—a “yes”—to the question about whether or not she is a feminist, and her “I don’t say things like ‘I am a woman hear me roar,’ but…” statement could be read as a rejection of the label “feminist,” and at the same time, she does precede and follow her “but…” with positions that might be called feminist. More important to my point here, though, are the ways in which she quickly acknowledges that
the powers available to her and other contemporary women musicians are in part because of feminism, and she emphasizes that it is the “word” feminist that has become “ugly.”

In this first exception to FAT’s general avoidance of the label “feminist,” the magazine seems to avoid one potentially problematic implication of taking the “I’m not a feminist, but...” position.

FAT also seems to avoid this potential problem of taking the “I’m not a feminist, but...” position in the second exception to their general avoidance of the labels “feminist” and “feminism.” Stevens’ editor’s note in the second issue of FAT, which focuses on defending against criticisms that a women’s snowboarding magazine is not needed, contains an inset in the bottom right corner of the page that explicitly acknowledges that the powers available to contemporary women are in many ways because of feminism. The inset contains a photo of “An organization opposed to granting women the right to vote, 1917”; a reproduction of a 1967 girdle ad from McCall’s magazine that reads “TEN MILLION SOLD! they must be comfortable”; and the following boxed text:

It is important to remember, as we consider the goals and struggles of the third wave of American feminists, that women were not simply given an education or the right to vote, but that earlier feminists struggled, at great personal cost, against political repression and social ridicule to gain each victory. The conditions that so many women take for granted today were the hard-won fruits of decades of sacrifice and activism. —Controversy and Coalition by M.M. Ferre and B.B. Hess, 1985. (“Editor’s Note” 3)

Although this statement comes in an inset, in very small font size, and in words other than the editor’s own, it does recognize the debt owed to earlier feminists. Thus, although the magazine primarily takes the “I’m not a feminist, but...” position, it does so
in a way that avoids the potential problem of using powers available to women because of feminism without recognizing the debt owed to earlier feminists.

In both of these cases—the first and second exceptions to FAT’s general avoidance of the labels “feminist” and “feminism”—the ways in which the magazine avoids this one potential problem point to the ways in which FAT’s version of feminist discourse and its use of the “I’m not a feminist, but…” position might function as a form of “de-facto feminism.” In “De-Facto Feminism and Praxis,” Patricia Misciagno develops the concept of de-facto feminism to offer one explanation of the “I’m not a feminist, but…” phenomenon. Misciagno argues that, while some women engaged in feminist activity may not identify as feminists, their activity as well as their situation are informed by feminism. She writes,

Because of this, they belong to the general class of women who are “feminists” (i.e., based both on their activity as well as the grounding of that activity in ontology, and on their social relationship to the feminist movement). What differentiates them from other members of this group is the fact that they may or may not identify themselves explicitly as feminists. (12)

Misciagno is clear that her “intent here is not to define feminism per se.” Nor is my intent to develop a single definition of feminism or to decide who is and is not a feminist. Rather, my point is that, even if FAT seems to take the “I’m not a feminist, but…” position, both the magazine and the magazine’s situation are informed by feminism, which Stevens seems to acknowledge in her second editor’s note. In this way, FAT’s version of feminist discourse might be described as a form of de-facto feminism.

A second potential implication of FAT unquestioningly working within and through feminist and anti-feminist discourses by taking the “I’m not a feminist, but…” position is that the magazine might perpetuate problematic constructions of those who do
identify as feminists. Despite Stevens’ second editor’s note, *FAT* does seem to do so in many ways. Some of these problematic constructions of feminists are very common ones. Especially within published reader letters, feminists are constructed as man-haters or male-bashers; within a couple of articles, lesbian baiting is used in ways that do little to question the homophobia and sexism underlying such lesbian baiting; and, in published reader letters and articles, feminists are sensationalized, for example, as bra-burners.⁴

More interestingly, though, feminists are constructed as complainers in published reader letters. For example, one reader writes, “Please don’t turn this into a guy-bashing/bra-burning/Riottgrrl magazine that *complains that boys are always getting the snowboarding spotlight*. The shred betties are here! Everyone knows it! Just leave it at that” (A.T. 4, my emphasis). In letters responding to the controversy around the name of *Fresh and Tasty* and to the possibility of changing the name, one reader writes, “The feminist activists are the chicks who are tripping over the name or something. I’d say too bad, deal with it” (Chere’e 6), and another writes as follows:

> About this name change thing, I don’t like the idea. I think *Fresh and Tasty* is a great name. Also, consider the totally hot guy rider who just got to the top of the board park. Who’s he checking out, the whiny girl *just sitting complaining about sexism in boarding*? No, he’s not. He’s checking out the chick who just pulled the best 540 he’s seen all day off the iciest jump in the park, the girl who’s actually doing something about sexism in boarding. (Janet 10, my emphasis)

In all of these letters, feminists are constructed as women who *just complain* about sexism in boarding.⁵ This construction of feminists as complainers is interesting in several ways. It is likely that what these readers call “complaining” is analysis of sexism generally and sexism within snowboarding specifically. Writing feminists off as complainers is and has been a way to disregard their analyses, and for young women in
particular, it is likely that they fear these feminist analyses. In “Fear of Feminism: Why Young Women Get the Willies,” Lisa Maria Hogeland writes that part of why young women fear feminism is because of its “systemic analysis of histories and structures of domination and privilege” (18), and, even more tellingly, that “feminism requires that you enter a world supersaturated with meaning, with implications. And for privileged women in particular, the notion that one’s privilege comes at someone else’s expense—that my privilege is your oppression—is profoundly threatening” (20). It is likely that young women readers of FAT are predominately white and middle class, given the whiteness of snowboarding as a sport and the incredibly high cost of snowboarding at a resort. That these young women construct feminists as complainers might have as much to do with their disinterest in recognizing their own privileges as their disinterest in “complaining” about sexism. I look more closely at white privilege and constructions of whiteness in the following chapter, but first turn to another dimension of FAT’s version of feminist discourse, the equality/difference binary.

2.2 Equality/Difference

A binary common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse is equality/difference. In “Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism,” Joan Scott applies key poststructuralist concepts—discourse, difference, and deconstruction—to what she identifies as “the ‘equality-versus-difference’ debate” within U.S. feminist discourse, focusing on the 1979 Sears sex discrimination case as one example of this debate. According to Scott, this equality-versus-difference debate is “a binary opposition...created to offer a choice to feminists, of either endorsing ‘equality’ or
its presumed antithesis ‘difference’” (38). In other words, conflicting feminist arguments are discursively categorized within this equality/difference binary such that they take the position of *either* equality *or* difference. Arguments that “sexual difference ought to be an irrelevant consideration in schools, employment, the courts, and the legislature” are categorized as the equality position, and arguments that “appeals on behalf of women ought to be made in terms of the needs, interests, and characteristics common to women as a group” are categorized as the difference position (38). Equality and difference are thus binarized as two dichotomous positions. As Scott and others point out, this binary opposition is politically limiting and problematic. I will return to Scott’s critique of the equality-versus-difference debate, as well as my own critique of the equality/difference binary within FAT’s version of feminist discourse, but first I analyze the ways in which this binary appears within FAT.

The equality/difference binary within FAT is set up on the first page of the first issue of the magazine (see appendix, figure 2.1). Within her first note from the editor, Stevens describes FAT as “a voice for women snowboarders” and asks, “now that we have this voice, what exactly do we want to say? What should ‘the first and only women’s snowboarding magazine’ have as its goal?” (“Drum Roll” 1). In answer to her questions, Stevens writes that within initial discussions with people across the county, men and women “had strong reactions” both for and against the idea of a women’s snowboarding magazine. Summarizing the positions for and against the magazine, Stevens claims that while some people “thought it was super and long overdue,” “others weren’t convinced that men and women need separate forums” and “feared that publishing a women’s magazine will only encourage separation and inequality.” Yet,
according to Stevens, people taking both positions share a common hope: “that, in the future, women and men will share equal footing in the industry and will each ride to the best of their abilities.” Stevens poses another question—“In what way can Fresh and Tasty best meet this hope?”—and this time answers her question by posing two options, which I quote here at length:

Is the purpose of Fresh and Tasty to help close the gap between men and women by encouraging and supporting women so that we can ride head to head with men? Do we want to be considered exactly the same as men, judged by equal standards? Is our goal to gradually envelope all snowboarders into one big happy family, publishing a magazine whose photography features equal numbers of men and women pulling the same tricks? If it is possible to progress into a world in which men and women are equal when measured on the same yardstick, then maybe it’s wrong to idolize the top female riders. We should instead look to the top rider. Rather than looking for inspiration from other female snowboarders, we should look to other snowboarders. Thus, the goal of Fresh and Tasty should be to become a coed magazine.

Or…

Do we acknowledge the fact that men and women are different and they shouldn’t be compared? Is it true that we like to be different, and a women’s magazine will give value to these differences by supporting women snowboarders, promoting confidence and interest in aggressive sport? Do you believe it is realistic to achieve the same support and respect the men receive while still being a woman? Is our purpose to note achievements rated on a woman’s scale that isn’t a negative classification, just its own distinction? (1)

In setting up these two options, Stevens frames the possible arguments and strategies of FAT in terms of the equality and difference positions as described by Scott. The first option that Stevens poses resembles the equality position that Scott describes as common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse. Most explicitly, Stevens uses the language of equality: she writes of judging women and men “by equal standards,” featuring “equal numbers of men and women,” and progressing “into a world in which men and women are equal when measured on the same yardstick.” More implicitly, she
also makes the assumptions that characterize the equality position: first, that equality means being “considered exactly the same as men,” and second, that equality means enveloping “all snowboarders into one big happy family,” looking “to the top rider” rather than “the top female riders,” looking to “other snowboarders” rather than “other female snowboarders” for inspiration, becoming “a coed magazine” rather than a women’s magazine, or, in Scott’s words, that “sexual difference ought to be an irrelevant consideration” (34). The second option that Stevens poses resembles the difference position that Scott describes as common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse. Not using the term “equality” even once in this passage, Stevens instead uses the language of difference: “men and women are different,” “we like to be different,” and “a woman’s magazine will give value to these differences” (1). In addition to using the language of difference, Stevens also makes the assumptions that characterize the difference position: that if women and men are different, then “they shouldn’t be compared,” those differences should be valued “by supporting women snowboarders,” and achievements should be “rated on a woman’s scale that isn’t a negative classification, just its own distinction,” or, again in the words of Scott, that “appeals on behalf of women ought to be made in terms of the needs, interests, and characteristics common to women as a group” (34). Thus the two options Stevens poses in answer to her question about how to meet the hope “that, in the future, women and men will share equal footing in the industry and will each ride to the best of their abilities” frame the possible arguments and strategies of FAT in terms of the equality-versus-difference debate as described by Scott.6

In addition to posing these equality and difference positions as two possible options, Stevens also constructs them as a binary opposition in at least two ways. First,
the equality and difference positions are presented as two seemingly dichotomous options. On the magazine page, the positions are captured in a paragraph each, rather than in one paragraph together, thus emphasizing that there are two possible options and that they are distinct from each other. Also, the transition between these two paragraphs is “Or….” This transition is surrounded by blank page space and in a font size as large as the title of the page and much larger than the rest of the text on the page, thus emphasizing that these two distinct options are in the sort of either/or relationship that typifies binaries. Second, the equality and difference positions are presented hierarchically, so that one position within this binary, the difference position, is rhetorically and visually preferred. After setting up the equality and difference positions as two possible options, Stevens does ask readers to “let us know how you think we can best achieve this goal.” Yet, rhetorically speaking, she offers the equality position first, as the opposing view, and then counters it with the difference position, as her own view, which is a standard way of constructing arguments within Western discourse. Also, visually speaking, most of the text on the magazine page is in black type. The only exceptions are the title of the page, each of the paragraphs presenting the equality/difference positions, and the short transition between those paragraphs. The paragraph presenting the equality position is in a blue/purple type, and the blank page space is a lighter shade of the same color, so that the equality position seems to fade into the page. In contrast, the paragraph presenting the difference position is in an orange type, and the title of the page, the transition between the paragraphs, and the borders around both the page and the picture on the page are in the same orange color. Rather than fading into the background, the difference position seems more aligned with the
page’s overall design, which could indicate a preference. Thus, as early as the editor’s note on the first page of the first issue of FAT, the equality and difference positions are constructed as a binary opposition made up of two seemingly dichotomous options that are rhetorically and visually organized hierarchically.

Beyond this first editor’s note, FAT returns again and again to the equality/difference binary, usually siding with the difference position, within interview questions, articles, and reader letters. Interview questions return to the binary by encouraging interviewees to talk about differences between women snowboarders and men snowboarders. For instance, in an interview with a group of three women riders known as the “Sea Hags,” Mary Catherine O’Connor responds to comments that snowboarding is “going way too girlie,” that “the fashion thing is getting out of hand,” and that snowboarding is “turning into a kind of slut scene,” by asking “But what about the idea of being distinctive in gender and not wanting to ride like a guy, but to ride like a woman, and there being value in that?” (54). Also, in a profile on sponsored rider Anita Schwaller, Sandra Jiskoot-Maier follows a question about what contests the rider has been involved in with the question, “What is the difference between women and men in snowboarding?” (56). In a way similar to these interview questions, articles within FAT return to the equality/difference binary and privilege the difference position. In “U.S. Open 1995,” an article on the annual Open Snowboarding Championship, Stevens writes that, “A big deal was made of the fact that the prize money for men and women was equal in the half-pipe competition, but it seems odd that the Big Air competition was not split into women’s and men’s divisions. A separate category for women would have highlighted their accomplishments instead of obscuring them” (10). In another article,
"The Herstory of Snowboarding," Stevens quotes World Cup Circuit rider Amy Howat as saying, "I think that it is important for women to project themselves and promote themselves as women (as opposed to wanna-be men) and be confident in that. We shouldn’t compare ourselves to men, because there is no comparison" (24). In both of these article passages, emphasis is placed on the importance of viewing women and men as members of separate, different categories, as well as the importance of not comparing women to men. Published letters from young women readers emphasize the same point. One reader writes that, "Personally, I don’t want to be considered the same as men. I’m not. I don’t even think we should be compared, the differences are obvious enough" (Santi 8), and another that, "...women boarders are not just like men! We ride differently, we’re shaped differently, we are different!" (Lorraine 4). These letters, articles, and interview questions are just a few examples of the ways in which FAT returns again and again to the equality/difference binary and privileges the difference position.

Another primary way in which FAT returns to the equality/difference binary and privileges the difference position is within their annual buyer’s guides. In the 1996-1997 and 1998 Buyer’s Guides, for example, an emphasis on differences between women and men is expressed using almost identical language. In “Buyer’s Guide 1996-1997,” Stevens writes that, "Maybe snowboards don’t know the difference between gender [sic], but good designers do. The overall design difference (not just putting girlie graphics on a guy’s board) is that women need a narrower board with a softer flex for any given length" (45), and “The 1998 Snowboard Buyer’s Guide” states that, “Maybe snowboards can’t tell the difference between gender, but good board designers and riders can....The overall
design difference (not just putting ‘feminine’ graphics on a board) is that women need a narrower board with a softer flex for any given length” (31). An inset within the 1998 Buyer’s Guide on “Women-specific Snowboards” also emphasizes that, “men and women are different…don’t believe the hype that boys and girls aren’t different” (35). In both buyer’s guides, differences between women and men are emphasized in order to establish the need for women-specific snowboarding equipment, and these differences between women and men are explained in terms of differences between women’s and men’s bodies, especially in terms of “proportions” and “averages.” For example, the 1996-1997 Guide states that, “a 140 lb. woman and 140 lb. man are not proportionately the same; the two will not have the same foot size or muscle ratio,” and it refers to the need for bindings that “anatomically fit” (45). Similarly, the 1998 Guide refers to “sports equipment which is made specifically for women’s proportions…sized according to the female physique,” and it claims that “using average boy sizes will not fit average girls sizes. More than likely a 140 lb. guy doesn’t have the same foot size as a 140 lb. girl” (35). My point here is not to argue for or against FAT’s claims that women and men need different snowboarding equipment because of differences between women’s and men’s bodies, but rather to point out the ways in which their claims emphasize differences between women and men and, more specifically, between women’s and men’s bodies.

In many ways, it makes senses that FAT would unquestioningly work within the equality/difference binary. The equality and difference positions are used as “truths” within contemporary U.S. feminist discourse, and, as Scott asserts, “The power of these ‘truths’ comes from the way they function as givens or first premises for both sides in an
argument, so that conflicts within discursive fields are framed to follow from rather than question them” (36). That FAT unquestioningly works within the terms of this equality/difference discourse speaks less to problems particular to its creators’ approach and more to the power of the discourse. Indeed, similar articulations of the equality/difference binary can be found elsewhere, including in many “popular” and “mainstream” magazines directed at young women, where the discourse is no longer just about feminism but about “women.” Yet FAT’s particular use of the terms of this discourse is certainly unique and distinct from these other magazines in at least three ways: because the magazine so explicitly and coherently sets up the binary; because it does so in ways that are so markedly (de-facto) feminist; and because it is more of a “marginal” or “subcultural” text. Yet FAT is similar to these other magazines in that it calls on the equality/difference binary common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse in ways that avoid and even reject identification with the label “feminism.” In doing so, the magazine does not just passively mimic contemporary U.S. feminist discourse; it repeats the discourse in ways that alter it. Thus FAT’s construction of the equality/difference binary speaks also to the simultaneous power of a site of discourse to reproduce that discourse in ways that are, albeit minimally, contested. In sum, that FAT works with(in) the terms of the equality/difference binary as it does points not only to the ways in which the magazine is a product of contemporary U.S. feminist discourse, but also to the ways in which it works to produce and reproduce that discourse in ways that ultimately have the effect of altering it.

It also makes senses that FAT would privilege the difference position in the equality/difference binary, both within the magazine in general and within the buyer’s
guides specifically. Within the magazine in general, the difference position is more often than not taken to defend the FAT’s existence against critics who use the equality position to argue that the existing (men’s) snowboarding magazines are adequate and that a women’s snowboarding magazine is not needed. It is no coincidence that, within her first editor’s note, Stevens poses the equality and difference positions as two options after stating that the idea of a women’s snowboarding magazine elicited “strong reactions,” and that those opposed to the magazine “weren’t convinced the men and women need separate forums. These people feared that publishing a women’s magazine will only encourage separation and inequality” (“Drum Roll” 1). Critics of the magazine take up the equality position common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse to argue that separate, or different, forums would not lead to equality, and in response, Stevens presents the difference position to suggest that because women and men are different, separate forums are needed. Likewise, within her second editor’s note, Stevens remarks on the praise and support FAT has received, and then acknowledges that, “there are a few dissenting few who feel that there is still no need for a women’s magazine” (3). Stevens quotes some of these dissenting few, who state that “Equality can be found between the pages of your current magazines. Snowboarder is not a gender specific term. Therefore we should just put the pictures of the best riders in our magazine” and who point out the ways in which women riders have been included within particular issues and sections of the existing snowboarding magazines. Stevens responds to these and other critiques by asking, “But why all these special gestures and ‘women’s issues’ sections if we are all just snowboarders with no differences?” and by claiming that “women snowboarders need their own forum.” Again, she takes the difference position in response to critics
who use the equality position in order to argue that a woman’s snowboarding magazine is unnecessary. Such critiques of FAT are also expressed in published letters to the magazine. For example, Mike writes that, “it seems all you guys write about is how snowboarding is a women’s sport as well as a men’s and we should treat each other equal. How can we be considered equal if the cover of your mag says ‘Women’s snowboarding?’ I haven’t found a mag yet that says ‘Men’s snowboarding’ on its cover. Transworld, Eastern Edge, Plow, etc. all seem to fit men and women in perfectly and give credit where credit is due” (14). Mike’s letter, working within contemporary U.S. feminist discourse, presents equality and difference as dichotomous positions, so that if the creators of FAT are working for equality between women and men snowboarders, then they should not create a separate, or different, magazine for women.

Unquestioningly working within the same discourse, Stevens takes the difference position, as it is the most available response to such uses of the equality position.

Just as the difference position is taken within the magazine more generally in order to defend the magazine’s existence against critics who argue that the existing (men’s) magazines are adequate, the difference position is also taken within the magazine’s buyer’s guides more specifically in order to defend the need for women-specific snowboarding equipment against critics who argue that the existing (men’s) equipment is adequate. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with FAT’s account of the differences between women’s and men’s bodies, it remains problematic that, prior to “women-specific” snowboarding equipment, snowboards, boots, bindings, and clothing were designed primarily by men; based on men’s bodies, riding preferences, and style preferences; and then marketed to men in magazines that featured mostly men riders.
When Stevens begins the 1996-1997 Buyer’s Guide with “It has been debated whether or not women-specific snowboarding equipment is necessary,” it is because demands for women-specific equipment, as well as the use of difference arguments within such demands, are in direct response to the snowboarding industry’s refusal to take women seriously as potential riders and consumers. Again, unquestioningly working within the contemporary U.S. feminist discourse where equality and difference positions are constructed as two dichotomous options, Stevens takes the difference position, as it can be used to argue that the existing equipment is inadequate if it takes into account only men’s needs, because where the equality position might be that women riders can use the same equipment men riders are using, the difference position is that women riders need different equipment for their different needs.

Although it does in many ways make sense that FAT would work within the terms of this equality/difference discourse, and that the magazine would privilege the difference position, doing so is politically limiting and problematic. Unquestioningly working within this equality/difference discourse is politically limiting, because doing so sets the terms of the debate, so that the available positions are assumed and the debate follows from these assumed positions rather than questioning the positions themselves (Scott 36). Because FAT’s engagement in debates about the necessity of a woman’s snowboarding magazine and women-specific snowboarding equipment is framed to follow from the construction of the equality and difference positions as a binary opposition, and does not question whether or not these should be the terms of debate, FAT is left with “an impossible choice.” As Scott explains, “When equality and difference are paired dichotomously, they structure an impossible choice. If one opts for equality, one is
forced to accept the notion that difference is antithetical to it. If one opts for difference, one admits that equality is unattainable” (43). By allowing their version of feminist discourse to follow from the dichotomous pairing of equality and difference, the creators of FAT leave themselves with two options: either there should be equality, where women and men are exactly the same, and thus a women’s snowboarding magazine and women-specific snowboarding equipment are not necessary; or women and men are different, and these differences should be valued, so separate magazines and equipment are needed, but equality is unattainable. Questioning rather than assuming the equality/difference binary might create more political possibility for FAT, in that their strategies and arguments could follow instead from a recognition that “equality is not the elimination of difference and difference does not preclude equality” (Scott 38). In other words, they could both argue for the need for a women’s snowboarding magazine and women-specific snowboarding equipment and argue for the need for equality between women and men snowboarders.

In addition to FAT’s unquestioning acceptance of the terms of this equality/difference discourse being politically limiting, its privileging of the difference position is also politically problematic. In emphasizing differences between women and men, and especially between women’s and men’s bodies, FAT perpetuates the man/woman binary opposition, which has historically been used by anti-feminists to explain and justify inequality between women and men on the basis of biology, as well as by feminists to suppress differences between women. 9 Scott writes that, “In effect, the duality this opposition creates draws one line of difference, invests it with biological explanations, and then treats each side of the opposition as a unitary phenomenon.
Everything in each category (male/female) is assumed to be the same; hence, differences within each category are suppressed" (46). Quoted by Scott, Johnson similarly explains that, “differences between entities...are...based on a repression of differences within entities” (x). Thus, FAT assumes a unitary category of women, this category itself and the unity of it goes unquestioned, and differences between women are ignored. As many feminists of color have theorized, any unitary category of women, assumptions about shared identity as women, and erasure of differences among women are politically problematic: Western, white, middle-class, straight women are then constituted as the norm; the experiences of many women, including women of color, are marginalized; and the ways in which some women are privileged at the expense of “other” women is obscured. In many ways, this is exactly what happens within FAT. The unitary category woman is used to refer almost exclusively to white women, and the feminist analysis included in the magazine does not recognize differences between women or white privilege. In the next chapter, I look more closely at FAT’s constructions of whiteness and white femininity.

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1 In addition to Misciagno and Duncombe, see also Boxer and Kamen.
2 “Pro models” are described in “The 1998 Buyer’s Guide” as follows: “Few riders have achieved the ability level, and reputation to earn themselves a pro model snowboard; a board made to meet their ability and riding style. Many even help create their own graphics” (39). The “Dunn model” is professional snowboarder Shannon Dunn’s pro model.
3 For discussions of young women’s fear of and resistance to feminism in relation to the “I’m not a feminist, but...” phenomenon, see Hogeland, as well as Duncombe, Kamen, and Misciagno. Although fear of and resistance to feminism among young women is one explanation for this phenomenon, and one particularly relevant to an account of the phenomenon as it occurs within FAT, there are other explanations for the phenomenon as it occurs in other contexts. For example, many women of color do not identify with the label “feminist” for a range of reasons, including because of the ways in which feminism has historically been constructed as the domain of white women, despite the many and varied contributions of women of color, as well as the ways in which white feminists have been and are implicated in systemic racism and classism. For more on this, see Ang and Evans, as well as Walker’s definition of womanism and other discussions of it. See Faludi for an account of backlash against U.S. feminism, as well as Sommers for an example of popularized anti-feminism in the U.S.
4 Concerns about man-hating and male-bashing are expressed in countless published reader letters. For examples of the ways in which feminists specifically are constructed as man-haters and male-bashers, see
A.T. and Rachel, and for the single reader letter that questions all of this concern about man-hating and male-bashing, see Mary. For examples of lesbian baiting, see VanEvery and Stevens, as well as Longfellow ("Adventures of the Wild Women"). For scholarly work on lesbian baiting and its connections to sexism, see Pharr and Taylor and Rupp, and for work focused on lesbian baiting, women athletes, and lesbian athletes, see Blinde and Taub, Lenskyi, and Krane. For examples of the sensationalization of feminists within FAT, see A.T. and Stevens ("Pure").

That readers are concerned at all about “feminist complaining” is especially interesting given that, according to Stevens, “We were pretty conscious about not complaining about the inequality…” (Email Interview).

Stevens also framed the possible arguments and strategies of FAT in terms of the equality/difference binary in our email interview. In responding to a question about her “own definition of feminism,” Stevens wrote that, “I am still struggling with my definition of feminism—generally it is for the equality of women, but I’m still not sure what equality means. We really struggled with this in the magazine—trying to decide whether we were just trying to close the gap and that eventually we would be equal with no need to have two separate magazines—or whether we should accept that men and women are different, and in a sense can never be equal b/c they are different, thus requiring their own forum?”

Annual buyer’s guides are a standard feature of snowboarding magazines. That FAT includes such a buyer’s guide is not unique, but that they focus on women-specific snowboards, boots, and bindings is. In addition, Stevens and Longfellow both acknowledge in interviews with the author that the idea and existence of a women’s snowboarding magazine was widely criticized (Email Interview).

This move is also politically problematic in that it completely erases transgendered and intersex people.

See, for example, Alarcón, Ang, Davis, Lorde, Mohanty, and Moraga and Anzaldúa.
CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTING WHITENESS AS NORMATIVE AND WOMEN AS WHITE

The many differences between women that are obscured within Fresh and Tasty include differences by “race,” and this obscuring of difference functions to elide the whiteness of the magazine. In an effort to make visible and interrogate this elided whiteness, this chapter critically analyzes FAT’s constructions of whiteness. The first section of my analysis considers the ways in which FAT visually and discursively constructs whiteness as normative. Whiteness is represented as an unremarkable norm through the combined visual presence of almost all “white” faces in the magazine and discursive silence about whiteness. Whiteness is also represented as ideal through its associations with snow in photography spreads. While representations of snow are of course going to be central to a snowboarding magazine, the excessive emphasis on snow as a signifier within FAT works symbolically to idealize snow. The second section of my analysis examines the ways in which FAT constructs femininity as white femininity. Focusing on advertising for Pure Snowboards as just one example, I point to the ways in which this company associates femininity with white femininity and white snow, as well as the ways in which it both perpetuates and plays with the myth of white women as sexually pure. In each case, these constructions of femininity as white femininity visually and narratively rely on blackness for their meaning and, in doing so, consolidate white
women’s privilege at the expense of black women and men. Both FAT’s constructions of
whiteness as normative and constructions of femininity as white femininity are
symptomatic of white privilege and undermine the feminist political potential of the
magazine in problematic ways.

Before turning to my analysis of FAT’s constructions of whiteness, I explain my
use of the category “white” and define the concept “white privilege.” My categorizations
of people as white are based primarily on published photographs and preliminary
determinations of whether or not the photographed subjects appear to be white in a way
that they are likely to have white privilege in contemporary U.S. society.² I do not claim
to “know” or want to know how they identify their race or ethnicity. For my purposes
here, what are most significant are specific cultural and visual constructions of racial
categories as related to specific texts and to white privilege. As such, my use of the
category white is informed by recognition that this is a social construction (Friedman 26),
but one with very material effects, and that it has a range of “contradictory, symbolic, and
situationally specific meanings” (Gallagher 69).³ While there are of course variances
within this category—most notably as it intersects with other categories of identity, such
as gender, sexuality, class, nationality, (dis)ability, etc.—people who are identified as
having “white” skin in contemporary U.S. contexts share white privilege. In “White
Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh defines white privilege as
a corollary of racism, in which white people can count on “an invisible package of
unearned assets” that benefits them at the expense of people of color (31) while
remaining “elusive and fugitive” (34). I maintain that the degree to which white privilege
is a powerful social force warrants situational, contextualized deployment of the category white despite the ways in which it can indeed be problematized.

3.1 Whiteness as Normative

The most evident way in which FAT visually and discursively constructs whiteness as normative is by representing it as an unremarkable norm. The skin color of almost every person in the magazine appears to be white. Yet this whiteness of skin color is not marked in any way, and with very few exceptions, race is not mentioned or discussed at all. These discursive silences are as significant as the visual presence of whiteness. As Appiah and Gates explain, “freedom from having to think about race...the inevitable silence of whiteness...[and] its status as the unexamined norm” all characterize white privilege (5). Thus the combined visual presence of and discursive silence about racial whiteness in FAT contributes to the magazine’s construction of whiteness as an unremarkable norm.

FAT also constructs whiteness as an unremarkable norm within descriptions of its creators. Stevens and Longfellow, the creators of the magazine, appear to be white in photos published in the magazine, but again the appearance of this whiteness is not discursively marked. This silence about the creators’ whiteness is especially telling given the place in the magazine where they describe themselves in the most detail. In this editor’s note, “whaz up? (from the publishers),” Stevens and Longfellow describe and identify themselves in a range of ways: by “age,” “current hair color,” “sign,” “years snowboarding,” “riding style,” “marital status,” and the list goes on (4). They even mark their “sexual orientation” as “hetero.” Noticeably absent from this list of markers—in
which their heterosexuality, a privileged identity, is marked—is any racial or ethnic identification. It is quite possible that Stevens and Longfellow do not mark their apparent whiteness because they just don’t think to; indeed, one aspect of white privilege is not having to think about one’s own race. Yet, regardless of their intent, by not marking their apparent whiteness, the creators describe themselves in a way that constructs whiteness as an unremarkable norm.

FAT similarly constructs whiteness as an unremarkable norm within addresses to and descriptions of its audience. Stevens and Longfellow conclude the same editor’s note by addressing their assumed audience as follows: “Enjoy Volume 3, Issue #2, full of girls just like you, doing the things you love to do...just like us” (4, my emphasis). They also describe their intended audience as just like them—and, one might argue, as white like them—within email interviews. When asked questions about their intended audience—“Who was the intended audience for the magazine? How did having this audience in mind influence certain aspects of the magazine?”—Longfellow responded that, “[W]e were the audience. Purely selfish. We created content that interested us. We interviewed people that we wanted to know about. We talked about whatever we wanted to.” Stevens wrote as follows:

The intended audience was women with the expected target market being teenagers (12-24)...It wasn’t too much of a conscious effort, however, because we felt we were targeting girls just like us—we didn’t really have to reach to try and figure out what they wanted. If we liked it, we assumed they would too. (my emphasis)

Within both responses, the magazine’s audience is assumed to be “just like” its creators. Thus if the creators are apparently white, and especially if they are not deliberately engaged in recognizing and interrogating their own whiteness, it is likely that they are
unconsciously assuming that their audience is also white. Again, regardless of whether or not the creators are aware of this assumption and intend to conceptualize their audience as white, this unstated presumption of whiteness functions to further normalize whiteness as an unremarkable norm.

In addition to representing whiteness as an unremarkable norm, FAT also constructs whiteness as normative by representing it as ideal through its cultural associations with snow. Cultural associations between whiteness and snow abound—e.g., “white as snow” and “snow white”—such that snow, “the bleak topography of winter...permafrost, tuques and tundra” have the symbolic function of “fir[ing] the imaginings of...whiteness” (Clarke 107). Of course representations of snow are central to any snowboarding magazine. Yet FAT often goes far beyond simply representing snow: the magazine glorifies snow and, to the degree that snow functions as a signifier of whiteness, the magazine glorifies whiteness. It is in this glorifying excess of the representations of snow that FAT performs the symbolic work of idealizing whiteness.

The primary way in which FAT glorifies snow is through its photography spreads, which are a standard feature of snowboarding magazines. For example, in the final three photographs from the October 1997 “FAT Photospread,” snow and whiteness are emphasized in at least two ways. First, in each of these photos, the snowboarder is photographed riding through snow, rather than riding through the air. In the photos of Robin Moore and Jane Mauser, the snow is visually emphasized as it sprays through the air following contact with the snowboards (54 and 56; see appendix, figures 3.1 and 3.2); in Mauser’s case, the snow almost completely covers her body, with the top half of her head being the only visible part of her body (56). In the photo of Amy Campion, the
snow is also visually emphasized as it breaks off and falls from the unstable surface she is
riding on following contact with the snowboard (55; see appendix, figure 3.3). A second
way that snow and whiteness are emphasized in these photos is through the use of white
background to frame them. The photos of Moore and Mauser are both framed by white
background below the photos and, to a lesser degree, above them. The choice of white as
the color to frame these photos further emphasizes both snow and whiteness, and if this
choice is made because it make sense aesthetically, that only points again to the emphasis
on snow within the photos.

In the written captions that accompany these photos, this visual emphasis on snow
is taken to its excess, to the point where snow symbolically glorifies whiteness. The
caption to the photo of Moore reads as follows: “Where’s your mustache? Robin Moore
milking the white stuff at the end of the season in Wasatch, UT backcountry” (54,
emphasis in original). Here snow is not only associated with whiteness—snow is “white
stuff”—but also the associations between snow and whiteness take on an additional layer
of meaning through associations with another very white substance, milk. Also, the
written caption makes clear that the visual emphasis on snow within the photo is no
accident. Similarly, the caption to the photo of Mauser concludes the photospread with,
“We leave you to wishing for an early winter and drooling over this last image, Jane
Mauser slashing through the big white wave. Fresssssssssssh! Here’s to this much
snow, wherever you are…” (56). Again, this caption explicitly associates snow with
whiteness—snow is “the big white wave”—and it points in writing to the intentionality of
the visual emphasis on snow within the photo. This caption also explicitly voices what
might be called “common sense understanding” among snowboarders: that snow is
something to wish for, to drool over, to toast to; something to photograph and to admire; something to idealize. Such descriptions of snow exceed what is required to mimetically represent snow. These three photos taken together idealize snow and—because of the both implicit and explicit associations between the two—whiteness. Whiteness is emphasized and glorified, and thus constructed as ideal.

FAT’s idealization of whiteness through its associations with snow points both to a central paradox of whiteness and to a central way in which being white is meaningful. A paradox of whiteness is that, unlike snow, white people are not the color white. Dyer points out that, “White people are neither literally nor symbolically white. We are not the colour of snow…” (42). Yet that people considered white are designated with the color white says a lot about the ways in which being white is meaningful. According to Dyer, people deemed white “characteristically see ourselves and believe ourselves seen as unmarked, unspecific, universal,” and this meaning of whiteness is connected in part to “the conceptualisation of the colour white in Western culture as also the absence of colour” (45). Thus, on the one hand, FAT’s idealization of whiteness through associations with snow further consolidates a normalization of whiteness in which people socially categorized as white become the unremarkable norm. Yet, at the same time, this normalization is in part associated with being designated the color white, when people considered white are not the color white at all.

3.2 Femininity as White Femininity

In addition to whiteness being represented primarily as normative, femininity is constructed as white femininity within FAT, especially within advertisements for a range
of companies that sell women's snowboards and snowboarding outerwear. Even the names of these various companies point to the ways in which their ads call on notions of white femininity: Pure Snowboards, Goddess, Bombshell, Powdered Sugar, Angel Eyewear, and Cold as Ice. Here I focus my analysis on just one of these women-specific companies, Pure Snowboards, and discuss three ways in which they construct femininity as white femininity.

Within this discussion of the ways in which Pure Snowboards constructs femininity as white femininity, I consider how each of these constructions relies on blackness for meaning. As Toni Morrison details in her analysis of whiteness in American literature, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, the presence of black representation—in the case of American literature, through black characters and imagery of darkness—is central to constructions of whiteness. She writes, "...it may be possible to discover, through a close look at literary 'blackness,' the nature—even the cause—of literary 'whiteness.' What is it for?" (9, emphasis in original). I consider the ways in which FAT's constructions of femininity as white femininity rely on representations of blackness to make clear what, intentionally or not, they are for: to maintain a system of white privilege at the expense of people of color, including African-Americans.10

In the premiere issue of FAT, the first advertisement on the inside cover of the magazine is for Pure Snowboards, and one way in which this "Pure Powder" ad constructs femininity as white femininity is by simultaneously emphasizing both white snow and a white woman (see appendix, figure 3.4). A photograph of an apparently white women rider, Mia Pringle, snowboarding is the central focus of the ad and takes up
most of the page. This photograph, like others throughout FAT, visually emphasizes snow and, by association, whiteness. The frame of the image pictures Pringle on her board, with the lower half of her body and her snowboard both barely visible beneath the snow; the snow all around her that she is riding through; and just enough of the tree line at the top of the frame to show the line of the snow slope above her. Noticeably absent from the frame are figures often present as background in snowboarding photography: whole trees, sky, and other riders or onlookers. Instead, the focus of the image is the white woman and the white snow. By emphasizing a woman, snow, and the whiteness of both, the photograph visually constructs femininity in relation to the color white.

This construction of femininity in relation to the color white visually relies on the color black for its meaning. In the case of color as hue, Dyer writes that the hue white is unique in that “it has an opposite, black,” and that this idea of color opposites is “of a piece with dualistic thought” (48), such that the color white “is virtually unthinkable except in opposition to black” (51). Within Pure Snowboards’ “Pure Powder” advertisement, the hue white relies on its opposition to the hue black for visual meaning. With the exception of rider Mia Pringle’s skin and clothing within the photograph, the ad is almost entirely in black and white hues. While the ad emphasizes whiteness through the snow and the background, all of the type in the ad—including the title of the ad, the title of the company, the name of the rider photographed, the name of the photographer, the names of all the Pure riders, and the contact information for the company—is in black, and the border around the photograph is black as well. Thus any meaning contained in the ad’s visual construction of femininity in relation to the color white is reliant on the color black.
The second way in which Pure Snowboards constructs femininity as white femininity is through taking associations between whiteness, snow, and women one step further by also connecting them to purity. Set against an all-white background, other central features of the same advertisement include the words “pure powder” in the upper left corner of the page, the words “pure snowboards” in the lower right corner of the page, and the symbol for woman overlaid with the names of the women riders sponsored by Pure near the lower left corner of the page. Although the conscious intent of these features is likely to instill in readers and potential consumers the name of the company and the company’s focus on women, they also have the effect of calling on notions of white femininity as pure. Whiteness is often culturally and legally equated with purity and innocence (Jones 255; Dyer 22), and especially in the case of white women, this equation usually takes on sexual connotations, with the “white wedding dress” being “a double symbol of the connection between white and innocence and the significance of sexual innocence of women” (Ross 263). In calling on notions of white femininity as pure, this Pure Snowboards advertisement constructs femininity as white femininity through associations with purity and, in doing so, further perpetuates the assumption of white womanhood as sexually pure and innocent.

Like the ad’s visual emphasis on the color white, this construction of femininity as white femininity through associations with purity also narratively relies on blackness for its meaning. Associations of whiteness with purity are connected to associations of “blackness with sin” (Jones 255), and whiteness with innocence to blackness with “noninnocence” (Ross 263). When conceptualizations of whiteness as pure and innocent take on sexual connotations in relation to femininity, the ways in which they rely on
blackness become particularly problematic. The myth of the white woman as sexually pure and innocent relies on, on the one hand, “the recurring mythology of the black man as the oversexed, large, would-be defiler of the innocent white woman” (Ross 264), and on the other hand, “the myth of black female hypersexuality” (Everett 283). All three myths contemporarily function to privilege white women at the expense of black women and men. In relying on such mythologies, Pure Snowboards’ constructions of femininity as white femininity through purity are especially problematic.

A third way in which Pure Snowboards constructs femininity as white femininity is by playing with this notion of white women as sexually pure and innocent in ways that reflect white women’s privilege. In “Pure: Michelle Barnas,” a FAT interview with the “front-running woman” at Pure Snowboards, Michelle Barnas, Stevens asks Barnas, “How did you come up with the [company] name?” (48). Barnas replies that she “had a list of about 10 names that I liked and I just asked a lot of people what they thought and everyone picked Pure.” Stevens poses a follow-up question, “Was there a story behind that or did you just really like the word?” Barnas responds as follows: “The story is that I’ve always been such a pure girl all of my life. Ha ha! No, actually it is just a simple name that can describe a number of things.” Barnas, who in photos published alongside the interview appears to be white, is using irony and humor to play with the notion of white women as sexually pure and innocent. She treats the idea that she might name the company Pure because she is “a pure girl”—an idea that she herself brings up in the interview—as a joke. Yet, the ways in which she jokingly challenges the notion of white women as sexually pure and innocent only work because of white privilege. Thus, even
as Barnas plays with the idea that white women are pure, her play is contingent upon
white privilege, so that femininity is again being constructed as white femininity.

This construction of femininity as white femininity through drawing on white
privilege to play with assumptions of purity also narratively relies on blackness. It is
through the oppression of people of color—including, but not only, African-Americans—
that white women have this white privilege and assumption of purity to draw on at all. In
Black Looks: Race and Representation, bell hooks' makes this critique of the ways in
which Madonna plays with assumptions of white women as pure:

[B]lack females in this society...have always known that the socially constructed
image of innocent white womanhood relies on the continued production of the
racist/sexist sexual myth that black women are not innocent and never can be...In
part, many black women who are disgusted by Madonna’s flaunting of sexual
experience are enraged because the very image of sexual agency that she is able to
project and affirm with material gain has been the stick this society has used to
justify its continued beating and assault on the black female body. The vast
majority of black women in the United States...do not often feel we have the
“freedom” to act in rebellious ways in regards to sexuality without being
punished. (159-160)

Hooks argues that not only the assumption that white women are sexually innocent, but
also white women’s “freedom” to flaunt opposition to those assumptions, underlie the
oppression of black women. Even when contemporary white women play with their
assumed purity, they do so at the expense of people of color. Drawing on hooks, Dyer
notes that, regardless of whether white women are upholding or transgressing notions of
white womanhood as sexually pure, they “are privileged and oppressive vis-à-vis non-
white people” (30). Thus, in playing with assumptions of white women’s purity, Pure
Snowboards only reasserts white women’s privilege at the expense of black people, and
especially black women.
Pure Snowboards is represented in FAT as a snowboarding company by and for women, yet the feminist political potential of such a company is both limiting and problematic if it consciously or unconsciously equates the category “women” only with “white women.” In Stevens’ interview with Barnas, Pure is described as a company that “designs, tests, and manufactures snowboards specifically for women” (“Pure: Michelle Barnas” 48). Explaining one intention of the company, Barnas says, “The name, the image, the product testing and design of the boards is all going to be women oriented.” The political potential of such a snowboarding company by and for women is seriously undermined by the ways in which Pure calls on and constructs femininity in particularly white ways, for the company is thus likely to advance any “women and snowboarding cause” primarily, if not only, by and for white women and, in doing so, advance white privilege at the expense of people of color.

FAT’s constructions of whiteness as normative and of femininity as white femininity are in many ways symptomatic of its contexts: contemporary U.S. society in general, and U.S. snowboarding culture in particular. Countless theorists have pointed to the multiple and complex ways in which U.S. society is characterized by racism and white supremacy, and for reasons both cultural and material, snowboarding in the U.S. is a very white sport. Cultural histories of the sport are characterized by the accomplishments of people, mostly men, who appear to be white, as well as by the roots of snowboarding in other culturally white sports such as surfing, skiing, and skateboarding, and the material cost of renting or purchasing snowboarding equipment and of purchasing a lift ticket at a resort are high, such that people economically
disadvantaged by the intersections of systemic racism and classism in contemporary U.S. contexts are unlikely to make up much of the population that snowboards regularly.\textsuperscript{16} Thus FAT's constructions of whiteness are in many ways effects of the magazine's contexts.

Although FAT's constructions of whiteness are symptomatic of the white privilege that characterizes the magazine's contexts, to recognize that the magazine's representations of whiteness are not necessarily the result of "conscious" or "intentional" rhetorical choices is not to "excuse" them, for the magazine reproduces white privilege to the same degree that it is produced by white privilege, and it thus affects as much as it is an effect. Indeed, that constructing whiteness as normative is probably not the intent of the magazine's creators is precisely the point: because of white privilege—including freedom from having to think about one's own race and racial privilege—"well-meaning" white women can set out with an agenda by and for "women," yet unconsciously advance that agenda in ways that not only benefit primarily white women, but also work at the expense of people of color by perpetuating white privilege. To the degree that FAT does this, they undermine the feminist political potential of the magazine in problematic ways.

\textsuperscript{1} I use the term "race" to refer to this axis of difference as it is constructed in contemporary U.S. society, rather than to call on any notion of racial differences as natural, inherent, or essential. Other differences between women that are obscured in FAT include differences along lines of class, political geography, sexuality, and (dis)ability. I briefly return to these other differences in my conclusion.

\textsuperscript{2} Although this method for categorizing visual representations of people is potentially problematic in that, in the words of Friedman, it "depend[s] heavily on the senses—above all, sight—that figure prominently in racialism in all its forms" (22), I use it precisely because it is one of the primary methods by which people in contemporary U.S. contexts are racialized as white and thus bestowed with white privilege.

\textsuperscript{3} Constructing the category white "as a monolithic, unchanging category" is problematic because doing so "even in racial and ethnic terms erases vast differences of culture and history punctuated by violence—witness the conflict between the English and the Irish; the Germans and the French; the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats; the Europeans and the Jews... Along with the Holocaust and decades of twentieth-century ethnic violence in Europe..., World War I and II ought to be sufficient in themselves in calling into question" any unitary conceptualization of the category white (Friedman 13).
My assertion about deploying the category *white* is informed by Leela Fernandes’ discussion of “deliberately deploying the categories ‘West’ and ‘Third World’ in order to foreground the trans/national relationships of power that have governed these constructions” (130-131).

I refer here only to photos that are marked as being of Stevens and Longfellow, and not to photos without captions.

The list also includes “goes by,” “order in the lineup,” “piercings,” “tattoos,” “pets,” “degree,” “high school sports,” “European travel,” “car,” “musical abilities,” “Sheagles (band) alias,” “TV likes,” “hometown,” “diet,” “likes,” “dislikes,” “heavy rotation,” and “fantasy job” (4).

Although it is significant that Stevens and Longfellow mark their “sexual orientation” and not their race or ethnicity, it is also possible that this little to do with acknowledging their heterosexual privilege, and it could even be a heterosexist response to lesbian baiting.

For other examples of the ways in which FAT idealizes whiteness through associations with snow in photography spreads, see the September/October 1995 “FAT Photospread” and January/February 1996 “FAT Photospread.” Whiteness is also similarly idealized within some of FAT’s editor’s notes.

See also Everett on “segregated film texts” and the ways in which, even with “a visible absence of black characters in other than supernumerary roles,” they call on “thematic or structural blackness in narrative terms” (281).

A potential danger of focusing on how FAT’s constructions of whiteness rely on conceptions of blackness is that doing so might inadvertently reify the black/white binary (Friedman 5). I maintain this focus, despite the risk, in order to show how the white/black binary is functioning in this particular text at a particular historical moment.

Again, this points to a paradox of whiteness: that, unlike snow, white people are not the color white.

Indeed, white people identified as “pure” white are often considered at the top of the “racial hierarchy of power” (Warren 135-136).

For further discussion of the ways in which this myth of black female hypersexuality originated during slavery and continues to function as a controlling image, see Patricia Hill Collins’ chapter “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images” in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. See also Angela Davis’s “Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist” in *Women, Race & Class*.

Also, in “White on White,” Kathleen Blee points out that the historical function of white women involved in racist movements up until the 1970s was to be “symbols of that which organized racism purported to protect: innocent white womanhood” (94). Thus constructions of white women as sexually innocent and pure not only contemporarily rely on, but also historically have contributed to the creation of, racist mythologies of African-American women and men as hypersexual. In relying on such mythologies, Pure Snowboards’ constructions of femininity as white femininity through purity are especially problematic.

See, for example, Blee (Inside Organized Racism), Delgado, and hooks (Killing Rage).

Susanna Howe’s *Sick: A Cultural History of Snowboarding* is one example of such a cultural history of the sport of snowboarding. For analysis of “the unbearable whiteness of skiing,” see Coleman. In 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998—the years FAT was in publication—61.3%, 70.7%, 61.8%, and 71.2% of snowboarding participants in the U.S. had household incomes of $35,000 or more; 42.9%, 46.3%, 44.2%, and 55% had incomes of $50,000 or more (Sports Business Research Network).
CONCLUSION

_Fresh and Tasty_ makes a number of important feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding in the U.S. The magazine's pages are filled with images of women snowboarders as athletes. These images inspire girls and women to snowboard and, by visually representing women snowboarders as the norm and as primarily athletes rather than sex objects, they counter the sexist representations found in other snowboarding magazines. _FAT_ also gives credit for women's accomplishments in the snowboarding industry to women riders, rather than to companies that sell women-specific snowboarding products. While these companies are typically positioned as solutions to the problems of women's material and representational absence relative to men within snowboarding and snowboarding texts, _FAT_ positions women snowboarders, their hard work as athletes, and, in some cases, their struggles against sexism as the solutions that make possible improvements for women and snowboarding. At the same time, _FAT_ also encourages the snowboarding industry that women are consumers of snowboarding products, thus directing industry attention to women and the need for women-specific products. Insofar as _FAT_ makes these feminist contributions on behalf of women and snowboarding, it functions as a site of feminist discourse, a site where feminist arguments are both advanced and challenged.
FAT is a site of feminist discourse that works within and through both feminist and anti-feminist discourses in a number of ways. In taking feminist positions while avoiding identification with feminism, the magazine seems to exemplify the "I'm not a feminist, but..." phenomenon and functions as a form of de-facto feminism. It does so in a way that avoids the potential problem of using powers available to women without paying debt to feminism, but that perpetuates problematic constructions of feminists, most interestingly constructing systemic feminist analyses of power and privilege as "complaining." The equality/difference binary common to contemporary U.S. feminist discourse appears throughout FAT as well. The magazine consistently frames its possible arguments and strategies in terms of either the equality position or the difference position, usually taking the difference position. Although this discursive move works to defend the need for both a women's snowboarding magazine and women-specific snowboarding equipment, it is politically limiting and problematic, especially insofar as the magazine obscures differences between women.

The many differences between women that are obscured within FAT include differences by race, and this obscuring of difference functions to elide the whiteness of the magazine. FAT visually and discursively constructs whiteness as normative. Whiteness is represented as an unremarkable norm through the combined visual presence of almost all white faces in the magazine and discursive silence about whiteness, and it is represented as ideal through its associations with snow in photography spreads. While representations of snow are of course going to be central to a snowboarding magazine, the excessive emphasis on snow as a signifier within FAT works symbolically to idealize snow. FAT also constructs femininity as white femininity. For example, advertising for
Pure Snowboards published within FAT associates femininity with white femininity and white snow, as well as both perpetuates and plays with the myth of white women as sexually pure. In each case, these constructions of femininity as white femininity visually and narratively rely on blackness for their meaning and, in doing so, consolidate white women's privilege at the expense of black women and men. Both FAT's constructions of whiteness as normative and constructions of femininity as white femininity are symptomatic of white privilege and undermine the feminist political potential of the magazine.

My critical analysis of FAT raises questions about the political limits and implications of its version of feminist discourse. To the degree that FAT represents systemic analysis of power and privilege as "complaining," obscures differences among women, and constructs whiteness as normative and femininity in particularly white ways, the magazine's feminist message of empowerment on behalf of women and snowboarding is undermined. One might ask, who exactly does this magazine empower? And at the expense of whom? It seems that, rather than empowering any unitary category of "women," the magazine empowers a specific group of women, made up primarily of women who already have a degree of white privilege. By doing so in ways that leave this privilege unmarked—and that even discourage the sort of analyses that would lead to interrogations of such privilege—the magazine might have the affect of mobilizing on behalf of already relatively privileged women at the expense of more politically disadvantaged women.

Analysis of the ways in which FAT potentially works on behalf of relatively privileged women at the expense of relatively disadvantaged women might be further
developed through consideration of a number of other questions. In what ways does FAT advance a sort of “market feminism” that works only for economically privileged women who have purchasing power? Claim gender power for Western women through the rhetoric of colonization and its notions of the individual, Western hero? Assume particularly abled bodies, for whom snowboarding equipment is readily available and snowboarding resorts are easily accessible? Perpetuate homophobia by responding as the magazine does to lesbian baiting and, at the same time, call into question compulsory heterosexuality by subtly including some queer elements within the magazine?

In addition to considering these questions specific to FAT, further analysis of the magazine might also situate it more broadly within contemporary, popularized versions of feminist discourse in the U.S. For example, popular media attention followed the 1993 publication of Naomi Wolf’s Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century, in which she argues against what she terms “victim feminism” and for what she terms “power feminism.” In the words of one media commentator, “…the media hubbub began about the so-called feminist debate between ‘victim feminism’ and ‘power feminism’—about whether we should view ourselves as ‘victims’ of sexist oppression or as strivers and achievers of ‘power’” (Rapping 11). Wolf’s victim/power dichotomy can certainly be critiqued on a number of levels. Perhaps most troubling, though, are the ways in which she, as a relatively privileged woman, calls for women to focus less on the ways their power is circumscribed and more on using their power; while this approach may work on an individual level for privileged women like Wolf, it does little for the women whose power is systemically limited by the very systems that in part grant Wolf’s power and privilege—racism and classism, to name just
two. One might pose questions to Wolf's book similar to those I posed to FAT. Who exactly does this book empower? And at the expense of whom?

If indeed the problematic politics of Wolf's popular book are similar to those of FAT, if they both function to benefit relatively privileged women at the expense of relatively disadvantaged women—a connection that would of course need to be demonstrated—then what does this say about the version of feminist discourse particular to contemporary feminist texts that hope to reach popular U.S. audiences? How is this version of feminist discourse shaped in part by contemporary capitalism, in its particularly consumerist and globalized forms? How is feminism being packaged, sold, and bought? What sorts of action and inaction are encouraged by this version of feminist discourse? What feminist subject positions does it produce? Are the politics of these subject positions characteristic of "third wave" feminism more broadly?

1 See, for example, "Uncharted Territory: A Trilogy of First Descents."
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Drum roll please... Introducing the Premier Issue of Fresh and Tasty.

After a lot of hard work... drum roll please! Fresh and Tasty has become a voice for women snowboarders. We have met and made friends with fellow women riders and sisters across the country, and the overwhelming response has proven rewarding and we are excited to share our story. Our associates and contributors have shared their own experiences to help others understand the joy of snowboarding and how to properly gear up.

In the pursuit of Fresh and Tasty to help close the gap between men and women by encouraging and supporting women, we have worked hard to ensure that we can ride hard to keep up with men. Do we want to be considered simply the same as the men, judged by our standards, to our goal is to gradually attract all snowboarders into one big happy family. Publishing a magazine about women's snowboarding and women's specific requirements was a big step in which we want to create a magazine that will be equal when compared to men's magazines. This magazine will give value to these differences by featuring women snowboarders, promoting equality and respect. Do you know that the average snowboarder the same support and respect the same way, which is not equal when compared to men's magazines?

For an advertisement to list the men and women are different and they should be different. The magazine will give value to these differences by featuring women snowboarders, promoting equality and respect. Do you think that we can treat women this way? We are excited to introduce our voice to the world and share our stories.

Fresh and Tasty strive to support women as we continue into the blue mountains. We can be proud to know that we can treat women this way. We are excited to introduce our voice to the world and share our stories.

Figure 1: Drum Roll Please
Figure 2: Robin Moore
Figure 3: Jane Mauser
Sick! This photo also appeared in a *National Geographic* article about my rescue, and is now on display in the Columbia coffee select server. "Campion grabs life by the horns!"

*Photo by Max Bloom*
Figure 5: Pure Snowboards